



CHRISTIAN RYAN GETS HIS  
FEET WET

HAPPY BUSINESS,  
BETTER BUSINESS



TOUGH LOVE FROM  
AN ANGEL

# EXCHANGE

MAGAZINE FOR ENTREPRENEURS / ENTERPRISES / ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS / EDUCATORS

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### INSIDE

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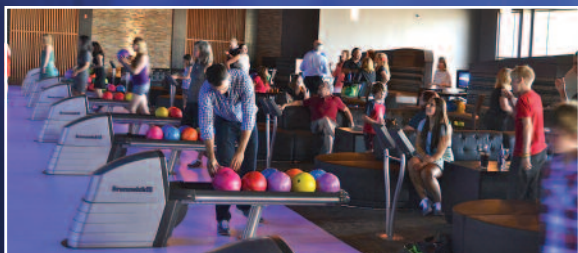
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# EXCHANGE

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## EXCHANGE

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# TOUCHING YOUR HEART

*Read the articles and respond*

by PAUL KNOWLES



PAUL KNOWLES is editor of Exchange Magazine. He is an author, public speaker and executive director of New Hamburg Live! email: paul.knowles@exchangemagazine.com

It's not often that doing this job inspires me to reach for my wallet. But this is the exception. This Exchange contains some intriguing and up to the minute business stories. I have enjoyed meeting people like Kim and Dave Neziol of

HomeFit, who are building on a foundation laid by Kim's mentor, the late John Carter; and Randall Howard, angel investor extraordinaire, recipient of a much-deserved national award; and Jennifer and Jim Moss, the unique founders of a business that boosts happiness.

But my heart became fully engaged as I worked on the stories about KW Habilitation, Nutrition for Learning, and the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region. These are local organizations that are doing so much for our community, much of it unnoticed and without thanks.

Here's my hope – and my pledge. I hope that the business people who faithfully read this magazine – and there are a lot of you – will also be touched by those stories. That you will seize the opportunity to make a difference by supporting these important community services – by donating to the building project at KW Habilitation, or helping to feed our thousands of hungry school kids, or supporting programs that are working to stop the thousands of sexual assaults in our region, every year. Read the articles – and then allow yourself the time to respond.

And my pledge? By the time you read this, my cheque will be in the mail. **X**



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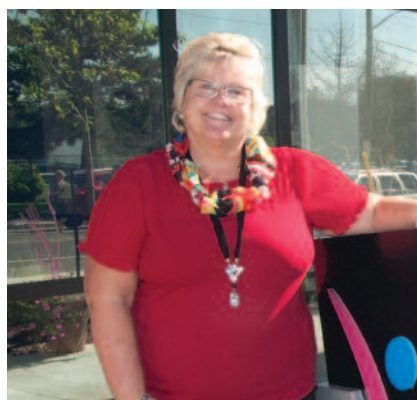
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# FATCA'S IMPACT ON CANADIAN BUSINESSES

*Penalties for non-compliance can be severe*

BY JULIA KLANN



Julia Klann, CPA, CA, CPA (Illinois) is a Partner in KPMG's US and Cross-Border Tax Services practice, and based in Waterloo. Concentrating in US and Cross-Border Tax matters since 2005.

The Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, or FATCA, was introduced by the IRS in March 2010 in an effort to toughen its stance and increase penalties on the US' foreign reporting provisions and requirements. Despite being a US law, FATCA may affect many individuals and entities worldwide. Canadians will need to determine their FATCA status and complete all required documentation to ensure no penalties and no payment delays are created when receiving income from US sources. FATCA legislation became effective July 1, 2014, but most reporting requirements become mandatory beginning in 2015.

The intention of the FATCA legislation is to find and identify US citizens who are considered non-compliant with the US' tax laws; however, the wording of the legislation will have a much broader and international reach. By way of background, a US citizen is considered a US resident for income tax purposes regardless of whether the US citizen earns any income from US sources or physically spends any time in the US in a particular year. In addition to filing an annual income tax return, US citizens are required to disclose their ownership of foreign financial accounts and foreign entities to the IRS on an annual basis. Failure to file and report these types of assets can result in hefty penalties,

Failure to file and report these types of assets can result in hefty penalties, with most forms carrying a \$10,000 per form, per year penalty.

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with most forms carrying a \$10,000 per form, per year penalty.

In an effort to make it easier for countries worldwide to comply with FATCA, the US has negotiated intergovernmental agreements ("IGA") with nations worldwide. Canada and the US signed an IGA on February 5, 2014. The IGA simplifies the due diligence procedures required by Canadians under FATCA and also shifts the burden of monitoring financial institution compliance from the IRS to the CRA.

The main burden of FATCA legislation will fall to business entities classified as Foreign Financial Institutions ("FFIs") which will need to register with the IRS and implement due diligence procedures over their account holders. FFIs will be required to examine all new and current individual account holders to determine if any of these account holders are US citizens. This information must be compiled by the FFI and then submitted to the CRA who will collect this information for the IRS. For corporate and other non-individual account holders, the entity will need to report to their bank whether under FATCA it is classified as an FFI, or Active or Passive Non-Financial Foreign Entity ("NFFE").

The goal of FATCA is to provide more transparency when it comes to payments from US sources. As such, US persons are required to undergo a due diligence exercise prior to making a payment to a non-US individual, corporation or other entity. This will have a huge impact on Canadian entities that receive income from US sources, such as sales or

service revenue, interest, dividends or royalties. Before a Canadian entity can receive a payment from a US person, the Canadian entity will be required to certify its FATCA status to the US payer of such income. This certification will be done on Form W-8BEN-E, an eight-page form that replaces the formerly used Form W-8BEN that many Canadians selling

into the US may already be familiar with. Failure to provide a complete Form W-8BEN-E can result in a 30% withholding tax at source, and therefore potentially create cash flow issues for Canadian businesses.

In order to complete Form W-8BEN-E, a Canadian business must determine its FATCA classification under the US Regulations and/or the Canadian-US IGA. There are a total of 31 potential classifications that all stem from the three main FATCA classifications. Depending on the classification, certain sections of the form need to be completed. In some instances the Canadian business will need to disclose a valid Employer Identification Number or substantial owners of the entity in order for Form W-8BEN-E to be considered valid. It is important that Canadian entities doing business in the US seek professional advice before completing this form to ensure that it is completed correctly.

For those individuals who may have a US filing requirement, there are also programs under which a US citizen residing in Canada can come forward to voluntarily file prior year US tax returns and forms with little to no penalty. These individuals should seek professional advice before filing returns with the IRS.

X

The main burden of FATCA legislation will fall to business entities classified as Foreign Financial Institutions which will need to register with the IRS and implement due diligence procedures over their account holders.

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*Randall Howard, photographed on the balcony of the Presidential Suite at the new Delta Hotel in Waterloo.*

## TOUGH LOVE FROM AN ANGEL

When the National Angel Capital Association named Randall Howard “Canadian Angel of the Year” on October 2, there is no question that it was a significant honour. His praises were sung by people like Jamie Doran, CEO of Innovation Guelph, who called Howard “a leader among leaders in the Guelph-Waterloo startup ecosystem.” Benton Leong, chair of the selection committee of the Golden Triangle Angel Network, said, “GTAN’s success over the last five years... is due in large part to Randall’s leadership and mentorship.”

But Randall Howard himself sees the Angel of the Year award as “a calling”. He thinks this kind of recognition is a spur toward doing even more to nurture Canada’s angel investment environment. “I see it as a bit of a calling, to be an ambassador”.

And when you sit down to talk with Howard, you don’t hear much about the award. You do hear a great deal about what needs to happen in Canada to keep this country competitive on the global start-up scene.

Randall Howard has been an entrepreneur and investor for a long time. He’s a youngish and energetic 60-year-old, always on the look-out for the next opportunity. When he finds it, he subjects it to relentless scrutiny, tough due diligence – and then he’s likely to invest in it. And an investment by Howard and his colleagues at Verdexus means more than money – these are self-confessed “hands-on” investors, who get involved in the projects they are supporting. Howard, a University of Waterloo grad (computer science and math), says he got his initiation into all things entrepreneurial when he moved to the United States in 1980, to get involved in a software start-up known as Coherent. He learned everything he could in the US environment, and then returned to Canada in 1984, to found MKS, one of Canada’s leading enterprise software vendors. He led MKS’s growth to \$50 million in revenue, with 400 employees world-wide. He told Exchange that some of the most important parts of that growth were the seven acquisitions he carried out. MKS was sold in 2001, for \$304 million.

That successful venture launched Howard into his current role as investor and philanthropist. He’s founding General Partner of Verdexus, which has a global portfolio of business-to-business “Enterprise 2.0” companies. He’s also an important player in many other organizations, including the local Golden Triangle Angel Network. He’s on the Wireless Advisory Panel at MaRS and on the Dean’s Advisory Council for Laurier Business. He is involved in Innovation Guelph, Board Chair of Centre Wellington Community Foundation, Director and Treasurer of Rose-neath Theatre, and Co-founder/Director of the Elora Environment Centre. In late

2013 Howard was invited to the “Group of Seven” by Governor General David Johnston to assist in nation building around Canada’s 150th birthday in 2017.

Howard has business interests around the world, but he is passionate about promoting his home community, and his country. That’s what drives his work in GTAN and NACO – efforts he describes as “95 per cent philanthropic” although there are investments involved, as well. He says that encouraging the Canadian business ecosystem was his goal from the moment he left MKS, in 2001. He talks about the importance of “scalable” Canadian businesses – enterprises with potential for significant growth. He was determined to work with a group of businesses with potential; that led to the founding of Verdexus, and also to his commitment to GTAN.

At the time he launched Verdexus, venture capital in Canada “was really a young industry,” Canada, he says, was well behind the United States. It was not an entirely smooth road, even for his own venture. The years 2001 and 2002 were a challenging time to raise an investment fund, so “we got hands on”. Instead of simply investing funds, Howard and his partners also invested brain power, expertise and effort in the companies in which they gained interests.

In 2009, Howard brought that same expertise and effort to a new organization, the Golden Triangle Angel Network. The economic downturn of 2008-2009 had dried up access to investment capital. Howard and a group of enthusiastic and astute colleagues believed that a network of angel investors could help to fill that investment gap. That doesn’t mean they were going to distribute money willy-nilly. Howard told Exchange that he is known for “tough love” – due diligence is vital to investment success. He was determined to apply that principle to the newly founded GTAN, where he recruited and headed the selection group – the committee that chose start-ups who got a chance to pitch to potential investors.

“The companies you put in front of your members is critical,” he says, if the organization is to be effective and successful. “We did not let a company get in front of GTAN until it was ready.” He’s proud of the success of GTAN – a key reason for his national award – but he’s also quick to share the credit. “Everything that’s good,” he says, “is because of great people.” There is no question that GTAN is good. Five years later, the organization has inspired 50 investment transactions involving more than 40 companies. Approximately \$42 million has been invested in that time – money that promising start-ups would probably not have accessed otherwise, which can doom a fledgling company.

Howard agrees. “What I recognized as Verdexus was, if GTAN and other angel networks didn’t exist, those companies, innovative companies creating the best and brightest jobs for the future just wouldn’t be there.” That, by the way, is how Howard talks, and he’s entirely sincere – he is truly an entrepreneurial optimist, a man who



## THE SCIENCE OF HAPPY

Jennifer and Jim Moss, co-founders of KW's Plasticity Labs, are openly happy. Jim says, "Our mission statement is, to help a billion people to be able to improve their own happiness." Jim continues, "We don't make people happier. We're using the science, psychology and research to show people the habits that tend to lead people toward happier existence."

And happier people are happier employees. And happier employees, it turns out, make for happier companies, higher employee retention, more satisfied customers, and better bottom lines. All of a sudden, this happiness thing may seem a heck of a lot more interesting.

The founders admit that the seeds of their company – which has just attracted a \$1.9 million investment by Fibernetics Ventures – were planted in 2009 when Jim – a former professional athlete (lacrosse and hockey) – was stricken with a debilitating neural-muscular disease. He personally applied lessons learned from sports psychology and from his university studies in philosophy, striving to bring a positive attitude and a focus on healing to the process. He discovered that his optimistic outlook led to unexpected outcomes – physiotherapists would volunteer to spend extra time with him, for example.

But while Jim and Jennifer were convinced of the personal value of fostering happiness, they didn't rely on this when they launched Plasticity Labs. Their staff includes seven researchers (PhDs and PhD candidates) from Wilfrid Laurier, as well as top-level international software developers.

Plasticity's solution gauges employee happiness; it discovers factors that would heighten happiness; and it teaches employees "the psychological traits of flourishing to create highly engaged corporate cultures." In more academically-oriented language, "A fun, social collaboration environment with a singular focus on company culture also measures social/emotional-intelligence to guide predictive psychological fitness training."

This is all done on a mobile and web platform that resembles popular social media platforms like Facebook. Jim says, "In the platform are activities and surveys, learning about the things that are highly coordinated to happiness and performance."

believes business success is a key to being able to make the world a better place, in every way. He argues that angel investors are important to Canada. "To stay in the game, we need to help out start-ups." And while he believes that this country is still well behind the US, he thinks Canada has made significant strides, and in fact, is several years ahead of the investment picture in Europe, where Verdexus also has investment interests.

Howard has words of praise for NACO, the organization that has honoured him as Angel of the Year. He says that "in the last five years, they've really been the ones to push the angel investment movement, Canada-wide." To add some perspective, though, Howard says that last year, angel investment in the United States totaled \$25 billion. In Canada, investments directly tracked by NACO totaled \$90 million – which does represent a 120% over the previous year. Howard suspects that there is plenty of angel investment not identified by NACO; he suggests the Canadian total is between \$300 million and \$500 million – still well behind US numbers, even on a proportionate basis. Overall, he argues, "we need to grow five to 10 times in the level of angel investment in the next years to reach parity with the US." He believes we are at a critical juncture for angel investment in Canada. He thinks we need more "serial entrepreneurs", pointing to some American investors who have made a positive difference in a series of companies, sometimes numbering in the hundreds.

Verdexus has followed that model in a more modest way – Howard has been involved in 30 to 40 companies, with a current portfolio including about a dozen. It won't get much larger than that, he says, because of the commitment to "hands-on" investment.

Howard is a fan of start-ups – but not of start-ups that continue to be small, boutique companies. "We're looking for companies that are going to scale into real businesses," he says. "We need more companies to get big." He's also a fan of angel investors. "There's a culture in the angel world. Everyone is there because of passion, a feeling that you're doing good... People who do make wealth have a responsibility to give back." But this is not a purely 'Kumbaya' moment as he quickly adds, "at the same time, everybody knows good investments and due diligence build better companies." – Paul Knowles



Jennifer and Jim Moss

Their platform is a response to the natural human tendency to good intentions. It includes, says Jim, "Activities to help improve happiness. Really, really simple stuff. How to be more grateful. How to use empathy. But as simple as these are, building the habit of doing them all the time is the hard part. We've all read self-help things, listened to a Ted Talk, and "Man, yes I should do that," but when we go away to do it, it's hard to build a habit. So the software is designed to help people build a habit of being more positive and learning specifically these traits that help people be more positive."

That's what's in it for the employee. Jennifer points out that there are "great gains" for employers who sign on with Plasticity Labs. "Employers want their people to be happier, and workplaces have the ability to build policies to support that."

The founders are happy to be working in a continually changing environment. Clients are already benefiting from Plasticity's platform – they are working with 12 companies, some multi-nationals, and have three more about to launch. But they are not resting on their laurels – their researchers are fine-tuning the platform, and continually developing improvements.

The more employees they interact with, the stronger their data base becomes. Jim calls it "crowd-sourcing our information." The Mosses point to demographic similarities that are emerging – commonalities among boomers (who are eagerly adopting the platform, by the way) and other groups, including the 20-something Millennials. Jennifer suggests that their findings can help employers retain young employees – or, to at least ensure they eventually leave happy, to explore other opportunities.

Jim points to companies that spend enormous efforts to measure the satisfaction of customers, but ignore the sentiments of their front-line people – the very employees interacting with those customers. This, he says, is something "they should be measuring every day. You can't impact customer satisfaction unless you understand employee sentiment."

A conversation with the Mosses produces intriguing combinations of vocabulary. For instance: "We're looking at the science... how do you improve the employees' side? It can be as simple as gratitude. If they are more grateful for their job, it is immediately felt, like a 95 percent correlation with customers."

Do employees care about on-the-job happiness? Jennifer underlines the importance: "This is mission critical."

They point to a client who had two employees who had given their notice. When it was announced that they were going to use Plasticity Labs' product to improve employee happiness, the two employees withdrew their resignations, simply on the basis that the company had expressed interest in their happiness. Jim says, "These employees who had actually quit, came back and said, 'We think we've made a mistake. If you're going to make this a kind of focus, let's give it another chance.'"

They stayed. Unexpectedly, another employee announced, "This isn't for me. I'm going to leave. That's actually a win, too. What's worse than somebody checking out and leaving is if they check out and stay."

Bottom line? After the Plasticity platform was in operation, the company recorded four consecutive record month-over-month sales increases, and four consecutive months of lowest technical issues.

Something to be happy about.





From left, Mike Farwell, Amanda Dennison, Debora Lynne Ritchie, John Panabaker, Kelly Lovell, Chair of KWCF David Brenneman, Governor General David Johnston, Sharon Johnston, Gezahn Wordofa, Roger Farwell, Zigmund Misiak, Susan Dalrymple, Rosemary Smith, Tim Jackson, Jim Erb, and Al Green. Photo courtesy Office of the Governor General



Governor General of Canada David Johnston



Rosemary Smith, Executive Director, KWCF

## NEW GRANTS STRUCTURE FOR KWCF; VOLUNTEERS HONOURED FOR CARING

With an impressive assist from Governor General David Johnston, the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation unveiled a new grants program, celebrating the organization's 30th anniversary.

The "Smart & Caring Grants Program" covers three areas, entitled "Vital Grants", "Community Grants" and – picking up on Johnston's phraseology from a few years ago – "Barnraising Grants".

KWCF CEO Rosemary Smith credited the Governor General with inspiring community foundations, nation-wide, when she told the audience at the anniversary celebration, "The Smart & Caring Grants Program is The KWCF's response to the challenge made by the Governor General of Canada to Community Foundations across the nation. He challenged us to envision 'a smart and caring nation where all Canadians can succeed, contribute, and develop their talents to their fullest potential.' Since we live in a community that encompasses many different smaller communities, it was important to our foundation to include them in our planning."

Smith said that the new approach will be rolled out over the next two years.

"Vital Grants" will be "larger, two-year grants" with the specific goal of tackling the single most important issue facing the Region, as identified by the Waterloo Region's annual Vital Signs program, along with community consultations.

"Community Grants" will continue the work of the foundation's Community Fund.

"Barnraising Grants," said Smith, "will focus on more entrepreneurial, capacity building projects and programs."

Also at the event, Governor General Johnston presented a Governor General's Caring Canadian Award to 13 people from southwestern Ontario, honouring their volunteer contributions to the local community. Recipients included Susan Dalrym-

ple of Midland, Amanda Dennison of Kitchener, Jim Erb of Waterloo, Mike Farwell of Kitchener, Roger Farwell of Waterloo, Tim Jackson of Waterloo, Al Green of London, Kelly Lovell of Waterloo, Zigmund Misiak of Brantford, John Panabaker of Waterloo, Debora Lynne Ritchie of Waterloo, Rosemary Smith of Waterloo, and Gezahn Wordofa of Stratford.

## SELF-COMPASSION KEY TO POSITIVE BODY IMAGE AND COPING

Women who accept and tolerate their imperfections appear to have a more positive body image despite their body mass index (BMI) and are better able to handle personal disappointments and setbacks in their daily lives.

Research out of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Waterloo found that this self-compassion might be an important means to increase positive body image and protect girls and young women against unhealthy weight-control practices and eating disorders.

"Women may experience a more positive body image and better eating habits if they approach disappointments and distress with kindness and the recognition that these struggles are a normal part of life," said Professor Allison Kelly of the Department of Psychology at Waterloo, and the study's lead author. "How we treat ourselves during difficult times that may seem unrelated to our bodies and eating seems to have a bearing on how we feel about our bodies and our relationship with food."

This study adds to the growing body of literature suggesting that self-compassion





Ann Bilodeau, Executive Director, KW Habilitation

## NEW FACILITIES REPRESENT NEW VISION FOR KW HABILITATION

KW Habilitation has opened its new, \$5.4 million facility at 99 Ottawa Street South in Kitchener. It's a superb new home for the agency – but according to executive director Ann Bilodeau, the building is one of part of the story.

Bilodeau told Exchange, “We want it vibrant. We want our brand to be out in the community so people recognize it, know who we are and build trust with us, because we plan on being around for a while.”

KW Habilitation is a not-for-profit organization that exists to provide services and supports to children and adults with developmental disabilities. The agency has been around a long time, but folks who knew it in the beginning might have a tough time recognizing KW Habilitation these days.

Bilodeau says, “We have a long history in our community. We started in the early 70s, very much as a traditional factory environment where the adults we supported came to what was then called a sheltered workshop.”

Today everything has changed. “We have moved from that environment. With technology, with us really supporting people getting paid jobs in the community, the time of the sheltered workshop is no longer.”

That building is finally gone, replaced by a new facility nearby on the same 1.3 acre site. KW Habilitation celebrated the grand opening of their new home in September.

The exact location of the old building will not remain vacant, however – Bilodeau

says, “We are putting up a 22-unit affordable housing project – a very different, creative, intentional community.”

The new home of KW Habilitation reflects the modern vision for the organization, which according to its website, has over 500 employees, and provides services to more than 1,000 individuals and their families.

Bilodeau says the new facility is designed to be “a hub” for the services provided by her organization. “The intent here is to build on good citizenship, having people connect in their community.”

She adds, “Community engagement goes both ways. People can come in, and we can go out. You can do three or four different activities out in the community – we have rock climbing up the road, we do Zumba class up the road.”

The new ION Light Rail Transit will be located nearby; that's one of the reasons KW Habilitation stayed on the same property. Not relocating also saved a lot of money, and maintained their long-term public visibility. Says the executive director, “We could not have asked for a better place. We've been here for more than 40 years, people know where we are.”

Looking around the area, Bilodeau adds, “Does this neighbourhood need to be revitalized? Absolutely, and we think we've done our part. Our brand involves inspiring abilities and enriching lives. ‘Habilitation’ means good life. That's what this is all about.”



Allison Kelly

sion might offer unique benefits that self-esteem does not. Self-esteem comes from evaluating oneself as above average, and so may be limited in helping in-

dividuals cope with perceived shortcomings.

“Regardless of their weight, women with higher self-compassion have better body image and fewer concerns about weight, body shape or eating,” said Professor Kelly. “There is something about a high level of acceptance and understanding of oneself that helps people not necessarily view their bodies more positively, but rather acknowledge their bodies’ imperfections and be okay with them.”

The research results suggest that eating disorder prevention and health promotion that focus on increasing young women’s self-compassion may be an important way to foster healthier weight management across the BMI spectrum.

This study gathered data from 153 female undergraduate students and used BMI calculations based on each participant’s self-reported height and weight. The research team administered a series of questionnaires assessing levels of self-compassion, self-esteem, body image, and eating behaviours.

The study appears in the September 2014 issue of the journal *Body Image*. Funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council supported the research.



## WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR PITCH ATTRACTS 96 APPLICATIONS FOR \$15,000 PRIZE

A marker that is applied to sunbathers' skin and changes colour when you need more sunscreen won first prize of \$15,000 in the pitch competition for the Women Entrepreneurs Bootcamp in the Communitech Hub. The startup, called SunCayr, is made up of University of Waterloo Nanotechnology students who will graduate in 2015. The company, founded by CEO Rachel Pautler, Hayden Soboleski and Chad Sweeting, will use the money to further develop the life science technology that uses light-sensitive markers to draw on your body after sunscreen is applied. The SunCayr marker changes colour when it is time to reapply your sunscreen.

Second place went to Beth Nenniger, from Waterloo, a graduate of School of Architecture and entrepreneur on Drafting Space. Beth took home \$7000 for her design software that helps homeowners organize bathrooms and kitchens to code. Third place went to Cat Coode also from Waterloo; her start-up Binary Tattoo is a computer software program that helps parents remove embarrassing photos posted on social media sites. Honorable mention went to Pharmacist Soha Ahrari of Cambridge. Her company, FocusOnCare is a information based content providing site designed to educate patients about the intricacies between medication and additional treatment.

All together 25 aspiring entrepreneurs participated in the event hosted by Communitech and Google for Entrepreneurs #40Forward. The two-part bootcamp helps female founders home in on validating and efficiently raising their business ideas. To qualify, attendees were required to demonstrate a technology-based product idea in hardware or software (with potential for IP ownership), have received less than \$100K in funding, and have a female founding team member.

The event was put together by summer student Danielle Graham and Talent Pro-

gram Manager of Communitech Alayne Hynes as part of a women in tech initiative. This provided the opportunity to work with Google entrepreneurs and have them provide some funding for an initiative called Closing The Gap. This program deals with gender diversity, and the two were fortunate enough to have their proposal accepted, allowing them to expand their work in the women and tech space.

Communitech receives some money through Status of Women Canada, which allows them to run a pilot program in areas such as women in tech, peer to peer group, networking events, mentorship program, skills development workshops.

Danielle Graham was hired for the summer specifically for the program which attracted participants from Waterloo region, the GTA, Halifax, St. Catharines, with even one participant from London England. "Danielle did a great job helping us increase the participation of women entrepreneurs in this sector," said Hynes.

A recent graduate from her MBA program, Graham was proud to be able to align her interest in terms of supporting women in this community and making sure they are getting the same benefits out of Communitech that so many men seem confident enough to come in and do.

Danielle told Exchange that "it's not your average pitch competition, because it follows six days on intensive workshops. So at the end of this they've gone through so much mentorship, many times practicing their pitch, that there really at a stage we're they feel confident and they have taken this seriously enough to put their best forward".

The program garnered 96 applications from 71 companies; they accepted 25 applicants from 22 companies.



Danielle Graham Deloitte and Alayne Hynes, Communitech



Rachel Pautler CEO, SunCayr

## CAMBRIDGE HYDRO PARTNERS WITH SUN COUNTRY HIGHWAY

Electric vehicle owners will find it easier to charge up in Waterloo Region, since Cambridge and North Dumfries Hydro has partnered with Sun Country Highway Ltd. to open two more electric vehicle charging stations in Cambridge. And for a limited time, the charge is on the house – the utility will provide the power boost for free.

The partnership was celebrated at an event in September, where Cambridge Hydro CEO Ian Miles told Exchange, "As a utility, this is a perfect product for us. It helps us sell more electricity, it's also about awareness building and getting the confidence up there, and it's also good for the environment, which is one of our strategic values as well. It reduces greenhouse gasses immensely."

Also on hand was Christopher Misch, Vice President of Sun Country Highway, who said that the Cambridge charging stations are "ahead of the curve". Electric vehicle use is growing in North America, but could still be described as being in the early adoptions stage. He said, "There are pockets within Canada – Quebec, British Columbia, southern Ontario, where EV adoption is going up."

In all, there are about a dozen charging stations – owned by different companies – throughout Waterloo Region. However, Mike Knox of Cambridge Hydro – himself a Tesla EV owner for the past 18 months – says that EV owners think differently about fueling their cars.

It's different, he says, from "a gasoline car mentality, where you fill it up, drive until it's empty, take it to a place and fill it up again. You don't treat an electric vehicle like that. You charge it at home, you top it up every night, you start each day with more than enough to take you through the day, you come home, you plug it back in again, and you're ready to go the next day. It's a different mindset." Knox has a 240-volt plug in his garage, where he tops up his EV every night.

Knox says his vehicle has a range of about 400 kilometers on a charge (which



Ian Miles, President and CEO CNDH, Michael Knox CNDH and Christopher Misch, Sun Country Highways

may drop by no more than 20% in the harshest days of winter). He's never run out of charge. He has also driven to Chicago, using supercharging stations along the route that re-charge the car in the time it takes to have a coffee.

He adds, "There are web apps for your smart phone that help you locate charging stations."

Sun Country Highway is on a public relations campaign, which includes creating "The World's Longest Green Highway" – from St. John's Newfoundland to Victoria – and participating in The Amazing E-Race. Misch is quick to point out that Suncor, well rooted in the oil industry, is one of their E-Race sponsors. "That seems like a contradiction but the reality is, by 2070, we're not going to be able to sustain ourselves on the traditional forms of energy. Diversification is really the key."

He told Exchange, "Our primary business is really about early adoption and electrifying the transportation section... We're a growing concern, seeking out progressive-minded businesses like Cambridge and North Dumfries Hydro."



## SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTRE NEEDS FUNDING FOR SUPERB PROGRAMS

For the staff and volunteers at the Sexual Support Centre of Waterloo Region, the objective is really two-fold. They're there to provide support to the survivors of sexual violence. And, they're there to transform the community, to stop sexual violence before it takes place.

Sara Casselman is the Public Relations and Operations Manager at the Sexual Support Centre. She told Exchange that it was the first part of that mandate that initially drew her to volunteer at the centre. But she has become passionate about being proactive, working to stop sexual violence.

The Sexual Support Centre commemorated its 25th anniversary in October, with a Gala fundraising event. Casselman has been with the organization for about half that time. In 2002, as a grad from Laurier, she signed on as a volunteer at the Centre. "I had read about an opportunity on the crisis line. I had studied psychology and women's studies, so this was right up my alley. So I came to volunteer training, and within the first session I realized I had found my niche in life. Shortly after that, I worked at Guelph in the women's shelter. This is what I wanted to do with my life."

She continued to volunteer, and when a staff position opened up at the Waterloo Region Centre, nine years ago, Sara came on board.

She says, "It's really special to actually do something you're passionate about. At first, I was drawn to supporting women directly through the crisis line, but as I've grown, the thing that really drives me now is the social action piece, being part of change, so that we don't have waiting lists for our counseling services, which is the way it has been for many years."

An important part of bringing about change is having the resources to do it. The Sexual Assault Centre needs funds to be able to shorten its waiting lists, and to grow its programs. Funds raised at the 25th anniversary gala were directed to the counseling program. Says Casselman, "In a year, we probably serve just over 200 individual people in individual counseling. There is no fee. Our waiting lists have fluctuated between three and six months in recent years. One of the things we're trying to do is, we want to do some fundraising, because we are using that money directly into our counseling program."

When the Centre began, it was a completely volunteer effort organized by a group of women, to offer a crisis phone line. Today, the Centre has a 24-hour support line, individual and group counseling for female survivors of sexual violence, individual counseling for male survivors, a family court support program (there is a Sexual Support Centre office in the regional court room), accompaniment for survivors in visits to police, hospital, or court, and a public education program that includes the unique Male Allies Against Sexual Violence (MAASV) program.

The Centre has three sites (the main Kitchener office, a satellite office in Cambridge, and the courthouse office), nine staff persons and 100 volunteers. In addition to their in-office responsibilities, staff members made 133 presentations to community groups, last year!

The Centre provides support to adults, aged 16 and over, who have experienced sexual violence at any point in their lives. The majority are women – statistics suggest between 82% and 86% of survivors are female – but as of 2011, there is also counseling offered for male victims. Casselman is quick to point out that the Centre is entirely inclusive – their literature includes Pride and transgender symbols to demonstrate that every survivor of sexual violence is welcome to come to the Centre for support.

Casselman and her colleagues talk enthusiastically about efforts to reduce the level of sexual violence – but they know they are no where near that target, yet. Police records reveal about 500 reported cases of sexual violence annually in Waterloo Region – but Casselman says that studies show only 10% of cases are ever



Team members at the Sexual Support Centre of Waterloo Region include, from left, Jennifer Andrews, Heidi Wheeler, Sandi Sherk, Sara Casselman, and Tamara Will.

reported to the police. That means there are about 5,000 cases of sexual violence every year, in this region.

The Centre is an active participant in community education, and wants to be even more involved in that kind of proactive outreach.

Casselman points to one great need in community perception: "The amount of shame and blame that our society puts on survivors, even children, is horrendous. That's one of the number one myths that we address with our public education/social action, is around busting those myths that has to do with victim blaming."

In fact, a campaign created by the Waterloo Centre has gone national – #noneaskedforit – on the first Friday in May (sexual assault awareness month). Says Casselman, "People wear purple on that day, and spread the word that blaming the victim is wrong. We always hear, 'the way she was dressed', 'too much make-up', or 'she was drinking' – they question the behavior of sexual assault survivors, and as soon as that comes into the conversation, you're somehow saying that the person brought it on themselves. That is a horrible thing. We don't say that about other crimes. What we try to do is put 100% of the responsibility for sexual violence on those who are perpetrating the crimes, and also on a culture that in some ways promotes sexual violence."

One program unique to Waterloo Region, founded in 2008 and already a success, holds great promise, says Casselman. "We have a really great program... our male allies against sexual violence program (MAASV). A unique component of our public education is engaging men as allies and leaders in the work to end sexual violence. We work with children, and we talk about concepts like healthy masculinity and relationships, and we also do a train the trainer where we work with men who are leaders in the community – teachers, coaches, faith leaders – and we train them how to work with boys around developing positive masculinity, in terms of trying to create future change."

She says, "We're hoping to be able to expand this. The community loves this program because they see the need for it. We're looking for funders."

MAASV is one part of the bigger community objective of the Centre. "We're proactive – we look at social action and social change, and how can we be part of a future that doesn't have sexual violence at the level that exists right now."

The key, at this point, is funding. Casselman is hopeful – she is in conversation with the Region and with United Way about providing funding – but individual and corporate donors will hold the key to providing and growing this essential community resource.

She says, "The need was there 25 years ago. The need is still there. Per capita funding is actually a little less than it was 25 years ago. We'd really like the community to respond."



# THE ATTRACTION OF HOT TUBS

## HEALTH BENEFITS ASIDE, HOT TUBS ARE GREAT FUN FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

"It's not your normal business mix," says Christian Ryan. He's commenting on his own reaction when he first got into marketing and distributing hot tubs. "I was hesitant – it was so different from what I was doing."

But Ryan, President and owner of Premium Wholesale, the proprietor of a mattress, bedroom and dining furniture business, "took the plunge". Twelve years later, he says "It's a lot of fun".

"Most of the fun" says Ryan... "Ok, all of the fun" ... comes from working his customers. It originates directly from their reason for looking for a hot tub in the first place. "When people purchase their hot tub, they're thinking about being with family, spending time with friends, and entertaining – having that oasis at home in the backyard. That's fun!"

Ryan launched the factory-direct business in 1996, when he and two friends he met working at a marketing company started to sell mattresses out of a storage unit. The business model was simple "go-direct", they had low overhead and could move

product quickly. By keeping the price down, they moved high volume. It was a business model that worked. Eventually, they found a more permanent space, and Ryan soon added bedroom furnishings, dining furniture and billiards.

In 2002 Ryan started selling hot tubs, using the same marketing model that worked so successfully with his other products – advertising in classified ads. As a result, "hot tub sales picked up very quickly."

Twelve years later, and after two moves – the most recent in August 2014 – hot tubs and the new Michael Phelps Swim Spas make up 90% of their business.

Working with his younger brother, while a third helps with sales, the business now operates at two locations. Their newest showroom, which also serves as their distribution facility, is located on 17 Manitou Dr., Kitchener. The second store is located on 6435 Dixie Rd in Mississauga. From those two locations, Ryan serves dealers not only in the South-western Ontario corridor, but coast to coast.

The new location, at the corner of Manitou and Fairway Road, is a definite adaptation to the times. They were located in an industrial park, and that worked well when they were getting a lot of business through classified and newspaper ads. But "that sort of thing has gone as times have changed," says Ryan. "We needed a facility that was more of a retail type location, with traffic out front." Ryan purchased the building and enjoys the additional space. In acquiring the building, Ryan is solidifying his commitment to future business, and to long term customers. "We'll be here for the long term," adds Ryan.

Premium Wholesale Home and Leisure focuses on recreation and outdoor living. "By offering quality products that are going to last, we try to offer customers a better price." They do this by negotiating terms directly with manufacturers while keeping their overhead low, a lesson learned from their early days marketing mattresses out of a storage unit.

Despite the recession of 2008, Ryan's hot tub business has prospered. Aside from the social attractions, there are the health benefits that come with relaxing in hot water and adopting hydrotherapy. "If you look back to early cultures," says Ryan, "there were hot springs that only kings, queens and the wealthy had access too. In today's time, we're pretty blessed to have a product that we can put in our own backyard and recreate that royal experience."

Many studies show that hot water therapy is great for your health. Tricia Mangan, a medical Journalist who writes for LiveStrong, highlights some of those qualities: "The heat, buoyancy and massage elements of a hot tub can provide a number of health benefits. People with nagging aches or pains, stiff muscles, circulation problems, headaches, sleep disturbances and chronic medical conditions like diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and arthritis may alleviate their symptoms and stimulate healing with hot tub therapy." Ryan couldn't agree more. "If you look at what athletes do after games, they're in hot water whirlpools. It obviously helps with stress, helps blood circulation, muscle recovery and does all sorts of beneficial things."

Premier Wholesale Home & Leisure CEO Christian Ryan



Changes in the way hot tubs have been designed have also advanced health benefits over the last decade. "Some of the higher end spas have really moved towards targeting therapy jets, by having different jets for different functions, so that they create different effects – if you had a sore lower back, or shoulder, you've got seats with neck and shoulder massage. There is even a bio-magnetic therapy seat that they now offer, utilizing the earth's magnetics. Studies show this to be a simple way that works the metals in the blood, and helps circulation and recovery."

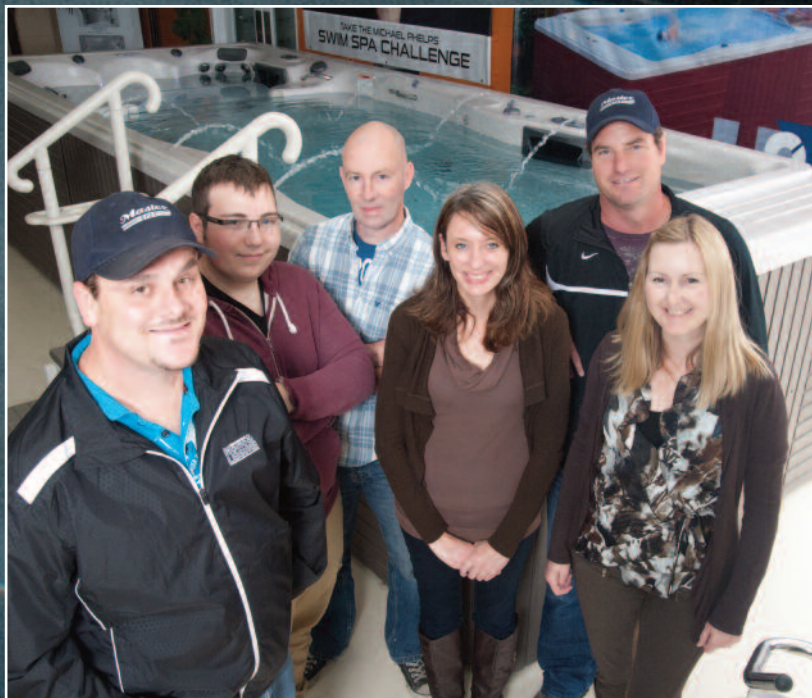
"North Americans are some of the hardest working people in the world," says Ryan. "Everyone is trying to provide for their families and raise their standard of living. We all deserve it and need it. At the end of the day what people need is to de-stress and work out the knots."

Ryan carries one spa line that is specifically designed for the North American lifestyle. It's a Master Spa and suitably called Healthy Living. The manufacturer redesigned the spa in 2013 and has modified the jetting to provide more hydrotherapy, with less irritation. "What Master Spa did with their Healthy Living Spa is, they provided more volume of water with less pressure, through larger nozzle jets, larger plumbing, bigger pumps that provide more flow and doesn't target to one pin-prick area. These jets pulsate, and spin. They're Swedish massage type jets of various sizes. The foot jets are especially nice as they're based on hitting the reflexology points found in the foot."

Advanced design improves the outcome of the spa experience and that's driving repeat sales. "We're seeing more and more spas that are been upgraded and traded in. Some of those spas have reached their life span; in other cases, the owners want more accessories." Science has not only changed the way the hydrotherapy is being applied, but also the materials used to manufacture the hardware. Today, most spas have lifetime warranties. People are liking the difference in innovation. "The tubs are just so much more energy efficient, they use better insulation that doesn't take on water, they've come down in price, the covers are better. There are just so many things now, as far as adding music, relaxing, and get you into that certain state of mind. They have iPad stands that suction cup to the side of the tub, with Bluetooth, so you can watch movies and your TV right there."

As a added bonus, Premium Wholesale Home and Leisure has a great relationship with their suppliers. When Master Spa first came to Canada, they didn't have many dealers, "so we were able to essentially work with them and become their wholesaler in Canada." Having the additional distribution channels creates a benefit for customers. As the second largest dealer in North America, "we have the largest volume and lowest price points."

Ryan puts on a lot of shows. "We have dealers that we've set up over the years, out on the east and west coasts, so we



*Premier Wholesale Home & Leisure staff pose in front of the innovative swim spa (l-r) Dan Weier, Conner Ormie, Steve Harrickey, Amanda Campbell, Christian Ryan and Cheryl Phillips*

pretty much have all of Canada." Part of their growth plan is to build their dealer network. "Some of the dealers were established and we brought them over to our brand, and others were entrepreneurs who left a full time job to do this full time. They're all enjoying this business and the growth and improvements in the industry."

One of the bigger game changers is the adoption of the swim spas. "More and more people are starting to realize they exist," says Ryan. They are an all-season pool that you can use all year long. Like a hot tub, they have a hard cover, and separate hot tub and swimming area built in. "It's great because, talking about health and wellness, water is such a great way to exercise, you're buoyant, there is less effect of gravity on your bones and joints. For a lot of people as we get older, that's a huge thing, so you've got low impact, aerobics, and all kinds of things you can do in it. In Canada, especially with the short swim season, it's something you can extend or use it all year round."

Water therapy is a new solution for so many age groups. "Boomers see the benefit of staying healthy and keeping in shape, and the swim spa is a great option. They have rowing gear, underwater bike, underwater treadmill, and obviously swimming is such a great exercise on its own."

Ryan's new location is designed to continue a way of business that has worked well for 18 years. The brothers will continue to offer customers a better experience and better customer service. "We have more space to display new products, we're looking at saunas, and looking at adding fibreglass pools. During the winter months we do a lot of research at trade shows." In the end they want to make sure that if they bring a product in, they will be able to offer it at the right price and provide the right quality that customers have come to expect. For Ryan, that's all part of the fun.



# THE HEART OF THE CITY

## THE REVITALIZATION OF THE SHOPS OF WATERLOO TOWN SQUARE

Jay and Jolanta Konduros knew they had found the answer to their challenge, the moment they walked into the rejuvenated “The Shops” complex at Uptown Waterloo Town Square. The couple were seeking a second site for their successful Nougat Bakery, and Jay says, “When we saw this place, we thought, ‘what a perfect location!’”

Nougat moved in, early in September – just one of five new business neighbours at “The Shops”, which is now home to 42 thriving businesses. Jay was immediately impressed with “the friendly welcome”, as well with the new look and feel of the shopping centre that occupies “the heart” of Uptown Waterloo.

“The Shops” have undergone a complete revitalization since two businessmen acquired the complex in a blockbuster deal in mid-2013. Now owned by local real estate developer Heri Polzl, of Primus PM, and partner Peter Czapka, of Tricap Properties, the retail outlets and offices that occupy the three addresses that make up Waterloo Town Square have a new look – and a new attitude.

Primus has brought in noted Toronto designer Jessica Cotton to regenerate the look of “The Shops” with a new colour palette, dramatic gardens and floral planters, and other striking new features.

Waterloo Town Square has been called “the true heart of the city,” covering 6.23 acres, with 240,200 square feet of retail and commercial space, home to 42 local businesses, including five new tenants – Carl’s Jr., Rogers, Quick Sandwiches, Vape for Life, and Nougat.

Long-time occupants of the burgeoning urban centre include a grocery store, a pharmacy, restaurants and food outlets, clothiers, specialty boutiques, financial institutions, personal care businesses, and more.

The Civic Square that sits in front of the main entrance is the main entertainment and special event venue in the city, with year-round activities including a jazz festival, a comedy festival, Oktoberfest events, the Busker Carnival, and much

more. A Farmers’ Market is held in the square every Thursday afternoon. Twice weekly, year-round, people meeting at The Shops for 6km and 14km walks.

With the coming of the ION Light Rapid Transit service, Waterloo Town Square is due to become the most vibrant place in the region. Two ION stations will be located at “The Shops”, and the urban development sparked by the LRT, including the signature Barrel Yards, will see 1,500 new condominiums built in the immediate area. And for those who visit The Shops by car, there is plenty of free parking all around the complex.

Heri Polzl says with pride that Uptown Waterloo, always noted for its vibrancy, is bustling with more life than ever – and he predicts that the ION will deliver “a huge influx” of university students to the shops, restaurants and nightspots of Waterloo Town Square. Waterloo’s Universities are home to 50,000 students, and university students will be able to travel on ION with free passes.

Thousands of Waterloo region residents, students, and visitors have already discovered the attraction of “The Shops” of Waterloo Town Square. They come to shop for groceries at Bob’s Valumart – the only grocery store in the Uptown district. They enjoy the personal attention at businesses such as G&T Barber (serving faithful clientele since 1971!), Nail Care Salon, The Waters Spa, and Iris Optical.

Dining and relaxing with a beverage are huge at “The Shops”, with options ranging from Beertown to Zoup!, as well as Coras, Starbucks, Gourmet Pizza, Booster Juice, and Thai Sun.

“The Shops” have earned a reputation as a home for high-end fashion, with labels usually found only in Toronto; fashion lovers delight in shops like Channer’s, Sass, Erban Corner, David Findlay, Reitman’s, American Apparel, and Just For You Lingerie.

Shoppers will discover many wonderful surprises at “The Shops,” from flowers at Charmed Flowers and Gifts, to original art from UpTown Gallery, to snowboarding gear at Sanction. There are shops selling the staples of modern life – Wind Mobile, the LCBO, and Shoppers Drug Mart– and boutiques with unique inventories, such as Tadpole Children’s Shoppe, David’s Tea, The Embellished Room, and Write Impressions.

“The Shops” has also proven to be an attractive address for financial and accounting institutions – Scotiabank, RBC Dominion Securities, RBC Private Banking/Counsel, Pricewaterhousecoopers, KPMG, Knightsbridge, and Scotia Private Client Group.

Heri Polzl points out that, with careful attention to design elements and to the quality of businesses that call the com-





# The Shops

UPTOWN WATERLOO  
TOWN SQUARE

plex home, "The Shops" has maintained a sense of elegance to compliment the vitality inherent in the entire area. With its relaxed patios and seating areas, the square captures the sense of the finest European town squares – a place of exceptional ambience, ideal for shopping, dining, special events and meeting friends for coffee and conversation.

In other words, "the heart of the city".

With a total of 42 thriving businesses, "The Shops" have limited space still available for newcomers, but the owners are still able to welcome a few new retail neighbours offering new products and services in this vital, urban complex, set in the centre of the action of one of Ontario's most appealing cities.





Dave and Kim Neziol



# SEAMLESS TRANSITION

## Succession, expansion: The power of a respected brand

by Jon Rohr

Everyone remembers the infectious energy of John Carter, founder and president of HomeFit Exercise Equipment. From his Kitchener downtown shop on Queen St., to his “got to get everything in this 15 second commercial”, to his expanded showroom on Victoria St., Carter lived, breathed and worked fitness.

For 27 years, Carter ran one of the most respected independent fitness stores in North America. He never missed a Saturday, so when Carter died, his death sent a shock wave throughout the fitness industry. As an owner and entrepreneur, Carter was as committed to his customers as he was his employees.

Months before his passing, Carter made one last deal. It was a deal that, if it hadn't worked, would have ended his legacy in the fitness industry. This deal was designed to provide him comfort during his last days, so he would know with a degree of certainty that the legacy and brand he built would continue in perpetuity, under a trusted new, hand-picked owner.

New? Well, not exactly. Kim Neziol, Carter's protégé for 25 years, along with husband Dave Neziol, signed the legal papers making them the new owners of John Carter's legacy on January 1, 2012. This was five months prior to the May 18, 2012 death of the 60 year old entrepreneur, after a long battle with prostate cancer.

Kim Neziol had started working alongside Carter at HomeFit in 1989 as his protégé and confidant. She knew the company intimately; no one doubted that she could and would make it work. “The big thing with John,” says husband Dave, “was that Kim and John had a very close relationship, because they worked together for so long. John wanted Kim to take the business over, it was important for him that Kim take the business and continue on with it and make the changes that she wanted to make.” Even at the lawyers' meeting, Carter told Kim and Dave that he was glad the two of them were taking it over, “because they will make the changes he would never have made.” Kim feels

very lucky to be able to take over Carter's business: “John created a brand, an independent store, the only kind in Canada,” she states.

Carter built a wonderful foundation on which Kim and Dave could build. Leveraging the name HomeFit, The Neziols continued to focus on selling exercise equipment to home owners – but there were new markets developing, and they wanted a piece of the emerging opportunity.

Settling into her new role as owner, Neziol spent most of her time working in administration and “doing what owners do”. Dave, who had worked in the fitness industry on the manufacturing side for past 25 years, was committed to being a silent partner, “hands off”.

Kim, extremely familiar with the retail sales side at HomeFit, ramped up retail sales to the point where she needed to add another employee to her complement of

four. “Once things started to get busier, Dave started coming in on a part-time capacity, working on weekends and maybe some nights.”

The two were working hard. Dave, who still working full time outside the business, started to think about change. Earlier this year, Dave left his job and came in to work at HomeFit, full time, thus restoring the staffing levels to what they were when Carter was owner and Kim, with three other staff, was on the floor.

With the retail store smoothly operating, the Neziols decided it was a good time for expansion. Dave, who has 25 years of experience in the fitness industry, suggested he could leverage that experience, so the Neziols decided to develop the commercial side of the business, a division Dave would champion.

“One of our biggest challenges,” Dave states, was letting people know that they had a full line of commercial equipment available. “It's difficult to get that across when we're called HomeFit,” said Kim, “and we're certainly not going to change the name”.

HomeFit had always done a little bit of commercial sales,

John created a brand, an independent store, the only kind in Canada.



# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS THE NEW BLACK

The office of the future will be much more collaborative



Mayhew Kitchener Office

Innovation has always been fueled by organizations with engaged employees. But today, CEOs are recognizing that employee engagement is a fundamental, bottom-line issue, and that's because a clear and research-based correlation has been made between engagement



and performance. An 'office renaissance' is taking place that is bringing people together in collaborative workspaces and it's changing how people work. For 40 years Mayhew has created and designed innovative workspaces. It has an impressive track record

of experience and is at the forefront of the workplace revolution. In the Waterloo Region they have collaborated with key partners, from start-ups to blue chip companies including OpenText and BlackBerry.

Communitech, a not-for-profit organization that supports and mentors technology companies at every stage of their life cycles, has recently partnered with the Kitchener/Waterloo team at Mayhew. Iain Klugman, CEO and President of Communitech, knows about innovation and what it takes to get great ideas off the



ground. They have been helping technology companies get their start for years. "There is a growing realization that workspace can contribute positively or negatively to the success of an organization," says Klugman. "Mayhew's deep understanding of stimulating creativity and innovation in workspaces meets one of Communitech's main objectives." Mayhew's full suite of services includes initial design of the workspace that is aligned to the organization's objectives, unique culture and all the way through to installation and follow up.

The world has changed and people are recognizing those opportunities to have their office staff thinking every day as a team, fostering interaction and serendipity, and generating new ideas. From innovative shared spaces that boost morale and productivity, to high-tech engagement via flexible furniture, Mayhew's team of experts practice a future-forward technique that produces workspaces with value, flexibility, usefulness and appeal.

Innovation is a race that is ongoing and dynamic. Companies in the Waterloo Region need to perform on the cutting edge of innovation if they are to perform on the world stage. Mayhew is a design company that provides the tools to ride that edge.

Klugman says, "The reason Communitech works with Mayhew is not only the expertise they bring to the table, but their unique style, belief in what they do and their great team of professionals. They are absolutely delightful to deal with."

The "Office of the Future" will be much more collaborative and this has a lot to do with culture. No more entitlement – the big corner office is replaced with community as employees want to be near their colleagues, coworkers and friends, making it easy to engage them in their drive for innovation.



Employee engagement is critical to building a high performance team. Unless you have people who love what they are doing and are in the right environment to stimulate creativity and innovation, you are not going to have the break-throughs you need for success.

They believe that there are five workspace trends helping companies grow, prosper and succeed:

- 1) Real Estate Optimization;
- 2) Enhance Collaboration;
- 3) Attract, Develop and Engage;
- 4) Build Brand and Culture;
- 5) Promote Wellbeing at Work

**Take the Mayhew quiz to help evaluate your current workspace. Does your space...**

1. Provide an environment that stimulates the creative process?
2. Support rapid prototyping and learning?
3. Help distributed teams collaborate?
4. Provide for a contingent workforce?
5. Help leverage the complexity of work today?

Mayhew has been in the business of creating and designing workspaces for over four decades. They are winners of the 50 most engaged workplaces and best-managed companies in Canada.

For more information on Mayhew call 519-744-1228 or go to [mayhew.ca](http://mayhew.ca)



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[mayhew.ca](http://mayhew.ca)



"we just never promoted it. Now, we're promoting it". The first thing they did was to add the commercial sales information to their website; the second was to connect with Exchange Magazine.

"The Tricity area is virtually untouched," Dave says. Marketing is a challenge: "other than people who came to us and asked about commercial equipment, we didn't have the staff available to get out and tell commercial operators, 'Here we are'."

With all of the diversified development occurring within Waterloo Region – new hotels, retirement homes, condos, new schools, and corporate fitness centres – the Neziols believe "there is so much more to get".

Statistically, HomeFit does just under 5% of their business commercially. With their new plan, they aim to bring that up to 20% by this year end.

Increasing business fourfold is not an easy task. They plan to accomplish this, says Kim, by reaching out to past customers, development owners and operators, and "putting Dave on the phone". It's the right time for this, they believe: North American companies are beginning to embrace the promotion of health and wellness, otherwise known as Workplace Wellness, to lower their medical costs and absenteeism.

Workplace wellness is a growing corporate trend, says Kim, both with the young and with aging boomers. "It's not going away any time soon, and can make a difference between keeping or losing a employee."

Workplace wellness is defined as a workplace health promotion activity or organizational policy designed to support healthy behaviour in the workplace aimed to improve an individual's health outcomes. Participating companies could offer health education and coaching, medical screenings, weight management programs,

on-site fitness programs, smoking cessation counselling – the list goes on.

In many newer situations, programs are designed for the individual rather than a "one for all" approach. Corporations, small and large, are becoming so committed that they are granting

Statistically, HomeFit does just under 5% of their business commercially. With their new plan, they aim to bring that up to 20% by this year end.

employees flex time schedules based on that individual being enrolled in an exercise program.

According to the Mayo Clinic, exercising improves your mood when compared to those who don't exercise. They recommend that companies consider incorporating exercise into the workday, every day.

Dr. Carmella Sebastian, a US based wellness expert, says that "a well-

designed, well-run wellness programs pays off." In the February 2010 issue of Health Affairs, several wellness program studies were published, revealing that medical costs fell \$3.27 for every \$1 spent on wellness. Furthermore, absenteeism costs fell \$2.73 for every \$1 spent. That translates to a 6:1 ROI.

Sebastian further states that "although harder to quantify, but just as impactful, is the fact that your investment in your employees' well-being will jump-start their morale, loyalty, and engagement—all of which is good news for their productivity and your bottom line".

Companies of all sizes can play a big part in encouraging health and wellness in the workplace. "Companies are spending more time and effort looking into it. Whether it's the smallest thing or biggest thing – we can fulfil it," says Kim.

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Kim Neziol is one of only a few women owners in the fitness equipment business across North America.

Another way HomeFit “plans to expand” is to increase their product availability of commercial equipment. Having 27 years of industry relations helps. “We were fairly limited before, but we’ve secured a much better strength line that

Several wellness program studies were published, revealing that medical costs fell \$3.27 for every \$1 spent on wellness. Furthermore, absenteeism costs fell \$2.73 for every \$1 spent.

is considered commercial, we have much more access to commercial product than we had ... and we have Dave,” smiles Kim.

As to what equipment is in and what is out? “Everything is popular,” states Dave, “It used to be, 10 years ago, that you sold a treadmill, bike and elliptical, but now there are so many variations of just the strength category, there is cross fit strength, then there is the functional trainer strength and the traditional strength machines, and the palates, the benches and bars.” Kim says it mostly “depends upon the site, demographic dictates a lot when it comes to the selection of equipment. For instance a retirement home’s needs for strength equipment varies greatly from a

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high school's needs. Most of the time there is cardiovascular equipment" that gets the blood pumping and lungs working. "You can never go wrong with a treadmill. To this day, if you're going to have one piece, that is probably the one for in the home or commercial/corporate centre". The two agree that you can't really pinpoint what is popular, "because it depends on demographics, users and the space or area the equipment is going to be in."

They also agree that it's more important to start with something, and that doesn't have to be in a big huge room. "Getting started and knowing that we're here," says Kim, "knowing that the ROI is in getting employees healthy ... eventually employees will start to produce better."

Over the past 27 years, Kim has "seriously enjoyed the retail side of fitness." It's exciting. Since focusing on the commercial side, they've gotten some good deals right out of the gate, "it's nice to see the reward right away," grins Dave. "After all these years I still enjoy selling exercise equipment. I don't enjoy all the other stuff that goes along



Dave Neziol joined his wife and business partner to help with expansion into the commercial fitness equipment supply business.

with it," he glances over at Kim, "things that she does." Kim, who likes to be on the sales floor more, still enjoys selling, but alas there are only so many hours in the day, and far too many hats to wear.

HomeFit's staff has been together for a very long time. "We try to make it fun, for the customers and for us." She says, "if they want it, customers are going to get a lot of fit-

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ness education"

The husband and wife work well together. "It's good to have Dave here, because his industry knowledge makes him quite good on the sales floor, and that's a certain relief when I'm running the business from the back office."

HomeFit has always been a owner-operated business, and "owners always care a little bit more".

"Carter," says Dave, "never missed a Saturday" and long time customers enjoy the continuity of Kim taking over the business. "Kim's has been a familiar face for so long. She knows all of John's customers, when people

"It's one thing to have such a strong female on staff, one that knows fitness like Kim, but to have her as the owner, it's unheard of in the industry."

come in they're not shocked by a new owner who could have done things completely differently. There was a seamless transition when the company changed over from John to Kim, and the customers like that."

They also like the fact that there is a woman who is in charge. Currently about 60% of the equipment is bought for the home and for a female. Many times it is purchased by a female. "It's one thing to have such a strong female on staff, one that knows fitness like Kim, but to have her as the owner, it's unheard of in the industry," states Dave. He believes that having a female owner is "a real unique plus" for HomeFit. There are only two female owners of fitness equipment stores in Canada, and "quite possibly in North America" – Kim is one and the other in Sudbury, Ontario.

Dave continues, "Kim is great in dealing with the female customers. Not every male sales person is great



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HomeFit staff, from left, Jake Baleshta, Curtis Penner, Dave Neziol and Kim Neziol in front of a photo of founder John Carter.

dealing with a female coming through the door. Males don't work out the same way as a female. Some things a female will tell another female, well, they're not necessarily going to tell a

male".

Variety is the spice of life, and exercisers love new equipment. For the experts at HomeFit, innovative equipment design and embedded bluetooth

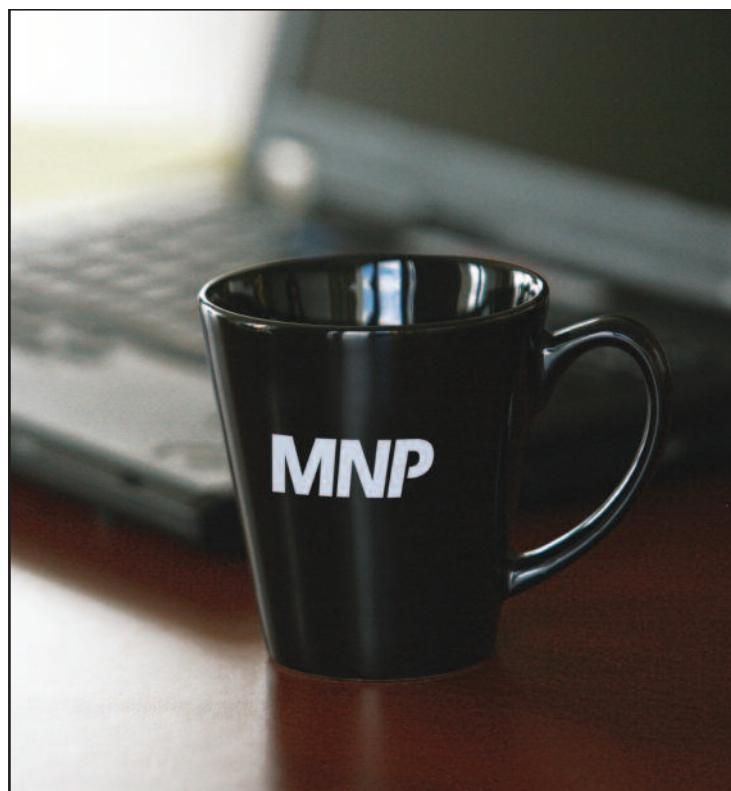
technology not only helps keep the energy and engagement of the exercise, but it also keeps them excited about their industry.

Clients are monitoring their workout performances via iPads, and are then adapting to the level of bringing the best results.

Some exercisers are rediscovering running, using innovative equipment from Octane called the Zero Runner, which "literally simulates running without any impact." Described as taking a step beyond the elliptical, it's a completely different workout, "and you're absolutely running. I love it", says Kim, "because you are literally running, suspended in air. It will give you a workout with whatever stride length you want".

Kim is quick to point out that the Neziols are busy business people, "who just happen to sell exercise equipment".

It's funny how things change when



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you work out regularly. "It changes attitude, makes you feel better," Kim says. "We're no different, we sit here on a busy Saturday lecturing people about working out and creating a habit, and how it's going to improve your life and we're just the same as everyone else. We were in a rut, we looked at each other and said let's bring something home that we want to work out on. It's exciting when you find something you like - 'cause you then use it."

Dave says that part of his success

"John made it very clear to us that if we didn't buy it he was just going to close it. He did not want someone coming in from out of town to run his store, he just didn't want anything like that."

came when he realized that what worked for Kim did not work for him. "We were always trying to bring home a piece of equipment that worked for both of us and it never really worked."

The Neziols feel extremely lucky to have been able to continue the HomeFit brand. There is a reason why they have John Carter's picture behind their checkout.

"John made it very clear to us that if we didn't buy it he was just going to close it. He did not want someone coming in from out of town to run his store, he just didn't want anything like that."

As a legacy to Carter, at HomeFit, the Neziols keep John Carter's enthusiasm strong. "We miss him, and this is his business and the traditions that he started. We are honoured we have the opportunity to continue." X



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Helen and John Beynon

**JOHN BEYNON HAS BEEN NAMED** to the **Sun Life Financial Hall of Fame**, a Lifetime Achievement honour. The Hall of Fame represents the highest standard of excellence, both professionally and personally, that a member of the Sun Life Financial Career Sales Force can achieve. Hall of Fame members are selected based on their contributions to the industry, to their communities and to the company through their leadership and sales achievements.

Beynon has been with Sun Life for 34 years. As well, he has been an involved member of his community. He was on the Board of Directors of **K-W Oktoberfest Inc.**, He is also founder of the **Boy Scout Oktoberfest Parade Day Brunch**, and has been an active fundraiser with various local charities.

The Lifetime Achievement honour is depicted on a marble plaque in the distinguished Hall of Fame display in

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Dr. V.S. Hegde, Chairman of Antrix (left) and Michael Pley, CEO of COM DEV International.

Waterloo. Sun Life has contributed \$15,000 to a charity of Beynon's choice – in this case, the seek money to launch the new Beynon Family Fund with the **Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation**.

**COM DEV INTERNATIONAL LTD. ANNOUNCED** at a ceremony held at the 65th International Astronautical Congress 2014 in Toronto,

that it has signed a contract with the **Antrix Corporation** (the commercial arm of the **Indian Space Research Organization** (ISRO)) to launch the M3M satellite on the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from India in 2015. The ceremony was witnessed by **Dr. V.S. Hegde**, Chairman and Managing Director of Antrix, and General (retired) **Walter Natynczyk**, President of the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).

The M3M satellite was constructed by COM DEV under contract from the **Canadian Space Agency/Public Works Government Services Canada** for Defence Research and Development Canada and is also subject to a commercial data sharing licence with **exactEarth Ltd.**, a joint venture

between COM DEV International Ltd. (73%) and **Hidesat Servicios Estratégicos S.A.** (27%).

**Michael Pley**, CEO of COM DEV International Ltd. said, "This contract reflects a monumental effort between COM DEV and Antrix, and between COM DEV and the CSA, to close out our original contract and secure the most rapid replacement launch for the M3M satellite, which was with-

**"Meet me in St. Louie" - the song Watson was humming while Bell had him "on hold".**

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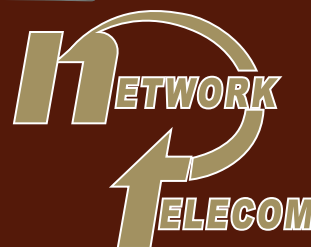
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drawn from its original launch slot on the Russian Soyuz rocket in July this year."

**DANISH RAMBOLL IS OPENING AN OFFICE** in Guelph from where the 11,000 person company will pursue opportunities in the providing district energy services in North America. Their first endeavor will provide expertise to **Envida Community Energy Inc.**, in support of the City of Guelph's Community Energy Initiative.

The implementation of the first city-wide district energy network in North America is well on its way in Guelph. Presently, according to the Canadian Urban Institute, district energy represents only 0.29 per cent of total sales of energy in Canada. But in Europe district energy is widespread. Guelph will provide an excellent doorway for Ramboll to access a growing North American market.

In Copenhagen where Ramboll's head office is located, 98 per cent of

the buildings are heated with district energy and one million people are supplied with low-carbon heat from what is one of the world's largest district heating systems. For more than 30 years, Ramboll has been the Metropolitan Copenhagen Heating Transmission Company's main consultant, providing consultancy assistance during all stages of the project from planning and design to operation and maintenance of the city-wide system.

**Pernille M. Overbye**, who is heading Ramboll's North American set-up within district energy, says: "Guelph has set up ambitious targets in its District Energy Strategic Plan, and we are delighted to help the City achieve those targets."

**K-W OKTOBERFEST WOMEN OF THE YEAR** has recognized outstanding women in the community. Residents of the Region nominated their choice for K-W Oktoberfest Women of the Year. The women recognized for their exemplar-

ry contributions included:

Arts & Culture: **Alysha Brilla** (Kitchener)

Community Service: **Shirley Laskier Levene** (Waterloo)

Entrepreneur: **Stephanie Rozek** (Waterloo)

Group Achievement: **Waterloo Region Special Education Choir**

Health & Wellness: **Robin Bender** (Waterloo)

Lifetime Achievement: (60 or over): **Astrid Braun** (Waterloo)

Professional: **Michele McBride-Roach** (Waterloo)

Sports & Recreation: **Victoria Moors** (Cambridge)

Young Adult (14 to 25): **Sherry Bo-Yee Wong** (Cambridge)

**GUELPH'S JOHN MCCRAE IS ONE OF SIX** "medical heroes" being inducted into the **Canadian Medical Hall of Fame** in 2015 for contributions to the field of medicine and health sciences. An event to honour the late McCrae and five other inductees will be held on April 23, 2015 in Winnipeg.

"We're very pleased and proud that John McCrae will be inducted in the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame in 2015," says **Bev Dietrich**, curator at Guelph Museums and co-author of the nomination. "It is so fitting that this honour is happening 100 years after he wrote the famous First World War poem 'In Flanders Fields.'"

The Canadian Medical Hall of Fame honours innovators and pioneers in the field of medicine and health sciences whose contributions significantly improve the state of health and healthcare in Canada and the world.

McCrae was an incredibly accomplished physician in his lifetime, and his research significantly advanced an understanding of tuberculosis, scarlet fever, nephritis and lobar pneumonia. McCrae died in 1918 of pneumonia and meningitis.

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Dan has brought compassion and practicality to any debtor situation and his many volunteer appointments over the years.

We at BDO wish him the very best in retirement. We hope that January 2015 brings snow and safety as he pursues his passion for skiing and many other interests.

Congratulations Dan and Thank You.

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Dan Fortin

ers, has appointed **Dan Fortin**, immediate past president of **IBM Canada Ltd.**, to its board of directors.

"We look forward to benefiting from Dan's collaborative leadership and innovative thinking to support Economical's profitable growth and competitive advantage," said board chair **Gerald Hooper**. "Dan's appointment further strengthens

our board as part of our ongoing renewal process."

Dan retired as president of IBM Canada in July. With more than 35 years of experience, he led IBM staff working with businesses across Canada.

**OPEN TEXT CORPORATION** announced the appointment of **John Doolittle** as Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Doolittle is a senior executive with more than 20 years of finan-



John Doolittle

cial experience, including most recently as CFO of **Matamy Homes Limited**, Canada's largest new home builder, and with **Nortel Networks Corporation**, where he held senior global finance roles.

**DR. SACHA GEER HAS ANNOUNCED** the appointment of **Lyndsey Butcher** to the position of Executive Director of **Planned Parenthood Waterloo Region**. Lyndsey holds an MSW from Wilfrid Laurier University and a BSW from St. Thomas University. She previously served as Treasurer of the Board of PPWR.

Lyndsey was born and raised in New Brunswick and moved to the region three years ago. For the past two years she has worked as a Social Planner at the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries.



Lyndsey Butcher

**ONTARIO HAS TAKEN THE NEXT STEP** toward two-way, all-day GO Train service along the Kitchener line, with the purchase of a 53-kilometre section of CN's rail line used primarily for GO Transit service between Kitchener and Georgetown.

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The line runs from Park Street in Kitchener to west of Main Street in Georgetown. Metrolinx has also purchased property in Kitchener for the future site of a train-layover facility.

"Ontario is making record investments in public transit across the province, including investing more than \$9.1 billion in GO Transit since 2003. By purchasing the CN track on the Kitchener line, this helps us add more train trips, improve reliability and help get more people to their destination sooner. This is further proof of our government's commitment to making the daily commute and quality of life better for Ontario families", said, **Steven Del Duca**, Minister of Transportation.

Regional Express Rail service will mean faster and more frequent trains, operating in both directions throughout the day, in the evenings, and on weekends. By increasing Metrolinx's ownership of the Kitchener rail corridor, GO Transit will be able to improve service, control operations, and make the infrastructure upgrades needed to support service expansion. These upgrades will allow for morning inbound trains to Kitchener and evening outbound trains back to Toronto.

Building public transit and creating jobs are part of the government's economic plan to invest in people, build

modern infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate.

**SANDVINE HAS RECEIVED** approximately \$7 million in orders from two tier-1 cable operators in North America – one existing customer and one new customer, through a competitive displacement.

One of the orders, which was originally expected to close in Sandvine's third quarter, relates to an operator who has been a Sandvine customer since 2007. The order represents an initial deployment of Sandvine's Network Analytics software and a major expansion of the deployment of Sandvine's policy traffic switch hardware across the network, to support both Network Analytics and policy use cases that improve subscribers' quality of experience.

The other operator is a new Sandvine customer and one of the ten largest cable companies in North America. The order represents an initial deployment of Sandvine's Network Analytics software and policy traffic switch hardware. The win was a competitive displacement of another standalone solution vendor.

"Sandvine's customers include five of the top six cable operators in North America. We continue to be the trusted partner for network policy control in this key market and see opportunities for further expansion," said **Tom Donnelly**, Sandvine's COO, Sales and Global Services.

**OFFICIAL ENROLMENT NUMBERS FOR FALL 2014** indicate that Conestoga College has attracted a record number of students this year, despite reports of a provincial decline in the total number of new students enrolling in Ontario's colleges and universities.

According to **Alan Vaughan**, Conestoga's vice president of enrolment management and international education, enrolment figures after the first ten class days indicate that Conesto-

ga's total first-year enrolment, at 6,764, has increased by 3.7 per cent over Fall 2013. Numbers have increased both for students coming directly from high school, and for those who are returning to school after a break in their formal education.

Total enrolment in all full-time post-secondary programs, at almost 11,195, represents a 4 per cent increase over the previous year.

Vaughan suggested that there are a number of factors that have contributed to the college's consistent enrolment growth.

"As the region's only source for polytechnic education, Conestoga can provide individuals from across our community with access to a unique mix of academic and applied learning programs that lead to rewarding careers," he said.

Enrolment in degree programs has increased by more than 28 per cent over 2013-14 figures. Another key area of growth for this year is Engineering and Information Technology, with an increase of 12.5 per cent.

Conestoga now delivers twelve career-focused degree programs, including Ontario's only two college-based engineering degrees accredited by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board. New degree programs in Design and in Early Learning Program Development were launched this fall.



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Photo: Meaghan Conyneare

2014 FACS Foundation scholarship recipients Brandon, Natalie and Damien, with Foundation Board Chair Melissa Howatson.

Conestoga is Ontario's fastest-growing college, with enrolment growth of approximately 90 per cent between 2005 and 2013.

**DONORS, SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS** joined staff and volunteers recently, in an informal evening of awareness-raising and appreciation for their roles in helping build strong futures for children, youth and families in Waterloo Region, through the **FACS Foundation**.

"We don't accept the status quo. Through our donors we're able to build a future beyond our care," says Foundation Chair, **Melissa Howatson**, "We believe in a strong community and giving all our kids a chance to fulfill

their dreams."

More than 80 people attended the event held in The Family Centre in Kitchener. Family & Children's Services (FACS) staff were on hand to provide insights into the programs, services and activities supported by the Foundation that enable families in care to heal, learn, and grow.

Peter Ringrose, former Executive Director of FACS, supplied an historical overview of the FACS and its important role in the community. Celebrating 120 years in 2014, Ringrose stressed that despite periods of financial uncertainty, the Agency's focus has consistently remained on provision of the most efficient and effective services to the chil-

dren and families.

A highlight of the evening was the presence of three Crown Ward Scholarship recipients who each spoke to the life-changing difference the scholarships have made in their lives. "Receiving the scholarship has inspired me to become all I was capable of becoming," remarked Natalie, who is pursuing Social Development Studies at Renison University College. "Knowing that others believe in me has been a tremendous motivation." She told attendees: "Without you and your donation to the scholarship fund, I wouldn't be able to be doing this at all."

Damien echoed that sentiment: "It's not always been easy. I'm working three jobs, mentoring my younger brother and very involved in sports. The scholarship enabled me to graduate from the Police Foundations program debt free."

"The scholarship helped me to help others," stated Brandon. "I got into University and graduated this past April. I was hired several days later with the police service I had applied to and now, with my badge in my pocket, which I'm so proud of, I want to say Thank You from the bottom of my heart. Your scholarship enabled me to fulfil my dreams."



cutting through complexity

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

The study began with a set of bench marks – the truancy rate, average grades, attendance figures, and health records – from the poverty-stricken area the students were from. The only variable during the two years was that students were given a healthy breakfast, every school day.

Says Labus, “They were able to show some really staggering results.” Students who were given breakfast saw their marks go up 15%. “That’s the difference,” says Labus, “between a student failing or doing well.”

Graduation rates went up 17%. Truancy rates dropped by an amazing 50%.

There were other changes. Kids stayed in school longer. Their self-esteem went up. Healthy food meant a lessening of sugar spikes, so attitudes improved, and communication improved.

Labus doesn’t need to see figures like this to be convinced, but they certainly give her and her colleagues ammunition in the battle to feed kids in Waterloo Region.

And it is a bit of a battle. Labus had noted that the provincial government had kick-started the breakfast program, but it’s important to know the figures involved.

## 15% limit

Labus says that Nutrition for Learning has two budgets – the actual amount available to support the program, and the ideal amount that would mean every hungry kid received a healthy breakfast, every day. They are vastly different figures.

The organization’s budget this year, all in, is about \$1 million. That’s for food, for staff costs, for overhead, for equipment, for volunteer management.

The real cost, computed at the accepted figure of \$1.34 per student per breakfast, would be \$2.7 million... for food, alone.

The province kicks in 15% of that figure... sort of. In reality, Nutrition for Learning receives \$350,000 from the province, because “we are at critical mass, now. We have a ceiling” imposed by the province, so the grant is less than 15%. The shortfall has to be managed somehow – in cost savings, in fundraising, or in cutting programs. All occur, annually.

Says Labus, “We have to find the difference. We have not yet been successful at getting that \$2.3 million dollars for food only.... Trying to find foods that meet our minimum nutritional requirements at the price points we have is very, very difficult.”

Meeting those healthy requirements, a school breakfast may include “three very basic small amounts of food like a

one to two-ounce piece of cheese, a glass of milk, maybe some Cheerios. We’re not talking huge meals, but they’re getting nutritious, really good, high quality meals,” says Labus. “Low sugar, very low sodium, high in fibre, really good balanced meal. That’s the goal of our program, to ensure that children get that.”

More and more children, it turns out.

Labus sighs. “It’s staggering!” When she joined Nutrition for Learning, the organization was providing breakfast to 4,000 children. But “we went from feeding 4000 children to very quickly feeding 8000.”

## 35% increase

And then, last year, the need skyrocketed, again. “Last year was a pivotal year for us,” says Labus. “At the end of June, 2013, we were feeding 9800 kids; when we looked at the applications [for fall, 2013], it was 13,000. That’s a 35% increase!” What happened? A downturn in the local economy, perhaps. The decimation of the local manufacturing sector. People who have given up even trying to find a job. All factors in creating situations of poverty.

Labus says that the 35% increase “probably caused a few minutes of sheer panic.” But then, simply stated, “We changed.”

Labus and her team were determined to find ways to feed more kids with less money. They approached – well, everyone they knew – looking for ways to save. And their long-time supporters responded.

The philanthropist who provides warehouse space moved his own goods out, to give more room to Nutrition for Learning. A forklift company gave them a deal. Long-time supporters, the Tim Horton’s outlets in Cambridge, raised more than \$60,000 toward a new truck.

And suppliers, led by the Freshco at Bridge and University, went looking for the best deals, and passed them on with no mark-up. In the end, food costs were cut by 50%.

That allowed the development of a new program – in high needs schools, food was supplied through a new “bulk program”. Food items were packaged by volunteers, and delivered in bulk to classrooms, where teachers volunteered to distribute the food.

This all sounds very positive – and it is – but the needs continue to escalate. There are 26 schools on the bulk program; the program uses 40% of the food budget, “because they are feeding such a high number of kids,” says Labus. “There are schools where whole neighbourhoods are really suffering because of downturn in the economy and a tougher time getting jobs, and having to take jobs that are really low

“Last year was a pivotal year for us,” says Labus. “At the end of June, 2013, we were feeding 9800 kids; when we looked at the applications [for fall, 2013], it was 13,000. That’s a 35% increase!”





*Nutrition for Learning staff members Julie Edgar, Brian Banks and Kelly-Sue Labus.*

income, and they're not making it."

Twenty-six programs were feeding almost 6,000 students. Another 141 programs – a different system, where money is supplied to the school in a proportionate amount, and the school volunteers run the breakfast program – account for the rest.

With all the cost-cutting, the demand

was so great in 2013/14 school year that Nutrition for Learning started the current school year with absolutely no money in the bank. That's the reason for the ongoing concern.

Nutrition for Learning does as much fundraising as possible – especially since 2009. Brian Banks is in charge of community development, leading the

way in fundraising. The organization has some unique events, including an annual Zombie Walk, the "Make Breakfast Happen Everyday Campaign" and the unique "Live Free Campaign", which invites participants to promise to live free of something – anything! – for a day, and encourage family and friends to donate in honour of that pledge.

Friends are vitally important to Nutrition for Learning. Labus points to "a lot of committed people." The organization has a staff of seven – and almost 1400 volunteers, including "800 volunteers who go to the programs in the morning, every day, and about 550 volunteers that bag food."

They're doing vital work, work that may make the difference in the future of one, ten, or maybe 20,000 children. They need all the help they can get. Because the kids need all the help Nutrition for Learning can give.

For more information, visit [www.nutritionforlearning.ca](http://www.nutritionforlearning.ca). X

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# HELPING THE KIDS, ONE BREAKFAST AT A TIME

*Nutrition for Learning is changing the lives of thousands of Waterloo Region kids*

BY EXCHANGE MAGAZINE

Kelly-Sue Labus

The numbers are staggering. There are about 14,000 kids in Waterloo Region who go to school hungry, every day. There are as many as 20,000 who don't have enough food, some days. That's 20,000 children, out of a total student population of 90,000. Those hungry kids, if they don't get breakfast, are paying a price in lower marks, briefer school careers, low personal self-esteem, unsuccessful relationships, and more. And that's why the program known as Nutrition for Learning may be one of the most important not for profit efforts in our community.

Kelly-Sue Labus is executive director of Nutrition for Learning, with the organization since 2009. She's proud of what Nutrition for Learning has accomplished; and she's also scared. She told Exchange, "This year is tough, financially. We really, really need support."

She adds that teachers and volunteers are concerned there will be cut-backs, that nutrition programs may be curtailed or ended early, or that a highly effective "bulk food" program initiated a year ago may not survive.

## Started in 1994

The school breakfast program came into existence, in a small way, in 1994. Labus says, "The Waterloo Food Coalition and public health got together when they realized there were about 40 children in KW who were really having trouble with

food security. These were very hungry children, living in poverty. So they put together this very makeshift program where they got out to the schools and fed the children, and a few churches got involved as well."

She adds that it was not long before the people involved in the program realized the 40 kids were the tip of an iceberg – "there were many other children living in the same conditions.... It started out very tiny, but it grew, over the years."

Students who were given breakfast saw their marks go up 15%. Graduation rates went up 17%. Truancy rates dropped by an amazing 50%.

In 1997, Nutrition for Learning was incorporated. It's a home-grown organization, serving Waterloo Region, although there are other, similar groups in other parts of the province and the country.

Labus says, "Teachers were realizing the benefits for the children. Health providers were realizing the benefits of a good breakfast. But it was very slow-growing. It wasn't massive until 2008, when the provincial Ministry of Children and Youth Services came forward with some funding. All of a sudden, we were able to get out there and feed a lot of children in need."

## A measurable difference

Feeding hungry kids can make a massive difference in what those kids achieve. The Toronto District School Board proved this beyond any doubt with a two-year study involving over 5,400 students.

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