

# BUSINESS VOICE

HALIFAX'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE



PAGE 14

## HALIFAX BUSINESS AWARDS 2020

Celebrating excellence in our community

### KICKING OFF 2020

Welcoming in a new decade Pg 5

### REBRANDED REVEAL

Bishop's Cellar's long-awaited revamp Pg 32

### FRANCHISE FAMILY

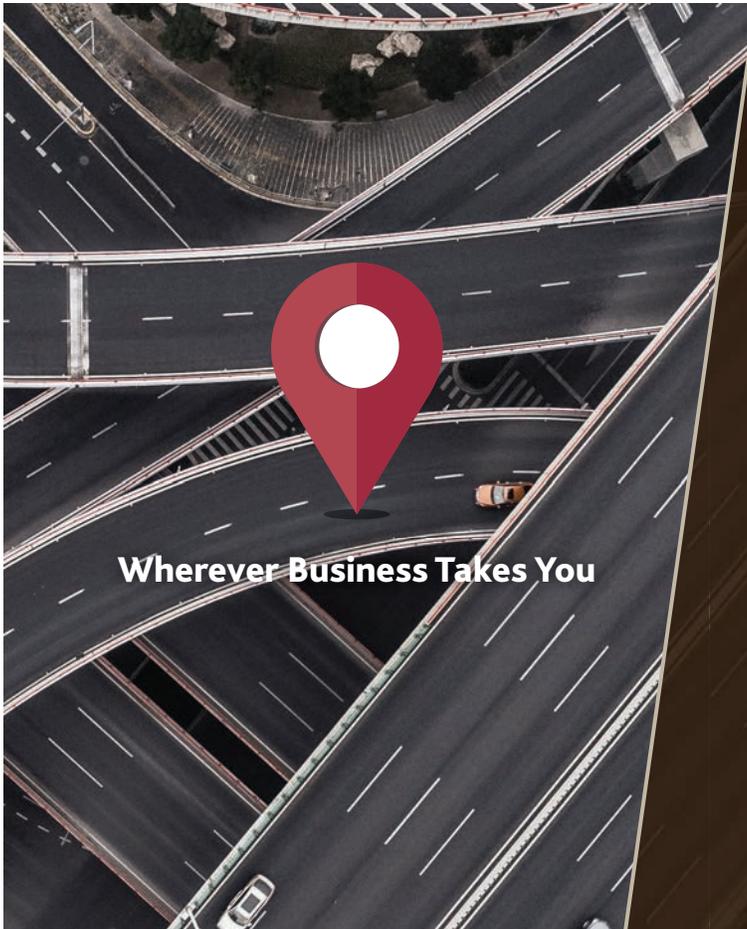
Mezza expands across Maritimes Pg 34



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Please address editorial enquiries and changes to information to:  
Halifax Chamber of Commerce  
100-32 Akerley Boulevard  
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 1N1  
Tel: 902-468-7111  
Fax: 902-468-7333  
info@halifaxchamber.com  
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President & CEO: Mark Lever  
Director, Product Management: Lindsey Bunin  
Editor: Nicole Cnazardowsky  
Layout & Design: Peter Ross  
Contributing Writers: Sara Ericsson  
Customer Relations Specialist: Meghan O'Neil  
Sales Executive: Wanda H. Priddle  
902-426-2811 ext. 1163 • sales@herald.ca  
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*I believe that this city is full of people with bright ideas and dreams that could grow to be very successful businesses."*

— Paul Tordon, Owner & Operator, Apex Tire Services



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# CHAMBER EVENTS

For a full and up-to-date list of our Chamber events, please visit [www.halifaxchamber.com/events](http://www.halifaxchamber.com/events)

## PINTS + POINTERS

DATE: Wednesday, January 15  
TIME: 3:30 – 5 p.m.  
LOCATION: Garrison Brewing, 1149 Marginal Rd.

## CHAMBER 101

DATE: Wednesday, January 15  
TIME: 12 – 1:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: Halifax Chamber of Commerce, 32 Akerley Blvd.

## 2020 HALIFAX BUSINESS AWARDS

PRESENTED BY: **RBC**  
DATE: Thursday, January 23  
TIME: 5 – 9:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: Halifax Convention Centre

## POWER LUNCH:

**Navigating Airports & Airlines**  
DATE: Friday, January 24  
TIME: 12 – 1:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: Halifax Chamber of Commerce, 32 Akerley Blvd.

## BUSINESS AFTER HOURS:

**The Coast**  
DATE: Thursday, January 30  
TIME: 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: 2309 Maynard St.

## SAVE THE DATE:

**ANNUAL STATE OF THE PROVINCE WITH PREMIER MCNEIL**  
FEBRUARY

## LUNCHEON:

**Minister Karen Casey**  
FEBRUARY

## POWER LUNCH:

**UpTree HR**  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

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# Diving into a new decade

Looking back at the past 10 years and forward to the next

@prezhfxchamber



**PATRICK SULLIVAN**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

It's 2020! We've entered a new decade, full of opportunity and growth. I know we talk a lot about Halifax's success, but sharing local business stories only becomes more important as we continue to grow. Ten years ago, Halifax's skyline was unmoving. Ten years ago, Halifax was losing our students and had low immigration numbers combined with high migration numbers. Ten years ago, Halifax met a turning point.

Through collaboration with business, government, not-for-profits and other enterprises, Halifax met its challenges

head on and has blossomed into a bustling, diverse community and one of the fastest growing cities in Canada. We should be very proud of how far we have come. Our city's diversification of business plays a key role in growing our GDP, retaining our population and putting Halifax on the map.

From the exporters, to the local businesses, to the innovative, to the organizations that have been here for decades, to the small and to the large, Halifax business is booming. And we can prove it! We're thrilled to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Halifax Business Awards with our finalists. We are very proud of the work the Halifax Chamber of Commerce has done to celebrate the success of businesses over 20 years and you can meet them all on page 14. As this is an extra special celebration, we decided to

reach out to some former Business Leader gold winners from the last 20 years. Flip to page 28 to read what they've been up to in the last couple of decades.

We hope you can join us on Jan. 23, 2020 to celebrate with local businesses, our sponsors, our partners and the larger community. It's a chance to recognize risk takers who push Halifax to be the best it can be. Our local businesses and leaders contribute to more than just the GDP — they create the culture of success we currently see in Halifax. They attract and retain talent and investment in Halifax. They're featured in the media around the world. Their unique business ideas create an entrepreneurial mosaic that inspires our youth to make a living here.

All in all, I'm proud of you, Halifax. Let's show the world what we can accomplish in the next decade. ■

## ANNOUNCEMENT



Please join me in welcoming our newest Halifax Chamber team member, **Chris Mann**, Sponsorship & Business Development Specialist!

Chris is a long-time Chamber member, well versed in sales and relationships. He'll be working with our members to provide value through unique and tailored sponsorship opportunities. Be sure to say hi at our upcoming events. Welcome, Chris!

# NEW & NOTED

We welcome our new Chamber members

## 14 BELLS FINE ART GALLERY

14 Bells Fine Art Gallery is located in the historic Hydrostone Market. It features high quality, smart and engaging contemporary Canadian art. The style of paintings for sale varies greatly on the bright walls of the second-floor space. Both the venue and art are available for rent.

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## AIDACA MEDIA

AIDACA Media's mission is to be the voice of small and medium sized enterprises in North America. *Spotlight on Business Magazine* is our medium, offering a fully-interactive experience so entrepreneurs can connect, engage and inspire each other while increasing their exposure with potential customers to build a stronger business and brand.

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Bridges is a non-profit domestic violence counselling agency offering individual, couples, family and group counselling to help people move away from abuse and toward respect. Located in Truro, N.S., services are accessible countrywide! Bridges Institute is also an international domestic violence research and training resource.

**Michelle Labine**

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902-431-8145  
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Halifax, NS  
902-880-7934  
josh@northpointhfx.com  
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c/o Volta Labs,  
1505 Barrington St., Suite 100  
Halifax, NS  
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**TECHSPLOATION**

The Techsploration program provides young women from diverse backgrounds with opportunities to explore science, trades and technology occupations while creating awareness about the critical role of women in these fields. The non-profit organization is a joint initiative between the Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.

**Emily Boucher**

800A Windmill Rd., Unit 5A  
 Dartmouth, NS  
 902-491-3535  
 emily.boucher@techsploration.ca  
 www.techsploration.ca  
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5991 Spring Garden Road, Suite 465  
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# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

How our members are growing Halifax



## MIKE CHAU JOINS COSSETTE HALIFAX

**Cossette** is pleased to announce that Mike Chau has joined our Halifax team as Senior Art Director. A seasoned art director, graphic designer and production designer in both traditional and digital spaces, Chau has honed his skills transforming strategic goals into visually pleasing work that gets results. His portfolio includes McDonald’s Canada, Toyota Canada, Walmart Canada, Tim Hortons, Gibson’s Finest Whisky and Air Canada. Cossette was named Canada’s Agency of the Year in 2016, 2017 and 2018. To learn more about Chau and the Cossette Halifax team, please contact us at 902-421-1500 or info@cossette.com.



## HALIFAX STANFIELD NORTH AMERICA’S MOST INTERNATIONAL MEDIUM-SIZED AIRPORT

**Halifax Stanfield** has been flying under the radar among more well-known international airports in Canada and the United States, such as Toronto, New York and Atlanta. This year, the airport’s impressive list of 20 international destinations has it taking off as a global gateway leader among medium-size airports in North America according to the Official Airline Guide, the leading global provider of travel data and insight. “We’re thrilled to receive recognition of being the Most

International Medium-Sized Airport in North America in support of our air service expansion to international destinations,” said Joyce Carter, President and CEO of the Halifax International Airport Authority. “Providing choice is key to attracting passengers. Our geographic position on Canada’s East Coast and proximity to many points in Europe and the Eastern U.S. Seaboard make us an ideal gateway for global leisure travel destinations and commercial markets.”

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**WELCOME TO THE TEAM, ROBERT!**

**Digital Nova Scotia** welcomes Robert Haldane to the team taking on the role of Director of Operations. Haldane has an MBA from Saint Mary’s University and a background in finance, economics and project management. Having worked in the telecommunications sector for many years, he has a broad range of experience related to product design and launch,

strategic planning and financial and market analysis. As seasoned project manager, he values respectful communication and out-of-the-box thinking as part of his leadership style. Born and raised in Nova Scotia, Haldane is interested in exploring all the ways that the digital sector can positively impact the province and the individuals who live and work here.



**NEW FITNESS FACILITY COMING SOON!**

Leanne McDow of **The Hustle Workout** has joined forces with Sonny Wilson of PuncHIIT Fitness to combine their individual strengths in the local fitness industry. The collaboration will be called IronMatrix and will be offered in two locations, 63 Tacoma Dr., Dartmouth and 357 Herring Cove Rd., Spryfield. With McDow’s strength in personal

training and Wilson’s strength in group fitness — kickboxing, kettlebells, TRX, etc. — this new hybrid fitness facility will cater to anyone looking to get or stay fit and have fun doing it. Accessible by virtually any age group or fitness level, IronMatrix will offer affordable memberships and high-quality classes and personal training.



**COMMUNITY & PARTICIPATION PAY DIVIDENDS!**

**Dress for Success Halifax** received a \$2,500 cheque for second place as a result of raising the most money per team runner in the 2019 Blue Nose Marathon. “It takes a village to support the women we serve in our community and we are extremely grateful to Scotiabank for providing these additional funds to assist us to continue our mission of Moving Women Forward, says Chair, Julie Wisen. “Please consider joining our Blue Nose team to celebrate our 20th anniversary in 2020.” Pictured are Darren Brackley, Scotiabank Charity Challenge and Brenda Saunders/Todd, CEO, Dress for Success Halifax. [www.halifax@dressforsuccess.org](http://www.halifax@dressforsuccess.org)

**WELCOME TO THE TEAM!**

**Fox Harb’r Resort** is pleased to announce the appointment of Susan Henderson as Account Director, incentive and corporate group sales. Henderson joins the Fox Harb’r team from Omni Hotels & Resorts. Beyond the office, she is an avid hiker, reader and baseball mom. She will continue to be based in Toronto, a region where many current Fox Harb’r clients are located. Founded by Tim Horton’s magnate and philanthropist Ron Joyce, Fox Harb’r is a landmark of Nova Scotia’s pristine Northumberland Shore and the only CAA/AAA four-diamond rated resort in the province, acclaimed for its golf, sport target shooting, event venues and oceanside vineyard, among other unique features. Visit [www.foxharbr.com/meetings](http://www.foxharbr.com/meetings) to learn more.



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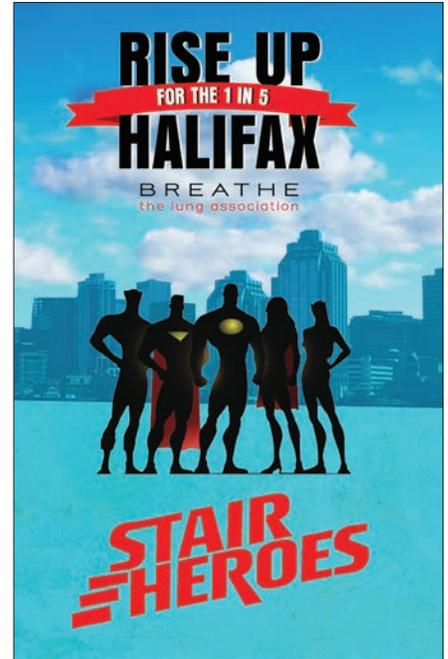
The **Discovery Centre** is pleased to announce the opening of its latest featured exhibit, Beyond Rubik's Cube. At Beyond Rubik's Cube visitors can learn how to solve the world's most popular puzzle, challenge a robot to solve their scrambled cube and manipulate the 10-foot giant working cube. "We are

excited to offer Discovery Centre visitors another world-class experience, plus a chance to explore an all-time favourite toy," says Dov Bercovici, President and CEO of the Discovery Centre. "The Rubik's Cube is one of those toys that is a mystery for young and old and I know this exhibit will be entertaining for both."

**OFFICE INTERIORS WELCOMES NEW STAFF**

**Office Interiors** is proud to welcome two new members to the team. Mallory Mills joins the furniture team as an Account Manager. Having completed her MBA in 2017, we are excited to put her education, experience and drive to work helping local Halifax businesses create more productive workplaces for their teams. Cody Turner has joined our team as a Digital Content Specialist.

Turner has a strong creative background in both videography and photography and we look forward to the exciting new content he will create for our learning center. Turner's goal is to create engaging visual content that will educate business owners and managers so that they can make the best decision for their business about ergonomics, office technology and productive workplace design.



**FIREFIIGHTERS RISING UP FOR LUNG DISEASE**

The Stair Heroes event which was originally announced for November has been rescheduled for Feb. 16, 2020. The stair climb, which is a partnership between the **Lung Association of NS** and Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency, will see up to 300 participants climbing the stairs of Duke Tower in Scotia Square in support of lung health. Anyone looking to participate in this fun event are encouraged to sign up today. The event will be chip timed and offers various categories including competitive and recreational. There will also be plenty of family entertainment onsite including face painting, special guests, music, refreshments and more. For more information visit [www.StairHeroes.ca](http://www.StairHeroes.ca)

**RODD HOTELS WELCOMES NEW STAFF**

We are delighted to welcome two new staff members to the **Rodd Hotels & Resorts** team. Susan Gray is the Nova Scotia Sales Manager and comes with a strong background in sales and business development through roles with Arbonne, Sales Experts and more. Michelle McAulay is the new Sales Manager for corporate business travel. She's been very successful in growing the market in Nova Scotia and we're excited to have her strength and experience in sales, customer service and relationship building for this new role. Welcome!



### SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETER WINS TWO AWARDS!

**Denise Alison** is excited to announce that she recently won two separate awards! At the Women of Inspiration Gala, a national event, she won the Rural Leader Award for her success in creating a thriving social media marketing business from N.S. Alison also won the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award from the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce. She's an active member of the business community and works with clients across the U.S. and Canada. An in-demand speaker, Alison has shared her expertise on social media and video marketing across North America.

### PINEAPPLE BYTES IS CELEBRATING

President Leah Boody was awarded the CPA Early Achievement Award. This award is given to a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) who demonstrates achievement and an ongoing commitment to professional excellence within the first 10 years of becoming a CPA. This prestigious honour recognizes Boody's career success, leadership, volunteer work and how her achievements have had a significant impact on the visibility of the profession.

**Pineapple Bytes** continues the celebration by welcoming new General Manager, Greg Corey. With over 20 years' experience in the hospitality industry both locally and across Canada, Corey embodies our mantra: "We get you."



### NEW RESEARCH ON WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS

The **Centre for Women in Business** teamed up with three researchers from Mount Saint Vincent University to update a comparative analysis of women business owners in Atlantic Canada. The findings show positive trends in sales growth, innovation activity, supplier diversity awareness and more. "We will use this information to

support our members and tailor training programs directly to women business owners' needs," says Executive Director, Tanya Priske. "We encourage women business owners to read the findings, celebrate their successes and learn from the current environment." A summary of the report can be found at [www.centreforwomeninbusiness.ca](http://www.centreforwomeninbusiness.ca)



### GIVING BACK WITH MURPHY'S ON THE WATER

**Murphy's on the Water** is excited to announce our partnership with Kits for a Cause™. These events, hosted at our restaurant or on any of our vessels, provide groups with an outlet to give

back to their community in a collaborative and fun way. Learn how to make an impact with your event by connecting with us at [info@mtcw.ca](mailto:info@mtcw.ca) or by calling 902-420-1015.



# HALIFAX 2020

## BUSINESS AWARDS



Thank you to Chainyard for hosting the 2020 finalists for this year's photo shoot. **Photos by Paul Darrow**

**THE HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** is pleased to present this year's Halifax Business Awards finalists. Now in our 20th year and sponsored by RBC, this event allows us to showcase Halifax's best and brightest business leaders and entrepreneurs. Businesses and individuals are judged by a panel spearheaded by Gina Gale, Senior Vice-President with BDC. We have dedicated this issue to profiling the incredible individuals who have made it to the finalist stage. These pages don't do their hard work justice, but they do provide a sample of who these individuals are. We hope you enjoy getting to know this year's finalists and book Thursday, Jan. 23 to celebrate with us at the 2020 Halifax Business Awards gala.

To learn more about the finalists, please visit: [halifaxchamber.com/awards](http://halifaxchamber.com/awards)



Presenting  
Sponsor:



# NEW BUSINESS of the year finalists



Sponsored by:

**BOYNECLARKE**   
LAWYERS | LLP

## New Business of the year finalists

L-R: *Derek Martin, HFX Wanderers FC;*  
*Marie-Claire Chartrand, Greywave*  
*Senior Care Consulting; Kevin Spencer,*  
*Ring Rescue Inc.; Dave Culligan,*  
*threesixfive; Jenner Cormier, Bar Kismet.*



### GREYWAVE SENIOR CARE CONSULTING

Many families face a crisis as loved ones age and their needs change. Greywave helps you and your family understand and navigate a full range of service options. We develop an effective, affordable and practical care plan to help people remain at home or move to a supportive environment.

#### Where do you see your organization in 10 years?

I see Greywave as becoming recognized as the go-to agency for aging adults and their families for support in health-care planning and delivery. I will work with a broad range of associates in delivering Greywave services.

#### How can we encourage youth to explore entrepreneurship as a possible future career?

I am a Wise 50 over 50 award winner. I am more about encouraging the older, wiser entrepreneur. Life is just starting at 50. Reinvent yourself and your work life.

#### What is your proudest accomplishment?

That I did it — I have successfully launched the company and built a platform for growth. My definition of success in this regard is simple and is measured in the satisfaction of clients who know they are being helped to meet their health-care needs. I am also proud of doing this on my own. As a solopreneur with no business experience I had to learn to be a bookkeeper, a receptionist and my own tech support, social media and marketing department.



### RING RESCUE INC.

Ring Rescue Inc. is a medical device startup company, formed in 2019 and is located in Dartmouth, N.S. We commercialized and internationally export our made-in-Canada product. Rings are culturally important and our product has globally redefined how to solve the common problem of removing stuck finger rings safely, easily and without ring cutting or damage.

#### How did you get your start?

We started with a problem to solve and a ring becoming stuck on a swollen finger is actually a common problem. Then, we solved it! The original concept began as a final year student project in Dalhousie Mechanical Engineering and it won Dalhousie's Capstone competition in 2017. I was a judge for that competition. As an emergency department physician, mechanical engineer and entrepreneur, I recognized this concept had real life potential. We believed we could commercialize this device together, so we teamed up and got it done!

#### What is your proudest accomplishment?

Our testimonials from patients that have had rings removed by Ring Rescue without ring cutting represent our best accomplishments. For example, a wedding ring stuck during a pregnancy, a 91-year-old woman whose husband died 42 years ago and whose ring meant the world to her and a Blue Jays World Series championship ring saved from cutting. You can see these testimonials and more on our website.



## HFX WANDERERS FC

HFX Wanderers FC is a professional soccer club in the Canadian Premier League, playing at Halifax's illustrious Wanderers Grounds. The club has averaged close to 6,000 fans per match and brought significant excitement and revenue to Halifax shops and restaurants. The 2019 team featured 15 Canadians, two local players and head coach.

### Who/What inspired you to open a new business?

I had been involved in sports entertainment for the last decade. I was approached by a former colleague about this new league being formed and felt there was a gap in the market for great summer activities. I knew the desire was there within the city to host the right size events in downtown. The league founders and staff were of a very high quality and I knew the league mission would resonate across the country.

### How did you get your start?

After playing university football at St.F.X., I worked in sports in Toronto. I had the opportunity to learn from several organizations and experienced people in the industry. I brought that experience to Halifax and started running events such as World Beach Volleyball on the waterfront and various university athletics events.

### Why did you choose Halifax?

I was committed to continuing to build projects in Halifax and Nova Scotia because it is the right size for many of the sport and entertainment events that we will continue to bring to the city. There is a strong collection of talent to be hired from the universities and an excellent influx of immigrants that will help build the vibrancy of the city. Halifax has always been a willing partner to work with organizations on world-class events.

## threesixfive

## THREESIXFIVE

threesixfive is a convention-crushing creative agency producing content and strategy for top local and global clients such as Saint Mary's University, Nova Scotia Power, Puma, eBay and Fossil. Specializing in unique video content, 2019 included projects in Vancouver, Montréal, Toronto, New York, London, Berlin and more.

### Who/What inspired you to open a new business?

I found a lot of inspiration to start my business online, from some of the world's best in video and marketing. I consumed a lot of books, blogs, YouTube content and podcasts. I also felt a push from a few of the core messages put forward in the Ivany Report.

### How did you get your start?

I dedicated an entire year to creating a video about my life and journey in the city and province every day. This got me out meeting people, learning about the region, learning my craft and got my work in front of the right people. I also received tremendous amount of support from a few key mentors and friends I made near the start of this journey. A very special thank you to Robert Zed, Mike Kennedy and my good friends from Sickboy Podcast.

### Tell us one thing people may not know about your business

People may not realize that almost 100 per cent of our business has been inbound. We haven't had any form of sales strategy other than to do good work, over deliver, make friends with our clients and take advantage of social media to put our work out into the ethos. It's served as a bit of a screening process to allow us to work on the right projects and continue to have fun while growing at the right pace.



## BAR KISMET

Bar Kismet is a family run seafood restaurant and cocktail bar highlighting handmade pasta with a spotlight on seasonal produce. It is known for its deep wine list, craft beer offerings and approachable hospitable service.

### How did you get your start?

My wife and I left our jobs at another restaurant to move home to Halifax and chase a dream. We started by opening a farmers market stall to meet farmers to supply the restaurant. I enrolled in the SEB program at CEED and my wife took a job as a fishmonger. We found our own location, designed the space ourselves and borrowed enough money for leasehold improvements. She runs the food and kitchen side, I run the bar and floor.

### Do you have any tips for people who are thinking about starting their own business?

The best advice I could offer someone who is starting their own business is to follow their dream and find a way to make it a reality. There will be a lot of people along the way who doubt your ideas, but if you train hard to work on perfecting your craft, your reputation will take you far. Stay positive, look at roadblocks as challenges and don't give up on doing what you are passionate about.

### What has been the biggest challenge to being a new business?

I believe that the biggest challenge for most new businesses is developing a reputation, especially in food and drink. There are an incredible number of great restaurants in this city and we had to push beyond our threshold of exhaustion to separate ourselves from the rest of the pack. Convincing financial establishments to lend to another seafood restaurant was also nearly impossible, but we had a vision that we never gave up on.



## SMALL BUSINESS of the year finalists



Sponsored by:



### Small Business of the year finalists

L-R: *Carolyn Laybolt, Preserving Traditions;*  
*Sheena Russell, Made with Local;*  
*Ryan O'Leary, SONA;* *Dr. Deborah Hartlen,*  
*The Flag Shop Nova Scotia;* *Dan Monk,*  
*MONK Renovations.*

## SONA

### SONA

Sona provides competitive pricing and tailored solutions to simplify payment acceptance. In an industry known for confusion and misleading claims, we put it all on the table with clear, honest, transparent information and a fresh approach. Powered by the world's largest payment processors, we offer cutting-edge technology to improve business and commerce transactions.

#### What would you say is your organization's proudest achievement?

We've been able to establish a strong reputation in the merchant services industry as client centric in a very short period of time. The industry as a whole generally has a high level — close to 30 per cent — of merchant attrition (merchants defecting for another merchant service company). Since SONA's inception in 2016, we have been operating at a small 8 per cent attrition level. With fewer merchants leaving, it is a testament to the relationships and trust we are building with our customers and that makes me proud.

#### If you could follow in the footsteps of a successful business, which would it be and why?

I would say Helcim Commerce based in Calgary. This is another merchant service company who shares many of the same values as SONA. Values like transparency, integrity and delivering on commitments to the team, partners and merchants. In the current landscape, merchant service companies need to move beyond simply providing a commodity in transaction processing but rather offering technology solutions that will help business owners grow their business.

## MONK RENOVATIONS

Trusted – Professional

### MONK RENOVATIONS

Monk Renovations provides outstanding and reputable home renovation experiences in and around the Halifax area. We work hard to protect our reputation and the industry by providing a quality product, professional service and a focus on maintaining trust with our clients. Kitchens, bathroom and ensuite, basement renovations and additions are where we specialize.

#### What would you say is your organization's proudest achievement?

Simply put, we all like each other. We have 14 people within our company and we laugh, joke, socialize and have a great time together — the company feels like a family. We get a lot of work done and we never compromise and always do what is right for our clients, employees and subtrades, because that is what family is supposed to do. Our clients become friends, our crews become family. Doing the right thing is never wrong, so we always do the right thing and that makes a happy workplace.

#### If you could follow in the footsteps of a successful business, which would it be and why?

Sawlor Built Homes — A third generation, family owned and operated business, with a reputation for excellence. I have created a company which I would like to be a legacy to future generations of my family. I have worked with my kids in the past and have always enjoyed working with them. My eldest Daniel, will graduate from Dalhousie University, in mechanical engineering in the spring of 2020 and my daughter, Ceiledh, is studying international commerce at Carlton University and doing her third year in Germany. Both are intelligent and capable of running a company in the future. I hope it will be ours.



**PRESERVING TRADITIONS**

Preserving Traditions specializes in making homemade preserves using time-honored recipes and techniques. We also offer bakery items made from scratch and our meals and chowders are created following traditional recipes passed down through generations. Our goal is to provide healthy choices that connect customers to their memories of days gone by.

**What would you say is your organization’s proudest achievement?**

Since inception, I have been fortunate to realize several key accomplishments and to reach goals that I had set when opening my business only three years ago. Most notably was the purchase of our commercial production and retail property. Each small step gives me cause to celebrate how far Preserving Traditions has come. Earlier this year, I was honored by the NS Association of Community Business Development Corporations as one of the three finalists for New Business of the Year. I am so very proud to have also been selected as a finalist in the Small Business of the Year category with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. It has truly been an amazing year for Preserving Traditions!

**How is your business contributing to making Halifax a better place?**

Preserving Traditions is firmly established in the community and consistently provides support to a variety of organizations. As a company, we are actively connected to our customers and support many of their various fundraising activities throughout the year. We provide display space and host workshops within our retail store for local artisans and craftspeople, allowing them an affordable opportunity to showcase their talents. Our growth and success is due in large part to the overwhelming support received from our customers which allows Preserving Traditions to provide an economic boost to many other small businesses within the municipality.



**THE FLAG SHOP NOVA SCOTIA**

The Flag Shop Nova Scotia is an independently owned and operated franchisee functioning within a Canadian franchise system known as The Flag Shop. The business consists of a brick and mortar retail location, online sales capability and an in-house production area specializing in custom flags and banners of any size and related products.

**What would you say is your organization’s proudest achievement?**

Our organization’s proudest achievement is its ability to adapt to the changing marketplace, to see opportunities and capitalize on them. One example is our work with the military community — we saw a gap in service related to their requirement for signal flags and developed production methods to construct these items.

**If you could follow in the footsteps of a successful business, which would it be and why?**

This is an interesting question! I do not follow but recognize our business’ strengths and build on those. Franchise systems are generally successful in that there is a support network built into the system and with this organization, there is also the flexibility to respond to local differences and requirements.

**Where do you see your organization in five years?**

In the next five years, I anticipate that our organization will continue to see growth, with possible expansion of services offered to our clients.

**What has been the biggest challenge to being a small business?**

Our biggest challenge has been finding balance between seasonal requirements and sustaining our workforce. Hiring students has been one way to address this challenge.



**MADE WITH LOCAL**

Made with Local is a Dartmouth-based snack foods company and Certified B Corp. Through our partnerships with local farmers, producers and social enterprises, we’ve grown from a five-foot farmers market stall to a celebrated natural food brand with over 800 retailers all across Canada. Our foods are simple, nourishing and have social impact baked in.

**What would you say is your organization’s proudest achievement?**

Seeing our social enterprise production facilities scale to keep up with our growth has been a huge source of pride for us. We love seeing how our expansion impacts these community-based organizations and has a tangible, measurable social and economic benefit. Also, navigating a national launch with Sobeys and Loblaws at the same time while I was working with a newborn baby this summer is something I’m so proud of our team for achieving!

**If you could follow in the footsteps of a successful business, which would it be and why?**

I really look up to other purpose-led, B Corp companies like Patagonia, Ben & Jerry’s, LUSH Cosmetics, who through their products and processes, are working to make the world a better place. I look up to companies who know deeply that business can be used as a force for good.

**What has been the biggest challenge to being a small business?**

Navigating huge growth spurts from a cash flow perspective and adjusting to world of “big grocery” has been challenging. Long payment terms, rigid rules and expectations and a lot of red tape takes a lot of energy to manage but we’ve done our best as a small team and are starting to see really positive growth from our national grocery chain partners. It’s exciting!

# EXPORT BUSINESS of the year finalists



Sponsored by:



## Export Business of the year finalists

L-R: Mitchell Hollohan, Site 2020 Incorporated; Rod Kerr, Northern Business Intelligence; Gamal A. BinEshaq, G.M. Applied Technologies Canada Inc.; John Lewis, Outdoor-Fit Exercise Systems; Andrew Barsoum, Triple Maple Trading Co. Limited.



### OUTDOOR-FIT EXERCISE SYSTEMS

Outdoor-Fit Exercise Systems is a leading manufacturer of outdoor fitness equipment. Our unique designs combine the bio-mechanics of commercial-grade indoor fitness equipment into a tamper-proof and weather-proof package. Our equipment is installed in correctional facilities, parks, military bases, corporate campuses, home owners associations and campgrounds all around the world.

#### What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the local business community?

Our biggest contribution is support of other local businesses. We currently work with over 20 local businesses for everything from our steel fabrication, to our accountant. We pride ourselves in working with all local companies to ensure our products are built to the quality we expect and to ensure smooth day-to-day operations.

#### What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as an exporter?

The biggest challenge we face is concerns with customs clearance from U.S. customers. Our equipment moves freely through the Canada-U.S. border, but we often have U.S. customers concerned that they will be hit with duties or taxes. We have only lost a handful of orders for this reason, but it is a concern many buyers have. We also will run into the “buy America” mentality from time to time in the U.S.

TRIPLE MAPLE TRADING



### TRIPLE MAPLE TRADING CO. LIMITED

Triple Maple Trading (TMT) is a small-medium sized company, specialized in exporting pharmaceutical and food ingredients and food supplements to the Middle East region. In five years TMT has expanded their business all over Egypt and is now penetrating new markets like Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Tunisia.

#### What inspired your company to become involved in export?

TMT has been focusing on export business from day one. We realized the size of the Canadian market might not be a good start for us as an SME that opened only a few years ago. Therefore, we thought of overseas markets and tried to focus on innovative products as much as possible.

#### What is your organization's biggest achievement to date?

Currently one of the biggest achievements is the diversity of products we have and the markets we've penetrated up to now. We export products to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Some of the countries mentioned are still in the trial phase, but still it counts as an achievement.

#### What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as an exporter?

Price is a major challenge for a product produced in Canada and shipping costs cannot be neglected. However, we have managed to close some deals for products produced in Canada and have outsourced other products to be produced in South Asia which will later be sold through TMT to customers outside Canada.



**G.M. APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES CANADA INC.**

G.M. Applied Technologies Canada Inc. is a Canadian owned firm, specializing in supply and exportation of telecom products to markets overseas. G.M. Applied Technologies Canada Inc. represents Canada internationally and we are the hub for export, carrying Canadian business mark and professionalism.

**What inspired your company to become involved in export?**

Expertise in telcom products.

**What is your organization's biggest achievement to date?**

We've seen a big increase in orders intake.

**What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as an exporter?**

Tough competition and availability.

**What do you enjoy most about working with international markets?**

Challenges and overcoming the obstacles.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the local business community?**

Local distribution agreements for marketing overseas, logistics, employment and consultancy overseas.

**Why did you choose Halifax?**

Strategically located east, close to the overseas exit for export services.

**What do you think Halifax needs to do in order to grow?**

Growth through luring new immigrants to Nova Scotia with attraction of settling in Halifax. Facilitation and encouragement of small businesses for the newcomers can also play a major role.



**SITE 2020 INCORPORATED**

Site2020 was founded by Mitch Hollohan and has grown significantly with team members now working with organizations all across North America. Site2020 designed and built the Guardian Smart Flagger system to address current technical limitations in the industry, solve onsite resourcing issues, ensure safe work zones and be the smarter choice.

**What inspired your company to become involved in export?**

We were inspired by the true need for the product in the U.S. Both the U.S. and Canada face the problem of dealing with flaggers and the dangers of the traffic control industry. With the pain being so significant and us receiving so many calls for the product it was the most natural next step for Site 2020.

**What is your organization's biggest achievement to date?**

Our biggest achievement to date would be partnering with Google Maps and Waze to improve the safety of our job sites through clearly reducing the amount of cars through our SmartFlagger sites by rerouting them around our job sites.

**What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as an exporter?**

One thing we have found difficult is dealing with regulations in various U.S. states.

**What do you enjoy most about working with international markets?**

Seeing our product grow through the minds of people from across the world. We are always gathering feedback and integrating it into our product.

**What is your favorite region or country to do business with?**

North America.



**NORTHERN**  
*business intelligence*

**NORTHERN BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE**

At Northern Business Intelligence we have an incredible team that delivers a world-class customer experience. With our partner, Geotab, we provide a best-in-class Telematics Solutions for fleets across Canada and the U.S. We are your trusted partner to assist in making the best decisions by presenting data in an efficient and streamlined manner, ultimately realizing maximum ROI.

**What inspired your company to become involved in export?**

It was a natural progression for the growth of the business. With our amazing team we were able to focus on customer experience and create strong partnerships that helped build a reputation for service excellence. With the success we had in Nova Scotia we were confident we would be successful in growing in other markets. We also knew that showcasing the incredibly talented people we have in Nova Scotia would help provide more visibility to Halifax and our province.

**What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as an exporter?**

We always view challenge as opportunity. To become established in a new market it takes significant time, effort and investment.

**What do you enjoy most about working with international markets?**

They present unique opportunities and slight differences in culture and approaches to doing business.

**What is your favorite region or country to do business with?**

I can't say I have a favorite. Our team enjoys doing business in all regions in Canada and U.S. in which we operate.



## INNOVATIVE BUSINESS of the year finalists



Sponsored by:



**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT  
Rowe School of Business

### Innovative Business of the year finalists

L-R: *Will Nelson, President, Sauté;*  
*Chris Willison, CEO, Junk Works Halifax*  
*Inc.; Joshua Svec, Founder & CEO,*  
*Air Realty; Paul Empey, President & CEO,*  
*Precision BioLogic.*

## S A U T É

healthy meals delivered

### SAUTÉ

Sauté is a healthy, ready-made meal delivery company that delivers meals directly to your door throughout Nova Scotia.

#### What inspired your business' innovation efforts?

Travelling outside of the region, to New York and San Francisco in particular, exposed us to innovative entrepreneurs and startups that offered a similar service to what Sauté offers today. Almost five years ago we noticed the combined trend of convenience and healthy eating emerging in larger markets and we decided to help bring it to Halifax.

#### What is your definition of innovation?

Innovation in business is the process of identifying and solving problems through research, critical thinking and creativity with the intention of improving a business' value to stakeholders. Innovation at Sauté means listening to customer's feedback.

#### Why did you choose Halifax?

There is a long list of reasons of why we love Halifax, but among them are the friendliness of the people, its proximity to the ocean and hiking trails, reasonable cost of living, ease of access to large centres like New York and London, as well as the prospect of building a large company on the East Coast. Nova Scotia also faces an obesity crisis that we believe Sauté can improve by providing easy access to healthy food and educating our communities.



### AIR REALTY

Air Realty saves you thousands when selling your house and is the easiest way to independently list your property on the MLS and REALTOR.ca. We have created the Air List, an online tool allowing homeowners to independently list their property in 15 minutes and save 50 per cent of the listing commission.

#### What is something new that's happening at your company?

Something new and exciting at Air Realty is the growth that is happening with our team. We have a great core of licensed agents that have recently joined up. We are raising the bar on the level of professionalism clients will experience using an Air Realty agent. As a company we are dedicated to hiring new agents to the industry to mold new and better habits.

#### What is your definition of innovation?

Our definition of innovation is taking an existing product or service and improving it to produce the easiest path of resistance to achieve the end goal. We created the Air List to give homeowners not only the easiest, but also the quickest path to getting their property listed on the MLS and REALTOR.ca. This meant shifting the entire process to an online platform, essentially giving the homeowner a direct link through our brokerage to the MLS. We give homeowners the same exposure and selling process a licensed realtor has. Innovation to us means continually improving a product or process allowing fewer barriers to exist for the consumer.

# PrecisionBioLogic

## PRECISION BIOLOGIC

Precision BioLogic develops, manufactures and markets specialized products used by medical professionals and scientists around the globe to diagnose coagulation disorders and conduct research. From our Dartmouth facility, we serve more than 1,000 clinical laboratories throughout North America and work with a network of international distribution partners.

### What advice would you give to another business that wants to embrace innovation?

I'd say do it! Embracing innovation keeps businesses healthy and growing. I'd also say be tenacious and don't get discouraged.

### What is something new that's happening at your company?

There's a new mindset at Precision BioLogic and as an organization we're committed to developing one new product per year. I can't say too much right now, however, I can say that we have a number of innovative products in our pipeline and we are well on our way to achieving and possibly surpassing this goal in 2020.

### What is your organization's proudest accomplishment?

While our products help diagnosis coagulation disorders on a daily basis, in my mind, Precision BioLogic's proudest accomplishment is being the first diagnostics company to support the World Federation of Hemophilia's Humanitarian Aid Program. In June 2016, Precision BioLogic donated much-needed calibrators, controls and reagents to the University Teaching Hospital in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Globally one in 1,000 people has a bleeding disorder and most are not diagnosed and do not receive treatment. Our donation was the first of its kind and an important step in the effort to improve and sustain care for people with bleeding disorders such as hemophilia.

# JUNKWORKS

## JUNK WORKS HALIFAX INC.

Junk Works is an environmentally responsible junk removal business. We offer full-service removal and a drop-off dumpster service. Junk Works offers the best customer service at the best value for money and is committed to recycle, reuse, repurpose and donate as much as possible.

### Why did you choose Halifax?

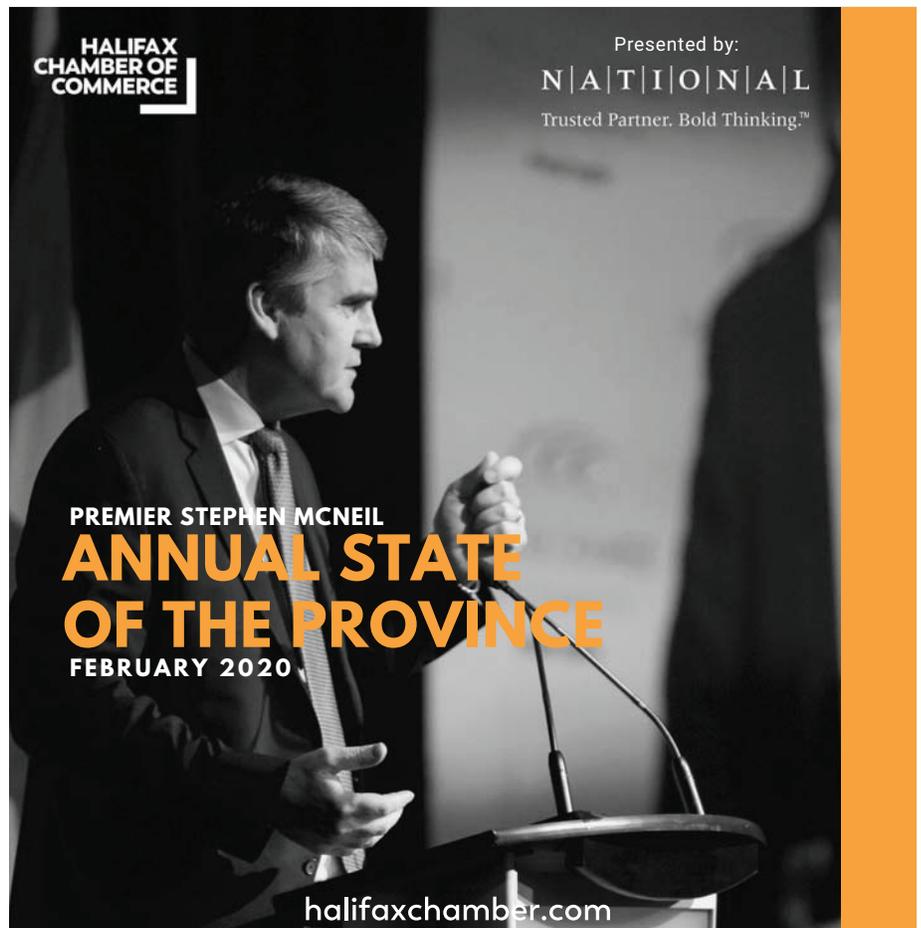
Halifax is a great city. It's compact enough to get around fairly easily, but large enough that we can run a business that benefits the people of Halifax — and of course, ourselves. But one of the very best things about Junk Works is the amazing people we meet and work with every day. Of course we service all of central Nova Scotia and not just Halifax, the people we meet in other areas are just as great too!

### What inspired your business' innovation efforts?

Our customers. We started our business providing full-service junk hauling and removal. It became apparent quite quickly that some businesses and domestic customers wanted to take more time over their renovations, yard work or domestic clearing but both wanted to know that as much as possible was being recycled. The option to have a walk-in, driveway friendly bin gave them that option and at a lower price point as well.

### What is your organization's proudest accomplishment?

That we have stuck to our fundamental ideals from day one, even though sometimes it costs us more to do so. That is to provide the best customer service, recycle, reuse, repurpose and donate as much as we possibly can and provide the best value for money to all our customers. By adding our bin service, we have been able to extend our services with the exact same principles to more people and businesses and in a way even more people can afford.



# BUSINESS of the year finalists



Sponsored by:



## Business of the year finalists

L-R: *George Cotaras, FBM;*  
*Alice McCaron, Home Instead Senior Care;*  
*Mike Davis, Davis Pier.*

*Missing: Dave Wilson, Wilsons Security*

## Wilson's SECURITY

### WILSONS SECURITY

Wilson's Security provides peace of mind to homes and businesses in Atlantic Canada. We use electronic security and monitoring solutions to protect over 10,000 homes and businesses, helping our customers manage life safety and security to protect their families, employees and property.

### How have you helped Halifax grow?

We have successfully demonstrated that an industry-leading company can be built by leveraging the strengths of our people. Our industry is dominated by international companies that provide limited service to smaller geographies. Wilson's focuses on the customer experience and providing excellent local service, becoming a nationally leading independent provider of security and life safety solutions. We have grown our team to over 80 people since our inception in 1998, now servicing homes and businesses across Canada.

### What would you say is your organization's biggest achievement?

We are proud of our ability to grow an industry-leading, high-performing team through a combination of strategic hiring and successfully integrating new team members from acquired businesses. In the face of rapid growth, we have been able to carefully align our objectives, build a common culture around delivering an exceptional customer experience and establish ourselves as the employer of choice in our industry.

# FBM

ARCHITECTURE • INTERIOR DESIGN

### FBM

FBM is a widely respected architectural firm that has been in continuous practice since 1917. Based in Halifax and locally owned, the focus of the practice is primarily in Atlantic Canada. The firm has been responsible for significant buildings the region including the Halifax Central Library and the upcoming Richmond Yards Development on Almon Street.

### What one piece of advice would you give to a new business?

Invest in the development of the next generation! Developing and retaining new young talent is critical to the long-term success of any business. As part of our mantra — people driven design — we are constantly looking at ways to support, mentor and empower our employees and create an environment where they can succeed. Our younger staff members bring new ideas and make sure that we as a firm are always on top of new trends and changes that are constantly happening in our professions and in the world we inhabit.

### What is something new that's happening at your company?

Strategic growth! Over the past few years we have strategically been working to enhance our architectural services with the addition of related design disciplines. Nikki Steele joined us from Ottawa as Partner and lead for FBM's interior design studio. We launched a new planning division to support Halifax's ambitious rejuvenation plans. In the last year, we also hired a renowned health-care architect to align with Nova Scotia's need to overhaul our health-care infrastructure. Overall, we have added 18 new talented people in the past 18 months.



*To us, it's personal.*

**HOME INSTEAD SENIOR CARE**

Home Instead Senior Care’s mission is to change the face of aging by providing personal, one-on-one support to older adults while enhancing the lives of seniors aging in our community. Our approach to care is relationship based and as our tagline states: “To us, it’s personal.”

**What would you say is your organization’s biggest achievement?**

At Home Instead Senior Care, our biggest achievement is the difference we make in the lives of seniors and their families. With the help of Home Instead Senior Care, seniors have been able to remain where they want to be — at home. Their families have the peace of mind and comfort of knowing their loved one is safe and being taken care of.

**How have you helped Halifax grow?**

Home Instead Senior Care has helped Halifax to grow by enabling seniors to take a more active role in the community. Our caregivers accompany seniors to activities and events within Halifax that they might not have been able to take part in otherwise. The caregiver-senior relationship enhances Halifax by encouraging more senior involvement in the community, while also improving the social lives of the seniors.

**Why did you choose Halifax?**

Halifax is a great community that will continue to flourish over the next few decades — it’s full of opportunity and spirit. It’s large enough to enable great opportunities for the young and old, yet small enough that it still feels like a community and enhances our lives. There are tens of thousands of aging loved ones living in the city that need assistance. With a focus on enhancing lives, Halifax is where the biggest impact could be made and it’s central to other communities Home Instead is expanding service to.

DAVIS PIER

**DAVIS PIER**

Davis Pier is a consulting firm that works with public sector and non-profit organizations in Canada and internationally to design and implement innovative solutions to complex government and social challenges. Their services include strategy and analytics, design, transformation, people and social innovation.

**How have you helped Halifax grow?**

We believe we have provided opportunities for people to build their lives in Halifax. Whether it has been providing roles for new graduates to allow them to stay in the province, attracting newcomers from elsewhere or repatriating those from the region, we feel that we’ve hired some excellent talent for the city that wouldn’t have otherwise come or stayed.

**What would you say is your organization’s biggest achievement?**

Our biggest achievement would be our growth and more importantly, retention of our clients and our team members. Since inception five years ago, our company has grown to 35 consultants and has collaborated on projects with clients in 25 countries — almost all of whom have continued to work with us. We’ve been able to do all of this while making a true impact on the delivery of government programs and services.

**What one piece of advice would you give to a new business?**

While it is tough to narrow that down to one thing, I would say only hire people who you think are spectacular and a fit in terms of both skillset and values. From there, figure out what you can do better than anyone else and be super focused on just that. Always use the golden rule: if you treat colleagues and clients the way you want to be treated, things will be much easier. It sounds hokey, but that’s been our experience.

# BUSINESS LEADER of the year finalists



**MATHEW BENVIE,**  
PRESIDENT, EVOLVE FITNESS LTD.

Evolve Fitness is a safe and welcoming one-stop private studio specializing in large groups, private training and small groups for those under the age of 55. Each session is led by a qualified instructor with every client getting the personal attention they need to be successful. All fitness levels, ages and genders are encouraged and welcomed!

### Why did you choose Halifax?

I chose this city for the people and to remain close to family where I grew up outside of Truro. Halifax is a big enough city for small businesses to thrive, but has a small-town feel where everyone knows everyone and they are very loyal.

### What would you say is your biggest accomplishment to date as a business leader?

Our biggest accomplishment to date is expanding on Strawberry Hill to create two locations under one roof and then opening in Bedford within three months of each other. We went from being able to directly impact 350 people to over 1,000 with much better services and amenities. This also allowed us to go from four amazing full-time employees to nine and five part time.

### What's something new that's happening at your organization?

Our expansion to Strawberry Hill and opening in Bedford both happened in late 2018. Our core offering is large-group training/boot camps, but we now offer small-group training for clients over 55 looking for a more intimate setting and more one-on-one attention. We have three functional aging specialists on the team who take care of this. We will soon be offering small-group training as well for the general public looking for the feel of private training with the accountability of their peers.

Sponsored by:



### Business Leader of the year finalists

L-R: *Karim George, CEO, InTouch Communications; Sherry Willison, Junk Works Halifax; Mathew Benvie, Owner, Evolve Fitness; Paul Tordon, Owner/Operator, Apex Tire Services*

*Missing: Roger King, President, Supplement King*



**KARIM GEORGE,**  
CEO, INTOUCH COMMUNICATIONS

InTouch Communications Inc. is a full-service marketing and communications agency based in Halifax, N.S., working with clients countrywide in a variety of industries. InTouch core competencies include digital marketing and creative content including video production, branding consulting and design, strategic marketing planning, communications, public relations, advertising and media buying.

### What steps does Halifax need to get to the next level?

Halifax needs to continue to increase opportunities for mentorship and support for new businesses of all sizes. We need education and programs in place to encourage people to take risks, partner on new initiatives and invest in opportunities. Halifax is a great place to do business with plenty of support, but there's always room for improvement.

**What’s the best business advice you’ve ever been given?**

The best advice I’ve ever been given was to focus on the success of others’ over my own. I see very clearly that my success is completely dependent on the success of others. If my goal is to help my staff and clients reach their goals, I will reach my own in return. There’s also a great deal of satisfaction in helping others succeed, so even when success doesn’t come quite as quickly as you’d like for yourself, you still enjoy the journey.



**ROGER KING,**  
PRESIDENT, SUPPLEMENT KING CANADA

From a one-man university delivery business to over 55 locations in nine provinces, Supplement King rules retail. The fastest growing company in its channel, they fuel their customer’s goals through retail innovation and are proudly headquartered in Dartmouth, N.S.

**What’s the best business advice you’ve ever been given?**

Surround yourself with positive people! This applies to all aspects of your life. Those with a can-do attitude will always find ways to lift you up, keep you focused and provide the motivation to work through difficult situations. Success in business is less about the wins and more about strong management through challenging times.

**Why did you choose Halifax?**

I moved to Halifax as a 20-year-old Saint Mary’s University student to live in residence. This was my first time in Halifax and coming from Saint John, N.B. I was impressed by the level of economic activity and prosperity visible here. I had the desire to create my own path and that led to the launch of my campus-based business, Supplement King, back in 2006.

**What’s your favourite part about Halifax?**

We are the perfect small city. Great dining, entertainment options and unmatched coastal scenery without the traffic woes and other draw backs of big city living.



**PAUL TORDON,**  
OWNER/OPERATOR, APEX TIRE SERVICES

Apex Tire is a full-service automotive shop. We pride our self on quality, quickness and putting the customer first. Through social media and word of mouth we have built a strong following that continues to grow at a very strong rate.

**What steps does Halifax need to get to the next level?**

I believe that this city is full of people with bright ideas and dreams that could grow to be very successful businesses. However, starting out can be very expensive. Unless you have saved money or know someone to help you get off the ground it just might not be possible. We were lucky to stumble upon one group to help us in the beginning, but I think having more resources to help guide new entrepreneurs who are just starting out could be very beneficial for Halifax as a whole.

**What would you say is your biggest accomplishment to date as a business leader?**

When starting Apex Tire, we knew that it was joining an already competitive market that has some well-established competition. I’m very proud of how we were able to build something that stands out from the competition. We get to know our customers on a personal level and have created a shop where people can trust they are receiving honest and quality work. Our reviews on Facebook and Google reflect that.



**SHERRY WILLISON,**  
DIRECTOR, JUNK WORKS HALIFAX INC.

Junk Works is an environmentally responsible junk removal business. We offer full-service removal and a drop-off dumpster service. Junk Works offers the best customer service at the best value for money and is committed to recycle, reuse, repurpose and donate as much as possible.

**What would you say is your biggest accomplishment to date as a business leader?**

As a business leader, I would say that my biggest accomplishment to date is building an amazing business network and developing loyal customers who trust me. I am also very proud of my dedicated recycling program.

**What leadership advice would you give an up-and-comer?**

If you want to be successful in business, do something that you are passionate about. Treat others as you would expect to be treated in return.

**What’s your favourite part about Halifax?**

My favorite part about Halifax is its size — not too big, not too small, the perfect size to run a business. The city is big enough for my business to thrive, but small enough for me to get to know some of my customers personally.

**What’s something new that’s happening at your organization?**

We are expanding our business to not only service residential customers, but to also service more commercial customers, such as construction companies, property managers, real estate agents and renovators. We provide both full-service junk removal and bin drop off junk removal — both with the same great Junk Works service.



Contributed

Wooden Monkey Dartmouth Partner, Matt Gass, Operator and Vice-President Christine Bower, and founder and President, Lil MacPherson together make up the restaurant's management team. The restaurant was awarded New Business of the Year in 2006 and MacPherson was awarded Business Leader of the Year in 2014 for her environmental advocacy work.

# Leading by giving back

Checking in and looking back with past Halifax Business Award winners **By Sara Ericsson**

It takes more than making a sale to be a top business leader in the Halifax business community. It means not only being a trailblazer who sets out to pave a way to make their business successful, but advocating for those without the voice or platform a business leader is traditionally blessed with, helping bring others up as they blaze ahead and lending their own hand out to help whenever possible.

The Wooden Monkey, Glow the Event Store and the IWK Foundation could not be more different. One is a restaurant, another an event-rentals business and another a fundraising body, yet all three are similar in that they make it a priority to advocate and give back to others in Halifax and across Nova Scotia as they reach new heights in their

*It means a lot to be able to give back and speak out on this. The city is waking up and people are now more aware about our food systems and climate change than ever before."*

— Lil MacPherson,  
Founder & President,  
The Wooden Monkey

professional journeys.

They each also won gold awards from the Halifax Business Awards over the last two decades and all still feel honoured to have been recognized. They have all also seen much growth since receiving their awards and are continuing to work to give back.

### **Succeeding against the odds**

The Wooden Monkey has become a fixture in both the Halifax and Dartmouth downtown areas years after it nearly didn't start at all when founder and President Lil MacPherson's loan application for a restaurant emphasizing locally-sourced ingredients was shot down by banks.

Despite the lack of financial support, MacPherson persevered with her idea



*“We live with some of the most generous donors on the planet. Just because we’re on the East Coast doesn’t mean we’ll settle with having less.”*

— Jennifer Gillivan,  
President & CEO,  
IWK Health Centre  
Foundation

IWK Foundation

IWK Health Centre Foundation President and CEO Jennifer Gillivan approaches fundraising like a business approaches its bottom line — looking to bring in the most money as efficiently as possible. She was awarded Business Leader of the Year in 2017 and is pictured here at a past IWK Telethon.

that came after Hurricane Juan carved through the province in 2003. When she asked farmers how much food there would be if the hurricane had wiped out grocery stores, she found what was locally grown would have lasted less than one week.

“It became so clear that we needed to help the food system grow,” says MacPherson.

The idea of opening a restaurant and fostering a community of farmers became reality when MacPherson partnered with Christine Bower, who now serves as Vice-President.

“We make up two extremes — Christine is so business savvy and I’m a hardcore environmentalist — and we balance each other and the business out,” says MacPherson.

The duo opened the restaurant in 2004 and won New Business of the Year in 2006. They never looked back and have continued to grow, adding a second location and new partner, Matt Gass, in Dartmouth. The restaurant now supports almost 20 farms and buys from around 40 small suppliers. The team was honoured

again in 2014 when MacPherson was awarded Business Leader of the Year for her work as an environment advocate, in which she teaches Nova Scotians about the lack of local food sold within the province, accounting for less than 10 per cent of food sold here. And MacPherson says her ability to advocate is thanks only to Gass and Bower, whose work ensures the business continues to thrive.

“It means a lot to be able to give back and speak out on this. The city is waking up and people are now more aware about our food systems and climate change than ever before. The community also now recognizes that an environmental business can make a difference and make a living at the same time, which is an incredible step for business,” says MacPherson.

#### **The business of fundraising**

Jennifer Gillivan was not a career fundraiser but still felt called to work for the IWK Foundation as she found it aligned with her lifelong passions of fighting for the rights of women and children and utilizing her business acumen.

She is now its President and CEO and uses that business approach to fundraise at the foundation.

She accordingly refers to the foundation as a social entrepreneur organization rather than non-profit as its fundraising is much like that of any traditional business — earn as much as possible, as efficiently as possible, meaning all efforts are organized, intentional and effective.

This razor-sharp method has earned Gillivan a strong reputation among her contemporaries and won her the Business Leader of the Year award in 2017 — one she says validated the foundation as a business community contributor.

“It’s an arena I’m comfortable in and it’s wonderful to have that recognition that we belong and are seen to have a role to play,” she says.

In addition to Gillivan, the IWK Foundation fundraising team includes marketing, communications and finance people who take part in daily huddles to identify existing gaps. Each member is on a business-like 30-60-90-day cycle to maintain focus and ensure the team is



Contributed



Contributed

Glow The Event Store founder and President Dave O'Connor says the store is a one-stop-shop event rentals destination and is able to supply anything from bouncy castles to cathedral décor (pictured). O'Connor was awarded Business Leader of the Year in 2018.

*It's never been just about organizing parties for me, but also giving back and rolling up the sleeves."*

— Dave O'Connor,  
Founder & President, Glow The Event Store

lean, meaning it is doing the most possible work within the resources and time at its disposal. Gillivan says this bold approach is what sets them apart.

"I've put the stake in the sand and have said we're going after the best and nothing less. We start every April at \$0 and we can't borrow money, so we have to be entrepreneurial," says Gillivan.

It's an approach that has yielded impressive results, with the newly constructed state-of-the-art NICU and NICO rooms having been 100 per cent donor funded, along with the PICU that is soon

to follow and the soon-to-be replaced fleet of hospital beds that will be traded for new wireless smart beds.

"We live with some of the most generous donors on the planet. Just because we're on the East Coast doesn't mean we'll settle with having less. It again comes down to that entrepreneurial 'we're going after it' and ensuring we have what we need to provide women and children with the best possible care. The foundation is a core piece of how this happens and how the IWK has grown to become what it is," says Gillivan.

### Working in and helping at events

The business that was first known as the best place to rent a bouncy castle has now become a one-stop shop for event rentals of all kinds and the man behind it all is a sort of one-stop volunteering shop himself. Glow The Event Store founder and President Dave O'Connor's goal is to supply its customers in and around the Halifax Regional Municipality with the best selection of event rentals while staying as involved in community events as possible.

He himself is about events of all kinds professionally and personally, whether he's helping out at them or from an organizational perspective with the rental business. O'Connor won Business Leader of the Year in 2018 and chalks the award win up to both leading his business and being involved in his community, which has seen him participate in the Halifax Progress Club, as a Halifax Hawks Minor Hockey Association executive board member and hockey coach for more than a decade. He says being a leader was about growing his store and also contributing to the community that it and his family call home.

"It's never been just about organizing parties for me, but also giving back and rolling up the sleeves. Being well-rounded is a big part of this," he says. "If you're going to be a leader, you must lead by example. I've always been a firm believer in that," he says.

The company has continually evolved since it first opened in 1996, growing from a mobile signs company to the event rentals store it is now, with a 35,000-square-foot warehouse nearly out of space as its product line of equipment rentals continues to grow.

As the event industry is not a static one, O'Connor says staying ahead of the curve and anticipating what the next event trend may be is a key part of Glow's success, with one of their latest additions being a fishing village made of fishing stages and lobster traps, along with props for people looking to host a kitchen party-themed event.

"We are sometimes still labeled as the 'bouncy castle company.' But people are impressed when they come in and see the full array of how we've built. We can still get you that bouncy castle, but we can also turn that event into something so much more with décor or balloons or a firework show," says O'Connor.

"We have everything you could possibly need. The goal is to make sure that when we get the call, the answer is 'yes, we can do that.'" ■



Contributed

At AGADA Bioscience, women make up the majority of the workforce. Their contributions to the field of science are immeasurable.

# Female scientists shatter glass ceiling

AGADA Biosciences creates influential, women-led environment **Contributed**

A small biotechnology company in the heart of Halifax is advancing therapies for muscular dystrophy patients around the world, while seeing their business grow by about 30 per cent each year. The key ingredient driving their success is the young women graduates they have hired.

“Halifax produces the highest quality life sciences grads we have ever seen,” says Kanneboyina Nagaraju, Founder, President and CEO of AGADA Biosciences. “Our company benefits from their strong attention to detail, their thoroughness and their ability to do multiple things at once. In our line of business, you have to be adaptable and these women grads do it best.”

Seventeen of the 20 employees at AGADA Biosciences are women in scientific roles.

Nagaraju and Co-founder Eric Hoffman, who live in Washington, D.C., launched AGADA Biosciences in Halifax six years ago to provide research services and support to clients across the world, to ultimately improve the quality of life for patients suffering from rare neuromuscular diseases.

“When we opened our company, people said, ‘How are you able to run

things remotely Female scientists shatter glass ceiling from Washington?’” says Nagaraju. “But it is simple. We find that if you hire responsible young people, give them independence and train them well, things rarely go wrong.”

Hiring a team was made easier by the Graduate to Opportunity program (GTO), which helps startups, small businesses under 100 full-time employees, non-profits and social enterprises offset the cost of hiring a recent graduate.

Employers receive 25 per cent of a grad’s first-year salary (35 per cent if the grad is diverse) and 12.5 per cent of a grad’s second year salary from the province.

AGADA Biosciences recently hired four international grads with GTO, all of them female research associates from Dalhousie or Saint Mary’s University: Ashley Maloney, Donika Shala, Candela Suarez and Heather Nadeau.

“In school we learn the theory behind things, but here we get the opportunity to apply these learnings in a practical setting,” says Maloney. “It is also encouraging to see young people in manager positions. I can see myself progressing in the company much faster than I thought.”

“At AGADA, we aggressively promote our staff,” says Hoffman. Shala, a Senior Research Associate, has been promoted twice since joining the company in 2018.

“Advancing in the company like this makes me work even harder,” says Shala. “It feels nice to be recognized for the job we are doing. I am the sole lead for a clinical trial project right now, which involves a lot of responsibility.”

All of the new grads are participating in preclinical testing, research and training to prepare for human muscle testing.

Nadeau didn’t know she would be setting foot into such an influential, women-led environment until her first day on the job. “Many of us are not from Canada, either,” she says. “It makes me feel more comfortable being in an environment this diverse and welcoming.”

To date, over 1,000 recent graduates have been hired across Nova Scotia by employers like AGADA Biosciences using GTO funding. GTO could save you money on the next person you hire. Applications are typically turned around within five business days. Learn more at: [www.novascotia.ca/GTO](http://www.novascotia.ca/GTO). ■





# From good to great

Newly expanded Bishop's Cellar space means more room for premier products and services **By Sara Ericsson**

**B**ishop's Cellar has always stood out. Its waterfront location and proximity to restaurants, condos, shops and other things along the Halifax boardwalk means it has enjoyed a place among one of the city's trendiest areas.

But it takes more than location to excel and Bishop's Cellar is looking to do more and be better than they already were, so the business underwent an extensive renovation and store expansion period that Bishop's Cellar President Matt Rogers says has been a long-awaited rebranding to replace the space that had been used for 17 years since the store opened. The new space has revealed to customers a posh yet personal retail experience that will exceed their expectations.

"It's more open, brighter and better organized and means our customer experience is that much better than it was before," says Rogers.

## PLANNING AHEAD

The business' latest project is proof that the team at Bishop's Cellar never sits still.

Rogers says its new renovation means the store has doubled its commercial space, having taken over the retail space next door and now has the breathing room to boast dedicated sections for fine wines, a finely curated beer selection and spirits from many different corners of the world. The new retail space also features a dedicated in-store pickup area for online orders as the store continues to develop and expand its e-commerce offering and is working towards a future goal of offering same-day order delivery around the city.

Positive customer reviews have continued pouring in over the month since the new space's unveiling, which mean Rogers and his team are feeling thrilled with how things are looking.

"We really needed to make these changes for our customers — to ensure their experience here was a good one. We also wanted to showcase and show off the products we carry. So as customers tell us they love it, we're very pleased with how this expansion has turned out," he says.

But feeling elated doesn't mean the work stops, as the holidays are the busiest season for the business — the New Year hits, the rush slows and then comes strategizing for a new year of sales and a review of the one previous. Wine is even ordered four to five months out. But busy means business is good and that there's never a dull moment.

"We've always worked hard during what would otherwise be downtime to plan ahead. The nature of our business is that when one side slows down, the other picks up — we're always working on something," says Rogers.



Photos Jessica Emin

The new beer area is among the store's new dedicated spaces, in addition to one for spirits and another for wine.

## GROWING DOWNTOWN

The timing of the business' expansion has also been key, according to Rogers, who says it has coincided with the further development and growth of downtown Halifax thriving, most of which is happening within just one kilometre of Bishop's Cellar.

"There are more people moving downtown and living within this area and thousands of units currently being built near us. That means more people shopping, working and eating downtown and ultimately needing a neighbourhood alcohol shop," says Rogers.

The business has already seen sales increase in the month since the store-front's grand reopening and is looking forward to the new space meaning a better holiday shopping experience for staff and customers. Sales within the licensee side of the Bishop's Cellar business have also been growing as their team works to provide great wine, spirits and beer

“It's more open, brighter and better organized and means our customer experience is that much better than it was before.”

— Matt Rogers,  
President,  
Bishop's Cellar

to establishments across the province. Rogers says it's a little-known fact that this work makes up an even larger portion of business than the waterfront store.

"We're like an iceberg — this side of our business is the side that's not seen above the water. More often than not, if you're having a nice drink in Nova Scotia whether in the city or from Cape Breton to Yarmouth, it's a client we've worked with," says Rogers.

Whether it be these clients or shoppers within its Halifax store, the customer has always been at the centre of everything at Bishop's Cellar — one thing that Rogers says will never change.

"We take pride in sourcing products from around the world and locally, too and focusing on bringing in products our customers are looking for — all to make sure they have the best-possible experience while at our store or working with us," says Rogers. ■



Mezza Lebanese Kitchen is owned and operated by Tony (left) and Peter Nahas, who says the business has expanded with franchises across Nova Scotia and is hatching plans to branch out across the Maritime region starting in 2020. Mezza won Business of the Year at the 2019 Halifax Business Awards.

# Branching out

Mezza Lebanese Kitchen franchise family to grow across province, Maritime region **By Sara Ericsson**



**Congratulations**  
on winning Business of the Year.

**MCINNES  
COOPER**

The family tree is growing new branches at Mezza Lebanese Kitchen, where every success is rooted in its focus on fresh food and family.

The business is no longer a budding operation and has grown into a network of franchises that began in Halifax and are now taking root in locations across the province. The last year has seen Mezza’s corporate branch work with each franchise to ensure the businesses are growing strong and to in turn grow new branches across Nova Scotia and plant seeds in 2020 for future growth in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, growing the business to span the entire Maritime region.

“It’s all about family at Mezza and the family is doing well,” says Vice-President of Business Development and Franchising Peter Nahas, whose parents started the business three decades ago and founded it upon the three principles of passion, hard work and that vision of family.

“Even with the growth and countless changes to the business over the decades, those three values remain true today. It is these that drive us to continually grow our business and remain a leader in our industry,” he says.

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# Congratulations

**Tony & Peter**

*on this* **Prestigious**

**Award** *from your*

*Friends at*

*Coca-Cola.*



**Coca-Cola  
Canada  
Bottling  
Limited**

# BIG ERICS

IGNITE THE SENSES

Big Erics Inc. is pleased to celebrate  
with Mezza Lebanese Cuisine for their

**Chamber of Commerce 2019  
Business Of The Year award win!**



< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

**MEZZA ACROSS THE MARITIMES**

Nahas says it has been quite a year for his family business since it was awarded Business of the Year at the Halifax Business Awards, but that the business’ growth spurt first began five years ago and has only kept going, with its first franchised location that opened in 2017.

Since then, new locations have been added in Spryfield and a total renovation

completed at the flagship downtown Halifax location in 2019. December will see the business open its 12th franchise location, with its newest branch opening in Truro, while construction will begin on its 13th, to be located in Bedford’s Larry Uteck area in January. Nahas says construction will start at even more new branch locations every two to three months in 2020.

Receiving that shout out from the Halifax business community at large via winning the award showed Nahas

and his personal and work families that their work to expand was not only being noticed, but being praised by their peers within the Halifax business community — something Nahas says meant the world to his entire family.

“What a year it has been for Mezza. It has been very rewarding to be recognized by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce for the work we love doing every day,” says Nahas. “The award truly serves as a validation for our staff, management team and franchisees that the hard work they do every day does not go unnoticed by their peers and the business community.”

**FRANCHISE FAMILY FLOURISHING**

Nahas says the company identified over the last year that focusing on franchise success would strengthen operations across the entire network and lay solid bedrock for future growth. And with some Mezza franchisees already signing on for second and third locations, business is looking good.

“Our expansion plans have always been rooted in the success of our franchisees. Ever since opening our first franchised location, we’ve believed that for our company to ultimately be successful, our franchisees need to first be successful,” says Nahas. “With all of them now having more than two years in business and a proven track record with successful locations and a shared vision of the future, we are excited to watch them all grow to their multi-units in 2020.”

The 2020 year will be an expansion milestone not just in Nova Scotia, as the business has plans to grow that family tree of franchise locations even further as plans for locations in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are in the works. This expansion would give Mezza a presence across the entire Maritime region — something Nahas says the business is working on as they work to secure new locations and gauge interest in communities across the three provinces.

As the Mezza family grows, its values remain the same, as Nahas says his parents’ core vision is what has led it to the success it has so far been met with and is its best guarantee for more to come.

“Mezza has been a family-run business built over the last 30 years. To be able to share the Business of the Year with not only our family, but also the families of our staff and now the families of our franchisees is truly the most rewarding part,” says Nahas. ■



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# Congratulations

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR!!

Congratulations Tony and Peter,  
to your Team and Franchisees on this outstanding achievement.

*"Eat Like You're Family" has never tasted so good!!*





# 2019 ANNUAL FALL DINNER

HALIFAX CONVENTION CENTRE

October 30, 2019

Thank you, to all 850 of you, for attending the Halifax Chamber's 2019 Fall Dinner. It was a night of "disruption" with our four keynote speakers and their distinct stories on disrupting industries and ideas. Eastlink made a surprise \$5,000 donation to Stewart McKelvey's charity of choice, Business is Jammin' and we were all able to learn more about the great work they do with youth in the community.

# THANK YOU!



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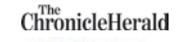
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