

LEARN ABOUT THE 2024 BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS NOMINEES

New Business Excellence

Vic Zajarny – RNR Garage:

As someone who retired in 2023, Vic saw the opportunity to serve some elders who needed mechanical work done on vehicles who couldn't get in elsewhere, in doing so many others started reaching out for work as well leading him to come out of retirement and opening a mechanic shop to serve those in need at a good price

Heidi Warren – Wildflower Boutique:

Heidi had a vision to open her own floral and home decor-themed shop last year and once she found a space she got to work and brought her vision to life. In addition to hiring employees, Heidi has supported local businesses and creatives, by giving them a space to showcase their products. She supports the dreams of youth as well in their entrepreneurial endeavors by purchasing their handcrafted goods and selling them in her store. Heidi has a joyful spirit and is so welcoming anytime you walk through the door of her store.

I want to nominate Heidi Warren for the New Business Excellence Award for the year 2023 even though this deserving entrepreneur could be nominated for the People's Choice Award, Customer Service Excellence-Retail Award, Fresh New Image Award, Business of the Year Award, Rising Star Award, Mentorship Award or the Business Leader of the Year. Heidi turned a dilapidated property into a beautiful boutique that is not only inviting from the outside but also a gorgeous peaceful and happy inside space. She is tirelessly assuring her boutique is filled with beautiful flora and darling gifts that are either manufactured or hand-made by local artists. She always has a happy greeting for every client who visits her boutique.

Heidi purchased an old building downtown, and completely renovated it inside and outside to create an inviting, bright space. This renovation has brought new life to the street she is on, and I know this has also helped other businesses on that street to increase their customer traffic. She opened her giftware/flower boutique in Fall 2023 and hit the ground running with a service & products that weren't previously available in Dryden. Her fresh flower service is an open market style, and many of the types of flowers have not been previously available in Dryden. She is always searching for innovative, quality products to offer in her store. Her enthusiasm, excellent service, and appreciation for business are what truly make her store special. Heidi does have an employee, but she is very rarely away from her store. She is usually the face that greets every customer that comes through that door six days a week, even if it's just her voice

greeting customers while her hands are working! Heidi has also stepped up by offering her business to help support local causes near & dear to her.

I want to nominate Heidi Warren for the New Business Excellence Award. I am nominating Heidi as she has done a remarkable job bringing her vision for the Wildflower Boutique to life. This shop opened in the fall of 2023, and it has very quickly become a local favorite- which can certainly be attributed to Heidi's talent and hard work. Her dedication to restoring the building, which is home to Wildflower, has truly helped to beautify Dryden's downtown core. Heidi's attention to detail and passion for her business is very evident when visiting this space. Her store features modern decor with very reasonable price points. In the few months Wildflower has been open, Heidi has hosted events such as a hot chocolate open house during the holiday train and photos with Santa with a local photographer. These events are notable as they fostered community engagement and spirit. This shop is a must-see and the product selection, atmosphere, and lush smell of flowers will keep you coming back time after time!

Ester Patrie – Esters Asian Foods:

Esther and her husband own and operate this delightful new store in town that expands the offerings in Dryden to the scale of a big city. They are always keen on helping you find what you need and try something new. A few friends had recommended this store to me and I was not disappointed. It was overflowing with cool new things to try and some really good staples too- everything is reasonably priced.

Karsten Boss – Boss Media:

As a young entrepreneur, Karsten has taken his love of photography and has turned it into a successful business venture. As more people see his great photography work and book his services, he continues to achieve outstanding business results with more and more bookings for personal and business events. He is demonstrating an exceptional promise for continued growth and serving as an inspiration for other young people to follow their dreams of having their own businesses.

Michelle Northcott – Sacred Spaces Consignment

Michelle had a vision and leaped with a great idea to bring a consignment space to our downtown core. Her shop is a breath of fresh air to our retail sector. It's always nice to pop in for a visit and see what new treasures are there. Her business is environmentally friendly as it lends itself to the recycling of clothes. As a person who loves clothes in a town with a limited selection, it's awesome to find pieces from all over in her shop. She has a warm and friendly personality and is always a pleasure to visit.

People's Choice

Heidi Warren – Wildflower Boutique

In addition to bringing her vision to life with the creation of the Wildflower Boutique, Heidi is an active community member. She supports and volunteers for youth sports like Dryden Minor Hockey and Ball. She donated proceeds from her first-ever Santa Claus photo day to Northern Critters in Need and she supports her daughter's fundraising for the Dryden Regional Health Center by having a permanent space to display her art for sale.

Mike Sveinson – Dryden GM Ice Dogs

Mike leads by example his hard work ethic and positive attitude are exemplary. Mike runs several businesses. And leads the Dryden Ice Dogs executive. By far his hardest job is dealing with the league, the staff, and coaches along with ensuring 25 players have good billet homes and are Happy. The tourism brought to Dryden is astonishing. Dryden is known from coast to coast from Ukraine to New Zealand. Whenever we travel, we meet someone who knows an Ice Dog. Mike Sveinson is an asset to Dryden an asset to Dryden GM Ice Dogs And deserves recognition.

Jed Nixon – IG Wealth Management

Jed is probably the most reliable, likable guy in Dryden. Every single interaction he has with clients, or the public is extremely powerful. I can't say enough nice things about Jed :)

Karen Mol – Cloverbelt Country Meats

Karen was historically highly regarded as a meat manager at Safeway, and since becoming the manager at Cloverbelt she has continued her great work there. She is very responsive to questions about the products and ensures she can provide options for any budget. She proudly partners with and promotes local agriculture. Recently, Cloverbelt welcomed DHS students to teach them how to make sausage. She is always seeking new partnerships with small business owners to promote local products. Karen is a personal friend as well and I've noticed she always speaks very positively of her team and seems to consider them like a family. The Cloverbelt Facebook page is very informative and even provides amazing meal ideas. Karen has expanded the product line and has brought in other NWO products such as cheese and chocolate. Karen is innovative and continues to take courses to increase her knowledge of safety protocols, funding, and products. She promotes "consumable gifting" for occasions. Karen loves living in Machin and is an active visionary in her community in addition to supporting local farmers. Karen's exemplary customer service and positive attitude make her a perfect candidate for "people's choice".

Judy Crigger (Nee Ostman) – Dryden Go-Getters

Believing strongly in the value of enjoyable social activities for the health and well-being of Dryden's senior population, Judy Crigger has made it her mission to grow the Dryden Go-Getters Senior Activity Centre to meet the ever-increasing needs of the community and surrounding area. As a VOLUNTEER member of the Board of Directors for the last 12 years and President since 2020, she has worked tirelessly to build on the strong legacy of its past leadership, and most recently led the completion of a significant building expansion in 2023. Given the challenges of COVID, increasing supply chain costs, and resulting budget issues, the road to completing the expansion project was a difficult and emotional test for any leader. Judy worked full-time over the almost 3-year project to address these challenges and to ensure the Go-Getter's plans for the community would be realized. The newly expanded Centre was officially opened on August 30, 2023. Judy also regularly contributes to Community Planning Sessions as an advocate for the needs of seniors in the community. Judy's energy and enthusiasm continue to lead the Go-Getters, constantly innovating exciting new ways to raise funds for the sustainable operation of the Centre. She is highly motivated by the continued growth in membership, the expanding range of exciting activities, and most of all, the many smiling faces at the Centre.

Rising Star

Niki Paterson – Loving Suds

They have been becoming an increasingly popular business to find homemade soaps and other products provided by people in the community.

Rhonda Beckman – The Clever Corvid

I have witnessed Rhonda bring her dream of building an art studio in the Dryden area to teach and share her passion for art with people of all ages to life. She shared the process on social media and despite being busy working she was creating this space at the same time. She brings her love of art and teaching skills to people in person and through online teaching and now she can host physical classes in her beautiful new Bird Nest studio.

Logan Scott – Adult and Teen Challenge of Central Canada

Logan took the initiative to acquire additional credentials as a certified addictions counselor while continuing to hold down full-time jobs - plural - all in addition to his street ministry work. His passion, commitment, and hands-on approach to servant leadership is a model and role model that inspires others with stories. Logan's story of self-discovery and growth is leading him to be part of broad enterprise solutions for regional capacity building for improved access and accessibility to mental well-being across our province. In my view, Logan is a worthwhile and deserving candidate for the "rising star" award. He is a leader among leaders who cradle others' growth out of darkness and into light.

Anthony Byers – BTS Automotive

Anthony opened his own automotive business just before the end of the year and his business has been booming ever since, he started the business on his own and he is his only employee. He is serving the community all on his own for their automotive needs. His drive, ambition, and work ethic need to be recognized!

Tourism Excellence

Mike Readman – The Best Western Dryden Hotel and Conference Centre

Mike deserves this award because he works tirelessly to create a positive guest experience. He not only represents the Best Western brand and his property, but he is also an ambassador for Northwestern Ontario and the Dryden area. He is an avid outdoorsman, a great chef, and an all-around true Northerner. He is a huge asset to our community.

Liz Gould & Carrie Doherty – We Run This City

Each year the WTRC team led by Liz & Carrie brings something new to our community and gives back in a meaningful way. They have donated to many organizations that bring tourists to the community and continue to run (pun intended) a full day of running events for locals and runners from across the region. It might be a niche event, but it offers volunteer opportunities to local youth and brings an event to our small city that hasn't been seen before. Their main purpose is to provide a healthy and active event that leads to lasting positive lifestyles. However, their bigger impact is on the community that feels the weight of their generous donations!

Customer Service Excellence – Retail

Evan Durance – Kano Reid

Evan goes above and beyond the expectation of good customer service. He remembers everyone's names, even those who aren't there very often. He asks questions to ensure he is providing the best recommendations to meet the needs of customers. He graciously orders special request items, is efficient but never makes customers feel rushed or pressured and is a joy to be around. Being part of a family-owned/operated local business is important to Evan as it provides the most welcoming service possible.

Karen Mol – Cloverbelt Country Meats

Karen has been there for a little over two years and in that time has vastly improved the retail section, making it more customer-friendly by having it look and feel more like shopping in a meat store and less like an abattoir. She has the selection of meats and cuts displayed in an attractive and organized manner, making it a pleasant shopping experience. She and the staff go out of their way to be helpful, especially in answering questions about the different products and cuts of meat. The new coolers showcase the products, helping me to see and try new products. The service is great in that you can phone in an order one day and pick it up the next. And a bonus for me is that they

will happily carry it out to your vehicle. The quality of their products, which includes a selection of smoked meats made on-site, is first-class. I am looking forward to seeing what further changes and improvements Karen and the staff are planning for the future.

Niki Paterson – Loving Suds

Loving Suds is a beautiful store with local bath products by the Owner Nikki. Nikki is so helpful and sweet to her customers. She also supports other local artisans by carrying their products!

Johanna Minnder – Sew Many Things

Johanna Minnder, in her shop, Sew Many Things, provides sewing alterations /repairs, crafting merchandise, handmade knit goods, fleece children's jackets, and educational classes. Open on King Street since 2014, serving customers six days a week. Johanna's reputation for expertise, efficiency, and creativity is known throughout our region. Customers arrive with worried faces, something doesn't fit, has broken or torn, is too short or long, it's an emergency, a wedding, graduation or home decor. Always smiling and humble, Jo calmly repairs, restores, and delivers quality and is the face of business excellence and service.

Chantasy Thibault – Shoppers Drug Mart

Chantasy is ALWAYS doing the most. I have never seen anyone so committed to keeping her clients informed and happy. Whether it's on socials, in person, or in skywriting (jk but I'm sure she'd go there) Chantasy is constantly engaging and getting creative on the job. She's extremely knowledgeable and advocates for her favorite products. She's always offering advice and consultation appointments so that we can have the best skin nails or hair. She's a confident dealer and she's also funny, cool, and competent. Even if you have no idea what you want- she can tell you. If you have any dealbreakers she can find the right product for you. She's a talented salesperson who knows how to market products to anyone but also isn't pushy. It's a joy walking up to her counter.

Jewel Dyck – Michelle's Top Drawer

Jewel has never missed a scheduled shift, greets each customer with a welcome smile, and is eager to help find that perfect purchase. She is friendly, and kind and makes her workplace a special place to be.

Fresh New Image

Karli Thomas Hair Salon

I work for Jaimee she did a fresh new look to accommodate her staff. She puts so much love into everything she does, and she did a Reno in the salon. It looks beautiful and she deserves to be recognized for the love she puts into her space.

Business Leader of the Year

Benjamin Feagin – AgriTech North

Ben (and his partner Fabian) at AgriTech North are continuing to provide our community with top-tier service. They are expanding quickly and meeting the demand. They have a most impressive operation and are tackling one of the most important issues facing rural and remote northern communities: food insecurity and quality. Not to mention the impacts that their operation can have addressing the devastating effects of climate change. This is a one-of-a-kind business, and we are SO lucky to have it in Dryden. They are putting fresh food into our schools & in the surrounding areas, they are innovating the ways that we grow food in NWO. They are staunch supporters of their community and frequently give back and engage with community members either in person or online. They are wizards. They have so many partnerships because they understand the value of working together to solve problems. This business is so special to our community, and it adds to the specialness of Dryden.

Heidi Warren – Wildflower Boutique

Heidi had a vision to open her own floral and home decor-themed shop last year and once she found a space she got to work and brought her vision to life. In addition to hiring employees, Heidi has supported local businesses and creatives, by giving them a space to showcase their products. She supports the dreams of youth as well in their entrepreneurial endeavors by purchasing their handcrafted goods and selling them in her store. Heidi has a joyful spirit and is so welcoming anytime you walk through the door of her store.

Heidi purchased an old building downtown, and completely renovated it inside and outside to create an inviting, bright space. This renovation has brought new life to the street she is on, and I know this has also helped other businesses on that street to increase their customer traffic. She opened her giftware/flower boutique in Fall 2023 and hit the ground running with a service & products that weren't previously available in Dryden. Her fresh flower service is an open market style, and many of the types of flowers have not been previously available in Dryden. She is always searching for innovative, quality products to offer in her store. Her enthusiasm, excellent service, and appreciation for business are what truly make her store special. Heidi does have an employee, but she is very rarely away from her store. She is usually the face that greets every customer that comes through that door six days a week, even if it's just her voice greeting customers while her hands are working! Heidi has also stepped up by offering her business to help support local causes near & dear to her.

Stephanie Calberry – Creative View

Stephanie Calberry goes above and beyond her small business to include and value other small businesses in Dryden. She is 100% dedicated to improving the lives of people in Dryden.

Theresa Romeo - McDonald's

I believe that Theresa is a great nominee for this award because she is committed to the improvement and development of her restaurant while going above and beyond for her crew and staff. She's a role model, a teacher, and most importantly someone her people can rely on. She gives young individuals a chance when other businesses wouldn't; she has worked hard to improve the performance of her restaurant over the years and continues to make a difference. Her dedication and time served is also a testament to her hard work and commitment. Her student employees refer to her as Mama T or McMama. She creates a relationship where her staff feel comfortable coming to her to find solutions to problems which is not in her job description but still something she works hard to do.

Mentorship

DHS RADish

RADish has offered 2S LGBTQ+ students and allies a supportive place for students to gather and discuss issues in and out of school, an organized voice to help address issues faced by 2SLGBTQ+ students (gendered washrooms/gym classes and locker rooms, fundraisers, board game gatherings)

Patricia Area Community Endeavours

I think PACE has been really picking up the pace when it comes to supporting small businesses in our town outreach and community engagement has been getting better and better. Looking forward to all the cool things they are doing!

Young Business Leader

Shalene Pollard – Top Coat Beauty

Shalene has been the owner of Top Coat Beauty & Pink Pine since 2013. She is very involved in the community markets throughout the year, she has handmade crafts throughout the town in stores, and many other things, etc.! She is a great leader & such a dedicated strong hard worker!

Lauren Allan – LAMA Self-Care Centre

Lauren is incredible when it comes to customer service. She constantly goes above and beyond. She is a professional at making people feel valued and taken care of. As for leadership, Lauren's the real deal. She's not just a boss, she's a mentor and a cheerleader rolled into one. She knows how to bring out the best in people, making sure everyone on the team feels heard and appreciated. With her leading the way, we're always hitting our goals and pushing for more. And let me tell you, Lauren's got a major love for our business community. She is constantly looking for ways to collaborate with other entrepreneurs, specifically in the health in wellness field. Her passion and vision are contagious, and they're what keep us all excited about what's coming next.

Blair Dingwall – Dingwall Ford Dryden Ltd.

Blair is the epitome of a Young Business Leader. He possesses an ability to make all of his customers and employees feel seen, heard, and important, and does so with a smile every day. Blair has put in countless hours to bring Dingwall Ford Dryden into the next generation, ensuring it remains a premiere employer and dealership in Dryden and really, NWO. The genuine care he has for his community is evident through the many events he not only sponsors but also spends hours volunteering, again with a big smile on his face. Dryden is lucky to have had Blair return home and should be excited about where he is going to take Dingwall Ford, his employees, and the community throughout his career.

Brendan McDonald – Boreal Audiology & Hearing Services

Brendan is the epitome of "invest in your hometown." Time and time again he is offered work back in Winnipeg where he spent the majority of his Audiology career but chooses to serve our community of Dryden instead. Brendan's business has soared in clientele over these past 2 years, reaching almost 900 clients since opening its doors in the Golden Mile Plaza. Not only is he driving his own business, but he's uplifting others as well by encouraging people like me to continue holding us to a professional standard and taking heart in knowing that businesses don't grow overnight. Brendan and Boreal Audiology is the kind of value we strive to build in Dryden.

Michelle Williams – Dingwall Ford Dryden Ltd.

It's with great pleasure that I write to you today to nominate Michelle Williams as Young Business Leader. Michelle demonstrates superior leadership skills not only within our organization but throughout the community. Michelle is a mentor for other women above, below, and at her career level. She inspires future women leaders in her profession and the community with her passion for helping. Michelle advocates for other women and enables positive things to happen in their careers. From organizing fundraisers like Girls' Night Out for the Girls bringing Chemo Care packages to those battling cancer, to taking the initiative to raise over \$71000 for our Royal Canadian Legion when the call for help was made, she is always quick to find a way to answer the call. Michelle demonstrates the ability to create and implement a vision for her team and is a visible leader as a pioneer of change within the organization.

Karsten Boss – Boss Media

At a fairly young age, Karsten has already been providing his photography services in our area and has a positive and friendly manner. I have witnessed him interacting with customers who are very much his senior age-wise and he communicates professionally and courteously demonstrating exceptional customer service. He is a leader amongst his peers. I don't know of any other students his age who have brought their dreams of business ownership to life. He created a business plan for his Entrepreneurship class for his business and is now moving forward and executing his plan. He is currently seeking grant support to expand his business. He recently provided his services to the Dream Believers charity event showing his commitment to our community.

Customer Service Excellence – Service

Kyle Hallson – MLRH Repairs Inc.

Kyle's always been helpful and now with the recent start of his business, he gets to help more and more people. He's very efficient and kind and takes the time to be personable and not at all condescending when you have questions about things unfamiliar to you. He will even travel far and wide to service other communities in the region. He makes sure that people come first during service calls and makes sure that customers are safe and satisfied always. He even offers fixed and working appliances to folks who cannot afford to buy new ones. This thoughtfulness and care is one of the reasons he deserves this award. Thank you, Kyle, for all your dedication and hard work- this community values it so much!

Jamie Daignault – Ryder Inc.

Jaime is the parcel delivery driver for Ryder Inc. She provides amazing customer service and often delivers packages on the weekend when there is a surplus of deliveries to ensure things get delivered on time. I have at times messaged Jamie on the hunt for a package being held by another courier company and she gladly assists me in locating it. Jamie is very deserving of this award!

Brent Gamble – KPE Refrigeration Inc.

To say Brent Gamble is in his element working at KPE Electrical Contracting is an understatement. By chance, he was available to repair our air conditioning at 30c when we were in a pinch. This led to a conversation regarding heating alternatives for us. Brent is well-informed about his products, friendly, punctual, and has excellent customer service skills. We are very happy with our new heat source. When he says he'll be there at a certain time he is. When he says your purchase will be here it is. And for some reason, it can't be he'll let you know ahead of time, so you are not left hanging. He certainly comes highly recommended.

Hailey Hoedl – Karli Thomas Hair Salon

Hailey goes above and beyond to make everyone in her chair feel special, and make sure they leave the salon feeling beautiful and gives them that extra boost of confidence. She also invests in her career by taking educational courses and traveling to cities for these at her own expense.

Chantasy Thibault – Shoppers Drug Mart

Chantasy makes everyone feel special when they walk in, she prioritizes each client as they come in and takes her time with each person. She accommodated my makeup for my wedding and went the extra mile to make it perfect for my special day. Chantasy is knowledgeable in her field and enjoys making people feel good with the cosmetics they choose, or she recommends.

Black Barn Farms

Sarah & Phil are using farming techniques that work with the environment and promote the healing of the land. They do tours and videos; they participate in local events to educate on the importance of green farming and healthy livestock for human consumption.

Jace Laderoute - NWO Trailer and Equipment Rentals

Jace has just started his new business and has the best customer service. He goes above and beyond to make every customer feel important. He will help in any way he can. If he can't accommodate you with his rentals he will find it for you. He does snowplow as well as does not charge his senior clients. This guy has a huge heart!!! He needs to be rewarded for his kindness towards everyone.

Morgan Fuels

Morgan Fuels consistently goes above and beyond for its customers, providing professional, personalized services to business and individual customers across Northwestern Ontario. Taking pride in ensuring customers never run out of home heat fuel, or propane all while keeping their commercial customers business' moving forward with fuel, bulk propane, gas & lubricants. With Morgan Fuels, running out of fuel isn't an option. Morgan Fuels' customers never have to worry about the safe service they will receive, the company takes special note of ensuring their staff is trained to work safely in any environment. Morgan Fuels often holds employee development sessions to ensure our staff knows how to be safe and professional while providing the best service available in the region. Along with a regimented training program, the employees are trained to keep you, and themselves, safe on the road, in your yard, or at the job site. When problems come up, Morgan Fuels is one of the few companies that will jump to help, and they deserve to be recognized.

Community Spirit

Ricci Group of Companies

If there's an event in town, you'll see the Ricci Group listed as a sponsor. from snowmachine drag races, to fall fest events and the sunset on the strip concerts. Whether it's donating the use of heavy equipment or monetary donations, Ricci Group is always eager to help. Not only do these events supply the Dryden community with entertainment. They bring in visitors from other communities, boosting our local tourism industry. Without the contributions from the Ricci Group, one would have to wonder if all these events would be possible.

Stephanie Calberry – Calberry Craft Markets

Stephanie goes above and beyond to support other businesses and individuals in our community. From fundraising and donating proceeds of salon sales to others going through a difficult time, to arranging many annual markets for home-based businesses and having all door prizes supporting other local businesses, to buying large amounts of

Smile cookies to support the community and delivering them to local schools, the community is at the base of everything Stephanie does.

Blair Dingwall – Dingwall Ford Dryden Ltd.

Blair (and the rest of the Dingwall family in Dryden) give so much back to the community but are always low-key about it and always have been. For example, they were instrumental in raising the money to fix the furnaces at the Royal Canadian Legion (speak with Cyril Ryan) and they don't want anything named after them - they are just happy to give and get results. He is young and always looking toward the future of the community. Dryden is lucky to have him.

Michelle Walter – Dryden & District Museum

Michelle runs and curates all the Dryden & District Museum exhibits. Throughout her time with the Museum, she has organized numerous after-hours community activities featuring local artisans and organizations. She has also taken up planning and hosting many extracurricular activities and seasonal programming for the community. In the museum, she welcomes as many students and young workers or volunteers as she can find and strives to include and give opportunities to workers or volunteers with physical or cognitive disabilities. She is passionate about growing the Museum's presence in our city while showcasing our local heritage and culture, and her efforts have not gone unnoticed. She is more than deserving of the Community Spirit Award.

Rainbow Alliance Dryden

RAD deserves this award for so many reasons. The impact that this group has in our community is far-reaching. In 2022, after dealing with an upset individual who repeatedly harassed and called members disgusting slurs and put-up posters around town trying to jeopardize the events RAD was hosting they did not shrink hide themselves or cancel any of their events. They fiercely protected their community members and celebrated them. They constantly show our community that hate has no place here and that Dryden is the safe and welcoming place it claims to be. Without this organization, our community wouldn't have 2SLGBTQIA+ Pride events, nor support especially for queer youth through the high school Gay-Straight Alliance. Young people need to see that "it gets better" but also that it can be better right now. RAD is a passionate advocate for justice and was recently in the news regarding the lawsuit they won that ensures that people on the internet can't call 2SLGBTQIA+ people or Drag performers a slur without consequence. This is a huge win for the community and sets a precedent that there are consequences for bad behavior and bigotry. RAD continually supports people and events on the margins: they have donated to various independent events happening in our community and elsewhere ensuring continued support for the queer community. I think that if they could win this award, we can get closer to the idea that Pride Lives Here and it's not going anywhere, because when we uplift marginalized voices, we all win.

Tom Ledoux – Dryden Home Hardware

Tom and his staff at Home Hardware were instrumental in bringing a very successful dinner theatre to the residents of Dryden in January. Not only did they donate the materials to make the complete stage set, but also donated many hours to come on-site to build it. Many guests commented on the generous donation which helps to ensure that the future of arts and entertainment is secure in Dryden.

Tom and his staff have built the set for the Thespian Theatre group for a few years now and have never charged for time or materials. Tom has worked very closely with the Thespian Theatre groups' Directors to assist in capturing the exact dimensions of the stage according to what is scripted and what space allows in our venue; ensuring all of the particular details meet with cast needs (which often changes and evolves) and that our audiences will have the best visually appealing experience. The final day after the Production Tom's staff attended to take down the set again without charge. Sunset Thespian is a nonprofit organization with any proceeds going back to our community. Tom and his staff's willingness to provide a full stage within our mutual vision is very generous and give back to our community with this generous support.

Tom has generously supplied materials from Home Hardware and staff to build, set up, and take down the theatre set for the Sunset Thespians theatre production at Best Western. Many hours and supplies are needed to have an authentic set. The community, as well as the actors, benefit from having such a beautiful set. It is an excellent way to help provide entertainment for the citizens of Dryden.

Tom Ledoux has been an avid supporter of Dryden's theatre scene since 2018. Without his generous donations of time, materials, and enthusiasm the Sunset Thespians' annual dinner theatre events would not be so effectively presented to our community. Theatrical performances such as these reflect the essence of a community and are vital to maintaining the cultural well-being of its citizens. Over the years, Tom has repeatedly demonstrated his understanding of the value of community theatre through his active involvement.

Health & Wellness

Dryden Area Family Health

The team at the Dryden Area Family Health Team goes above and beyond to provide exceptional health care in many different programs and services to people in our community and the surrounding area.

Jayme Lyle – Lyle Osteopathy

Dryden is incredibly lucky to have Jayme's expertise and dedication to health in our community.

Carly Brown – Lokah Sangah Yoga

Carly is one of a kind when it comes to authentic and passionate yoga education in our community. The yoga community in Dryden knows the difference in quality of service when they walk into LSY. Carly and her staff have had to navigate a huge shift after COVID-19 and have maintained a core group of dedicated members. There are multiple classes available always, partnerships with other wellness practitioners, and fun, unique activities at the studio. LSY members can take advantage of many different workshops and trainings that Carly lovingly curates for us. Not only do we get to take care of our physical health with the asanas but the mental and emotional health benefits of yoga and connecting with the community are unmatched!

Black Barn Farms

Sarah and Phil are using green farming techniques to produce healthy livestock. They are providing the community with a healthier alternative. Livestock raised by regenerative farming has up to 85% more nutrients. They are providing better food options and improving the environment so that is healthier for the community.

Katie Hill Doula Services

Katie has been working hard to provide Doula services in the NWO region. Not only has Katie been providing services to clients but she has also provided educational nights and education through social media. Katie has opened opportunities for mothers to connect to discuss any experiences, challenges, etc. Dryden is very lucky to have Katie.

Business of the Year

LAMA Self-Care Centre

The quality of service and care at LAMA is impeccable. I have limited experience with the services offered and wanted to try something new. Lauren immediately quashed any myths and doubts I had about trying medical aesthetic procedures. She is so reassuring and gentle, constantly checking in that you are comfortable and informed. It is an absolute joy being in her presence and her space. She has made her space so welcoming and works with the highest quality products and people (herself included). I cannot wait to see how far she goes, and I know it will ensure the longevity of her business and care for the citizens of Dryden.

Stellar Seafood

I want to nominate Stellar Seafoods Inc. for the New Business Excellence Award. With their main store located in Dryden, along with two mobile locations serving the surrounding areas, Stellar Seafoods has quickly become the go-to destination for seafood in Northwestern Ontario. One of the key reasons for their success is Vaden, the founder of Stellar Seafoods, who has dedicated 40 years to the seafood industry. His wealth of knowledge and expertise in seafood has been instrumental in shaping the business and ensuring the highest quality products for their customers. Stellar

Seafoods' commitment to customer satisfaction is evident in every aspect of their operation. Vaden's hard work, combined with his friendly demeanor, creates an inviting atmosphere that customers truly appreciate. Whether it's providing personalized recommendations or sharing his passion for seafood, Vaden goes above and beyond to ensure each customer feels welcomed and valued. Furthermore, Stellar Seafoods is not just content with serving their local community. They are actively expanding their reach by building a route to Northern Canada, with air shipments out of Red Lake. This initiative demonstrates their dedication to providing quality seafood to even the most remote areas, further solidifying their reputation as leaders in the industry. In summary, Stellar Seafoods Inc. exemplifies the qualities of a truly outstanding business. Their commitment to excellence, dedication to customer satisfaction, and innovative approach to expansion make them more than deserving of the New Business Excellence award. I wholeheartedly believe they are setting a new standard of excellence in the seafood industry, for Dryden, Northwest Ontario, and beyond.

Dingwall Ford Dryden Ltd.

It brings me great pleasure to nominate Dingwall Ford for Business of the Year.

First, their dedication to their employees is unmeasurable, with the leadership and hard work that Blair puts into the business it is easy to see why they have such long-lasting employees. Their customers are second to none, they always go above and beyond to get customers looked after.

They are heavily committed and involved in making our community a better place, from sponsoring Walleye Masters, and Fall Fest, and the tireless efforts to raise funds to keep the legion doors open. These are only a few examples of their community spirit and cannot go unrecognized.