

# Cumberland Business CONNECTOR

ISSUE 08 | MARCH 2023

## Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

2023 has been off to a fun start hosting our Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in person again after a pandemic hiatus! In partnership with CBDC Cumberland and Nova Scotia Works/CANSA, this program offers training and support to youth 18 or younger to develop a business plan. Four separate training sessions were offered to go through all the aspects of starting a business, from the initial spark of an idea to the first customer interaction. Participating youth then pitched their business plans to a panel of local business people on March 8th. All participants did an amazing job and we thank them so much for dedicating their time to this program! Our 2023 winners are: Tessa Spicer - 1st place with her business Blenders and Beyond, Ethan Douglas - 2nd place with Go Gutters and Sahara Wheaton in 3rd with Outcast Crystals! Our 4th place prize was shared between Henry Learning with his business Sky Hoop Spray and Seraphim Boland with Astral Angels! Judges had their work cut out for them! Great work Youth Entrepreneurs and good luck to all your businesses across Cumberland!

CONGRATULATIONS



## Mashup Lab

We have been pleased to offer a new FREE program in the county - Dream Business Cumberland is a fully online training program for aspiring entrepreneurs as well as existing businesses looking to creatively pivot their business in a new direction. In partnership with CBDC Cumberland and the Town of Amherst we have brought in Mashup Lab who are an industry leader in training for entrepreneurs in rural areas. This program is designed to take prospective entrepreneurs off the sidelines and get them into the entrepreneurial game by helping them determine which steps and pieces are necessary for their business to succeed and grow! This program is currently underway, with a diverse group of participants! The next, new, exciting businesses in Cumberland are on their way!



**MASHUP LAB**  
UNLEASH RURAL POTENTIAL

To learn more about any of our programs or general info follow this code to our website!



## New Staff!

We are excited to welcome the newest member to our team, Sylvia Day, who is our new Communications and Special Projects Lead.

Sylvia has many years of experience working in marketing and event planning across Canada. She also has extensive experience working with youth, and will play a key role in running the Cumberland Business Connector's youth events. She came to Rockley, Cumberland County 12 years ago, and it has been home for her ever since. Some of Sylvia's favourite things to do include: spending time in nature, gardening, connecting with her large family, and watching her son play basketball.

## Career Fairs

Another exciting youth initiative that is back after a pandemic break are our Youth Career Fairs. Our first fair will be held at Pugwash District High School on April, 19th. The goal of this event is to highlight the many excellent career and employment opportunities and pathways that are available to students after graduation, without leaving our great community. The goal is to expose students to a variety of options that exist, talk to people in those fields, and learn about careers that are of interest to them. The focus is not specifically on filling current job vacancies but is geared towards inspiring students to expand their ideas on what career paths they could take in our region.

After Pugwash we will be taking our Career Fair model to Advocate and then to other high schools. If you're a business interested in participating and connecting with local youth, please send a message to:  
[sylvia@cumberlandbusinessconnector.ca](mailto:sylvia@cumberlandbusinessconnector.ca)



All Youth Entrepreneur Participants with Justin Ott from CBDC Cumberland and Victoria Vance from NS Works/CANSA

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## Business Testimonial

Most of us are familiar with the sign for Maritime Sod along the highway outside of Amherst, the sign sits among the long rows of green, verdant grass. The company has been a mainstay there since 1968. Their top-quality sod is sold across the Maritimes from our beautiful Tantramar Marsh. Maritime Sod's management has recently changed hands from Robert Arseneau to his daughter Robyn Giffin and her husband Geoff Giffin. Robyn is the third generation to run this company, "we are still hearing of the positive impact my father had on so many individuals. I would like to make both Dad and my late grandfather proud by reinventing the farm for a new era," said Robyn.



When they took charge of the company in 2019 there were many challenges - she likens it to a sinking ship, listing to port and taking on water. Robyn was not working in business herself at the time but she had recently enjoyed working closely with small businesses as an Executive and Business Coach. For that reason, she knew that there would be help available and was delighted to find it so close to home at the Cumberland Business Connector.

Robyn reached out to the Connector's CEO Jonathan McClelland to learn about what expertise, knowledge, and direction Maritime Sod could tap into to help bring the business back to a secure and stable place. Robyn says that "Jonathan was a sounding board, and a stabilizing factor for our business. We needed the security of having someone to run ideas by, (the fact that) Jonathan has experience in the agriculture industry was an added bonus!"

Maritime Sod worked closely with Jonathan and then enrolled in the Business Connector's Business Accelerator Program working with Jason Steele and then Melissa Mills. This program offers continued support and expertise as businesses navigate their specific challenges and opportunities. The Accelerator Program guided Maritime Sod through the process of defining their values as a business, which gave them a benchmark on how to make decisions – based on their vision and values. Maritime Sod then focused on stabilizing and growing their business in a methodical manner.

"If we hadn't had the Connector's support I don't think we'd be here now. The internal knowledge from Jonathan and the Accelerator Program gave us the confidence and validation to move forward." says Robyn.

Robyn and Geoff also credit their fantastic staff for helping them come through the past three transition years successfully. Their office manager Karen Arseneau, their Farm Manager Stan Lake and all other staff have, with their dedication, professionalism, and talent helped bring the company to its current situation where it is poised for growth.

Maritime Sod's goal is to grow a top-quality product that people love and are completely satisfied with. Their experienced staff work hard to make sure each customer is treated with respect and professionalism. The company is also working to reduce their environmental footprint. "We want to see a happy and satisfied staff. A solid business that people can feel good about working in is the ultimate goal!" says Geoff.

If you are interested in contacting Maritime Sod for your spring landscaping projects, please reach out to Karen Arseneau at 902 667 7413 or visit: [www.amherstsod.com](http://www.amherstsod.com)

The Cumberland Business Connector is grateful to Maritime Sod for reaching out to us. We can't wait to see how their business continues to grow! Please email us if you think our Accelerator Program could help your business!



## 2023 AGM

**FYI!**

Our 7th Annual General Meeting is coming up in late June in Springhill at the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre. This is a free event with refreshments provided. Learn about what we've been up to and our future goals! We have an exciting keynote speaker lined up that will be announced a little closer to the date, so please stay tuned to our social media for the announcement!

Connect with us!



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