

Employee receives recognition at small business week event

by Patrica Roy

Jim Gallant received the **Employee of the Year** award at the 15th Annual Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Business Awards dinner held in Summerside during Small Business Week.

Jim has worked at the Waterfront Mall in Summerside for the past 25 years as a **Maintenance Technician**. He is responsible for assisting the Operations Manager with the day-to-day operation of the facility. Jim is also responsible for looking after the electrical, mechanical and other equipment as well as supervising all maintenance staff and seasonal help.



Jim Gallant (right) was presented with the Employee of the Year Award by award sponsor Wayne Linkletter of Linkletter's Welding Ltd. Awards in seven categories were presented at the 15th Annual Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Business Awards dinner during Small Business Week. Jim says it was an honour to be nominated and it is very exciting to win. "Having my family there to see me receive this award made it even more special," he says.

Training makes for a valued employee

"Jim is trained as a **Fourth Class Power Engineer**, and **B Class Refrigeration Technician**, making him extremely valuable to the mall's operation," states the award's citation, which was provided by his employer **Tina Mundy**, Operations Director of the Waterfront Mall. "He goes over and above what is asked of him by both the tenants and his service team. A perfect example of this is when the Oran Group took ownership of the mall. The shopping centre was without an operations manager for well over a year. Jim took it upon himself to add these responsibilities to his ever growing résumé. He was now responsible for the entire operation of the shopping centre, and he did it without ever being asked and without a raise in pay.

"Jim is always looking for ways to enhance the effectiveness of the centre's operation as well as looking after his team. He is unselfish in sharing his wealth of knowledge and ideas. Recently, a larger number of items no longer needed at the mall were being discarded. Jim took it upon himself to find buyers for these items and suggested a staff appreciation party with the profit from the sale," continues the citation.

Community involvement

Besides his paid employment, Jim says it is important to be involved in his community. He is a volunteer and a director for the Agricultural Fair and Acadian Festival. He is also a volunteer for the Evangéline Bluegrass Festival and the Red Cross. He has donated blood 95 times and hopes to reach his goal of 100. And Jim also finds time to fund raise for the IWK.

Jim is also the Prince County representative for the PEI Draft Horse Association. One of Jim's proudest accomplishments was winning the PEI Horse Pull Championship title eight times in his nine years of competition.

Demand for people trained as Power Engineers

Jim says there is a demand for people trained as a Power or Stationary Engineer. The outlook for employment into 2009 is listed as good on the **PEI Job Futures** website at www.pei.jobfutures.org

What do they do?

Stationary Engineers, commonly referred to as **Power Engineers** or **Auxiliary Equipment Operators**, operate and maintain various types of stationary engines and auxiliary equipment such as boilers, turbines, generators, compressors and other equipment to provide heat, ventilation, refrigeration, light and power for buildings, industrial plants and other work sites.

Where are they employed?

They are employed in industrial and manufacturing plants, hospitals, universities, government and commercial establishments.

For more information about the **Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce**, visit www.chamber.summerside.ca



10E
Nov/Dec 08

Collection agency wins Eastern PEI Business of the Year Award

by Stella Shepard

Krista Walsh of Montague was all smiles as she stepped on stage at the **Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce** inaugural awards banquet. Her company **KC Collect** was the winner of the **Eastern PEI Business of the Year Award**. The awards banquet held in Belfast was in conjunction with **Small Business Week 2008**.

Premier **Robert Ghiz**, the guest speaker, presented the award to Krista after his keynote speech outlined the important role small businesses will play during the economic crunch.

About the company

At the age of 25, Krista founded **KC Collect** in 2005. She became the first female on PEI to own and operate a collection agency.

This financial services company provides debt recovery and management services to small and medium-size businesses. It offers many products to help clients manage receivables, strengthen credit policies, and avoid bad debt. Krista also offers collection counselling, skip tracing, document serving, investigative research, and credit reporting.

Her start in business

Krista was a business manager for her father's business, **Barry Walsh Heating**. "During my five-year stint working for the heating company, I gained a wealth of experience in business and receivables management," says Krista. "The first time I had to ask one of our customers for money, I was extremely nervous and didn't want to make the phone call. I realized if I didn't collect the overdue accounts, the business could potentially fail. My father and I would be out of work and I wasn't going to let that happen.

"While I enjoyed going to work every day, I still wanted more. I wanted to be a leader. It was actually the year-long persistence of a family friend that made me realize that collecting money was one of my strengths. I knew that I could use this skill to my advantage."

Family support and a mentor helps build confidence

"While visiting my older brother in Winnipeg, I decided to randomly call collection agencies that I found in the Winnipeg Yellow Pages," she says. "After numerous phone calls, I finally secured a meeting with a business owner.

"When I arrived back on PEI, I was eager to begin my new venture. I thought it was going to be easy when I began the license application process. But my application was rejected the first two times.

"I was going to give up, but a family friend offered this advice: **'This experience can either make you a successful entrepreneur or a former business owner. You can give up now or you can keep going for your license.'**

Willingness to learn

"I wanted to know more about collections," she says. "I wanted to have an edge and be the best in the business. I started searching for ways to improve my skills. I read books and took success training seminars. I joined networking groups in the business community, as well as an on-line support group for collection professionals. In 2007, I completed a rigorous on-line study program. I became the first Canadian to receive a **Certified Financial Collection Professional (CFCP)** designation."

Determination pays

"In my first year of business in 2005, I had only six clients," she says. "But I was determined and willing to work long hours to build the company. Today, I have over 300 clients and three full-time office staff. With the anticipation of growth, I will no doubt be in the position to hire during the upcoming year."

Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce

"The Eastern Prince Edward Island Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting its members' businesses and the economic environment of the community," says **Mary MacQueen Elliott**, Administrator. "The Chamber of Commerce is often the first place a business, customer or visitor goes to inquire about the local living environment, area activities, and businesses or services in the area. The Chamber actively promotes our members' businesses."

For more information about **KC Collect**, call 838-7000 or visit www.kccollect.com



For more information about the **Eastern Prince Edward Island Chamber of Commerce**, visit www.epeicc.ca or contact **Mary MacQueen Elliott** at 838-4791.