

Miramichi entrepreneur wins national award

Lisa Williams grew her business from one employee to 250 in 10 years

Gail Harding · CBC News · Posted: Oct 21, 2018 4:54 PM AT | Last Updated: October 21



Lisa Williams, owner of Unicare Home Health Care, accepts her award in Ottawa on Oct. 18. (Facebook/Unicare Home Health Care)

Ten years ago, Lisa Williams says she had no job and no place to live. She was unsure what she wanted to do.

When her father asked what she was going to do, she told him she didn't know but had been happiest working for a startup company that helped seniors.

He thought she could do something like that for herself. She agreed.

"So I worked up the papers that summer and we started in 2008. Unicare was born."

Unicare Home Health Care, based in Miramichi, N.B., has grown over the past decade. Williams' hard work has earned her a national award from Startup Canada as national entrepreneur of the year.

"I started with one location and now we have six in the province," she said of her business that provides trained personal-care workers to help seniors remain in their homes.

"We need to have a standardized set of regulations and standards to deliver this kind of care across the country. I hope someone out there is listening." - *Lisa Williams*

But Williams, a former teacher, has also created two other companies around the needs of seniors and caregivers. One is a residential and commercial cleaning company and the other is a tech company to help improve communication in home care.

Her businesses employ about 250 people, a big growth after starting with only one employee.

Williams has also sat on a provincial committee that worked to create standardized training curriculum for all home support caregivers.

She said that has changed how people look at caregivers. Rather than see them just as housekeepers, Williams said they are recognized as an important part of helping to keep seniors in their own homes.

Williams became involved with Startup Miramichi when it was created and said she's also been involved in other community organizations involving entrepreneurs.

'Great honour'

"It's still kind of surreal to me," she said of the award.

"It's a great honour. It's an honour for my staff and my caregivers that go out in the field every day. It's a pretty cool feeling and it's pretty cool to bring this home to the Maritimes, the Atlantic region and to small town Miramichi."

But what Williams says she most hopes comes out of this win is her goal of seeing a national home-care strategy, which she says is needed.



Miramichi entrepreneur Lisa Williams won national entrepreneur of the year from Startup Canada. (Facebook/Unicare Home Health Care)"We need to have a standardized set of regulations and standards to deliver this kind of care across the country. I hope someone out there is listening."

The entrepreneur said she spoke about that need at the award ceremonies held in Ottawa on Oct. 18.

"We've got to start doing this because the demographics are changing so rapidly," Williams said, adding the Maritime provinces are seeing effects now.

"We don't have enough resources and we need those resources. It may not be hitting other parts of Canada but it will be and we need to be prepared for that."

While she works on that, Williams said she will continue mentoring and offering help to entrepreneurs who need it.