

## Fredericton-born entrepreneur recognized for company growth

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Fredericton-born entrepreneur Dr. Lesley Steele is one of three New Brunswickers who received Wallace McCain Institute Growth Awards as recognition for their companies' growth.

Steele is the CEO of Vet Alliance, based in Fredericton, as well as the owner of CBS Animal Hospital in Newfoundland, and operator of two other startups.

She was awarded the prize for the 10 to 40 employees division as she tripled the size of her enterprise in the past 12 months.

"I feel great, it was announced about a month ago internally so I've known for a bit but I was super excited. I had some tough competition," said Steele. "I just knew I was sitting in a room full of incredible entrepreneurs and that they didn't get to be in that room unless they were the best of the best."

Vet Alliance is a federally incorporated company that functions as an affiliate buyers group for veterinarians. Steele said they have just under 700 hospital members. She said it is the only company of its kind in Canada, and this uniqueness gives it an edge.

"There's one in Australia, one in England, one that started after us in the U.S., and we're the only one in Canada."

Steele also credits her success to her team and her business partners, as well as their dedication to balance the demands of the members and partnered companies.

"I'm fortunate to surround myself with amazing people that are able to take my ideas and throw their thoughts on board and help me to drive things forward," she said. "[We] make sure that we always treated our partnered companies with respect ... but also to treat the members with respect at all times.

"We provide loyalty programs and rebates to them on items and services that [are needed] every day in their hospitals, and also bring cutting edge continuing education locally to where their hospitals are located."

She said nurses and hospital staff need to continue their education as they work to keep their licenses, so her company brings in speakers from all over the world to companies free of charge.

"We may bring in a speaker from the United States that has a cost of \$15,000 a day, so not somebody that they can afford to bring in privately to their hospital," she said.

She said the Wallace McCain Institute is a huge catalyst for entrepreneurs in Fredericton, and the city is full of talented people.

“I do believe that there’s a great and bright future for the province and I think that we have amazing high-calibre entrepreneurs here who are really doing incredible things, if you sit in a room and listen to their stories and listen to their success,” she said.

Steele was born in Fredericton but spent a long time in Halifax. She moved back here to raise her two young boys in 2015.

“I think that we as New Brunswickers have a bad habit of blaming everybody else for why things aren’t going well in the province, and that just becomes our story after a while. But I think we need to keep in mind and remember that there are some great stories of success out there and I think you’ll continue to see that.”

She said New Brunswick has plenty of potential.

“It’s worth continuing to focus on,” she said.

One of the other two winners are Billy English, CEO of Kindred Home Care in St. Stephen. He received a prize in the over-100 employees category, and his company has employed 60 more people this year. The other is Moncton’s Karim Bhibah, president of Marathon Fluids/Bos Brothers.

English and Steele were in the same group, the seventh cohort of the Entrepreneurial Leaders Program (ELP7). Steele said their group won a \$5,000 grant to pay for speakers for their retreats.

Rick Allen, CEO of Fredericton’s Quality Engineered Solutions Ltd. was co-moderator for this group.

“I am incredibly proud of Billy and Lesley for their individual accomplishments,” Allen said in the release. “Their drive and passion is an example to be modelled.”