

Legresley excited to begin the Wallace McCain Institute entrepreneurial program

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A Miramichi entrepreneur is thrilled with the doors that will be opened through a mentorship program he's now a part of.

Guy Legresley, owner of Legresley Home Building Centre is one of 16 entrepreneurs across the Maritimes selected for an elite peer mentorship program through the Wallace McCain Institute.

The Wallace McCain Institute is an entrepreneurial program offered to business leaders from across Atlantic Canada.

Legresley was nominated for the program by Eugene Fowler, founder of Loogaroo Animation and Games, which runs its operation here in Miramichi.

Legresley said he is excited for the program as he thinks the relationships and skills will be beneficial for him and his business.

"For me it was a point in my career where it had to be me for a change," he said. "I'm hoping that with this program, it will work on good sound business judgment."

Hal Somers, president/owner of Towne Ford, is a previous participant of the mentorship program. He said one of the ways the program impacted him, was by giving him a second wind in his career.

"It gave a bit of a renewed energy, I really took on the idea of growing the business," he said. "I was pretty content and then I got the idea we can do a lot more."

Somers said his number of employees has grow from 40 to 70 since being a part of the program.

The Wallace McCain Institute is set up so the 16 entrepreneurs will meet each month to listen to speakers and discuss anything happening with their business. They will each have the opportunity to talk about any successes or failures they have had with their business and the other members will offer advice.

"It's very open so you discuss your successes, your challenges, your failures," Legresley said.

The program was started from a donation by Wallace and Margaret McCain who gave \$2 million to the University of New Brunswick to aid entrepreneurs.

"To help entrepreneurs in the region have a better chance of success," said Nancy Mathis, executive

director, who came onboard the year after the donation and it was there the program was started. It is now in its ninth year.

Natalie Forrest, owner of Marlin Travel, is also a previous participant of the mentorship program. She said the program is designed to choose entrepreneurs with various skill sets and have them aid each other in improving their businesses.

“It’s a peer group that supports one another that can offer support for each other,” said Forrest.

Forrest said the program has helped her improve her business in countless ways and she owes it to the people she met through McCain.

“There’s always so much value in it from what others are giving back,” Forrest said.

The selection process for the fellowship program includes multiple steps. Mathis said it begins by her receiving around 400 nominations. After this Mathis said she will contact all 400 and direct them to the website to research the program and see if they think it would be beneficial to them.

From this point, she said the number is usually cut down to about 100 people. From this 100 she said typically 50 people will apply. The applications then go through a team of reviewers and is cut down to 32.

Mathis said these 32 will come in for a 15 minute interview in front of nine judges. Following the interview they will go through a series of workshops. The final part of the selection includes a ceremony where they choose 16 candidates to go through the program. This is done in front of past alumni and the process is called “the choosing.”

“I know it’s very Hunger Games,” Mathis said with a laugh, referring to the three adventure novels written by the American novelist Suzanne Collins.

Legresley made it to the final choosing in 2015 when he was cut, Mathis said him reapplying showed resilience, which is an important entrepreneurial personality trait.

“I’m very impressed by that characteristic in entrepreneurs, where they can maybe have a disappointment in their world, but be tenacious enough to get back up,” she said.

Legresley said being cut and making it the very next year made the victory even sweeter.

“It’s an awesome feeling to be part of such a great program,” Legresley said.

Legresley said the reason he stuck with the program was from the success he’s seen from past candidates.

“The results that I’ve seen from them has really encouraged me to go forward with it,” he said.

Mathis said there are plenty of examples of alumni who have seen financial improvements in their businesses, but she said the ones who make her the most proud are the ones who use the peer mentorship to pull their business out of a slump.

“The ones I’m most proud of are the entrepreneurs who go through something that is so challenging for their organization,” she said. “That had it not been for the support of the group, their company wouldn’t exist anymore.”

Mathis said this ability to continue fighting is what truly defines a good entrepreneur.

“When someone is feeling really down and beat up and not sure they have the strength to get back up on their feet and try again; [they’re] an entrepreneur,” she said.

Legresley said he has faced challenges in the past being an entrepreneur but has learned from them.

“Being an entrepreneur there’s always a bit of self doubt,” he said. “It makes you realize you have to work hard for your goals and you have to accept failure and you can evolve from it.”

With the program set to begin in one week, Legresley said he is hoping to gain more business insight.

“For myself it’s to work on good business judgment,” he said. “You want more knowledge basically, most of the knowledge I have is industry based.”

Forrest said the peer mentorship was extremely beneficial for her as each person has different skills they can offer.

“There’s always so much value in it from what others are giving back,” she said.

The 16 entrepreneurs will meet once a month for a two day period for the next year. After which they commit to meeting quarterly, approximately four or five times a year, for the rest of their lives.

Somers said the meetings remain useful for him as it gives them an opportunity to check in on one another, without committing too much time.

“The meetings are very helpful, we keep them very business like,” Somers said. “Quarterly is a lot easier than monthly, monthly is quite busy.”

The meetings take place at Upper Oxbow lodge in Sillikers, New Brunswick, just outside Miramichi.

“Miramichi is being highlighted, spotlighted to entrepreneurs all over the area,” Mathis said.

Legresley said he already feels connected with the other 15 participants as simply going through the application process created relationships.

Forrest said she still keeps in touch with her group and thanks them for her successes. She said peer mentorship is among the best aid an entrepreneur can receive.

“There’s so much value in it,” she said. “Because everybody needs a little bit of help sometimes.”