

Two Sussex business owners invited to join elite leadership program

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John McNair and Blair Hyslop have been selected for this year's Wallace McCain Institute's Entrepreneurial Leaders Program. They're pictured here in McNair's store, Outdoor Elements.

Photo: Lyndsay Armstrong/Kings County Record

Two Sussex business owners have been selected to join the Wallace McCain Institute's Entrepreneurial Leaders Program.

John McNair, owner of Outdoor Elements and Blair Hyslop, owner of Mrs. Dunster's were both included in this year's cohort of Entrepreneurial Leader Program members.

Out of 419 nominations, the two Sussex CEOs were among the 28 chosen for this program.

The Entrepreneur Leaders Program aims at enriching business owners through leadership training and peer support.

“The mandate is to develop strong entrepreneurs in Atlantic Canada,” said Hyslop.

“It’s a peer-based program where groups of entrepreneurs of different sizes, shapes, and forms come together once a month and go through a sort of journey together in terms of leadership training, and personal development and professional development,” he said.

The monthly meetings will go on for one year, but the program doesn’t end there.

“You graduate from the program and stay connected forever,” said Hyslop.

After the first year members continue to meet quarterly. The purposes of this continued commitment is to support future entrepreneurs who are selected for this program.

This is the tenth year that this program has been going on.

“It’s an honour and a privilege to be a part of the group really,” said McNair.

McNair said he expects this program will build, “stronger communities and stronger business leaders.”

What impressed McNair most about the group chosen this year is the diversity. He said that different sizes and types of businesses have been represented.

Hyslop said the common denominator in the diverse group selected is that each business owner cares about their community.

“It was evident that the people that were chosen in the end weren’t just entrepreneurs looking to have economic success. They were also very interested in their communities and in their ability to change the dialogue in Atlantic Canada,” said Hyslop.

Hyslop and McNair said they hope to inspire and encourage other local business owners through this program.

“I think it shows you can be successful wherever you’re from,” said Hyslop, “At the end of the day you’re not at a disadvantage because you’re here.”

Hyslop said the Sussex community businesses have a lot of to be proud of.

“This is another example of how as a community we fight above our weight class. Here you are in this small little place with 4,800 people and we have disproportional representation in these areas,” Hyslop said, “You can take a lot of pride in that.”

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