

## Owners of Mrs. Dunster's Named Huddle Businesspeople of the Year

Dec 20, 2017 by [Mark Leger](#)



Blair Hyslop and Rosalyn Mcfate-Hyslop. Image: submitted.

**SUSSEX – Blair Hyslop and Rosalyn Mcfate-Hyslop, the owners of the beloved bakery company [Mrs. Dunsters](#), went on an acquisition spree this year, dramatically scaling up their business from a base in small-town New Brunswick. Their ambitious growth earned them the title of Huddle's New Brunswick Businesspeople of the Year for 2017.**

The couple's entrepreneurial roots together that go back 30 years – before they got married and long before they purchased Mrs. Dunster's together.

The Hyslops had both been in Junior Achievement when they were in high school and were living in Halifax as adults getting a start on their careers. They met because the local Junior Achievement chapter paired them up to recruit new program participants in Halifax area high schools.

They started going out soon after that, and their business ambitions quickly became a regular subject of their conversations.

“On our first date, we talked about wanting to own a business,” said Blair in an interview with Huddle. “We each had aspirations to be entrepreneurs. As our relationship developed, that evolved into, ‘Let’s do something together.’ ”

Decades later, after Rosalyn had stayed home to raise children and Blair had worked for a number of private companies building skills and experience, they realized that dream together when they bought Sussex-based Mrs. Dunster's in 2014.

“It was always a matter of ‘when’ not ‘if’ we would go into business together,” says Blair.

Blair was working for Barbours when Mrs. Dunster's approached the Sussex-based business about a possible sale. Barbours wasn't interested, but Blair was in the room at the time and had begun his career with Eastern Bakeries in Saint John.

"I spent my first six years in the bakery business," he said. "As they talked about the challenges and opportunities, I thought, 'wow, I think I know how to take advantage of the talents that are there to make that business better and stronger.' It kind of inspired me.

"I came home that night and I said to Rosalyn, 'I think I found the business.' Eight weeks later, we owned Mrs. Dunster's."

Initially, the Hyslops' bank thought their growth plan of three per cent a year was too ambitious, but their estimates actually turned out to be conservative as they grew 30 per cent a year instead.

They grew so quickly by expanding the number of products they supplied to stores in the Maritimes and New England, and because they also began purchasing other family-run companies that fit their vision and complimented Mrs. Dunster's roster of bakery products.

In 2015, they acquired Snairs Golden Grain Ltd. in Prince Edward Island. This year, [they bought Kredl's Corner Market](#) in Hampton and [McBuns Bakery](#) in Moncton. When the deal with McBuns closes in January, the McDunster's team will grow from 178 to 240 and the overall operations will have a combined product offering of more than 450 items.

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The Hyslops are community-minded, both in their approach to running their company and their volunteer work in the community.

They're still involved in Junior Achievement. Blair is also on the board of the United Way and the chair of its annual fundraising campaign. Rosalyn is one of the driving force behind an elementary school reading program called Good Fit Book that they're in the process of incorporating as a non-profit organization.

As parents of three kids, the Hyslops are passionate about the health and well-being of the children in the region's schools. As they continue to grow as a company and deepen their community involvements, they're looking at ways to leverage their business to help kids in the schools. This could mean doing things like lending their expertise and resources to help with school meal programs, says Blair.

"There's a sense of responsibility that comes with those businesses, in terms of their position in the hearts of New Brunswickers," says Blair.

"We have a real sense of responsibility to the community that drives our decision making. You do things differently when you're responsible to the community."