

[How These Young Entrepreneurs Are Helping Rural Seniors Stay in Their Homes](#)

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Billy English and Will Bernard. Image: Submitted

The young owners of a senior home care company are helping individuals often neglected by other companies in the industry – seniors in rural areas.

[Kindred Home Care](#) offers a variety of in-home services to seniors including light housekeeping, medication reminders, companionship, and meal preparation.

Instead of having bricks-and-mortar locations in all the communities they operate in, they have managers that work from home in the communities their home care workers serve. The company does have one office location, which is its headquarters in St. Stephen.

“Our model is very different in this industry,” says Will Bernard, Kindred Home Care’s chief operating officer. “Even though we’re big and we’ve centralized some things, what’s really important to us is we want to make sure we’ve got regional teams that are close to where the clients are and where the caregivers are.”

“[The caregivers] need to know the clients and understand their needs and their situation and what’s going to actually keep them home. On the other side, [the seniors] need to know the caregivers and to understand their personalities and their skill sets.”

Paul English founded Kindred Home Care in 1986. At that time, the company offered family support services, such as teaching life skills to parents and supervised visits. The company expanded into senior

home care at the request of the provincial government. In 2013, Paul and his wife wanted to retire, so they sold the company to their son Billy English and Bernard.

At the time the company employed about 200 people; today it has close to 500.

“Very ambitiously, when Will and I bought the company in 2013 we decided that we’d grow by 50 percent in six months, which is a pretty ridiculous goal. We were young and naive enough to think that we could do it, so we did,” says Billy English.

“What that meant was there was a national company, Revera, that has a presence in New Brunswick and they had around 100 employees and 100 clients here. We ended up acquiring [Revera’s New Brunswick’s client and employee list] within six months of buying the company from my dad, thereby increasing to 300 employees.”

Both English and Bernard admit that their first acquisition brought on some growing pains, but say it was ultimately the right move for it’s now one of the company’s strengths when it comes to further growth. English says the company plans to triple in size over the next five years.

“We want to do that through strategic acquisitions in rural areas in the U.S. but also in Nova Scotia. We do have few clients and employees in Nova Scotia at the moment right now, but very few. We’re looking to expand in there as well,” says English.

“At some point, we may offer service in Halifax, again, we want to go into these smaller [communities], likely through acquisition because that’s what we do really well.”

Kindred Home Care has around 500 clients throughout New Brunswick in areas like Grand Manan, St. George and Carleton County. The majority of clients are referred by New Brunswick’s department of social development, but they also have private clients as well. Bernard says servicing rural areas has always been a part of the company’s focus.

“We started as a rural company,” he says. “We started here in St. Stephen. I think that’s always been part of the DNA. We were in the rural areas and so as we’ve expanded, we’ve expanded into the cities but also continue to be in rural areas because we recognized we know how to do them well and we know a lot of others aren’t as well equipped to be able to do them.”

“We’ll go into areas that a lot of our competitors won’t go into. What people think right off the top of their heads is, ‘let’s go into a bigger area because it’s a bigger market,’ but there’s a lot to be said for expanding into small rural area,” says English.

It’s great because you’re expanding into a community where the people in the community care about the seniors that are in that community. You get a lower turnover in rural areas and the relationship between caregiver and client is a stronger one we find.”

Though there may be competition in the senior home care sector, New Brunswick’s ageing population offers some big opportunities for businesses, says English. He says Kindred Home Care has already been adopting new technology that helps change the way seniors are cared for at home

“Right now we have a system where if a caregiver doesn’t show up to the client’s house within a certain number of minutes, then our team gets an alert and they can respond to that immediately,” says

English. “Where a lot of other companies you wouldn’t actually know if somebody didn’t arrive ... so our system will tell us that right away so we can follow up and respond within minutes.”

They are also in the process of working with big data to figure out trends that can help curb the amount senior hospital visits.

What we’ve been doing is collecting a lot of data related to this. Like what caused the need to go to the hospital? How long were they in the hospital? Did they go back home or did they go to a nursing home?” says English.

“Then we can cross reference that with other data points, like was the caregiver present when the event happened in the home that required a hospital visit? How much care were they receiving? There’s a whole list of these types of things. When we’re able to collect all this data, then we start looking for trends.”

The region’s ageing population also has lots of room for new startups, especially in tech, that come up with new, innovative solutions. Solutions that not only help senior’s quality of life but could also reduce the overall costs of healthcare in the province. English says Kindred Home Care is excited to partner with these new companies in the future.

“We’re collecting a whole bunch of data because we want to be involved in some of these startup or technology companies to roll out possible solutions in this industry or looking for opportunities within this silver economy,” says English. “We think because we’re young owners of a home care company and pretty geeky ourselves, we’re well positioned to try out and pilot a lot of these technologies and really have an impact.”