

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

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We are looking for a
volunteer with a
business background
To serve on our
Business Investment
Committee,

For more info call the
RRFDC at
274-3276

2008 CUSTOMER SERVICE CHALLENGE

For the fifth consecutive year, we are excited to be holding our Customer Service Challenge. It has been a very popular program and we are ecstatic that the Business Community continues to participate in the challenge every year.

The shopping will begin soon. Every business that has signed up will now be shopped 3 times and evaluated on a variety of different topics.

There are so many different facets to customer service. It is more than being able to answer a customer's question and having stock on your shelves. It also includes having your steps free of snow and ice, ensuring your windows, floors and shelves are clean and making sure your hours and methods of payments are posted clearly. It also means acknowledging every customer with a verbal greeting, making

eye contact and smiling, ensuring your employees are properly dressed, providing a farewell salutation and having knowledgeable staff. In our challenge, the businesses will be rated in all of these areas and more.

The great thing about our challenge is that the purpose of it is to ensure businesses are providing good customer service at all times. This is what we are encouraging. It is a known fact that good customer service equals repeat customers. Businesses that have won the challenge in the past should be proud of this and express it freely. Customers should also encourage the businesses in which they receive good service from to enter the challenge.

Our 2007 Winners were:

- Energy Fitness Centre
- Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- Fort Frances General Supply
- New Life Clinic
- Norlund Oil (2004) Ltd

- Northridge Funeral Home
- Northwoods Gallery & Gifts
- Shoppers Home Health Care
- Super 8 Motel
- Warehouse One

2007 Honourable Mentions:

- Curves for Women
- Drs. Lidkea, Elliott & Lidkea
- Global Gaming
- Green's Countrywide Furniture
- Kreger Sales & Service
- McTaggart's
- NCDS Career Works
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Skills & Employment Source
- The Corner Closet

Who will be named the 2008 Customer Service Champions? Look for the announcement in May 2008.

Are you up for the challenge?

Good luck to all the businesses who have signed up!

NEW MUSIC AGENCY IN FORT FRANCES

A young entrepreneur has started his own business here in Fort Frances. Andrew George has launched All Good Projects, which will cater to performers along the Thunder Bay to Winnipeg corridor. George received \$15,000 from NOHFC under their Northern Prosperity Plan to help him get started. He offers a wide range of Video/Audio recording services, including, weddings, events/corporate videos, and commercials for web or television. You can also record your band or create a demo. We wish Andrew George and his new business good luck and congratulations. If you would like more information, please contact Andrew George, All Good Projects at 275-8097 or Andrew@allgoodprojects.com

NORTHRIDGE FUNERAL HOME



2007 Customer Service Champion

Jason Lilley, Owner
Northridge Funeral Home
with
Russ Fortier, Chair
RRFDC

The notion of customer service in the funeral home business may not be immediately apparent, but as Jason Lilley says, in fact: "...it is a matter of extreme priority."

Jason is the owner/operator of the Northridge Funeral Home Ltd., situated roughly at the centre of the district next to Highway 11 just west of Emo in the Township of Chapple. "We serve you once," said Jason. Additionally: "We are dealing with families and friends during an event of high emotion, feelings of loss, and possibly also who have concerns about cost."

In this context, it is necessary for Jason's staff to show the

highest regard for the people they serve, and this is a standard he strictly enforces both on them and on himself. Jason is a licensed funeral director, trained at Humber College. The staff is from the nearby communities, and they have expertise in floral arrangement, beautician services, and monument preparation.

As needed, Northridge can provide a "start to finish service", including all aspects of dealing with the body, funeral services and related notices, and monument preparation. Pre-arranged and pre-paid funeral services are an option. Also Northridge has access to the Rainy River Cremation Services in International Falls, and thus can forego the need to transport the

body to the only other regional cremation facilities in Winnipeg or Thunder Bay.

Currently, like all funeral homes in Ontario, Northridge does not control or own a cemetery. This situation may undergo statutory revision in the near future. His funeral home is non-denominational, and it can add or remove religious symbols and aspects of the service as requested.

Jason grew up on a farm near London, Ontario and began working in the funeral home business in that area. He was drawn to the district by the chance to own and operate an independent funeral home.

Written by Stephen Challis

Self Employment Benefits Program

Are you currently on EI? Have you been on EI in the last 3 years or maternity/paternity benefits in the last 5 years? Are you considering starting a business? The SEB program may be just what you need to get you back into the workforce. If you meet these requirements and have a business idea, give us a call to find out how you can collect your EI benefits and start and run your business at the same time. This is an excellent program to help entrepreneurs get started on the road to success. Give us a call or attend one of our SEB Info Sessions to find out more about this government initiative.

STORE FRONT LOANS

Would you like to spice up the front of your building? Needing to replace your outside sign? Has your building façade seen better days? Then maybe we can help. Spring is the perfect time to look at giving the front of your store a new look, and the RRFDC can help. We can provide a loan up to \$10,000 to improve your store front, walkways, awnings, lighting, signage, windows and so much more. These changes could attract new customers, enhance the shopping experience, increase sales and keep up with the competition. Plan now for spring construction and give us a call or stop in the office for more information on this exciting program!

RRFDC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2007-2008

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NORTHWOODS GALLERY & GIFTS & GOURMET OUTFITTERS

Northwoods Gallery and Gifts is the launch point for the artistic vision and entrepreneurial drive of Ms. Connie Cuthbertson. On the second floor she also runs Rafters Gallery and, across the street and mid-way down on the same block, is Gourmet Outfitters. These enterprises, along with a handful of other operators' nearby businesses, anchor the Scott Street shopping destination.

Connie's said: "I want my customer's to know they will be 100% satisfied before they even walk through the door." "On a personal level this is important to me, and I try to instill it into my staff." "We always strive to do the little extras for our customers like delivery service."

Connie started an art framing service in 1986, and as her children grew, she moved to the storefront in 1998. New ideas kept emerging, and two years ago she launched the kitchen equipment outlet. A bridal registry and mini-trade show related to weddings have also seen good uptake.

The businesses complement each other and bring to the market quality items at competitive prices. Her greatest satisfaction is when regular customers bring their out of town guests to "their store." In the art gallery she is able to exhibit her own paintings and other work of a similar genre.

Simply walking into Northwoods, whether to browse or buy, is an experience. Connie designed and directed the expansion and renovations to the building with the aim of creating "another world for the visitor to enter." This included, amongst many details, the application of seven coats of polyurethane to the floors and log beams.

Connie listens to her customers and tries to build trust. "If someone says: this is not what I was thinking." "My immediate reply is: let's see what we can do to make it work."

Written by Stephen Challis



2007 Customer Service Champion

Connie Cuthbertson & Staff
with
George Emes, RRFDC

CONGRATULATIONS GEOFF GILLON, EC.D.(F)

The Board of Directors of the Rainy River Future Development Corporation (RRFDC) would like to announce that Mr. Geoff Gillon, Ec.D.(F) Regional Economic Development Manager, has been elected President of the Economic Developer Council of Ontario (EDCO) for a one year term. Mr. Gillon assumed his duties at the 2008 EDCO Conference in Toronto where he had the opportunity to meet with various government Ministry Staff. EDCO, a provincial association with over 600 members, strives to provide economic development practitioners with vital professional development and information services. We wish Mr. Gillon and EDCO all the best in this coming year.



WATCH FOR OUR UPCOMING SEMINARS ON:

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UNDERSTANDING
& USING YOUR
FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS

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Phone RRFDC at
274-3276

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check the website for the
latest updates

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SELLING ONLINE SEMINAR

Is your business e-biz ready?

Date: Thursday, March 13, 2008

Learn how to sell and market your products or services online at this 3 hour workshop.

Time: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Location: Rendezvous (upstairs)

Topics include:

- Selling and buying online
- Enhancing and maximizing your website
- Online security
- Cost saving internet marketing strategies
- And much, much, more...



Registration fee: \$10.00

Refreshments provided.

Sign up today! Seats are limited so don't be disappointed.

To register call 274-3276 or email angela@rrfdc.on.ca

Get your questions answered here!

"It is better...to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong than to always be right by having no ideas at all." Edward DeBono