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Old Tin Shed wins Canadian Retailer of the Year award



By Nate Smelle

Local business owner/operators Janis and Peter Whitehead and their daughter Dagny Musclow have reason to celebrate with their team at The Old Tin Shed store in Bancroft. Recently the Canadian Gift Association (CanGift) announced that Bancroft's The Old Tin Shed as the 2014 winner of their coveted Canadian Retailer of the Year award. CanGift is a national not-for-profit association dedicated to improving competitive capabilities and business effectiveness by giving suppliers and retailers, opportunities to interact in Canada's $10 billion giftware industry.

When the mother daughter team decided to open their enchanting retail outlet in 2002, Musclow said they wanted to create a store that was more than just a place to buy things. The idea, she explained, was to create a shopping experience. The decor in the space is packed with all sorts of one-of-kind gifts, clothing, jewellery, decorative iron hooks, rusty old signs and hand-crafted picture frames. Definitely more than it is possible to look at in just one visit.

The award is based on criteria that are vital to retail success including: visual merchandising and store design; business achievements; advertising and public relations; community involvement; and originality and innovation. Once a retailer is short listed by the judges, a secret shopper visits the store.

?Customer service is what we value the most,? said Janis.

?Treating our customers well and making them feel special. You want to provide experience for them so that it's not just shopping, it's an experience and a feeling they will remember. Giving back to the community is also very important to us. We do a lot of donating and sponsoring, and then actual hands-on involvement.?

Through Peter's past work on Bancroft council and as chair of the BBIA; and through Janis's volunteerism and work on the board of directors at the Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce, the two have been actively working to help make Bancroft a world-class destination. The Whitehead's believe the overall aesthetic of the town depends upon how appealing the buildings and businesses operating there are in the public's eye. They feel that businesses especially need to be attractive to the eye and inviting to both locals and visitors if the community truly wants to encourage sustainable and prosperous economic development.

?The outside of your building should reflect who you are on the inside, and so many businesses miss that? said Janis.

?That has been the whole focus of the BBIA over the last few years; to help change the appearance of the town,? Peter added.

?You take a look at the downtown and when you drive down the main street you ask questions: Which business is telling me that I want to go in there? Which businesses appearance can i get at any strip m in all in Scarborough or wherever. We've had some people working with us outside who told us that it was amazing to see how many people slowed down to take a look, and then turn around and came in.?

The team at The Old Tin Shed will be officially awarded at a reception held during the Spring Toronto Gift Fair (Jan. 25 to Jan. 29).

The Old Tin Shed is located at 25 Sherbourne Street in Bancroft, and is open throughout the holiday season on Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Friday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and also on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information visit www.theoldtinshed.com.