

## R&L Buslines partner with TROUT



By Sara Gottardi

Following the devastating fire that happened on Saturday, March 28 at the R&L Bus Lines yard, both owners and operators Wendy and Laurie Evans spoke only positive of a new and fresh beginning for their business and upcoming partnership with Community Care North Hastings. Having nobody gotten injured and still having sections of their business still intact, along with having been able to have saved some important files, Laurie said, 'all you can do is brush it off and keep going'. When talking about the fire Wendy says, 'We're doing alright, what can you do right? You don't have any choice so you just gotta put one foot in front of the other and keep going. It could have been so much worse, we're lucky we had this (the shop) and that nobody got hurt.'

The fire was spotted at 9 a.m. in the morning and plenty of staff, fire crewmembers and volunteers from the community pulled together to help the Evans salvage what they could from the blaze, Laurie said, 'we have an awesome community and an awesome group of drivers and team.' Buses were up and running only a few short days later, a loyal testament to the devoted community and with that, a new business endeavor also.

Steadily moving forward Community Care North Hastings and R&L Bus Lines are embarking on an exciting new Private/Not for Profit partnership together as both businesses will benefit in operating together. They will be able to expand greater in working in conjunction with one another.

Laurie says, 'The way we'll be benefited is the fact that we're in the transportation business, that's what we do. We provide services for school children, treasure services anywhere in Ontario, and taking this on, we have our own mechanics, and our own garage facilities.' 'The benefits are high for both sides as the partnership, as Gord MacDonald said, 'makes good business sense.' Laurie says, 'partnering with the TROUT, we're taking the current schedule that we have now which puts us into certain areas, and there's more areas to get into which we will hopefully, through Gord soliciting it, so we can grow and get out into the surrounding areas that are a little bit more untouched.'

'The partnership came about while talking quite a bit, a few months ago and discussing what Gord thought about this idea,' Laurie says, 'and so, with me, I thought it was a good opportunity to expand our business and to be able to hopefully build the community transit in Bancroft better and possibly bigger.'

R&L Bus Lines have already ordered a new 24-passenger coach style buses in anticipation of their expanded and hopefully continually expanding partnership with Community Care North Hastings Tour and charter business. The potential for growth is immeasurable and all in each partners favor.

'For us, this has been my first month of operation and you find out people do need this service because not everybody has a car, not everybody has family and so there's a lot of people who do depend on the bus to get them to their Tuesday or Friday appointments, or Sunday church. With that, it's kind of nice too because you're getting a bit of satisfaction knowing that you're transporting people around,' Laurie said.

'There are a lot of little hamlets,' Laurie says, 'Coe Hill, people out in Gilmore, Bancroft's a big surrounding area and it's a hub for a lot of individual hamlets within 50-60 kilometers. You have Whitney, Madawaska, Barry's Bay, Combermere.' The potential for

growth and increase of efficiency is grand on many levels and gives plenty of opening opportunities to the community and surrounding areas to be available and open to be enjoyed by surrounding areas otherwise difficult to reach alone.

Both organizations will flourish in this partnership as the further in business they lead, the more each side can lend a hand to the other with what they offer specifically to one another that they otherwise might've not had. They will be helping not only one another in this journey of business, but also providing an exceptional pitch to start something new and exciting that will change and assist peoples lives that live up North.

Laurie said, "this is a good opportunity for the partnership of R&L Bus Lines and Community Care North Hastings, to do what they're doing. I think it's just the start of something good to happen, hopefully the municipalities and the people that fund this will get behind it and make it happen and help us along the way, so everybody can use it."