

# 'We are Going to be Stronger and Better than ever'

Submitted by Sherry Martell

A phoenix rising from the ashes will be a prominently displayed feature at the new NovelTea book store and café when it reopens later this year.

Café owner Vonda Hazard was the guest speaker at the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce Awards Gala, held online on April 27, and spoke about the challenges her small, family-owned business faced during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. These difficulties were further compounded in September when the business was completely razed by fire.

She said it was during this



devastating time she realized the business, which had been operating in downtown Truro for six years, was so much more than a physical meeting place.

"I remember just that realization, that the building of NovelTea was gone but the spirit and community of Nov-

elTea was more alive and stronger than it had ever had been," said Hazard. "We knew that we hadn't just built a business but we built this community of support and love around us."

She said it's acts of kindness and a rally of support that make it possible to get through any tragedy.

"Businesses, we are still in the thick of this," said the small business owner. "Know that your business is not just a service that you are offering to this community, but that you actually are a part of the fabric of the community. That what you offer to the community is a human touch. You offer kindness and that your customers notice."

"I truly believe as we go forward into 2021, that not just NovelTea, but all of down

town Truro, all of the town of Truro, all of Colchester County, all of Nova Scotia, we are all going to rise like a phoenix out of these ashes. We are going to be stronger and better than ever."

Due to COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, the Chamber cancelled its annual gala, a traditional April event, and moved the celebration online for 2021.

"It was important during these turbulent times for business that we not only try and host a gala for members, but try and shine a light of hope for all those in attendance," said Chamber President Matthew Mossman. "We also wanted to continue to set the example of how successful virtual events can be so members could join us safely from their homes or offices."

During the evening celebration, Mossman presented Past-President Ron Smith with a plaque recognizing his two terms serving on the Board of Directors from 2019 to 2021.

Two local businesses were also recognized during the inaugural virtual Awards Gala. They are Carter's (Truro) Lim-



Vonda Hazard, owner of popular downtown Truro café and book store NovelTea, was the guest speaker at the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce's 131st annual Awards Gala, held on April 27 online. (Submitted)

ited Paints, receiving the Community Credit Union Business Excellence Award and Karen Baillie of Elegant Steps, receiving the BDC Business Person of the Year.

"Being in business for 131 years is truly commendable and Carter's Paints has certainly been able to adapt to change and we have seen them grow over time," said the President "Their business not only supports Colchester County but regionally as well, and has helped Colchester have its place on the business map."

"Our Chamber is proud to share our anniversary of 131 years with Carter's Paints."

He said Karen Baillie was a perfect choice for the Business Person of the Year award recognizing her leadership in the

community, willingness to advocate for local business and desire to help others in any way she can.

"Elegant Steps has been a staple in our community since the early 90's and her dedication, not only to the success of her business, but helping with the success of those around her is commended."

The Chamber represents more than 450 businesses in the Truro and Colchester region. The 2021 Awards Gala can be viewed on the Chamber's YouTube channel. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZAi2vepchg&t=881s>)

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## Business Excellence

### Carter's (Truro) Limited Paints

The Community Credit Union Business Excellence Award recognizes a business that has exhibited visionary leadership; achieving growth by introducing new products or ideas, expansion or exportation of goods or services and valuing employees and safety in the workplace.

The business is actively involved in the community through fundraising and partnerships in support of organizations or individuals working to better the community. It establishes partnerships and supports the local business community with leadership while actively looking to the future, focused on long-term results and job creation.

These qualities are exemplified by Carter's (Truro) Limited Paints, which clear to see with its outstanding leadership and longevity in our community.

The Truro-based, family-owned company has a colourful past supplying paint to the local market for 131 years spanning five generations. Originally founded by William Porter Carter in 1890 as Carter Painting and Decorating, their customers could purchase their own paint or hire William and a crew of workers to apply it.

The Carter family continued to expand their offerings to customers when in 1932, the founder's son Elwin Carter took over the business and added a gift shop. Along with building their reputation as a quality paint store, they sold China, did picture framing, wallpapering and supplied custom drapery and blinds. The business continues to offer drapery service today.

In 1970, Doug Carter, was the third generation to take the helm of the business. Carter, a former mayor of the Town of Truro, handed the reins of the business to his son



Mark in the late 1980s but continued to work at the paint supply store until January 2013.

Mark launched their wholesale business PAINT SUNDRY ATLANTIC in 1989 that sells paint sundries to other paint stores in NS, NB, PEI, NFLD.

Today, Mark is joined at the family business by his son Jeremy, the fifth generation.

The more than a century of successful operation is attributed to a combination of customer service and community support.

Taking a step back in time, the business was originally located in downtown Truro at the corner of Walker and Prince streets. It expanded to a new location in the Truro Industrial Park in 2000 including a warehouse of more than 1,900 different painting supplies distributed to stores across Atlantic Canada.

Adapting to changing consumer demand has added to the resiliency of the business. One of the biggest changes the painting industry faced was the introduction of vinyl siding in the late 1950s which continued to gain popularity with home owners. However, the introduction of new product lines, popularity of decks at homes created new revenue streams.

New technologies, new equipment, new product lines and a newly launched E-Commerce capable website, built as part of our Chamber's E-Commerce project, have all contributed to the business's success.

In the early years, customers could select a shade

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from about 100 tints and now the business offered more than 5,000 different colours and 50 lines of paint.

The family members and employees support the community by donating to several fundraisers during the years, the Colchester East Hants Hos-

pital Foundation, as well as donating several gallons of paint to the new food bank.

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce is pleased to honour Carter's Paints with the 2021 Community Credit Union Business Excellence Award.



Georg Oberprieler, left, CEO of Community Credit Union Truro, presents Jeremy Carter, of Carter's (Truro) Limited Paints with the 2021 Business Excellence Award during the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce's annual Awards Gala held on April 27. (Submitted)

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