

Restoring dignity, one precious drop at a time

February 27, 2012 - 4:30am ED MCHUGH BUZZ FROM THE 'BURBS

I know where Bedford resident Barb Stegemann will be on Wednesday evening. She'll be watching television.

Why is that worth noting? Won't many of us be doing the same? Yes, but we probably won't share her same high level of interest when she's watching CBC television's Dragons' Den.

Barb is the first woman from Atlantic Canada to successfully pitch and land a venture capital deal on that show just over a year ago. This Wednesday at 8 p.m. the program will look at some of the more memorable pitches from the past year, including hers. This should be the highest rated episode of the current season for the Den if historical trends continue.

If you haven't seen this weekly show, it features approximately five different entrepreneurs in each episode. They pitch their business idea to a panel of five wealthy business experts. The panel listens to the presentations and asks some very tough and probing questions. The panellists then decide if any of them has an interest in the business. If so, those interested negotiate with the entrepreneur the amount of money and control needed to make a deal.

This program has been on the air for six years. If you haven't seen it, I certainly recommend it.

"After the studio lights and cameras shut off, the lives of the Den's entrepreneurs can take many different paths," explained a CBC news release. "This special edition of Dragons' Den will take you across the country to reveal what's happened to your favourite pitchers, track down the most memorable disasters and catch up with some of the biggest success stories in the show's history."

In chatting with Barb, I learned she will be watching the show with 14 Wing Greenwood in the Annapolis Valley as they will be featured as well.

Barb's business idea has had an interesting journey. It began when her best friend, Capt. Trevor Green, was wounded in Afghanistan in 2006. During numerous hospital visits, she learned about his personal mission of assisting others by teaching them about the freedom of economic empowerment.

She decided to keep that candle burning by creating a new business model that does trade with nations experiencing conflict or poverty. On International Women's Day in 2008, Stegemann released a book entitled The 7 Virtues of a Philosopher Queen. It's now in its third edition.

She then launched a company called 7 Virtues that began by sourcing essential oils distilled from legal crops of orange blossom and rose from farmers in Afghanistan. This provided an alternative to the illegal poppy crop for farmers. Perfume is made from those exquisite oils. "I believe that women can flex their buying power to effect change and to reverse issues of war and poverty," Stegemann explained.

The business has expanded into Haiti where they are sourcing oil from vetiver, a perennial grass in that country. Future oils are being sourced through fair trade from countries in the Middle East and Africa to continue with the goal of empowerment.

The fragrance collection was initially carried by Mills Brothers here in HRM and at one store in Toronto. Now it is also available at all of The Bay stores in Canada and at select CANEX stores.

Photos



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ED McHUGH

"Business success has the power to restore dignity," shared Stegemann, who has now been nominated for and received several forms of recognition for her efforts with 7 Virtues.

Make a point to watch or record Dragon's Den on Wednesday. You'll get to witness a local woman trying to empower others with her vision of a better world. You'll also get a sense of the sweet smell of success.

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About the Author »

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