

# ACCESS

## ALBERTA

July - September 2001

### BUSINESS IS HOT, SPICY AND AWARD WINNING... especially if your product is Basil's Fire & Brimstone Hot Gourmet Pepper Sauce

By Jill Hilderman

*Communications & Investment Manager, AWEIA*

Margaret Simmons and her family immigrated to Canada from Guyana, South America, in 1976. Her father, Basil, was soon simmering the family recipe for hot sauce and turning up the mealtime heat for friends and coworkers in Lethbridge. These enthusiastic taste testers were the first source of market research for Simmons. In 1998, with her family's support, she decided to commercially produce the West Indian style hot sauce.

Early production took place after hours in the kitchen of a local restaurant. First sales were through farmers' markets and in Alberta specialty and grocery stores. Operations expanded to meet demand and now up to 400 cases are produced on regular two-day blitzes at Alberta Agriculture's Leduc Processing Centre. From preparing the fiery Scotch Bonnet peppers, chilies and mangoes, to labelling, packing and shipping, it's truly a family affair. Basil oversees quality control on the product that bears his name, while Mom Hilda and Grandma Marjorie handle administrative support. Simmons takes care of marketing with trade show participation, and a new Web site is her current focus.

Going from 'home recipe' to successful commercial production was quite the journey. To help move her business forward, Simmons accessed business coaching from **Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association (AWEIA)** and attended monthly networking/information events. "There is always something I can use from the business information presented...and the other women entrepreneurs are so generous with their ideas," says Simmons. She also recognizes the ongoing support, information and referrals she receives from Alberta Agriculture.



The heat in the kitchen is certainly paying off for the Simmons family. The business won first place in *Chile Pepper Magazine's* 2001 Fiery Food Challenge in Fort Worth, Texas. Then it was off to New York City to receive the "Golden Chile" award for Best International Hot Sauce. **Simmons Hot Gourmet Products** was the only Canadian hot sauce manufacturer to reach this level of competition despite 374 entries from around the world competing in 48 categories. During the competition, known as *Sizzlin on the Street with Pepcid® Complete*, the Simmons' team went on to win two additional awards.

Margaret Simmons may be reached at (403) 327-9089 or visit her Web site at: [www.firenbrimstone.com](http://www.firenbrimstone.com).

The Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association (AWEIA), with services to help Alberta women start and grow their own businesses, may be reached at 1-800-713-3558 or visit [www.aweia.ab.ca](http://www.aweia.ab.ca). ♣

# THE POWER OF PARTNERS

By Linda Chorney

*Communications Director, The Business Link*

In the business world, “partner” is typically associated with an agreement between two or more people to carry on a business to share risks and profits. Management, liability and financial contributions are usually part of the terms and conditions.

However, more individuals and organizations are finding that beyond formal agreements, forging “partnerships” or “strategic alliances” — with or without the exchange of dollars — is becoming a necessary survival tactic.

Partnerships and strategic alliances are paramount to the success of **The Business Link Business Service Centre**, Alberta’s most comprehensive business information source for entrepreneurs. These alliances enhance the Centre’s role as a “business navigator” for Alberta entrepreneurs looking for information and direction on start-up, incorporation, financing, regulatory requirements, market access, exporting, and public and private sector programs and services.

A joint initiative of the Government of Canada (through Western Economic Diversification Canada), the Government of Alberta (through Alberta Economic Development) and Economic Development Edmonton, The Business Link is a member of the Canada Business Service Centre network. It is connected to similar centres across the country to share information systems, expertise and best practices.

The Business Link enhances client services by partnering with the private sector to provide Alberta entrepreneurs with free,

basic professional advice through its Guest Advisor Program. The first of its kind in Canada, the program introduces clients to management consultants, lawyers, accountants and financial representatives who volunteer their time to discuss clients’ business concerns on a confidential, no-obligation basis over the phone or at the Centre.

TELUS, Microsoft and The Brick teamed to develop a Small Business Technology Centre within The Business Link’s resource library. Clients have free access to computer stations, complete with software and Internet access, in a home office setting. Corporate sponsors get profile, clients use computers free of charge, and The Business Link better serves clients through this unique alliance.

Relationship building doesn’t happen overnight. Partnership and alliances take planning, nurturing and management to become useful, productive and cost effective. Mutual benefits must be defined and attainable.

As you enter the world of business or look to grow your enterprise, consider the world of opportunities that partnerships can create. Strategically planned and managed, these valuable business relationships will empower you to manage risk...and success.

For more information about The Business Link, call (780) 422-7722 or 1-800-272-9675, or visit their Web site at: [www.cbcs.org/alberta](http://www.cbcs.org/alberta). ♦

## NETWORK PARTNERS COMBINE TO DEVELOP SMALL TOWN BUSINESS SUCCESS

By Carla Boudreau

Partnership and teamwork are an integral part any business and no one knows that better than Stuart Coulson and Diana Pearson, owners of **Mayerthorpe Home Furnishings** in Mayerthorpe, Alberta.

Partners in business and life, the Mayerthorpe couple bought the furniture store in October 1998 after managing it since 1993. Like many small businesses, Stuart and Diana knew it was going to take a lot of hard work and dedication to succeed, but they were ready for the challenge. However, it wasn't long after buying the business they discovered that even though they knew the furniture business inside out, they would need some additional support in financing and business services. They turned to **The Yellowhead East Business Development Corporation (YEBDC)** for help.

The YEBDC is part of Western Economic Diversification Canada's (WD) Western Canada Business Service Network that provides entrepreneurs with over 100 points of service in the West. The YEBDC helped Diana secure a loan through the **Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program** because a back injury she had suffered in her previous job as a dietary aide kept her from continuing in that position. The funding then helped them purchase the business and get started.

Shortly after the business was underway, the YEBDC referred Stuart and Diana to a WD Client Service Officer who helped them review their financial statements and develop a new strategic plan for the business. WD also helped them introduce changes in their operations that allowed them to have greater working capital.

"I didn't know there was any organization out there that looked after entrepreneurs," says Stuart. "We'd never had anyone look after us like that before."



Diane Pearson and Stuart Coulson of Mayerthorpe Home Furnishings credit their small business success to support from their community.

Not only did the YEBDC help them with the business and financing aspects of their business, they also helped them increase their network of contacts locally. Through business mixers organized by the YEBDC, the couple met with other business owners that they now partner with to increase their selection of products and services.

Mayerthorpe Home Furnishings currently employs four full-time staff and one part-time employee for delivery. They are growing every year and hope to continue the momentum.

Stuart and Diana credit their success to the YEBDC, WD and, most importantly, the people of Mayerthorpe who have supported them over the years. "It taught us to believe in our town and to support buying local."

For more information on WD programs and services, visit our Web site at [www.wd.gc.ca](http://www.wd.gc.ca) or call 1-888-338-WEST (9378). ♣



## ACCESS ALBERTA

# WESTERN CANADA BUSINESS SERVICE NETWORK - *Alberta Style*

The Western Canada Business Service Network of professionals can help you find what you need to establish a business or make it grow with services ranging from practical information and funding options, to counselling and support. In Alberta, network partners include:

### **Western Economic Diversification Canada**

Suite 1500, Canada Place	Suite 400, Standard Life Bldg.
9700 Jasper Avenue NW	639 – 5 Avenue SW
Edmonton AB T5J 4H7	Calgary AB T2P 0M9
(780) 495-4164	(403) 292-5458
1-888-338-WEST (9378)	

### **Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association**

#250, 815 – 8 Avenue SW	#100, 10237 – 104 Street NW
Calgary AB T2P 3P2	Edmonton AB T5J 1B1
(403) 777-4250	(780) 422-7784
1-800-713-3558	

### **The Business Link**

#### **Business Service Centre**

#100, 10237 – 104 Street NW  
Edmonton AB T5J 1B1  
(780) 422-7722  
1-800-272-9675

### **Calgary Business**

#### **Information Centre**

#250, 639 – 5 Avenue SW  
Calgary AB T2P 0M9  
(403) 221-7800

### **La Chambre économique de l'Alberta**

8929 - 82 Avenue NW  
Edmonton (Alberta) T6C 0Z2  
(780) 414-6125 or 1-888-414-6123

### **Community Futures Development Corporations**

Business Development Centre West, Cochrane  
(403) 932-5220  
Chinook CFDC, Taber  
(403) 223-2984  
Crowsnest Pass Business Development Centre, Blairmore  
(403) 562-8858  
Drumheller Regional Chamber of Development & Tourism  
(403) 823-8100  
East Central Alberta CFDC, Viking  
(780) 336-3497  
East Parkland Community & Business Development Corp., Mirror  
(403) 788-2212

Entre-Corp Business Development Centre, Medicine Hat  
(403) 528-2824

Fort McMurray Regional Business Development Centre  
(780) 791-0330

Highwood Business Development Corp., High River  
(403) 652-3700

Lac La Biche Regional Community Development Corp.  
(780) 623-2662

Lakeland Community Development Corp., Bonnyville  
(780) 826-3858

Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corp., Two Hills  
(780) 657-3512

Lesser Slave Lake Community Development Corp., Slave Lake  
(780) 849-3232

Lethbridge & District CFDC  
(403) 320-6044

Lloydminster Region CFDC  
(780) 875-5458

MacKenzie Economic Development Corp., High Level  
(780) 926-4232

Peace Country Development Corp., Peace River  
(780) 624-1161

The Reach Corporation, Smoky Lake  
(780) 656-2110

Red Deer & District Business Development Corp.  
(403) 342-2055

SMEDA Business Development Corp., Beaverlodge  
(780) 354-8747

Southwest Alberta Business Development Institute, Pincher Creek  
(403) 627-3020

Tawatinaw CFDC, Westlock  
(780) 349-2903

Treaty Seven Economic Development Corp., Calgary  
(403) 251-9242

West Central CFDC, Warburg  
(780) 848-2222

West Yellowhead CFDC, Hinton  
(780) 865-1224

Wild Rose Economic Development Corp., Strathmore  
(403) 934-6488

Yellowhead East Business Development Corp., Sanguo  
(780) 785-2900

Community Futures Network Society of Alberta, Medicine Hat  
(403) 529-6180