

Tiny homes, big returns

by Stella Shepard

Mark Mahar and Sherri Spatuk are investing their time and energy into building an alternative housing business.

Their business, **M4G Alternative Housing** (M4G stands for My Four Girls) opened in January 2017 and is located at their home in Marshfield, PEI.

“We were away from our young children for long periods of time, sometimes 60 hours a week,” says Sherri. “We thought if we have to work long hours, we might as well be investing them into running our own business, which would benefit our family.”

Mark and Sherri construct the tiny homes themselves. “We do all the work except for the electrical wiring.”

“Both our parents, who live in Souris, have owned and operated their own businesses for decades, so we have knowledge about what it takes to run your own business,” says Mark. “As well, we both have experience in business and the trades.”

Mark and Sherri started this business because alternative housing was something they were both interested in. When completing the market research portion of their business plan, they confirmed that there is a demand for micro living.

“Our research indicated the housing market is going in the direction of micro living,” says Sherri. “When we developed our business plan, we found out through our research that many members of the younger working generation are not interested in living a lifestyle that has high mortgages and debt.”

The couple accessed the following business resource

They heard great things about the **Montague Rural Action Centre** (RAC) and the programs it offers. “Once we had a concrete business plan, we approached the RAC.

“They were fantastic, and provided us with the additional funding we needed,” says Mark.

“The RAC staff has been very involved and very supportive of our business,” says Sherri. “We can call them anytime with business-related questions, and they are quick to provide resource information and answers. This allows us to focus on developing and growing our business.”

Eastern Prince Edward Island is flourishing with existing and new business developments. Rural Action Centres are client focused, one-stop service centres housing multiple federal, provincial, and non-government organizations that are all focused on business and community development.

All services provided by Rural Action Centres collaborate through a cooperative service model to ensure complete and seamless access for support to development programs for entrepreneurs, business people, and community groups.

For more information, visit **Montague Rural Action Centre** at www.ruralactioncentres.ca

Future business plan

“I would like to hire a carpenter,” says Mark. In the future, the duo plans on building more than just tiny homes.



Mark Mahar and Sherri Spatuk own and operate M4G Alternative Housing in Marshfield, PEI.

Sheds, bunk houses, converted shipping containers, and even developing land for alternative housing communities are all options they are researching.

For more information about **M4G Alternative Housing**, contact **Sherri Spatuk** or **Mark Mahar** at 902-213-9697 or search **M4G Alternative Housing** on Facebook.

For a complete list of resources for start-ups and for existing businesses, visit www.employmentjourney.com/resources-to-start-maintain-a-small-business/

Construction companies hiring needs after going through expansions

by Stella Shepard

In 2007, after more than 30 years of gaining knowledge, experience and developing construction skills, **Darren MacKenzie** opened his own business, **MacKenzie Builder Services Ltd.** located at 262 Howe Point Road, Souris.

In 2014, he was the first builder on PEI to receive a Master Builder's Designation from the Canadian Home Builders Association.

Also in 2014, he started another business, **Legacy Homes Ltd.**, and is the exclusive distributor for Maple Leaf Modular and Mini Homes located at 12745 St. Peters Road, Ten Mile House.

“We are presently looking for a Salesperson for Legacy Homes Ltd. who also has project management and estimating knowledge and experience,” says Darren.

About the staff

“On average, there are about 10 to 25 full-time, year-round employees at MacKenzie Builder Services Ltd., depending on production,” says Darren.

“Throughout the year, I hire experienced Carpenters, Construction Labourers, and Project Managers. I also outsource jobs to Electricians and Plumbers.

“I hire about 12 staff with carpentry and seam filling skills during the busier summer months.

“I prefer to hire experienced people with their Red Seal, but I will hire Carpenters and Carpenter's Helpers who are willing to learn and have a good attitude, regardless of their educational level.”

Difficult jobs to fill

Estimator is one of the more challenging positions to fill. It takes knowledge and experience to determine the cost of supply products, collect quotes for materials, and prepare and submit cost estimates.

“I am qualified to estimate job proposals, but I am looking to find a qualified person to assist me. Proper estimating sets the foundation for a good experience for our clients. It is a large time commitment. However, it is imperative that we spend the time to ensure the details of a project are accurate right from the beginning.”

Advancement opportunities

“I have hired first-time Labourers who are now licensed Carpenters with us. Some of them are now in supervisory roles. We are willing to work with our employees to assist them in obtaining their certification and Red Seal training.”

Future business plans

“I am considering expanding the business by opening a Charlottetown office,” says Darren.



Darren MacKenzie. Submitted Photo

For more information about **MacKenzie Builder Services**, contact **Darren MacKenzie** at 902-969-0425 or email darren@mackenziebuilders.ca

Visit www.mackenziebuilders.ca

For more information about **Legacy Homes Ltd.**, visit www.legacyhomespei.ca or contact **Darren MacKenzie** at 902-676-3200.

For the full interview, visit www.employmentjourney.com and search **MacKenzie Builder Services**.