

*TLTI Economic Development and Marketing Officer Amy Webb and family participating in the Tapping Out Party held in Lansdowne.*



# TLTI SHINING BRIGHT LIGHTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

By Lorraine Payette

The Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands is brimming with ideas and looking toward the future. No matter how good an idea is, however, you have to have the right people in place to make things happen.

TLTI has hired Amy Webb to be their Economic Development and Marketing Officer. An enthusiastic member of the community, Webb is more than ready to help the Township achieve its goals.

"My passion is my community," said Webb. "Last year, following an unexpected layoff, I found myself in a position that allowed me to take a risk and follow this path."

After working hard for six months in a contract position for Community and Business Outreach to prove herself, she applied for and won the job when it became permanent at the beginning of 2018.

"The Township has a very active Economic Development Committee that has been earnestly working to become 'investment ready' while keeping a focus on our two largest sectors – agriculture and tourism," she said. "This group has really set the stage for growth in TLTI."

Everywhere you look in TLTI, things are going on. Whether a "Tapping Out Party" celebrating the local maple industry, an "Equine Extravaganza" feeding the fantasies of horse lovers for kilometres around, or the annual "Textile Festival", something is happening that is bound to please residents and tourists alike. In 2018 alone, there are 30 public events scheduled.

However, nice as all this is, the Township felt it needed more.

"Right now, the main focus is on supporting information derived from the Official Plan Review in regard to growth within our villages – Seeley's Bay, Lyndhurst, Lansdowne and Rockport," she said. "This information on vacant lands, employment opportunities and resident feedback will propel our future development objectives. The new Community Centre designs for Lansdowne, open up a whole new 'community hub' offering which can help small business with day to day functions. The Library offers business support services with wi-fi, computer access, printing and faxing, and we will soon have more modern meeting spaces available as well."

This opening up of the Township to investors and investment creates all kinds of tantalizing possibilities. At the same time, everything needs to be kept in balance, every step carefully considered as to its final

effect on the land and the people. Growth is good, but it must be sustainable and take into consideration all of the current residents as well as those down the road. From children to seniors, those who make a career of agriculture to those in a wide range of other businesses. Everyone has to fit into the tapestry of development.

“Being ‘investment ready’ can have a different definition for each community pursuing it,” said Webb. “For TLTI, we want to be welcoming to businesses, create effective marketing, diversify our demographic and business base, seek out sustainable development and, most importantly, forge strong relationships. We are also preparing for new investment within our communities, while staying connected to the healthy and successful businesses already here. We have been enhancing our website, showcasing business and business resources. We hope to have a full suite of guidelines for starting, expanding, and transitioning business soon.”

“Locally, we have built a unique partnership of various systems called the Business Support Network. It consists of the Township along with Town of Gananoque; Keys Job Centre; 1,000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce; Gananoque Public



*The annual Textile Festival encourages crafters and tourists alike to come to the Township.*



*The Equine Extravaganza brought participants from all over*

Library; and the 1,000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board. This group meets regularly and shares concerns from our business owners – new and long term – and develops workshops and events to support those concerns. We have delivered training on customer service, new technology, lean business modelling, talent management, and realtor information. These events are sometimes attended by those simply seeking an opportunity to network, expand connections and reach out to like minded individuals.”

TLTI is absolutely serious about its plans for the future, and Webb delights in doing all she can to help them achieve their dream. Attend a community event, and she’ll be there. You can find her making short video clips about different activities in the area to post on social media, or encouraging other attendees to try something new and different. She brings her family with her, and everyone pitches in to help promote the Township and put it in its best light.

“I am sure it is apparent that relationship building is key, not only inside our villages,

but with our surrounding neighbours, especially when it comes to tourism,” she said. “Tourists themselves may not be familiar with township boundaries and we need to work together to offer them the best experience while they visit. Maybe they stay in Gananoque, shop in TLTI, play in Rideau Lakes; whatever it looks like, we need to be owning what we do, and share it with those around us. We look forward to partnering with surrounding municipalities on these regional connections in 2018 and going forward.”

“Lastly, we are embracing new opportunities in smart agri-technology and agri-tourism to expand on what traditional farming may look like in TLTI. The aim is to understand where these industries are heading and how we can service the next generation. Business transition within agriculture is usually a family decision. Embracing new ideas, business models, and technology are essential to keep the next generation involved. TLTI recognizes this and is adapting to local need. Keep your eye out for more interesting ventures coming soon.”

**LH**