



Sandra with a surprise visit by Jonathan Winters (actor/comedian)

# TRIUMPH OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## Executive Secretarial Celebrates 30 Years of Success

By Lorraine Payette

"I first decided to start my business when I was laid off at UTDC, Bath, Ontario, in 1985," said Sandra Wright, proprietor of Executive Secretarial Services and Art Supplies in Gananoque. At the time, many traditional employers and large industries were downsizing.

Part of her job had involved typing resumes and relocating, so she decided to try it on her own and created her business.

"I found the location at the back of Robeson's Country General Store in 1986," she said. "Starting a new business was

very scary and I couldn't find a business loan to start me off so I went for a personal loan of \$4,000. Added to my savings and the equipment and supplies I had already bought with my unemployment cheques, I was on my way."

She moved from Kingston to Howe Island to improve on her commute.

"The drive was so much more bearable," she said. "There were a few times where one ferry would break down and I found myself lined up with other commuters all trying to get to work on time, but only

twice could no one get on or off the Island in my 22 years of living there."

Sometimes it meant leaving very early or she would be hard pressed to see any business at all. But it never stopped her.

"I remember only making \$0.10 on Saturdays in the beginning and wondered why I was doing it," she said. She hired a Saturday person, giving her a much-needed break, at the same time she was running out of space for her business, so she purchased her current store.

Running a small business is not easy. She soon found herself working six days a week once more. Even so, there were good times and great surprises.

"One day a friend of mine who cared for some cottages on the Thousand Islands told me that Jonathan Winters would be staying there," she said. "I told him I loved Winters and, sure enough, Jonathan Winters came into my store. He locked himself in with me and did a comedy routine that I will never forget."

Wright also enjoys supporting the local community, doing everything she can to help.

"During 'Jammin In The Thousand Islands' musicians come and play in stores, halls, theaters, anywhere they can fit a band and equipment," she said. "I have participated for six years now, and am proud to have musicians come and play in my store. We laugh because we always put the drummer in the window."

She was also involved in "The Ultimate Fishing Town" contest run by the World Fishing Network. Open to all of Canada, Wright and her team won the title of "Ontario's Ultimate Fishing Town" for Gananoque in 2013.

Wright has received grateful public recognition – from the "Entrepreneur of the Year Award" in the year 2015 from 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce and through many certificates of thanks and congratulations from MPP Steve Clark, MP Gord Brown, The Mayor of Gananoque Erika Demchuk, The Gananoque BIA, and good wishes from the entire community.

"It's hard to believe it's been thirty years," said Wright. "Please accept my sincere thanks for letting me serve you. I greatly appreciate the fact that you have chosen to do business with me, and I pledge my continuing efforts to offer you the best service possible. Please come again." **LH**