

Airs tonight ? Grounds Guys featured on W Network program

By Tabitha Wells

It's undeniable that a lot of great things have been coming out of Caledon and Dufferin.

From renowned cuisine that brings people up from the city, to the tourism options, equine industry, and several companies that have gone from being a small town business to making waves beyond the walls of the community.

"This is a very business-minded area and a great breeding ground for new ideas and everything needed to grow to the next level," said Peter van Stralen, CEO of The Grounds Guys, a local full-service grounds care, and snow and ice removal company. "We fly people in from all over Canada, and (the area has) great hotels, incredible restaurants and we're close enough to the airport, so it's just a great area for everything a company needs to do."

The Grounds Guys is a family-owned and operated company that focuses on lawn care, landscaping and snow and ice management for commercial and residential properties. It was started in Palgrave as a business run by the 10 brothers of the van Stralen family and was built upon a core set of values responsible for their growth.

"Our main values are CARE: Customer First, Attitude, Respect and Enjoy life in the process," explained van Stralen. "By working together as brothers, which can be tougher sometimes than hiring people, we learned by applying those principles and by working together through good times and hard times. It was those values, those principles that allowed us to expand our business."

Tonight (Thursday), The Grounds Guys will be featured on an episode of Be The Boss Canada on W Network, where two employees from a franchise will go head-to-head for a major promotion. Both candidates faced a variety of challenges over a two day period to see who was the most deserving.

The network approached van Stralen early last spring, saying they had heard about the company and thought they would be a great fit for the show. After doing some interviews, the network decided they liked that The Grounds Guys was built on clear principals and felt the company would be a good choice for an episode.

"After that, I had to submit 12 names to the network, so we submitted names from B.C. right across Canada and had strong candidates," said van Stralen. "The network sent out their casting director, who filmed the candidates and spoke with them and they decided to go with two employees from Cobourg, Ontario."

The filming took about a week during the summer, and was done locally, at the head office and on properties in the area. The two employees, a single mother of two and a gentleman from Africa who recently immigrated to Canada after marrying an RCMP officer working there, were put through two solid days of rigorous situations to see who was most deserving of the promotion.

"We were able to put them through these really tough challenges, where you might run into these scenarios once or twice in a year, but we forced all these opportunities and challenges into two days," he explained. "I was really proud of how they handled themselves and how they successfully applied our company's values under those extreme conditions."

Van Stralen added that W Network did everything they could to make sure the process was as smooth as possible for the company, including coaching himself and company President Scott Bryk on how to talk and present themselves on camera.

"It was a unique experience," said van Stralen. "I've never really done anything like that. The production company was great to work with. They were really accommodating and they didn't interrupt us that much. Hopefully the end result is great (tonight) and everyone will enjoy it. It's an entertaining show."

The episode will air at 8 p.m. eastern time.

The Grounds Guys has grown to include 40 franchise locations across Canada and 140 locations across the United States. They have also recently launched a second business, The Sprinkler Guys, which focuses on irrigation and the installation, maintenance repairs of sprinkler systems. Currently, they have seven franchises in operation.

"Anyone can really mow lawns or plow snow; it's not what we do, but how we do it," said van Stralen. "I think that has been our biggest accomplishment ? being able to recruit like-minded people who really care. That's really been at the root of it. We learned that through the launch of our franchising, and learned over the years that it's all about people; all about getting the right people and getting great people, so we spend a lot of time focusing on that."

The company also currently has opportunities available for both franchising as well as positions at the head office in Mono. For more information on the company or to inquire about employment opportunities, visit www.groundsguys.ca