

Here's proof it can be done

Mark Wood is the type of guy you'd like to have around. He's an electrical engineer by profession but there's a lot more to this New Brunswick-born import.

He's an inventor who has a keen knowledge of instruments and has used his skills to carve out a niche for himself in the undersea world of oil exploration. His invention, "Big Ears," has found fame on the international stage by finding a "problem" in the billion dollar oil rig Thunderhorse. Thanks to his invention, the rig was saved after it was listing horribly in the Gulf of Mexico after being damaged by hurricane Dennis last summer.

But Wood is not interesting just because of his knowledge of listening devices. What makes Wood and his partner Desiree Stockermans outstanding is their family values. They could live anywhere in the world. And, indeed, they have spent time abroad – in Europe and the United States – closer to the action, as it were.

But they decided once it was time to raise a family that they wanted to get back to some basics. They've been in Great Village for the past 13 years raising their three children in a way that really only Nova Scotia could provide.

Some might say that there were greater opportunities elsewhere, and rightly so. But there's a quality of life in rural Nova Scotia that cannot be found in Houston, Texas or London, England.

Wood now works out of a 150-year-old building that was once a dry goods store, a pool hall and a mortuary. It suits him just fine and it's an interesting backdrop for a technology company that can find problems in the most challenging of environments. He's only about an hour or so from the airport which means he can go anywhere in the world on a moment's notice.

And that's the blessing of rural Nova Scotia. Wood has discovered that he can be a successful businessman in a small town and still have international presence. That's the exact message the Colchester Regional Development Agency is trying to broadcast to people who have left the region for opportunities elsewhere. And that's the message we need to tell people so they will come home and help us prosper.

We already know that there is an out-migration of young workers and we will be in a bind in the near future. Wood is a "poster-boy" for the call to Come Home to Colchester.

If a 48-year-old father of three can be successful in a small community like Great Village, there's no end to the opportunities in Colchester County. We need more people like Mark and Desiree, who have made a commitment to their families and have decided that location means more than proximity to big business. Location means good family values, the type of which you find with excellent neighbours and community spirit, not with big buildings and the hussle and bustle of the big city.

26 April 2006

Truro Daily