

Neighbours of Stittsville

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*An exclusive
magazine serving
the residents of
Amberwood Village,
Crossing Bridge,
Cypress Gardens,
Forest Creek,
Granite Ridge,
Westwood
and Wyldewood*

HAPPY
Canada
DAY


**The Joy
of Being
Your Own
Boss**

Cover photo by Irina Fortey Photography


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Resident Feature



Meet the **Willis** Family

By Clare Flockton

Photos by Irina Fortey Photography

Henry Ford once said, “coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success” Jim and Mary-Lynn Willis have certainly put the success in working together. Jim and Mary-Lynn Willis have been considered a dynamic duo for their entire career. Both of them have had successful careers in the retail industry and have worked side by side for many years. In fact, their relationship began while they were both working in Jim’s father’s grocery store - Kanata IGA. Their relationship blossomed and they were married in Ottawa on May 24, 1986. They are the proud parents of two grown children, Ryan and Tracy Lynn and the uber proud grandparents of one lovely little grandson, Benning.

In 1989, having some expertise in the grocery store industry and looking for adventure, Jim and Mary-Lynn took a leap of faith and moved from Ottawa to Kingston to be their own bosses and open a LOEB grocery store franchise on Princess Street. Jim and

Mary-Lynn found many reasons to run their own business:

Your hard work benefits you.

When you work for someone else, they often benefit from all your hard work. When you’re in control of your own success, the day-to-day vitality of your business depends on you, so you’ll be driven to make each day as productive as you can.

You can help your community.

One of the most fulfilling parts of becoming an entrepreneur is being able to support non-profits, charities, or community efforts with your profits. Starting your own business gives you a unique opportunity to help neighbours and community members.

You can achieve financial independence.

With determination and hard work, there’s no cap on how lucrative your own business can be. As your business grows, it’s worth also grows. You may decide to sell it or hold on to it and let it become a family business. Either way, it’s valuable.

You can control your schedule.

Running your own business allows you to have more control over your schedule. You can opt to schedule meetings around your family schedule, or you can opt to work from home. Work still needs to get done, but no one is looking over your shoulder making sure you do it their way on their time.

You'll have true job security.

When you start your own business, you know you're investing in your future and in your own job security. Moreover, should you choose to start a family business, you could be providing jobs for other members of your family.

Jim and Mary-Lynn successfully ran their grocery store franchise in Kingston until 1997. It was there where they started their family and had to find the balance between working long hours and raising little people.

In 1997, The Home Depot came to Canada. As this was Jim's favourite "toy store" and Jim was looking for a change of pace, the Willis' decided to sell their profitable grocery store franchise, and move back to Ottawa with their two small children, Ryan and Tracy Lynn. Jim, looking for someone else to be boss for a while, joined the Home Depot team. Even though he was not the boss, he was still busy as he managed stores in Ottawa, Nepean, and Gloucester.

Mary-Lynn was tasked with finding them a new home in Ottawa. It was at this time that Mary-Lynn fell in love with the Stittsville community and wanted to raise their family here. Jim remembers thinking fondly, "Stittsville, are you

kidding me?... It seemed so far away from everything." Mary-Lynn couldn't be swayed, and the Willis family built their home in Forest Creek in 1997. (In retrospect, Jim is so happy that Mary-Lynn pushed for them to relocate to Stittsville because they have loved every aspect of Stittsville ever since. He shares, "it was a great place to bring up our children. We have watched the community literally quadruple in size." Jim and Mary-Lynn cherish all their great neighbours and friends and have continued to love their community as it has evolved and grown exponentially since they have lived there.)

After twenty years at Home Depot and feeling the need to be their own bosses again, in 2018, Jim and Mary-Lynn decided to open another franchise called **GORILLA Property Services**. They are happy to have just celebrated their fifth year of operation. What they are most proud of is growing the business to three crews who are serving the Ottawa and outlying areas. Their business is a property maintenance business. Services include window and gutter cleaning, graffiti removal, house washing, dryer vent cleaning, pressure washing and litter pick-ups. They serve commercial, residential and condominium corporations.

Along with being a successful business owner, Jim has been part of the volunteer firefighter organization. While living in Kingston, Jim joined the Kingston Township Volunteer Firefighters where he volunteered for seven years. In 2001, he served as a volunteer firefighter at Station 81 in Stittsville, for eight years. Jim is delighted to



watch as his son followed in his footsteps as a volunteer firefighter in Stittsville at Station 46 on Iber Road. Ryan has been with the organization for over ten years and was recently promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

Jim was inspired to join the volunteer firefighters by his father-in-law who was one of the first three career firefighters in Kanata (at the time it was March Township). When Jim joined the fire department, the chief handed him a pager and told him that he could start responding to calls right away. Things have changed a bit; today, if you are hired as a firefighter, there is a mandatory 13-week training course before you can respond to emergencies.



It is a responsible volunteer post. You are given a pager and you are essentially “on call” 24/7. Jim has missed birthday parties for his kids, he has run out while entertaining company, and left work without notice, all to serve people in need.

Jim and Mary-Lynn share a final reflection on their life in Stittsville, “we raised our children here; they have found love here and married. Now we are enjoying the next phase of life with the birth of our first grandchild. This is an awesome time in our life.”

If you see one of their GORILLA trucks out on the road, give a friendly wave, it’s most likely Jim and Mary-Lynn off to lend a helping hand. **S**

***Do you know a neighbour who
has a story to share?***

Nominate your neighbour or volunteer yourself to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at cflockton@bestversionmedia.com