

A Local Success Story

Interview with Yona Harvey of
1000 Islands Helping Hands

<https://1000islandshelpinghands.com/services.php>



Pictured are Mayor Joe Baptista and
Owner of 1000 Islands Helping Hands, Yona Harvey

Tell me a little bit about your business.

I provide for those who are home-bound. They can be people without licenses, seniors and those that have disabilities. I have the ability to transfer clients to appointments, assist with shopping, and help in getting them out and socializing. I have fee for service and hourly rate models – varying prices depends on the service and distance. I currently am able to travel to Gananoque, Kingston, Smiths Falls and Brockville.

Where did the concept for your business come from?

I worked at a local financial services branch for seven years, customers and community members had trust in me and shared their challenges. This idea came directly from their needs.

When did you know you were ready to “start” and what was the first step you took?

I took a course through my local Church in the spring of 2017 on “how to start your own business”. This sparked my interest and I visited the Township Administration Office. This is where I learnt about the Small Business Enterprise Centre and the Age-Friendly planning initiative. The Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre (LGSBEC) is where I found out about grant programs and workshops. So, I signed up for the first workshop available, Starter Company Plus.

<http://www.lgsbec.com/programs/starter-company/>

Explain the process that you took to launch your business.

The Business Plan was the foundation. It wasn't quite as easy a process as I thought. I couldn't just look it up on-line. That's where LGSBEC really helped.

Who were your key partners? What key resources did you use?

Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre <http://www.lgsbec.com/>

1000 Islands Community Development Corporation <http://ticdc.ca/>

The Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands
<http://www.leeds1000islands.ca/en/growing/Starting-a-Business.aspx>

It is very expensive to hire professionals to create websites, advertising plans and afford insurance. These resources helped me find financial support and local reliable resources to be able to set up what I required.

What licenses or permits did/do you require? Did you need anything specific for a home-based business?

I luckily didn't need much more than my own liability insurance, a transportation vehicle (I had just purchased a van), and a home office. The workshop provided guidance and additional resources for me to attain and maintain these items.

How and where do you advertise your service or product?

I have a website <https://1000islandshelpinghands.com/services.php>

and a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/1000IslandsHelpingHands/>

The Township Office informed me of the County Business Directory
<http://directory.leedsgrenville.com/en/businessdirectory/search.aspx>

and has assisted in introducing me to local community groups and businesses that may also support my client base.

From here I have been relying on the word of mouth of my satisfied customers.

Share with me the best part of launching a new business.

It is very meaningful, it feels good to help others, I am able to use my creativity and, of course, I get to be my own boss!

Describe for me your biggest challenge so far.

Advertising and recruiting clients can be difficult. This takes time and trust. I am willing to work with individual families on their individual needs.

If you had a magic wand and could do anything differently, what would it be?

Start at a younger age!

What would you tell a new business owner who is looking to start?

Come to the Township Office first!