From Denmark to Chester

Local businesswoman wins prestigious award

Pernille Fischer Boulter
Award winner

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CHESTER — From the point of view of some, the odds were stacked against Pernille Fischer Boulter.

She's a self-employed woman and she's an immigrant. And she freely admits some people held that against her.

But, because of this she's also successful. And now she has an award to prove it.

On November 23, Ms Boulter was awarded the 2007 Women of Excellence Award from the Canadian Progress Club, Halifax Cornwallis.

But Ms Boulter, president of Kisserup International Trade Roots, has a drive not just to be the best woman in her line of work, but to be the best — period.

"I'm very flattered and honoured by the award, absolutely," she said. "But a funny question could be what if there was a men's excellence award.

"I grew up differently. The gender issue isn't illuminated to the same extent in Scandinavia. We don't have women's chapters for a lot of things. I believe there is a glass ceiling for some people. But I also believe sometimes in North America we're supporting it by talking about it.

"I have been able to get Newfoundland and Nova Scotia companies contracts in Greenland strictly because of where I was born. It's a huge advantage to some."

Ms Boulter, who was born in Denmark and resides in Chester, began Kisserup (named after her hometown), an export-based consulting company, out of her home in 1998.

"I came here for the oldest reason in the world," she said. "I married a Canadian man who was looking to buy a Danish company."

Her husband soon built an ECI Medical Technologies plant in Bridgewater.

That created a bit of a problem when they moved.

"My husband's not from Nova Scotia, and the plant's in Bridgewater," she said. "Looking at Nova Scotia and the infrastructure, I would like to work out of Halifax. We looked at a map and Chester was halfway between Halifax and Bridgewater. So, here we are."

The next hurdle was finding clients, someone willing to take a chance.

"A lot of the businesses in Nova Scotia didn't have a European focus," Ms Boulter said. "That was what I could add to the table."

So, she picked up the phone.

"I made a list of the top 100 CEOs in Atlantic Canada and started calling all of them," she laughed. "I formed the basis of a consulting company. It took some time. Some of them I had to call more than once — a lot more than once. But only one of them said they weren't interested."

Only one of them refused to meet with her.

"They were curious about what's out there," she said. "The other part of the explanation is the helpfulness of Maritimers, the helpfulness of Atlantic Canadians. They're always wanting to help you. That's how I landed my first job."

She now employs four people out of her Halifax office.

The business, she says, is growing slower than she'd like, but she's doing it on her own dollar, which she does like.

"It's been an organic growth. I like to control it. I'd like to have a lot more people with all the opportunities out there. But we'll hire number 5 when we need number 8."

Ms Boulter was nominated for the award by the World Trade Centre Atlantic Canada, of which she is a member.

"Not only is she a member, she's a contractor," said friend and Trade Centre employee Sandy Gordon. "She's been facilitating trade courses here since 2003.

"The thing about Pernille that makes her a special person is she gives so freely of herself. She is constantly helping others. On top of all the amazing things she's done, she deserves some recognition."

It's been almost 10 years now and Ms Boulter has firmly entrenched herself in Nova Scotia.

Aside from her business, she's involved on various committees and boards.

But she's also involved at the grassroots level.

"I coached soccer in Bridgewater for a number of years," she said. "I volunteer with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association. I try to help people coming here find work. We help them find homes. I'd like to volunteer more for the Phoenix House program [providing transition and education services for homeless youth]."

For Ms Boulter, it's hard to say where the next 10 years will take her.

"Markets change so rapidly," she said. "Ten years is a long way away. In five years from now I'd like to be one of the leading experts on Europe, of Asia and the U.S. as an exporting consultant."

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