

HABITAT PROFESSIONALS

Experts eliminate the guesswork at home.



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
WALTER FRAN CZYK

ROBERTA ALEXANDER

HOST

*Huntsville Hospital Auxiliary
Autumn House Tour*

Why do support the home tour? Interior decorator Roberta Alexander is opening her home for the Huntsville Hospital Auxilliary's Autumn House Tour because she's a big fan of anything that raises money for the local hospital. "I like to support our hospital," she says. "Everyone in this community takes advantage of it at some time."

The September 22nd home tour is an encore for Roberta. Her previous home, the historic Hart House, where her family lived for 20 years, was on one of the hospital auxiliary's Christmas tours. In 2014, she renovated her current home on Hunters Bay, to capitalize on the beautiful lakeside view. Renovations included expansive windows overlooking the lake and a large, bright master bedroom at tree-top level on the upper floor. "We love its bright open space that's big enough for my family. I have older children who live in the city and they basically use it as a cottage. It's big enough when we're all together, but it's still cosy."

Tour details: The Alexander home is one of six houses in the Port Sydney and Huntsville area on the Autumn House Tour. They include a working hobby farm, some contemporary homes and a 140-year-old country house. Tour tickets include lunch. They're available at the Huntsville Hospital Gift Shop, from auxiliary members, Castle Antiques and the Algonquin Theatre in Huntsville.



CAROLA GRIMM

OWNER

Red Canoe Gallery

What does your gallery offer? "We're 100 per cent Canadian art and craft," says Carola, who is celebrating her shop's 25th anniversary. In addition to paintings by artists from Muskoka or the edge of Muskoka, the gallery carries stone and wood carvings, metal sculpture, pottery, jewelry and turned wooden bowls, both functional and decorative. Humorous T-shirts, by Carola's sister, Ileana Grimm, are also available. "Everything is 100 per cent Canadian and all handmade."

To what do you attribute the gallery's longevity? "People just love the gallery," enthuses Carola. "I've always tried to be a store that offered something unique. People walk in here and they know that they're not going to see the same thing that they have in every other shop."

What do you enjoy about your business? "I love the aesthetics of it," she says. "I love setting it up and the beauty of the pieces. I love working with clients. I can help them choose pieces. Sometimes, I'll have a client visit me here and get an idea of what they like or visit them in their home. I can bring an assortment of paintings and try different things or I'll help them order commissioned pieces from the artists."

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LORI & WAYNE HOMER

OWNERS

Pro Pool Table Services

What's new with your business? Well-known for servicing pool tables throughout Muskoka, Lori and Wayne Homer are also in the business of selling tables. "We'd like everyone to know that they can start making memories on their own brand new pool table, rather than acquiring a used one," says Lori. "Most people are unaware that you can get a good quality, solid pool table for under \$3,000. A lot of people are under the impression they have to buy used or spend a lot of money."

What tables do you sell? "We represent several reputable pool table manufacturers and each one has a variety of styles to choose

from. While some still prefer the standard traditional styles with detailed carving, dark finishes and green cloth, others may opt for clean contemporary lines, or even specialty tables made of reclaimed lumber with hammered metal accents, a washed driftwood finish and charcoal cloth."

What services do you offer? They move pool tables, from the city to the cottage, or from home to home. They level tables and re-cloth them, offering many choices of colour.

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RANDY SKIDMORE
OWNER
LEAH READMAN
PROJECT MANAGER
Muskoka Lakes Construction

Tell us about your business: “We are in our 40th year of designing and building cottages in Muskoka,” says Leah. “We do everything with our clients, from the design, planning and permits to working with engineers and the building.”

Why do people choose you? “In our experience over the years our clients have enjoyed working with us,” Leah says. “We have built positive relationships with clients that seem to last years and sometimes through repeat projects. We believe that they like our design process when working with their ideas and concepts and creating a part of their lifestyle. We like to take care of their

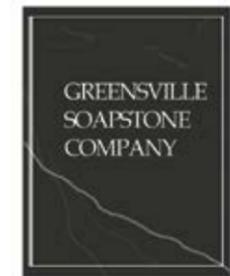
properties and respect their natural landscape while bringing their ideas to life in a quality structure, built to last generations.”

What makes your work a joy? “The creative process,” Leah says. “Our work is tangible and we enjoy the ability to step back and see what we have successfully created. We take pride in the many projects we have built through the years. We enjoy working with people and the puzzles we get to solve throughout the building process. We enjoy working together, sharing ideas and working to produce the best results for our clients. We also have a lot of pride in our employees.”

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AMANDA YAKE
LIGHTING CONSULTANT
JASON ROBERTSON
OWNER
Living Lighting Parry Sound

What's your store all about? Inside Northern Living Kitchen & Bath Design Centre, Living Lighting offers a variety of indoor and outdoor lighting and fans as well as landscape lighting," says Jason. It has a wide selection of lamps, ceiling fans, wall sconces and chandeliers. "We can supply a single fixture or we can work with a customer on their building plans and supply lighting for the entire home or cottage, inside or outside."

What can lighting do for a home? "Aesthetically, I think it makes a big difference, a lot of people don't realize this until they add their fixtures and layers of lighting; the right fixture can really set off the rest

of the home's décor and furnishings," says Amanda. Lighting provides all sorts of different accent opportunities to enhance a design, a space, a fireplace or any architectural aspect of a house. You can really make it pop with the right light, indoors and out," says Jason.

What are the current trends? "Mixed materials and finishes is a trend that has been popular for a while now and continues to be. We are also seeing finishes resemble each other, such as metal made to look like wood, so it can be hung outdoors," says Amanda. Technological advances have made LED lighting a little brighter. "So you can use them in more fixtures than you traditionally would have," says Jason.

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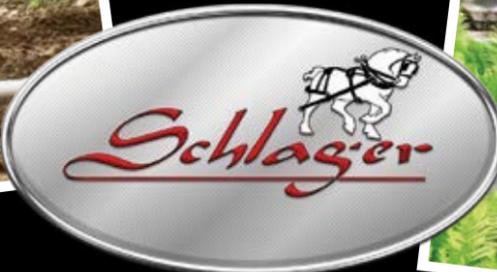
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ROBIN KEELER

OWNER
Twig

Why did you open your store? "I wanted a project in Muskoka," says Robin. "I live in the city in Mississauga and we spend a lot of time up here in the summers but I felt I needed something more than just entertaining and boating. I really wanted to sink my teeth into something other than hors d'oeuvres on the dock at five o'clock. I decided to open a retail store, in a field that wasn't fashion," says the former fashion director at Yorkdale Shopping Centre. "I thought cottage and home décor is something that would be related. I just decided to go for it. She opened Twig, a store that sells lanterns, candles, hostess gifts, baskets, tabletop linens, wool throws and more, six years ago. "I literally learned how to retail as I became a retailer. I haven't looked back. It's been great."

What is it about this business that has kept you at it? "It's hugely challenging," she says. "It's unpredictable. It's tough. I've never worked harder in my life but the rewards are marvellous. It's creative. Learning how to be a retailer has been a wonderful experience because it's something I didn't know and I'm still learning. It just makes it that much better." **OH**

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