

Venture Profile

AWARD-WINNING ENTREPRENEUR

*Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto,
Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Awards*

In 1989, the closure of the Canadian Forces Base in Summerside on Prince Edward Island resulted in the loss of 1200 jobs and, to the people of the town, the future looked grim. Jo-Anne Schurman decided that her business idea might be exactly what was needed to ignite a spark in the local economy and put people back to work.

The owner of a gift shop since 1979, Jo-Anne was determined to build an inn that would attract tourists to the beautiful area. In spite of the difficulty in securing funding, the decision in 1990 to build the Loyalist Country Inn proved to be the vote of confidence the community needed. The fact that a local family would invest considerable dollars in its own community during a period of great uncertainty and create 72 new jobs seemed to be a turning point and encouraged other projects to go forward. Approximately 125 local tradespeople worked on the construction of

the Loyalist Country Inn, which now employs an in-season staff of over 100. The inn offers 103 rooms, a lavishly appointed dining room, banquet and meeting rooms, and a tavern.

The Loyalist Country Inn is noted for a taste of heritage and Island hospitality. Jo-Anne has marketed the inn locally, nationally, and internationally through Rendez-Vous Canada and other trade shows, as well as through a series of trips to Japan. The response has been so good that a \$4.6 million expansion has been completed. Tourists and corporate travellers have ensured that the inn maintains a high occupancy.

The community as a whole has readily acknowledged that the Loyalist Country Inn was one of the projects that led to the recovery of Summerside. In recognition of her outstanding achievement, Jo-Anne won the Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year: Impact on Local Economy Award in 1997.



Exploring

1. What evidence is there that the Loyalist Country Inn venture had a positive impact on the local community?
2. What happens in a community when jobs are lost?
3. Why is the creation of new jobs so critical to a community's well-being?
4. Find out more about Summerside, Prince Edward Island. If you lived in Summerside, what venture would you consider starting? Why?