

Ideal Home and Garden Show takes centre stage

By Barbara Deppisch
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Residents of Southwestern Ontario will now be able to enjoy the biggest and best consumer shows much closer to home, thanks to Continuum Productions Inc. The company produces top-of-the-line consumer events that focus primarily on home and garden shows. The most spectacular one yet will be the Ideal Home and Garden Show, which runs March 5 to 7 at the Careport Centre in Hamilton.

Continuum was founded in 2008 by owner and president Dwayne McKillop, whose vision was to create a company that would present shows concentrating on the needs of attendees, sponsors and exhibitors in the west end.

"We've got about 40 years of combined experience producing these shows all over the world," McKillop said of his team. "We're taking a very unique model in the industry and we're really designing something for exhibitions as opposed to trade shows."

The Ideal Home and Garden Show presented by RE/MAX will provide the most comprehensive shopping opportunity for buyers and sellers of renovating, decorating and landscaping products and promises to feature never-before-seen innovations in the marketplace. Special attractions include showcase houses, Canada Blooms gardens, the Toronto Maple Leafs and live radio shows. The Outdoor Living Home Theatre will feature guest presenters from HGTV, the Food Network, CityLine, Style at Home, Royal Botanical Gardens, CTV Canada AM, Honeywell and landscapeontario.com.

This new home and garden show, which will be Southwestern Ontario's largest, promises something for everyone. "It's going to be bigger and better than anything that's hit Hamilton before," said McKillop. "It's definitely worth getting off your couch for, because whether you live in a grand mansion or in an apartment, everybody needs something for their home. You're always going to come away with some cool ideas."

McKillop, who worked on Toronto's National Home Show for many years, saw a need for a large-scale show to be staged in the west end. "There were no facilities from the International Centre in Mississauga right to London and Niagara Falls. Hamilton sits right in the middle of that whole triangle," he said. "So we thought why try to drag these people to the shows? Bring the shows to the people."

"I think this is something that Hamilton has needed for a long time," he added. "In this area, they are going to see the largest suburban home and garden show in Southwestern Ontario, covering three acres."

McKillop approached the city of Hamilton's economic development department with his plans to help revitalize the city through a transformation project. The result was the conversion of an old warehouse in McMaster's Innovation Park into the Careport Centre, a 170,000-square-foot exhibition space, with six acres of free parking and close proximity to a highway. "It was a great fit."

For a show, building it probably couldn't be better," he noted. Continuum Productions held its first show, the Liquidation Outlet & Supersale, at the new facility in November; the official opening of the building will be February 5, with the RV and Family Camping Show.



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+ Dwayne McKillop of Continuum productions, at the Careport C...

Aside from producing the spring and fall Ideal Home and Garden Shows, Continuum leases the centre to other show producers. “The intent is to draw many out-of-town events to the city that never would have come here because of the facilities being smaller,” he added. “We probably underestimated the need for a building this big here, but it’s good for the city and means lots of business for the people that are here. We are turning a warehouse into a chic expo hall.”

McKillop went to high school at Hamilton’s St. Mary Catholic Secondary School. Born in British Columbia, he grew up in Waterdown and studied sports administration and commerce at Laurentian University in Sudbury. He worked in professional sports, including the CFL and the NHL, before getting involved in the show industry.

“Nobody really grows up and says ‘Gee, I can’t wait to run a home show’. You kind of fall into it and then you get the bug and go with it. A good friend of mine was running the Toronto Boat Show and gave me the opportunity to work there and I fell in love with the industry,” he explained.

Approaching his 15-year mark in the business working for others, McKillop and his wife (they have three children) decided it was time to exercise his entrepreneurial spirit and open his own show company, Continuum. “From a lifestyle standpoint, it is absolutely the best thing I have ever done in my life. Did it put a dent in the paycheck for a little while? Sure it did, but that all comes back to you in spades,” he said. “The intention was always to bring the largest suburban home and garden show to Hamilton. I’m a Hamilton guy.”

McKillop believes in giving back to the community and Continuum Productions is involved with local children’s charities, Spec Kids Charity Program and Courage to Cope. “It’s important to us that if you are going to be embraced by a community that you need to be part of the community,” he said.

In McKillop’s office hangs a framed photo of Jackie Robinson, the first African American Major League Baseball player. The photo is inspirational to him.

“Imagine the crazy looks I got at city hall the first time I went in and said ‘I’d like to take an old abandoned warehouse that used to be a refrigerator factory and turn it into an expo centre and run home shows in it,’” he recalled.

“Every time somebody said ‘You’re crazy. What are you doing?’ that photo would remind me that you just got to keep going. It symbolizes everybody telling you, you couldn’t do it and you did it.”

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