



# Exercising Civic Responsibility

**M**eaghan Lister is in an enviably contented frame of mind, and with good reason. This energetic entrepreneur has achieved an impressive list of accomplishments that wouldn't look amiss on someone with decades more work and life experience. Lister, 31, holds Bachelor degrees in Science and Education, is the former executive director of a not-for-profit organization, and has 17 years experience as a lifeguard and aquatics instructor. Since purchasing her company five years ago, this half-time teacher has expanded Atlantic Fitness East in both size and location to cover 32 staff and 27,000 square feet across three facilities in Montague, Morell and Souris, Prince Edward Island.

Some of her most memorable and heartwarming experiences, however, relate not to what she has accomplished for herself, but to what her accomplishments have enabled her to do for others. Asked to explain, Lister describes the satisfaction she receives every Sunday when she sees local children piling their loose change onto the counter so they can go swimming. (Sundays are when Atlantic Fitness East offers discounted swim times of just two dollars a session.) "When I see those nickels and dimes and pennies, I know many of them have saved up their money all week, and some of them probably wouldn't be able to afford to go swimming otherwise." She also donates free pool time each week to Special Olympics, and says she is amply repaid when previous non-swimmers are transformed into gold medal athletes.

Lister is equally generous with Girl Guides, soccer teams, swim teams, high schools, and virtually every other community organization that approaches one of her fitness facilities with a donation request. That's in addition to the personal time which she and many of her staff regularly donate to coaching, organizing and fundraising. "Not many people are aware of just how much we do for the community," notes Lister. Indeed, she admits to having surprised herself when she sat down to prepare a comprehensive list of her company's various activities for this article.

Acknowledging the depth of her generosity, however, doesn't mean she's about to cut back. One reason she feels compelled to continue is that many of the activities with which Atlantic Fitness East is involved directly relate to the company's raison d'être: promoting physical fitness and personal well being. In a broader sense, she says that those same charitable and voluntary efforts also strengthen the communities in which she operates. "If everyone does their own part to pitch in, help a neighbour, and support each other in whatever little way we can, then I believe that, together, we create stronger and healthier communities."

Looking at Atlantic Fitness East's facility expansion and client loyalty, it appears that altruism makes for stronger and healthier companies too. 🏆

**Are you a community champion?** We want to know which Atlantic Canadian companies are giving, how much, to whom, and why. Send submissions to [dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com](mailto:dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com), with "Community Champion" in the subject line.

## Community All-Stars

The following are Atlantic Fitness East's major annual charitable and voluntary commitments. Not including its many one-off requests for donations and various in-kind contributions, this small business contributes upwards of \$30,000 annually to various community organizations.

### Special Olympics PEI:

donates pool time for weekly swim practices, swim meets and swim camps.

### Montague Sea Hawks

**Swim Team:** donates pool time for weekly swim practices and provides reduced rates for provincial swim meets.

### Eastern Eagles Soccer

**Club:** sponsors soccer jerseys for the Under 8 and Under 10 teams.

### Swing for a Cure:

staff voluntarily organize event and company donates court time.

### Girl Guides of Canada,

**Montague District:** donates meeting space and pool time for registration night.

### SAVE (Students

**Against Violence Everywhere):** golf fundraising tournament hole sponsor and door prize donor.

### Morell Regional High

**School:** donates 20 one-month memberships for yearbook fundraising event.

### Montague Regional

**High School:** provides discounted weekly pool time for students with special needs and donates facility usage (four times/year) to all high school physical education classes.

### Montague Figure

**Skating Club:** donates meeting space for executive meetings.

### Montague Pathfinders:

donates space for wakeover.

### Sea Glass Festival:

donates membership for door prize.

### Community Swim:

provides discounted swim time each Sunday.