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## Polishing a name in industry

Grimsby business nominated for NEYA award



**Polishing a name in industry.** One of the first major projects for Grimsby-based Contemporary Concrete Solutions was at Burlington's Royal Botanical Gardens. The project not only enabled owner Lucas Rolland to pay off his initial business loan but helped the Grimsby native build a name for himself. Contemporary Concrete Solutions is one of 32 businesses nominated for the Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards. *Amanda Street/Staff Photo*

Grimsby native Lucas Rolland is polishing a name for himself in the construction industry.

In 2007 Rolland launched Contemporary Concrete Solutions Inc., a company which specializes in polished concrete floors, and has been building a name for himself ever since. Major projects like the renovation at Burlington's Royal Botanical Gardens, the McMaster Innovation Park and Cops Coliseum have put the Blessed Trinity Catholic High School graduate's work in the public

spotlight.

“When the bank looked over my business projections for the first five years, they thought they were overshoot,” said Rolland, who was persistent on opening his own business, visiting six banks before finally securing the first \$60,000 loan which started it all. “I paid that loan off in the first six months after landing the job at Royal Botanical Garden. I also brought my name into the industry.”

Rolland was not unfamiliar with concrete when he opened his Grimsby-based business three years ago. While studying sociology at Brock University, Rolland spent his summers pouring concrete for others. Every year it was a new company, as the one he had previously worked for had gone under. He thought about starting his own concrete pouring business when fate came in the mailbox.

An industry magazine had a feature on concrete floors and finishes and Rolland’s interest was piqued. He began looking into the industry, and realizing there was a lack of a market in southern Ontario, started looking into courses.

So Rolland headed to Tennessee with his grandfather, Donald Lucas, in tow. The two were the youngest and oldest in the class. Rolland decided then and there that he would start his own business. In the early days of the business, both Rolland and his grandfather would be on the job from seven in the morning to seven at night. “I couldn’t have done it without him,” said Rolland.

“I’ve always wanted to own a business, and this was something I could do on a bigger scale,” said Rolland, who credits the help of his late grandfather, his mom Paddie Lucas, and his five employees for the growth his business has experienced. “I did my research and there wasn’t really anything like this in southern Ontario so I got on board before anyone else did.”

Jumping into a new industry has paid off for Rolland, who has applied his concrete technique in homes, restaurants, commercial buildings and more.

It starts with a special mix of concrete that is poured. The mixture is more dry than traditional concrete which encourages the stones to settle near the top. Once the concrete has set diamond abrasives are used to polish the concrete until it has a distinct shine. The finished look is comparable to terrazzo flooring which was traditionally seen in hospitals and schools, said Rolland, only this application is much more green.

Contemporary Concrete Solutions has been contracted by the Town of Grimsby for the town hall renovation project. The polished concrete application fits in with the town’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design build as it utilizes the existing concrete surfaces which eliminates the need for additional coverings and coating materials to be manufactured and purchased.

“It’s the best bang for your buck,” said Rolland, noting polished concrete can cost less than cheap tiles.

Though the demand has moved Rolland into a more administrative role, handling tenders and bidding on jobs, he still tries to get out on the job. “I enjoy working with concrete,” he said. “If you find a job that you love, you won’t work another day in your life.”

Starting in 1993, the Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards honour enterprising people whose businesses have made significant differences in the community, and in our lives. This year there are 37 nominees from 32 different businesses across the Niagara region. The awards dinner will take place Friday, Feb. 18 at the Sheraton Fallsview Hotel and Conference Centre.

“I’m super excited with regards to, one, being nominated and appreciated,” said Rolland, “and two, for the opportunity to get my name out there even more.”