

CREATING IMPACT

Candid Conversations with Leaders in Life, Business and Philanthropy



KEVIN ENGLAND

THE ENGLAND GROUP | DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF NEW HOPE RECOVERY FOUNDATION
CHAIR OF BC NEW HOPE RECOVERY SOCIETY | CO-CHAIR OF CLASSIC & CONTEMPORARY CAR INVITATIONAL

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by Jason Boudreau

Greetings and welcome to the winter edition of *Creating Impact!* I'd like to start by wishing you a joyous New Year filled with warmth, health, and happiness for you and your loved ones throughout 2024. Recently, I had the fortunate opportunity to meeting Kevin England, President of The England Group, through a mutual connection. Throughout our interactions, I was met with enthusiasm for life and a passion for vintage cars, right down to the intricate art of cranking and firing up one of his proudest assets- the Ford Model T. As I delved into Kevin's life, his passion for community and family became more and more evident, offering insights into his remarkable journey and the values that define him."

Kevin's narrative begins in the rural heartlands of Pembroke, Ontario, where he was born as the fifth of ten children on a bustling dairy farm. This early environment was more than just a place of residence; it was a crucible where the values of hard work and family solidarity were deeply ingrained. Kevin fondly recalls the influence of his grandparents, particularly a 1922 steam engine owned by them, which not only symbolized their hard work but also ignited Kevin's lifelong fascination with machinery.

Kevin's educational journey was as unique as his upbringing. He attended a one-room schoolhouse, a setting that not only provided academic learning but also reinforced his understanding of community and collective identity. This early exposure to diverse age groups and the need for cooperation undoubtedly laid the groundwork for his later success in team environments and business collaborations.

After completing high school, Kevin embarked on a gap year adventure in Europe. This experience broadened his horizons, instilling in him a sense of independence and a global perspective. His journey into the professional world began with humble experiences that forged his character. Hitchhiking to Fort McMurray, Alberta, seeking better



An enthusiastic car collector, Kevin England doesn't just acquire classics; he actively enjoys them year-round, regardless of the weather. Currently, his impressive collection boasts over 12 cars, ranging from a 1906 REO, a 1910 High Wheeler Horseless Carriage, to a captivating 1930 Lincoln Model L Type 179 Victoria Coupe, all maintained in mint condition. Pictured below with his red 1931 Ford Model A, Kevin often takes one of his cars out when he grabs a coffee in town.



job opportunities, Kevin engaged in various roles, from construction to driving gravel trucks. Amidst these experiences, a serendipitous interview with IBM altered the course of his life. At 25, Kevin embarked on his career with IBM, where he not only honed technical skills but also developed cru-

cial interpersonal talents, fostering relationships that would later shape his trajectory. Kevin's time at IBM was marked by a thirst for knowledge and an unrelenting work ethic, immersing himself in diverse projects, learning the intricacies of technology and business dynamics.



Kevin's journey into the realm of real estate began as a branch manager with Imperial Group. His career trajectory took an intriguing turn when a transfer whisked him away from Vancouver to Edmonton. Upon returning to Vancouver, he delved into a two-year stint with Qualico, immersing himself in many roles that extended beyond his job description. This approach, characterized by an insatiable appetite for learning from diverse company divisions and individuals, laid the groundwork for his eventual foray into establishing his own real estate syndication investment company, The England Group.

The decision to venture into this new territory proved to be a turning point of immense significance. Recognizing the potential in the real estate landscape, particularly in Texas, Kevin embarked on a path to familiarize himself extensively with this market.

His strategic approach during the early '90s, a period marred by market crashes and overbuilding, was unconventional yet astute. "We focused on purchasing existing properties in those areas, preferably gated communities," Kevin elaborates. "Our emphasis wasn't on building; it was on enhancing what was already there."

Understanding the intrinsic value of amenities and quality living, Kevin's team didn't just invest in properties but in experiences. "We enhanced these properties with amenities like tennis courts, gyms, and more," Kevin says, "as opposed to trying to cut costs, we were actually bringing more value."

Through treating investors' properties like family assets, he ensured no deferred maintenance, even deferring his management fees during economic downturns. His innovative financial tactics, like the cash pool loan, and fortified

Co-Chairs, Kevin England and Dave Lede. Dave Lede, CEO of the Ledcor Group of Companies, is a dedicated activist and supporter of the BC Children's Hospice and its annual fundraiser, the Classic & Contemporary Car Invitational.

properties, resulted in an impressive 19% annual cash-on-cash return over 25 years. His emphasis on transparency, evident through audited financial statements, built trust and led investors to claim it was one of their best investment experiences ever.

Kevin's approach wasn't just about profits; it crafted a legacy of success and satisfaction for all involved. In 2014, he proposed that if the final sale of the portfolio exceeded \$20 million above the appraised value, investors would donate 1% of the proceeds to the B.C. New Hope Recovery Foundation. This foundation's initial focus was to support Baldy Hughes, a therapeutic addiction treatment community and farm, in Prince George, B.C. The portfolio value surged to an astounding US\$288 million (initially appraised at US\$220 million), and with an additional CA\$52 million sale of a property in Toronto, a CA\$4 million donation was made to enhance support and addiction services.

Kevin shared, "helping young men who struggle with demons has been very gratifying and that's where I realized that it's fun to do properties to make

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money, but it's a lot more fun to go out and bring people together and do good in the community. That has become my passion."

In recognition of his unwavering commitment to community service, Kevin received a Medal of Good Citizenship from the Premier of British Columbia on September 14, 2016. This prestigious award stands as a testament to his dedication and outstanding contributions to the well-being of society.

Today, Kevin remains focused and committed to supporting young men and women who are battling addiction, sharing, “my most important and impactful work is still ahead, where I am a strong advocate for individuals in need of a solution for their disease of alcoholism and addiction, in the province of British Columbia and across Canada”.

A deep-rooted passion for vintage cars, stemming from his childhood memories of his grandparents’ steam engine, has evolved into a significant aspect of Kevin’s life. His vintage car collection is not just a personal love; it serves as a conduit for his charitable work, most notably through hosting car shows after a moving experience at Canuck Place Children’s Hospice.

His convertible Model T ride for a family staying at the hospice, led to the idea of organizing a car show to raise money to support Canuck Place and cancer research. Kevin was beaming when he shared about his passion for this event, “Helping others enhances my personal life so much because I have been blessed with so much. When I see these other people struggling and I get to help them, that re-grounds me, resets me, and that’s a blessing.”

Since its inception three years ago, the Classic & Contemporary Car Invitational has been able to raise over \$2.5

million, with the next one upcoming on June 15th, 2024, taking place the day before Father’s Day. Speaking with Kevin about the car show being centred around Father’s Day, led to me then learn about his role as a family man being central to his identity. He speaks of his children and grandchildren with immense pride and joy, cherishing the moments spent with them, especially through sharing his love for vintage cars at the car shows, or by taking rides together around the city. For Kevin, these moments are not just familial bonding but opportunities to instill in the younger generation the values of hard work, passion, and the joy of giving back.

Kevin’s zest for life extends beyond his professional and philanthropic interests. He is an avid kite surfer and enjoys electric foiling, activities that reflect his love for adventure and the outdoors. These hobbies, while providing personal satisfaction, also offer him a sense of balance and rejuvenation, essential in sustaining his high-energy lifestyle. Travel forms another crucial element of Kevin’s life. His trips are not just vacations; they are journeys that offer cultural exposure, adventure, and opportunities to meet diverse people. His experiences in places like Mexico, Brazil, Vietnam and Thailand have



In 2016, Kevin England was presented with the British Columbia Medal of Good Citizenship, honouring his leadership and volunteerism for many non-profit and worthwhile initiatives.

enriched his perspective, enabling him to embrace a more holistic view of the world.

As we closed out our candid conversation, I asked Kevin to share some words of wisdom, particularly to younger people, regarding philanthropy and giving back. “Go with your passion, pick something that truly moves you and you’ll be able to galvanize others to come together with you to make a difference!”

Kevin England’s life story is a compelling narrative and serves as an inspiring example of how a life driven by purpose, passion, and a desire to make a positive impact can truly create a lasting legacy. He hopes his journey will serve as source of inspiration, motivating individuals to pursue their aspirations with unwavering dedication, confront challenges with resilience, and, most importantly, leverage their achievements as a foundation for fostering a positive and enduring influence on society.

