

The luck of the draw

Contest Queen of Oshawa

By Fran Zingone
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Luck is often just a matter of chance meeting opportunity.

When browsing on the Internet, so many contests and special offers are flashing on the screen throughout the duration of our time spent online.

While most of us just close the pop-up boxes or ignore the special contests to win free stuff from countless different companies, Oshawa resident Carolyn Wilman has made it a hobby to win things online and is ready to share her secrets with the world.

With a background of nearly 20 years in the marketing business, Wilman has learned more than just a thing or two about the online contests and has written her own book entitled "You Can't Win If You Don't Enter" with inside tricks, tips and approaches on how to increase one's chances of winning everything from movie passes to a luxury trip.

Although difficult to match Wilman's determination to win by sending up to 67,000 ballots per day for various contests and sweepstakes, she does ensure that most people give up too easily.

"It only takes one ballot to win," said Wilman. She also mentions that a winning cycle often takes about 90 days or so to win because many contests' drawing date takes a month or two to be drawn but so often, people give up too quickly.

The idea of writing her book came to her after she won a trip to have dinner with famous chef Bob Blumer at his home in Los Angeles, who inspired her to write her first book.

"He told me that being in the kitchen was the center of his world and I began thinking about the center of my own world and it was contesting," said Wilman.

During the time period in 2001 when Wilman won the special chef dinner trip for two, she had been in an unemployed stint, unable to land a job in the field she had been in for so many years.

"The field I'd had so many years of experience in was at an all-time low during that period and I couldn't find a job anywhere," said Wilman.

"At one point, I just began to think that I didn't need to work because I could just win stuff," said Wilman of her massive winning streak that won her nine grand prize trips in less than five years, two of which she gave to family members.

"Sometimes I enter my mom's name or my sister or my husband even though it's still me entering the ballot," said Wilman.



After two long years of researching various types of gaming with sweepstakes and contests, she has finally completed her book which tells readers all about her thousands of dollars worth of prizes from winning various trips across the world, DVDs and CDs to a years supply of pizza!

In Wilman's book "You Can't Win If You Don't Enter", she shares her tips and tricks of winning after her many years of practicing and contesting.

"I've sat on both sides of the tables," said Wilman of her contesting career as well as her nearly 20 years of working in the sales and marketing sector. Since her experiences in marketing, Wilman has now created a new business of her own called Imagination Edge Inc., which focuses on business consulting and promotion.

"My advice to anyone wanting to get into contesting is to figure out what you like and stick with it," said Wilman.

As odd as the contesting hobby sounds to many people, there is an actual online community of contesters, who live to win.

"I've already got that contesting community to

understand what's out there, but now I'm just trying to let the rest of the world know," said Wilman.

Wilman does have a life outside of contesting though, with a loving husband and four-year-old daughter, who believes that winning is what you do because she has grown up with a mother who wins her toys, trips to movie sets like Harry Potter's latest film shot in London, to DVDs and CDs.

"Nobody does what I do, but I just look at winning as just an extra now because I have made friends for life through the contesting community," said Wilman. She has visited many friends she's met online after winning trips to their hometown.

For more information on the unique contesting hobby and to order a copy of Wilman's book "You Can't Win If You Don't Enter", please visit her website at www.contestqueen.com.

So what is next for the determined Contest Queen to conquer?

"I've decided that I'm winning a car this year," laughed Wilman.