

# Contest Queen

## Carolyn Wilman is a pro at winning prizes. She shares her secrets at a seminar next weekend

BY PAULA MCCOOEY, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN    SEPTEMBER 26, 2009

Carolyn Wilman is a Contest Queen.

In the past eight years, she's won more than \$150,000 in prizes -- everything from movie passes and beer cooler bags to all-inclusive vacations to Europe.

And there are dozens more -- prizes the Oshawa resident says "money can't buy." Like the time she met legendary rocker Sting and Canadian crooner Michael Bublé. Her husband Craig and their seven-year-old daughter Nicole have also lucked out from her aggressive contesting. They've visited the Harry Potter movie set in England, and Craig experienced the hair-raising rush of driving in a Formula One car in Toronto in 2002.

"I officially became the best wife ever that day," quips Wilman, who was named one of Canada's Top 40 Women over 40 in 2007 by MORE Magazine. She says anyone can get lucky like her.

"If you want to learn how to win quickly and easily, I am the person who can teach you in one day."

Next Saturday, Wilman will share her secrets to winning during a full-day seminar at the main branch of the Ottawa Public Library.

The event is geared toward those who like entering contests, but don't have time to do all the legwork to find them.

"They will learn how to find contests, how to enter them, and what to do when you are the winner," says Wilman, 42, who usually enters contests online, but rarely turns down the opportunity to fill out a ballot. "Because there are different things you need to do at each stage."

She will also discuss contest rules because if you don't play correctly, you could lose your chance of claiming the prize.

"I have been told by promotional management companies, I am the third or fourth person they've phoned because the people didn't answer the skill testing question or didn't get back to them in time with the proper documentation," says Wilman. "So I wasn't the first one picked, but I was the first one to win."

This lucky lady enters contests often and keeps a spreadsheet of her wins. To date, she estimates she's helped her followers win more than \$1 million in prizes.

Despite her good luck, Wilman estimates she's only won about one per cent of the contests she's entered. Playing often is key, she says.

In 2004, with two decades of marketing experience under her belt, she decided to marry her professional skills with her hobby of entering contests. Utilizing her extensive research, she wrote an Internet-focused contest resource book called, *You Can't Win If You Don't Enter*, released in 2006.

In conjunction with the book, she launched a contest resource website, [www.](http://www.contestqueen.com)

[contestqueen.com](http://contestqueen.com), with links to contest sites, groups and forums, contest management companies, and software.

She also consults with companies to help them maximize their promotions potential. Of course, she isn't eligible to enter those contests.

"In Canada in 2007, companies spent \$200 million running promotions, and that number is expected to triple by 2012," says Wilman. "So over half a billion dollars will be spent each year, and it's just going to keep going up. So (there are) a lot of prizes to be won."

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How to win seminar

When: Next Saturday (Oct. 3) from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Where: Ottawa Public Library (Main Branch), 120 Metcalfe St.

Cost: \$79 or \$99 with a contest starter kit, valued at \$30

Info: 613-580-2945

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