

And the winner is

BY MICHELE DELUCA

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The Sweepstakes Queen knows how to get what she wants. She wins an average of 10 to 20 prizes a month.

Carolyn Wilman has made a career for herself by winning. She just recently returned from a trip to London to see Welsh singer Duffy. It was the second trip she has won to that country.

She has won concert tickets, movie tickets, and even a visit with Sting. She has made a business for herself out of sweepstaking and contesting, and encourages more people to join in.

There's a lot of people entering contests, she said, but there is a lot out there to be won.

"There's enough prizes for everyone," said Wilman, who lives just north of the border in Oshawa, Ontario.

Companies in the United States spend almost two billion dollars running contest promotions annually. That trend is expected to triple by 2012, and Wilman believes you can't win if you don't enter.

She's not a gambler. She calls herself a "contestor." "I don't like putting my money into slots and seeing it disappear."

Wilman's sweepstakes winnings are much more intentional. She spends a couple hours a day online entering as many contests as she can find. She also has a poster board in her office where she pins up photos of items she wants to win. And win, she does.

The whole sweepstakes thing started when she

was a 14 year old and she won tickets by random dialing a radio show to see Burton Cummings of "Guess Who."

She once had a career in marketing, mostly in the information and technology field, until the dot.com crash when she lost her job.

She stayed in bed for a while, unemployed and feeling sorry for herself, until she read a story about a couple of teachers who entered contests on a daily basis and fortified their lifestyle with prizes including fancy dinners out and exotic trips.

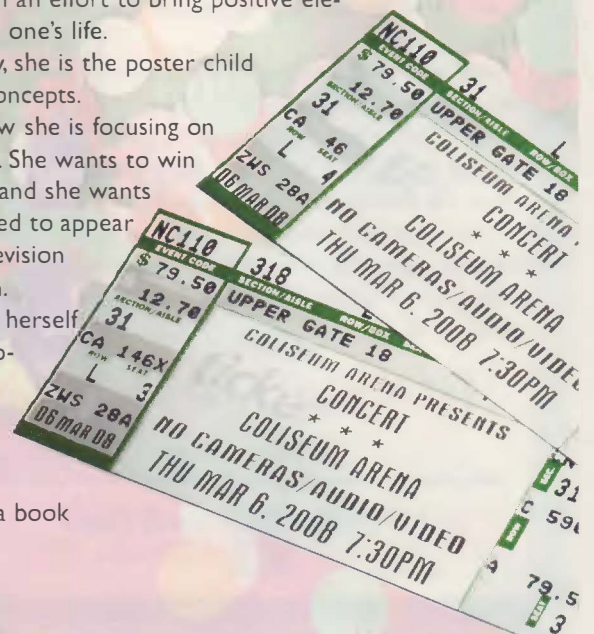
"I thought, well that's a good idea. I won't have to work, I'll just win what I need," she said.

Her success, aligns perfectly with the current trend towards using "the Law of Attraction," and personal intention in an effort to bring positive elements into one's life.

Certainly, she is the poster child for such concepts.

Right now she is focusing on two things. She wants to win a new car and she wants to be invited to appear on the television show, Ellen.

She calls herself the "Sweepstakes Queen," and most recently published a book



called "You Can't Win If You Don't Enter."

She has a website, www.contestqueen.com; a radio show and a blog on her website. She also sells luck related products and mentors sweepstakes enthusiasts and clubs, including a group in Rochester called the Lucky Lilacs.

There are lots of links on her website, including information on trends in sweepstakes and contests, and she offers advice freely. "Odds are best right now on cell phone sweepstakes, often found in packages provided by wireless providers.

"My friend Rick just won two Harley Davidson motorcycles off his cell phone," she said, adding with a laugh that his wife no longer complains about the cell phone bills.

Niagara region residents who want to learn more about winning sweepstakes can join her at a gathering from 2-4 p.m. Feb. 7 at the Orange Cat Coffee Shop in Lewiston.

The purpose is not just to have more fun and excitement in your life but also to change your thinking, she said.

Wilman, who wears sneakers with shamrocks on them and a green bracelet that reads "I am lucky," believes that a lot of winning has to do with attitude.

"I have people who say, 'I never win,'" she said. "You can't think that way."

"There's no wish fairy," she added, smiling. "You have to take action."



IF YOU GO:

- WHO: The Sweepstakes Queen
- WHAT: Sweepstakes and contestors gathering
- WHEN: 2-4 p.m. Feb. 7
- WHERE: The Orange Cat Coffee Co., 703 Center St., Lewiston
- CONTACT: RSVP to Carolyn Wilman at contestqueen.com or call 416-410-7517.

WINNING ADVICE

Thinking about trying your hand at prize winning efforts? The following is an excerpt from Carolyn Wilman's book "You Can't Win If You Don't Enter."

DO:

Pick free contests. There are often drawing boxes in grocery stores and other businesses. Also radio and television contests cost nothing to enter.

Pick "better odds" contests. Look for contests that have a limited contesting area, offer lots of prizes, or require you to do something like write a story or solve a puzzle, or that run for only a short time.

Enter often. If it's a "better odds" contest I'll enter five to 20 times. Try to space your mailings throughout the length of the contest's run.

Collect UPCs. Remember that hand-drawn facsimile are usually accepted in mail-in contests and, believe me, they really work. I've won many contests using hand drawn facsimile.

Subscribe to contest newsletters.

Visit my website for more information:
www.contestqueen.com.

DON'T:

Swipe the entry pads and stuff the drawing box. Getting greedy can get you disqualified.

Don't try to win more than once a month on a local radio station. If you make a nuisance of yourself over every prize offered you lower your chances of winning the good stuff.

Don't waste money sending dozens of entries to contests that give away only one prize. That is a quick road to contest burnout.

Don't get scammed. If you win a contest you haven't entered -- beware! If you have to be earning \$40,000 a year and are required to attend a sales presentation, think twice!!!

Don't send money to receive a prize, ever!!