

Contest junkie turns party host

Debbie Bruce

July 26, 2010

Tanya Campbell is a winner and she's got a backyard full of people to prove it. The Clarkson resident is a self-proclaimed contest junkie who has won a dishwasher, oven, fridge, video camera, coffee maker, hundreds of dollars in gift cards and a houseful of other winnings since starting her hobby. She celebrated her good luck with her latest prize: a fully catered backyard barbecue for her and 40 of her closest friends.

"I've been entering contests now for four years," said Campbell. "(On TV) I saw a girl known as the contest queen, who won a lot of prizes by entering contests. I thought, 'I can do that.'"

Campbell decided to try it for a month, and see what happens.

"Within a week and a half I'd won a cell phone from Virgin Mobil," she said. "I was hooked."

In the early days Campbell entered every contest she could, but has since learned to be more selective.

"I don't do that anymore. You end up with a lot of crap," she said with a laugh, adding that she donates a lot of winnings to charity such as T-shirts, autographed CDs and books. Now Campbell only enters contests that has a prize of something she or someone close to her can use. Like her prized possession: an autographed Sidney Crosby jersey. When her boyfriend was upset she didn't give it to him, she promptly won him another one.

"That was pretty awesome," she said.

Last year, Campbell netted approximately \$7,000 worth of merchandise using websites such as frugalshopper.ca and redflagdeals.com and working with the "contest community," a large network of fellow contest enterers who trade information, special codes and insider tips. "Without these sites and my fellow contest community, I couldn't do what I do," she said, adding that her winnings rank her quite low on the prizing winners' totem pole.

"Some people who are really into it win up to \$100,000 a year."

The backyard barbecue she enjoyed yesterday afternoon was compliments of Lakeport Brewing, who chose her as one of their Flippin' for Lakeport Backyard BBQ Party contest winners. In addition to providing all the food and refreshments, Campbell was left with a brand new barbeque valued at approximately \$800.

"I'm amazed that I won it," Campbell said, standing in her backyard full of people. "Any prize that you can share with your friends and family is a good one."



Lucky Lady. Tanya Campbell won a backyard barbecue party from Lakeport Brewery. She enters, and wins, all kinds of contests. *Photo by Peter McCusker*