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WINNING FOR A LIVING

**Meet 'The Contesters':
Passionate People Hooked on Contests**

**World Premiere on CBC Television 'Doc Zone', Thursday March 6 at
9:00 P.M. (9:30 P.M. NT)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Toronto, February 18, 2008)

Contests! We've all filled out a form, mailed in a ballot, or rolled up a rim. The temptation is irresistible: after all, who doesn't like to win something? But for some people, as we see in the new Handel Productions Inc. documentary **WINNING FOR A LIVING, airing Thursday, March 6, at 9:00 pm (9:30 pm NT) on CBC Television's Doc Zone**, the lure of big prizes turns into a marathon dance with Lady Luck. These dedicated - some might call obsessed - individuals are known as "contesters".

Contesters are loyal citizens of the land of big dreams. For them, hope springs eternal. Long odds and slim chances don't deter these eternal optimists in their quest to win everything from free oven mitts, to cars, TVs, homes and vacations, all given away by companies hoping to attract more customers, higher sales, and a bigger slice of their product's pie.

And it's a big pie. Canadian companies spend over \$200 million a year on contests and promotions. After all, from a marketing company's point of view, contests aren't about winning; they're about *selling*. In their continuing search for ways to get consumers to notice their brand, marketers know that giveaways boost sales. That's why two-thirds of brands used contests last year as part of their marketing plans. In the brave new world of cyberspace, a whopping 61% of internet users enter contests *every two weeks*, making 'cybermarketing', with its emphasis on creativity and interactive participation, the New World of opportunity for contest promoters.

WINNING FOR A LIVING profiles several Canadian contesters to find out what drives them to devote much of their time, sometimes at the expense of their personal and family lives, to entering dozens of contests hundreds, or even thousands, of times. Is it the prizes themselves, the fact that the objects are free, or just the thrill of winning that attracts these contest junkies?

In fact, each contester in the film has his or her own reasons for entering, and strategies that will lead them to El Dorado:

- **Carolyn Wilman of Oshawa** got into contesting when she was pregnant and unemployed. These days she calls herself 'The Contest Queen'. Thanks to contest wins, she's cuddled with Sting and sat in Dumbledore's chair on the set of the Harry Potter

movies. Carolyn has parlayed her hobby into a thriving new business: writing a tell-all book about contesting (“You Can’t Win If You Don’t Enter”); running her own contesting website (www.contestqueen.com); and organizing the first Canadian contesters convention. She firmly believes you’ll *be* lucky if you *feel* lucky, and is now on the prowl for a really big win.

- **Mike Smith of Toronto** has been contesting for over 30 years, winning an estimated \$250,000 in free stuff, including seven TVs! He spent all of one weekend filling out 2,000 ballots in hopes of winning TV #8! He even fills in ballots in his car while waiting at red lights. But there are serious costs, and his marriage has suffered from his contest addiction.
- **Rosemary Chiu of Newmarket, Ontario**, is a doggedly determined lifelong contesteer who’s raised her three sons on barcodes and ballots. She’s earned, on average, \$1,000 a month in winnings, though she bagged \$44,000 in her best year. She’s focused on winning specific prizes, including a new car for her eldest son, and believes that if you really want or, more importantly, need something, you will receive it. Rosemary calls these her ‘11th hour wins’.
- **Fern Corraini of Calgary** is the newbie, a retired teacher and closet contesteer for years till she finally went public with her friends and relatives. She’s just won her first \$1,000 prize. As a result, she’s now an addict to what Carolyn Wilman calls ‘contest crack: one win and you’re hooked!’ Fern thinks you need to feel ‘worthy’ of winning. Once you do, she believes you’ll start winning.

WINNING FOR A LIVING reveals some of the winning strategies of these ‘professional’ contest enterers, tricks of the trade aimed at increasing the odds of winning – everything from ballot box stuffing, to new computer software programs like RoboForm that allow contesters to accelerate filling out multiple contest ballots, to more arcane theories of seducing Lady Luck through prayer, feng shui, or the sage advice of self-help books on the power of positive thinking. The marketing companies fight back against these hard-core contesters, searching for ways to foil ballot box stuffing and block RoboForm, so that the pros don’t win everything and the one-time contest entrant gets a fighting chance to nab a prize.

WINNING FOR A LIVING also takes viewers behind-the-scenes to get the skinny from experts who actually create the contests. Top marketing and communications gurus Ira Baptiste of Cossette Communication Group and Tony Chapman of Capital C explain the marketing strategies behind contents, including new approaches prompted by the internet that encourage interactivity. Chapman describes the thinking behind Capital C’s phenomenally successful *Bring Home the Cup* campaign for Pepsi, which asked Canadians to make a video proving their community had the country’s most fanatic hockey fans, with a personal visit from Mark Messier and the Stanley Cup as the winner’s prize. That campaign perfectly merged national pride and product placement. It was a marketing home run.

In **WINNING FOR A LIVING**, director Nadine Pequenezza and producer Alan Handel have created a fascinating portrait of the passionate people who get hooked on contesting and, on the flip side, the marketers, equally determined to find news ways to keep the hard-core contesters from winning everything!

WINNING FOR A LIVING director/co-writer **Nadine Pequenezza** has won numerous international awards for her work, and is a three-time Gemini Award nominee in both writing and directing categories for her films *Exhibit A: The Secrets of Forensic Science “Bare Bones”*; and *Turning Points in History “Aristide’s Haiti”* and *“A Coup: Made In America”*. The Toronto-based filmmaker’s other writing/directing credits include *Lives That*

Changed The World “Nelson Mandela”; *Final 24 “Marvin Gaye”*; *Iran Betrayed*; *Raising Cassidy*; *Who Killed Patrice Lumumba?*; *My Beat: The Life & Times of Bruce Cockburn*; and *Argentina’s Dirty War*. As a series producer, her credits include *Psychic Investigators*, *Almost Legal*, *Women Behind the Badge* and *At the Post*.

WINNING FOR A LIVING is directed by Nadine Pequenezza, written by Nadine Pequenezza, Alan Handel and Allen J. Abel, and produced/executive produced by Alan Handel. Narrator is Ann-Marie MacDonald. The Film Editor is Glenn Berman. The DOPs are Renald Bellemare, Michael Boland, Russell Gienapp and Harald Bachman. Original Music by Mathieu Vanasse and Claude Milot. Location Sound is by Paul Adlaf, Glenn Hodgins and Tim St-Pierre. Associate producer is Craig Silverman. For Handel Productions, Leon G. Arcand is Head of Production. For CBC, Senior Producer is Linda Laughlin, Michael Claydon is Area Executive Producer, Independent Documentaries and Mark Starowicz is Executive Director, Documentary Programming.

WINNING FOR A LIVING is produced by Handel Productions Inc. in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and with the participation of the Canadian Television Fund created by the Government of Canada and the Canadian cable industry, CTF: License Fee Program, the Québec Film and Television Tax Credit administered by SODEC, and with the assistance of the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit. Developed in association with CTV.

Handel Productions Inc., founded and run by Alan Handel, is one of Canada’s leading documentary production companies. The Montreal-based company’s films have been broadcast on CBC, Radio-Canada, CTV, Discovery Channel, Global Television, Bravo US, The History Channel US, PBS, NBC, ARTE, BBC, Channel Five UK, ZDF, and many other networks around the world. Handel Productions Inc. was recently nominated for two Primetime Emmy Awards for *How William Shatner Changed The World*, and has won a number of other international awards. For further information, please go to www.handelproductions.ca

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Repeat Showing – **WINNING FOR A LIVING** will be repeated on CBC Newsworld Saturday, March 8 at 10:00 P.M. ET/PT.

Still Photography for **WINNING FOR A LIVING** is available at: www.cbc.ca/imagegallery

For more information, DVD screening copies, audio/video clips, interviews, etc., please contact:

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