

'Contest Queen' makes own luck

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A case of Goldfish crackers, a gourmet meal cooked by celebrity chef Bob Blumer in his Los Angeles home, a visit to the set of Harry Potter in England. Such are the free fruits of Carolyn Wilman's labours — and luck.

The "Contest Queen" — her official moniker — is a whiz at winning. "I call it contest crack. It's an addiction," says the 42-year-old Oshawa resident, who spends up to two hours a day at her computer entering online competitions.

While Wilman gets her kicks playing the game, she averages between five and 15 prizes a month. The four kilograms of crackers were a particularly good catch, lasting her family of three a year and a half.

On recycling days, she and her husband check neighbourhood blue bins to find product packages with PIN codes to enter on the manufacturer's website.

Highly organized, she checks daily emails and websites listing current contests and uses software to fill in entry forms. Occasionally she enters radio call-ins with a phone on autodial in each hand or uses her cellphone for texting entries.

She got serious about contesting after looking for a way to balance motherhood, work and having fun. She parlayed her hobby and a 20-year marketing background into a career, holding seminars on how to haul in the loot and coaching businesses on how to give it away.

Fortune doesn't come without effort, Wilman says, quoting film producer Samuel Goldwyn: "The harder I work, the luckier I get."



carola vhnak / torstar news service

Oshawa's Carolyn Wilman, the self-proclaimed "Contest Queen," pictured here in her office, is so good at winning, she teaches others how to do it -- which they have, to the tune of \$1 million.

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