

Tina's a champ when it comes to dogs

By HENRY BURY
Staff Reporter

When it comes to handling dogs, Tina Keuning is a true Canadian champion.

The 15-year-old Sidney Township resident captured the Canadian title for junior dog handlers — at the national competition in Toronto recently.

The win now earns her an all expenses-paid trip to the oldest and largest dog show in the world — in London, England in February 1989. There, she will spend a week competing against thousands of other champion dog handlers from Europe and North America.

Winning the Canadian title — she's won the Ontario crown the past two years — is something the Grade 11 Centennial Secondary School student never dreamed would happen.

She entered the dog handling world only four years ago. Her parents, Ieter and Eileen Keuning of RR 5, Belleville, own Blessington Kennels.

"I was just speechless when I won the Canadian title," Keuning said. "I've only been in competitions for the past four years and this is the highest award I've ever won. I never thought I'd get this good this quickly."

The student offered no real explanation for her dog handling success.

"I guess I just love dogs so much and they love me. I feel I have a way with dogs," Keuning said.

Her mother, Eileen, said Tina's success is "her natural ability to work with dogs and teach them what they're supposed to do. She has a special way with dogs. They seem to respond to her handling."

A dog handler is judged on how he or she takes the dog through its paces.

The Toronto competition was sponsored by the Canadian Kennel Club. There, she beat out 19 other provincial junior dog handlers from across the country. Later, in the finals, she also edged out the overall winners from the junior novice, junior open and senior novice divisions. And again she was rewarded with top national honors.

Because the competition was the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Kennel Club, the Canadian winner was automatically chosen to represent this country at the prestigious Crufts Dog Show in London.

The all expenses-paid trip is funded by Iedigree Lal.

It's the first time a Canadian champion is being sponsored to attend the London competition and Keuning will again be entered in the junior dog handler division.

But there's one catch. She won't be allowed to bring her own five-year-old championship Sheltie, call name Flash but registered as Gallantry Irimary Success.

She won the national competition with Flash.

Instead, the London organizers will provide all competitors with dogs.

"I don't care what dog I get as long as I have a dog," Keuning said.

The student, who's already been approached by a New Orleans professional dog handler to help in her training, said she hopes to do well overseas in February.

"I hope to handle as many dogs as I can between now and the actual competition. And then, who knows?," said Keuning.

WINNING TINA

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