

Thompson, Sarah

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By Pat Whittaker

Special to The Intelligencer

To observe Sarah Thompson in her comfortable Belleville bungalow, one would not describe her as a jock.

Yet that is the enigma of the 80-year-old blind woman, for she describes herself as "just one of the guys at the gym."

In fact, she's far more than that. She tends her family, home and garden and she lifts 155 pounds down at the gym. In fact, she's a world-class powerlifter.

Her recreation room teems with trophies, plaques and medals, accumulated for the most part since she turned 60.

Sarah Thompson will be the featured speaker at a dinner celebrating the International Year of Older Persons to be held in Picton on June 16. The event is co-sponsored by the Prince Edward County Community Care for Seniors Association and the seniors clubs of the county, and has received a \$925 grant from the Ontario government's IYOP funding.

Sarah was recently one of 130 Ontario seniors to receive the 1999 International Year of Older Persons Award from Cam Jackson, the Minister of Long-Term Care with Responsibility for Seniors at a ceremony held in Kingston.

The Picton-born woman has covered herself in glory as an athlete, most recently as a powerlifter, winning seven World Cups in the masters division since 1992, despite sustaining physical disabilities that eventually left her blind, and the loss of her daughter to cancer.

During her athletic career, she has accumulated scrapbooks full of clippings and has hobnobbed with celebrities from all walks of life.

When she was 65, she met sprinter Ben Johnson, then a rising track star, running the 100 metres in 11 seconds. Sarah was running 100 metres in 16 seconds. She told Johnson: "If I had my sight and your age, I'd beat you."

She says matter-of-factly, "I always wanted to be the best in the world and now I am, and I'm just waiting for someone to come along and take it away."

She began running early in life. One of nine children in Picton's Gentile family, she raced from the family farm on the edge

Sarah Struts

Her Stuff

No slowing down senior

powerlifter Sarah Thompson



Sarah Thompson during a recent powerlifting competition.

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