

MODEL STUDENT: Gouweloos wins top prize in TV Commercial competition

Grafton teen turns heads at model and talent convention

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CECILIA NASMITH

cnasmith@northumberlandtoday.com

GRAFTON — Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East student Dena Gouweloos considers herself well on the way to the modelling career she has dreamed of, after turning heads at the Canadian Model & Talent Convention, held in Toronto from April 30 to May 3.

For example, the Grafton resident took first place in the TV Commercial competition — though she also entered other competitions and participated in a number of seminars and workshops.

"I learned a great deal, and got the inside scoop from national and international agents and dignitaries — 52 of them from around the world including France, Italy, England, Greece, South Africa, Japan, Taiwan, China, Korea, Singapore, New York, California, Florida and Canada," she listed.

"While winning the best TV Commercial award was awesome, it was not the highlight of my four days at CMTC. The big prize, much bigger and more important than winning a trophy, was the opportunity to meet and speak with the agents and scouts, with the ultimate goal being to have one of them invite me to a callback on the last day of the convention."

If an agent or scout takes an interest in a model, she explained, you're chosen to attend a callback and meet

with these people one-on-one to discuss contract possibilities. Gouweloos received seven callbacks from agents that represent models from around the world.

They seemed pleased that she has only one year left at the CDCI East International Baccalaureate Program, she said.

"All agents throughout the conference repeatedly stated that it is important for models and commercial talent to do well in school and to finish high school, and that they do not like to take anyone out of school to work," she said.

"Therefore, many of the International agencies will choose 18-year-olds and older for that reason. I am very fortunate that I will be graduating from high school at 16, giving me a head start.

"Particularly exciting for me is that a couple of the New York agents, as well as the agent from Tokyo, are very interested in the possibility of having me come to their agencies for a couple months this summer."

While there are no guarantees, she added, there will at least be auditioning and networking opportunities.

This experience would not have been possible without the local sponsors who helped her get there, she said.

"A lot of the girls who competed came from larger metropolitan areas within Canada, such as Calgary and Toronto, so they quite easily enlist many corporate sponsors



Submitted photo

Grafton resident Dena Gouweloos holds the first-place trophy she won in the TV Commercial competition at the recent Canadian Model & Talent Convention in Toronto.

for this event. However, those of us from the smaller towns do not have that option, so we rely on the generosity of the smaller local businesses," she said.

In her case, that list includes the Mill Pond Hatchery, Absolute Vogue, Wimpy's Diner, Smith Energy Systems, Jillian Bickle Photography, Boston Pizza, Pam Vorkapic Photography and Boston Pizza.

Her next step is to discuss any offers that come in with her current agency, Mode Elle Model & Talent Agency in Belleville. Then, if she does sign with another agency, "it will be up to me to get out

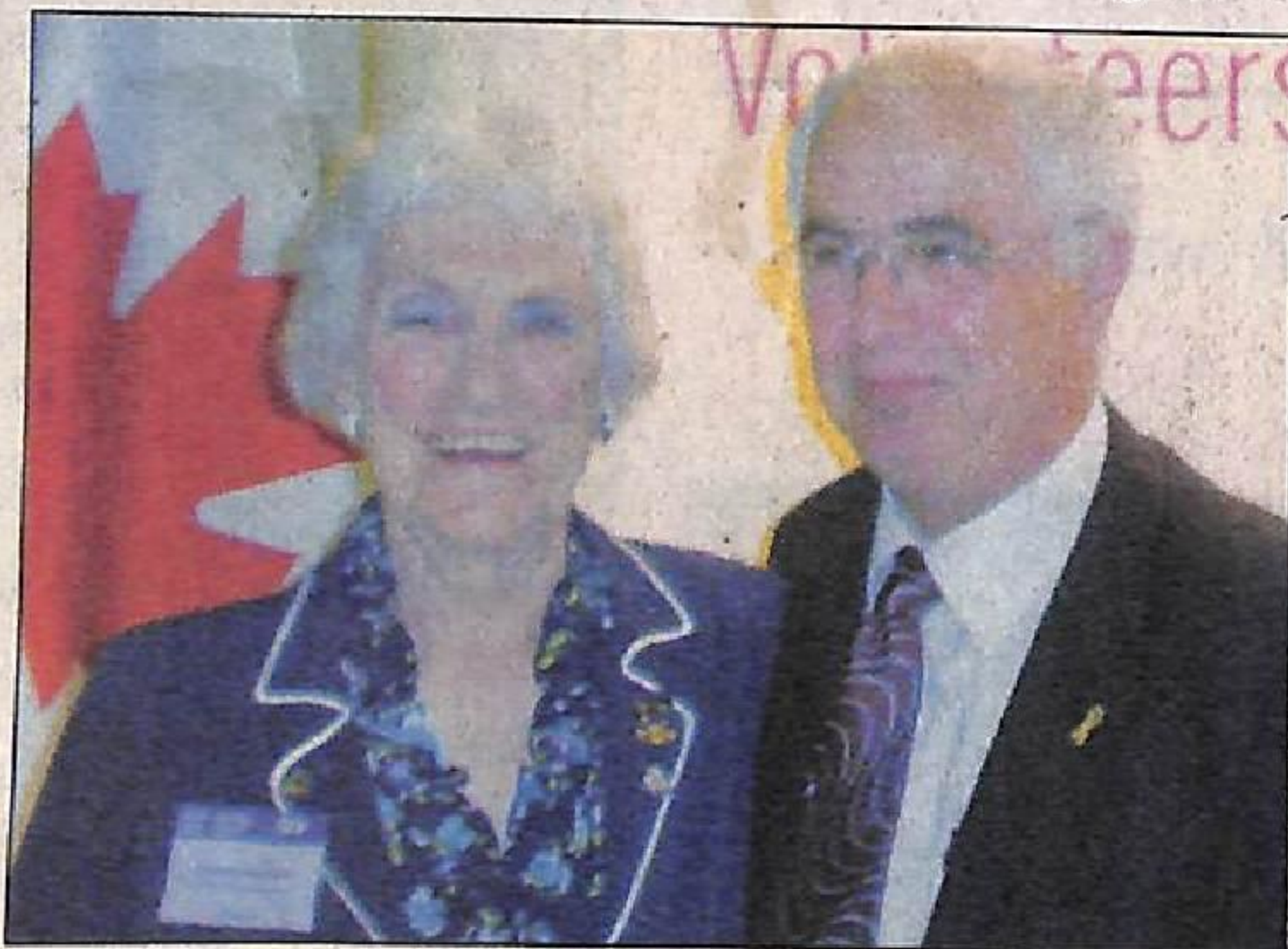
there and work hard, really hard.

"As with any trade, you can't just wake up one day and instantly start doing the job. It takes years of training and experience, and this is no different. I'm happy to start my training now and work my way up.

"At the same time, I am realistic in that I definitely understand that the competition is fierce and that not everyone makes it. However, if nothing further ever comes from all this, then I will know that I gave it my best shot. And that's so much better than never trying at all."

THANKS: Ontario Volunteer Service Awards recognize dedication

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VALERIE MACDONALD Sun Media

Northumberland County's long-serving volunteers were honoured at the Cobourg Lions Community Centre last night during the 2009 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. Two 50-year volunteers were among those honoured. Left: Dorothy Harnden was honoured for 50 years of volunteer service with the Women's Institute in Cold Springs. Congratulating her is Northumberland-Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi. Right: Dorothy Beedham received recognition for her 10 years as a volunteer with the Hamilton Township-Cold Springs Memorial Hall Board of Management and 50 years volunteering with the Women's Institute in Cold Springs. She is flanked by Khalil Ramal, parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (left) and Northumberland-Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi.