

Hunt skates to silver medal

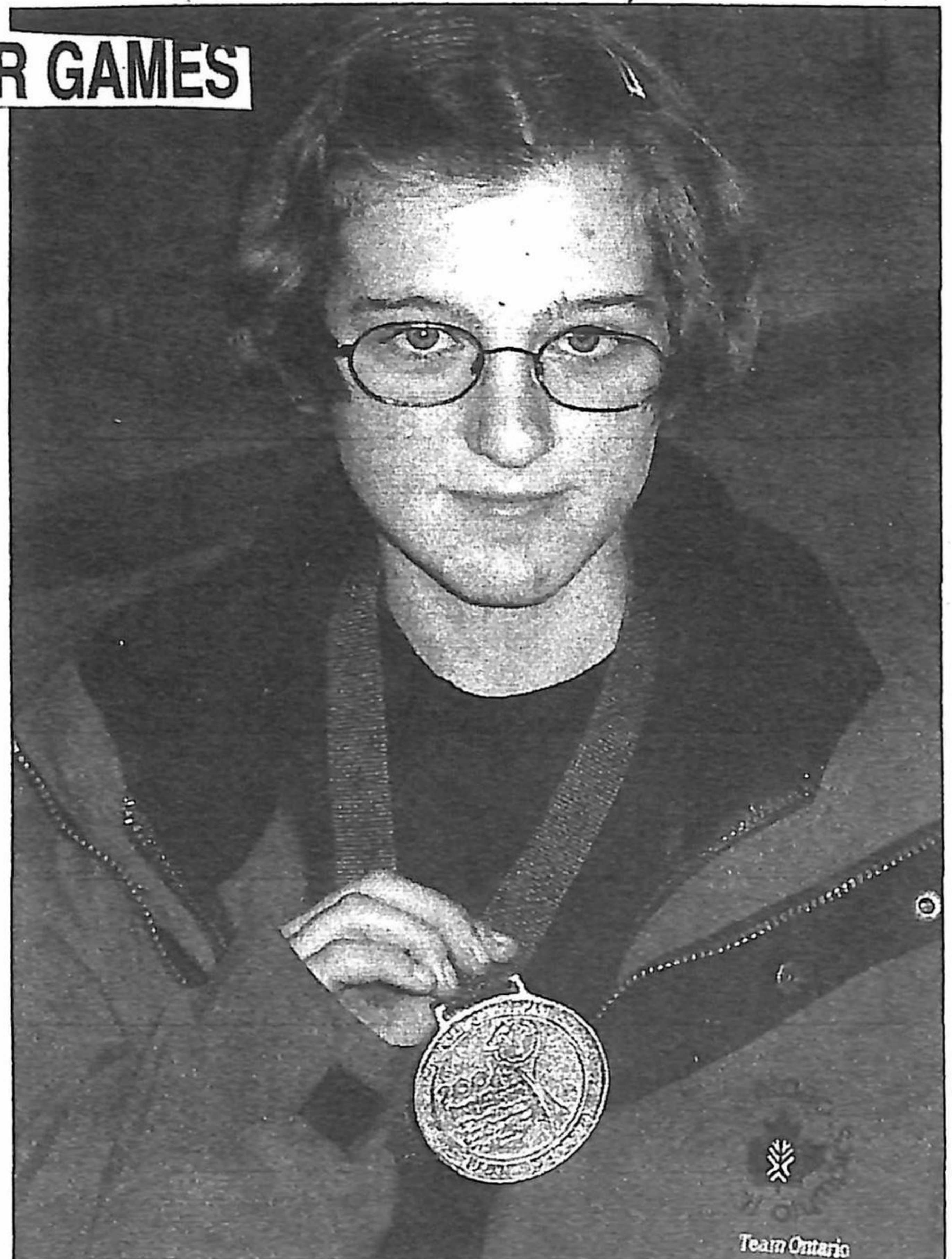


Photo by Barb McKay

Kim Hunt won a silver medal in figure skating at the Canadian Special Olympic Winter Games last month.

By Barb McKay
STAFF WRITER 2004

WOODSTOCK — Kim Hunt has come a long way from the first time she put on a pair of figure skates and stepped onto the ice.

Hunt returned from the Canadian Special Olympic Winter Games last month sporting a silver medal. The 14-year-old earned the second highest spot in dance and placed fifth in the division A free skate competition.

Hunt qualified for the games — held in Charlottetown, P.E.I. Feb. 16-21 — by winning gold at the provincials last November in Barrie.

The trip to P.E.I. presented a number of firsts for the Woodstock resident — her first time away from home on her own, her first time on an airplane, her first time to the east coast and her first time competing in a national competition. It was exhilarating.

“My favourite part was see-

ing new people,” Hunt said.

Getting on the airplane was a little intimidating. She was travelling across the country on her own with people she had never met before.

“It was scary at first, but then it was OK,” Hunt said.

To prepare for the games, Hunt practised twice a week for months at the Embro Community Centre, where she is a member of the Embro Skating Club.

“We went through her elements and solos,” said her coach, Heather Beynen. “She just got better and better.”

Hunt joined 16 other athletes from across Ontario to compete at the Winter Games. She was even selected as the flag bearer for the team and proudly carried the provincial flag around the ice as her team was introduced.

“It was a little scary,” she said.

Despite the tough competition, Hunt performed well enough to beat out four skaters

in her category and secure the silver medal — something she never dreamed she would do. She returned home with the medal, a team jersey and jacket.

“I was basically surprised,” she said of her reaction to the news. “I was happy.”

A shy girl, Hunt was able to come out of her shell a bit on the trip. She stayed in a hotel with dozens of other young athletes and even attended two dances.

She had more than enough time to connect with her teammates after being confined to the hotel for a day when a massive snow storm paralyzed the east coast and practices were cancelled.

“We played games and all that stuff,” Hunt said.

Hunt received plenty of support from back home for her venture. Her high school, St. Mary’s, held a fundraising breakfast in January and raised \$170.

“One of the stipulations was she had to use some of it for

spending money,” said Deb Roloson of Woodstock Special Olympics. Hunt brought home a few souvenirs, including a bracelet.

St. Patrick’s Catholic School, where she was a student, held a T-shirt day and raised about \$150.

When asked about the support from the community, Hunt beamed.

“It was nice,” she said.

Hunt took up figure skating just six years ago and has developed into a star competitor who regularly brings home medals. But Hunt isn’t one to trumpet her successes. Skating is something she practises for pure enjoyment.

“It’s something to keep my mind on,” she said.

Beynen said Hunt has been dedicated to the sport for as long as she’s been coaching her.

“She’s very hard working. She knows what she needs to work on,” she said. “She always has a smile on her face. She’s an enjoyable person to teach.”