

# Local deaf educator recognized for excellence



## Heather Gibson appointed to Order of Ontario

By **Stephanie Hounsell**  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

A while back, Milton resident and Deaf educator Heather Gibson decided a change was needed in the way Ontario Deaf students were taught.

They had a right, she felt passionately, to be taught in their native language — American Sign Language (ASL) — just as much as English-speaking and French-speaking students.

ASL is a language of its own, after all,

complete in itself and not dependent on English; in fact, there are several signs in ASL that have no English equivalent. It has its own culture and literature, as well as its own words, sentence structure and metaphors.

It was only fair that students in Deaf schools have the opportunity to not only be taught in ASL, but to also study the language itself, explained Gibson recently through an interpreter at the E.C. Drury School for the Deaf.

So, with a team, over the course of

about a decade, Gibson — who's now systems principal at Ontario's three provincial schools for the deaf, including E.C. Drury — developed an ASL language arts curriculum, the first of its kind in North America.

That curriculum was implemented first at E.C. Drury School for the Deaf elementary school about five years ago and is now also being put in place at the provincial deaf schools in Belleville and London. Gibson hopes in the fall it will be implemented at E.C. Drury School for the Deaf's high school as well.

• see HONOUR on page A15

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION  
**HONoured FOR HER EFFORTS:** Heather Gibson proudly displays her Order of Ontario certificate.



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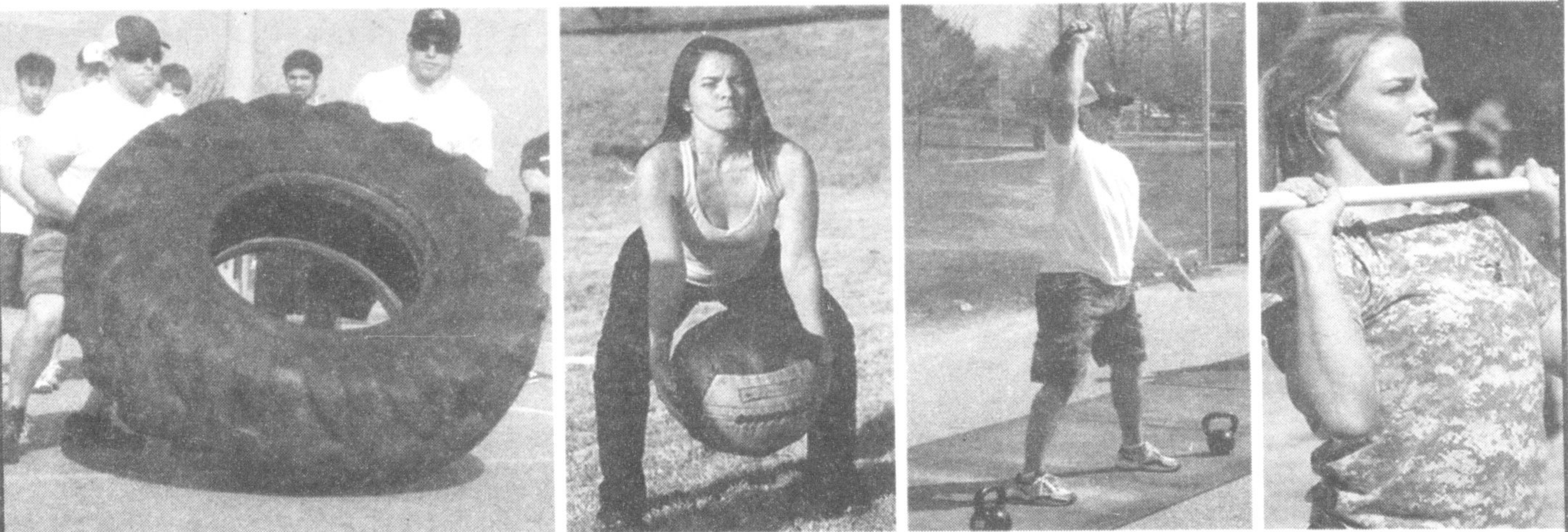
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