

Anderson hopes to make waves at Special Olympics

Vanessa Anderson is no stranger to competing in the Special Olympics.

The 24-year-old Markham resident was indoctrinated into the games as a 12 year old where she took part in the bowling competition.

When this year's 2000 Ontario Special Olympics Spring Games commence at various sites in York Region Thursday, Anderson hopes to be a splash hit in the pool as she will compete in the swimming competition.

With the swimming events staged at the Richvale Community Centre in Richmond Hill, Anderson will be entered in the 50- and 100-metre freestyle, 50m breaststroke and 50m backstroke.

A member of the York Region Stingrays swim club for the last five years, Anderson earned the right to compete in the games after garnering two firsts, a second and third at a regional qualifying meet in Barrie in February.

"She's come a long ways in the pool," notes Anderson's mother, Barbara, of her daughter's swimming exploits. "She's an excellent swimmer."

Barbara notes her daughter eagerly awaits the arrival of the games and each year, enters the regional competitions.

In explaining her daughter's enthusiasm for the games, Barbara gives credit to the husband-and-wife tandem of Bruce and Margaret French. The Newmarket pair are current liasons to the games and at the time of meeting Vanessa, were regional co-ordinators.

"We just got talking with Bruce. He started the bowling event and we bowled in Markham at the time. Bruce took her under his wing," Barbara recalled.

While Bruce is not predicting how Vanessa will fare, he feels her character will make her a presence in the pool at the upcoming games. This he knows full well after taking her to her first Special Olympics competition 12 years ago.

"Vanessa has a bubbly character and she tries harder. She might not be the best swimmer, but she'll try harder," he said.

In exhibiting her enthusiasm for the games, Vanessa has taken things one step further by being a spokesperson for the games. In days leading up to the games, she did several public speaking engage-



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Markham resident Vanessa Anderson will make her second appearance at the Ontario Special Olympics, which start Thursday. Unlike her first appearance as a 12 year old when she took part in bowling, Anderson will be competing in the swimming competition this time around.

ments at various schools in York Region. Barbara noted her daughter spoke to some 200 youngsters at one school and 500 at another, who asked her plenty of questions.

With the games just a few weeks away, Barbara notes her daughter has been logging plenty of hours in the Centennial Pool in her quest to bring home a medal.

"She's pretty excited. She's been practicing like mad. She goes to Centennial each morning and does lane swims. We're proud of her and we'll be there to watch her."

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Perry Curiston

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Perry Curiston is director of Impact Golf Schools and was the 1996 and 1998 Ontario PGA Teacher of the Year.

2000 Ontario Special Olympics



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