

Hard Work Pays Off

Employee Places First in Worlds Dance Competition

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Lou Gagnon's recent trip to Walt Disney World "was pretty exciting." But Lou, a trainer in Support Services, and his wife, Catherine Leslie, weren't there just to sight-see. They were there to take part in the 2009 United Country Western Dance Council (UCWDC) Worlds Competition.

The best dancers in the world, over 3000 in total, took part in the competition. While the US dominated, Lou reports Canada was well-represented, winning many as well. And one of those couples representing Canada and winning was Lou and Catherine. (Readers will remember an article on Lou and Catherine, published in the August 18th, 2008 issue of LOD.)

Last year, at the 2008 Worlds held in Nashville, Tennessee, Lou and Catherine came in second. "We were not about to settle for second this year."

"We had our dancing shoes on for fourteen hours a week," he estimates, between practicing, giving and taking lessons. There was "a lot of travel involved" going to Toronto and Montreal for lessons.

Even when he wasn't on the dance floor, Lou continued to work towards the Worlds. Using weights and a treadmill for an hour a day, Lou gave himself "a vigorous workout" to stay in shape.

"You can't be running out of steam halfway through," he warns.

All the hard work paid off, as Lou and Catherine placed first in the Couples Classic Diamond 2, and graduated to the Diamond 1 Division "which is a whole lot harder," he explains.

Receiving their trophy was "very exciting." Going forward, he admits that he'd like to "bring home more trophies for Canada. That would be awesome."

They had spent six years within the Diamond 2 division with Catherine taking two years off after having major surgery, requiring "a really long road" back to the competition floor. "It's a very hard division," Lou admits, explaining that Division 1 requires more difficult poses, and playing with timing and rhythm.

In the Crystal 2 division, they were one point from tying first place in a division which includes couples ten years younger than Lou and Catherine. "It was very close," Lou says.

of their Pro-Am students, Bruce and Sue Henry, who placed fourth overall as a couple in the newcomer division.

The Worlds involved "every kind of dance" including couples, Pro-Am, Pro-Pro, Line Dancing, Teams, Troupes and a variety show type of competition. There were also lessons and classes taking place.

While the Worlds involved "a whole bunch of people really focused and dedicated to doing their best", Lou points out there was a "country and western politeness" to the competition.

Everyone was "friendly, even within the same division", Lou recalls.

Lou and Catherine received a lot of morale support from many of their friends from Loretto in the Barrie area. "It was just wonderful" to receive

such support, Lou remembers. "Of course, they had 100% faith in us."

Lou, Catherine, Bruce and Sue would also like to thank the Rowntree Church for their continued support in supplying a space to practice dancing.

Lou and Catherine will continue to keep training and competing. The next level is the Masters. "You can't get any higher than that," he explains. The curriculum changes at the Masters level. In addition to doing the normal eight dances, the Masters involves a six minute show dance.

Lou admits it's a "challenge, but I'm sure we can get there and overcome that."



Lou Gagnon and wife Catherine Leslie show the trophy they won at the 2009 United Country Western Dance Council (UCWDC) Worlds Competition. (Photo courtesy of Lou Gagnon.)



Lou and Catherine take their place atop the podium, having placed first in Couples Classic Diamond 2. (Photo courtesy of Lou Gagnon.)

Lou and Catherine were also very proud