

Sunday, October 13, 2002

Sweepstakes winners wonder: 'Why buy what you can win?' **At a casino convention, tales of jackpots runneth over.**

By JAN TORMAY
Special to the Bulletin

MASHANTUCKET -- Wendy Limaugé paid her own way to Foxwoods Resort Casino Saturday to attend the second annual Connecticut Winners Sweepstakes Convention.

But if there had been a contest to get there, Limaugé would have entered.

After all, she's already enjoyed free trips to France, Hollywood and the Bahamas, all by winning sweepstakes.

Limaugé, president of the Connecticut Winners Club, organized Saturday's event that attracted 120 people from all over New England and from Florida, Ohio and Michigan.

Limaugé said her best sweepstakes win was the trip to France. It was valued at \$25,000 and included three days in a 400-year-old chateau, her own private chef and trips to the beaches of Normandy and the Moulin Rouge in Paris.

One of her funniest wins was 730 Baby Ruth candy bars.

She said she's won \$7,000 in prizes so far this year; last year her prizes totaled \$37,000.

"Why buy it, if you can win it?" Limaugé said.

Barbara Amato 39, of Glastonbury, who attended Saturday's festivities, said she got hooked on sweepstakes after she won a \$40,000 scholarship for her son last year. She's also won a home theater system valued at \$1,500, movies, special event tickets, and lots of baseball caps.

In 1994, Lorri Lennon won \$100,000 through Nutrition Facts.

"It was thrilling. I could not believe it," Lennon, 46, said during the convention Saturday. She also has won trips to Dublin, Paris and Cancun, Mexico.

She said her next goals are to win a midsize or luxury car and a trip to a warm climate.

Limaugé said people join sweepstakes clubs to share information. The Connecticut club meets once a month in different towns and has about 40 members.

Almost every grocery store and pharmacy have sweepstakes and most radio and television stations have contests on their Web sites, Limaugé said. She said about 100,000 people nationally enter sweepstakes as a hobby.

Limaugé said most of her wins are on the Internet.

She said companies use sweepstakes as marketing tools to get people to buy their product or come back to their Web site. People need to read the sweepstakes rules carefully. Many have no restrictions on how many times a contestant can enter and that increases the odds of winning, Limaage said.