

Sweepstakes Guru: She's in the Money, Giving Tips

Published on Sunday, October 6, 2002 in [The Westerly Sun](#)

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STONINGTON - For Donata Delulio of Stonington, a workshop on sweepstakes seemed like a good way to take home something special.

"I can't remember if I've ever won anything in my life," she said. "I'd like to know what it feels like to be a winner."

Wendy Limaugé said she's pretty used to the feeling now. She shared her knowledge of sweepstakes with a group of adult education students Saturday at Stonington High School.

Limaugé, a computer consultant, said she has won \$7,000 in prizes so far this year, including a \$4,000 savings bond she won within the last two weeks. Last year, she won a \$25,000 trip to France through a Forbes Magazine sweepstakes.

The key to winning sweepstakes is knowing where to look for them and reading the fine print, she advised.

"It's about being organized and following the rules and being persistent," she said.

While sweepstakes might have clear benefits for winners, Limaugé said they "are a marketing tool to get people to take a look at a product, or to return to a company's Web site. It's a cheap way to get the name (of a company or product) out there. There's been a lot of products I didn't know about before a sweepstakes."

Warning: Pratfalls await novices not used to the language of offers. Limaugé warns about the phrase "award confirmation."

"If you have to call back, or if you have to buy something, it's not real," she said. "And if you haven't entered, you know you shouldn't win anything."

With the Internet, the number of sweepstakes and the ease of entering have increased exponentially, as have the number of people entering.

"There's more that you can enter," she said. You can enter 30 to 50 a day. There's more competition, but there's more to win."

Not all of it is, well, inspiring.

"There's stuff you win you won't like," Limaugé said, "Like the time I won 700 candy bars."

Limaugé is a member of CT Winners Sweepstakes Club, which will host a sweepstakes convention Oct. 12 at Foxwoods Resort Casino. The 40-member group meets once a month, and Limaugé posts various sweepstakes on her Web site (www.thecomputerladyonline.com), which club members look at. The club sponsors two

families each year during the holiday season, donating sweepstakes winnings to needy families.

The session is one of the many that Stonington adult education programs have available. In four years, the program has grown from 11 to 69 courses, said Karen Veit, its director.

With the downturn in the economy, many of those who enroll in the courses are looking for more practical knowledge, versus enrichment classes, Veit said. "They're looking for things that they can use that can be valuable to them now. Whatever the community says it wants to have, I try to get."

Veit said it usually takes about two to three months to develop new courses for the program. She meets with other adult education directors at a forum twice a year to discuss what's popular and what isn't. Often, new courses come into being from requests in the community, or if someone with an area of expertise asks if they can teach a class.

The adult education program will send out a newsletter before Thanksgiving with course offerings for the spring semester.

"It's a college-level course for a third of the price," she said. "I don't want to waste people's time and money, so that when people come into the course they'll be happy when they leave."

Delulio said she's taken a few of the adult education courses and found them informative and convenient.

"They don't demand a large investment of time," she said. "They offer fun things. Karen does a great job. I'll probably be a perpetual student. I like doing something new. That's why adult ed is great."