

2009 Lynda Garland Award Announced

July 2, 2009 - The Lynda Garland "Award for Excellence" was presented for the first time at the Canadian Baton Twirling Championships in Edmonton, Alberta. The first recipient of Lynda Garland's "Award for Excellence" was Maureen Johnson, of Regina, Saskatchewan.

At the 2008 Canadian Championships in Moncton, NB, the CBTF recognized Lynda Garland's years of service to Baton Twirling in Canada and around the world by creating a new award that bears her name. Among Ms. Garland's many accomplishments, she was one of the founders of the Twirl Canada organization and was its first President from 1979 through 1983. Twirl Canada went on to become the [Canadian Baton Twirling Federation](#) [1] (CBTF), which was a charter member of the [World Baton Twirling Federation](#) [2] (WBTF) when it was formed. Lynda served as President of the World Baton Twirling Federation between 1983 and 2008.

Ms. Garland established the criteria for the new award. The Lynda Garland "Award For Excellence" is presented to a Canadian Baton Twirling Federation (CBTF) Coach who exemplifies excellent, progressive coaching, superior technical abilities and provides innovative ideas and programs.

In presenting the award, Ms. Garland provided a history of Maureen's career and accomplishments:

- She has dedicated her talent and energy to the sport of baton twirling in Saskatchewan, Canada and Internationally.
- Her students have represented Canada at the World Baton Twirling Federation Championships every year since the inception of this event in 1980.
- Maureen started twirling at age 8, and has been coaching for 56 years.
- Maureen performed with the Regina Accordion Band from age 9 to 12. She performed with the Regina Lions Junior A Band from age 14 to 20 and travelled extensively with the band.
- Maureen started teaching with her sister Sonia at age 14 and went on to establish the Martin School of Dancing and Baton Twirling; the studio recently celebrated its 56th anniversary.
- She was asked to form a group of baton twirlers for Pre-Game and Half Time entertainment at the Saskatchewan Roughrider football games (CFL) and attended Grey Cup games and parades. Maureen directed and performed with this group from 1960 to 1980. The Riderettes were awarded first place in 3 Grey Cup parades.
- She established the Sundown Optimist Buffalo Gals in 1967. In 1969 they became the 1st western corps to win the Canadian National Championship.
- Maureen Johnson coached the Sundown Optimist Buffalo Gals to two *Little Brown Jugs* at NBTA AYOP in 1974 and 1976. The *Little Brown Jug* was the highest group award for baton twirling corps at the time and they were the first Canadian group to achieve this honour.
- In 1976, she was awarded the NBTA Dance Twirl "Teacher of the Year".
- Maureen has coached many athletes and groups to medal standings at provincial, national and international competitions. Athletes receiving international honours were:
 - Stacey Singer, who won 7 WBTF World Gold Medals and 2 Bronze World Medals from 1985 to 1993
 - Leah Holliday and Jennifer Tangjerd, who won WBTF World Gold Medals in the Senior Pairs event in 1999
 - Sundown Optimist Buffalo Gals, who won World medals in 1988 (5th place), 1989 (Bronze), 1990 (Silver), 1991 (Gold), 1993 (Silver), 1994 (Silver), 1995 (Bronze), 1998 (Bronze), 1999 (4th), 2001 (4th), 2002 (5th) and 2008 (Bronze).
 - Ai Notohara, who captured the All Japan Dance Twirl Title in 1999. Ai is now a performer with Cirque de Soleil "Ka" in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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- In 1979, Maureen was a Founding member of Twirl Canada (now known as the Canadian Baton Twirling Federation) and served as its first Western Vice President.
- Maureen was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Baton Twirling Association.
- Maureen has received the YWCA Women of Distinction – Silver Pin Award.
- She received the CBTF Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996.
- She was inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame as a Builder in 2000.
- Maureen has been a guest clinician at the World Baton Twirling Federation Clinics, as well as throughout North America and Japan.
- As a guest speaker at numerous coaching symposiums she has shared her expertise in group and solo choreography, as well as the progressional development of athletes from beginner up to elite.
- Through the unique association that the Sundown Optimist Buffalo Gals shared with the Martin School of Dance and Baton Twirling, Maureen has been able to create literally hundreds of opportunities (outside of competitions and parades) to expose the general public to the beauty of baton twirling.
- Maureen was a central member of the SBTA committee that was able to recognize baton as a sport in Saskatchewan.
- Maureen continues to upgrade and develop in areas that are related such as Art, Theater, Dance, Gymnastics, Skating, teaching and coaching methods.
- She is a Registered Teacher, Royal Academy of Dance and a guest choreographer for local gymnastic clubs.
- Maureen is an accredited Examiner for the Canadian Dance Teachers' Association – Tap & Jazz.
- In the dance arena, Maureen has adjudicated festivals all across Saskatchewan and in Ontario. Maureen's dance groups have achieved many high marks, including 100% standings at these competitions.

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