

Olympic high:



Donna McAllister - (shown here tandem papapenting this year in the French Alps) is used to flying high around the world. She and brother Philip are volunteers at the Atlanta Olympics. *by Doug Hallett (Guelph Tribune)*

Donna McAllister had to cut short a working holiday in the Alps, and brother Philip is giving up three weeks of building his chiropractic practice in Guelph. But both volunteers for the Atlanta Olympic games say it's well worth those sacrifices and the \$2,000 or so it will cost them.

When track and field athletes in the Olympic stadium need first-aid treatment or the Georgia summer heat causes problems for spectators, Philip will be there, with Donna assisting. They will be among the thousands of volunteers doing a variety of tasks at the Olympics, July 19 to Aug. 4.

Local siblings off to Atlanta.

Competition was stiff to land the positions, they say, even though volunteers have to cover their own travel, accommodation, and other expenses. The Olympics, which closely checks the background of applicants, pays only for on-duty meals and pre- and post- Olympic parties for volunteers. It also lets them use their accreditation badges to get into restricted areas in other venues to watch other events.

"I really had to push and follow up all the time even to talk to someone" about being accepted as a volunteer, said Donna, 26. In her favor, were her experience as a volunteer at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, B.C., and the language abilities she's developed during extensive world travels.

"I speak French, Spanish, and a bit of German now," the Guelph native said. "If there's a medical emergency it's nice to have someone there who can translate, instead of trekking off to look for an official translator."

Donna and Philip, 30, are driving down together and keeping expenses low by staying at a "friend of a friend's" place in Atlanta.

The siblings will be driving back immediately after the Aug. 4 closing ceremonies, so Philip can be back at work Aug. 6.

The time away from the chiropractic practice in the Stone Road Mall he's been involved in for only about a year is a big sacrifice, said Philip, who also volunteered, at the 1994 World Cup of Soccer in Pasadena while studying in California to be a chiropractor. But his speciality is sports medicine, and "there's no better place to be right

now than around the world's greatest athletes, treating them."

For Donna, being at the Olympics is fulfillment of "one of my prioritized goals," she said. "I just want to be in the whole atmosphere, with the intensity of the athletes and the people who worked so hard to make this happen. I like to be around people who are achievers. I think it's going to be fun, too."

She already has set her sights on another goal – being a volunteer at the next summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, in the year 2000. That's the year she expects to graduate after four years of study at Toronto's Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, starting this September.

That academic pursuit will bring at least a temporary halt to world travels that have taken her since 1990 to 15 countries, from tropical rainforests in Central America to the snowy Alps in Europe to the African plains and the Middle East.

"I'm going to have to be really, really disciplined and tied down" for those four years, she said. But she's planning to travel for a year when she finishes, starting with the Olympics in Australia – one part of the world she's never visited. Then she hopes to join her brother's chiropractic practice and eventually get involved in "international" sports medicine in some realm."

Her parents, John and Marie, who came to Guelph in 1965 from Northern Ireland, have always been supportive, she said. "I had a lot of pressure from friends, not family" when she decided to abandon her architecture studies at the University of Toronto after first year and embark on a couple of years of travelling. Friends predicted she would never get a university

degree, but she has proved them wrong.

After spending two years mostly working in Costa Rica for a Canadian tour company, she earned a four year honors degree in human kinetics from the University of Guelph – meanwhile travelling a lot during breaks. When she graduated in May 1995, she began another period of travel that over 14 months took her to England, Spain, Egypt, Kenya, Austria, France, Denmark, Sweden,



and Norway. She worked 11 of those months for a British tour operator, doing things like showing tourists good ski spots in the French Alps. She arrived home only a week before leaving Sunday for the Olympics.

"It would be easy to fall into a nice easy pace of life being a ski bum," but she has managed to balance those experiences with longer-term goals, she said. Now her friends say "whatever Donna does doesn't surprise them any more. Expect the unexpected from Donna, they say."

"There are a lot of people who talk about things, they'd like to do," said Philip, who is

also single and has also done more than his share of world travelling. "We like to shock people and just go out and do it."

**Brother
& Sister
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to 'shock'
people.**