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Shannon Leroux is one of Sarnia-Lambton's greatest fitness success stories. Born and raised here, she moved to the Greater Toronto Area to become a nationally renowned fitness model, actress, on-camera host and voice talent. Leroux's dedicated approach to healthy living and perseverance is a 'model' for us all.

FITNESS AND FAMILY
 THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A FITNESS MODEL



ETC: When did you realize that becoming a fitness model was for you?

Shannon Leroux: I have always had tremendous respect for those fortunate to be 'natural athletes'. I've had to work harder to develop my athletic abilities, and in the process learned that when things don't come naturally, you inherently develop other strong characteristics that support your athletic endeavors. I strongly believe that, regardless of your personal athletic capabilities, staying focused on your personal dreams and your goals is key to eventual success.

Figure and fitness competitions have become my niche in the arena of competitive athletics. I love the sport and the pursuit of excellence. Learning from those who have preceded me in this field has shaped my development as both a competitor and spokesperson for the health and fitness industry. I'm very fortunate to have progressed quickly and successfully through ranks of competition and my success as a fitness athlete has granted me the privilege

Background photo and left photo courtesy of Paul Bucaria/Oxygen Magazine

of appearing in industry-wide, major publications such as Oxygen, Inside Fitness, Natural Muscle Mag, Status Fitness, Planet Muscle, GNC and most recently Fit Parent Magazine. (I was recently named Chief Fitness Editor for Fit Parent Magazine. I will be sharing many tips for a healthy fit lifestyle there.)

I HAVE A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES TIED TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS, BUT THERE IS SUCH A WONDERFUL SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN SARNIA AND I FEEL SO FORTUNATE TO STILL CALL IT 'HOME'.

ETC: What's your average day like?

Leroux: LOL... 'Average' would not be the best description of how my days unfold! In fact, it is the continued variety of projects that really keeps me motivated and passionate about what I do.

As an example, I may be scheduled to appear on The Shopping Channel. This demands

that I'm up by 5 a.m. for hair and make-up, and on air by 6 a.m. for one of six shows scheduled that day. Factoring in motherhood, this dictates a quick trip back home to shuffle my children to school by 8 a.m. and back again to the studio for additional shows. Balancing good nutrition in between shows is critical to staying fresh and energized throughout the day. My day lends me the flexibility to be back home for dinner with my children at 5 p.m. and back to the studio for the last show at 7 p.m. By 9 p.m. I'm able to make my way to the gym for a one- to two-hour workout of strength training and cardio exercise.

By contrast, a different day's schedule might include two commercial auditions, a voice-over for Nature Valley Granola bars, a phone interview with Status Fitness Magazine and dinner with my children.

My life demands good organization, a great network of family and friends, as well as solid nutrition, and opportunity to physically stay strong.

ETC: Among your many successes, is there one that stands out from the rest?

Leroux: Any woman accomplished and solidly positioned in the fitness world as a pro competitor and model highly appreciates the opportunity to appear on the cover of Oxygen magazine. Oxygen magazine is the industry leader in education, entertainment news, and training protocols for women in fitness. When Robert Kennedy, the owner of Oxygen magazine, offered me an opportunity, I was so excited. Shooting for the cover of Oxygen Magazine was the realization of one of my ultimate fitness goals!

ETC: What do you love most about Sarnia-Lambton?

Leroux: While Toronto has become my current home, Sarnia-Lambton will always be my roots –

something you never depart from, and it's necessary for me to 'plug in' to those roots quite frequently. I have a lifetime of memories tied to family and friends, but there is such a wonderful sense of community in Sarnia and I feel so fortunate to still call it 'home'.

ETC: What is your greatest accomplishment?

Leroux: Motherhood is my most treasured accomplishment that often gets sidelined by all the 'front page' material: my children, Troy and Kamryn. They both teach me so much as they are wise beyond their years.

ETC: Who has the greatest influence in your life and why?

Leroux: I have had the great fortune to meet many talented and influential people. I made a conscious decision early to glean from other successful individuals – what has made them extraordinary and how then best to interpret and apply that directly to my own life. We seem to be the most influenced in our early years, when we are determining who we are and where we are headed. My 8th grade teacher, Mr. Walters, still remains a pivotal individual in my life. His steady application of "I am capable and I can do anything" left its indelible mark on my life.

He was instrumental in helping me to understand and apply "if you could dream it...you could achieve it" into my daily endeavors.

ETC: What is your favourite memory growing up in Sarnia?

Leroux: I'd be hard-pressed to list just one! I love the 'familial feeling' that is so much a part of Sarnia. The luxury of walking down the street and knowing so many familiar faces is a real treasure. My early involvement with the Sarnia Little Theatre was instrumental in helping me pursue my dream. Three years of training at Second City were also a direct extension of the foundation established at Sarnia's Little Theatre. I also would be remiss not to recognize the influence of 102RCACC, (Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps) which established the fundamental discipline that is so prevalent in all aspects of my life. Other favourite recollections are Canatara Park, the fantastic beaches, and the most beautiful Christmas tree I've ever seen, on London Road.

ETC: What is your goal in career and life?

Leroux: The power of positive thought is a force to be reckoned with. The wonderful combinations of fitness, media and television provide a unique platform on which to share my vision and to reinforce those traits contribute to my success and ideally to that of others. Specific characteristics like perseverance,

determination, and benevolence are my cornerstones. Regardless of my role, it's the composition of who I am that brings about life's ever-changing moments and helps me to motivate others. I hope to be identified as a motivating and encouraging example for the people everywhere. Thus, my daily goal is to keep the agenda of helping people achieve their dreams at the forefront of my actions.

ETC: When did you win your first figure competition?

Leroux: October 31, 2005 was my first stage competition. Eleven weeks prior to this date I began intensive preparation for the show. My first encounter with competition can be described as nothing short of a magical, transforming and seminal event. Competition can be very contagious and it certainly proved so for me! Winning my first WNSO Figure Pro Card at my first show was a testament to the dedicated realization of your dream. That achievement inspired me to participate at the Worlds. (World Natural Sports Organization) sharing a stage with some of the greatest names in fitness.

ETC: Do you have tips for those who dream of following in your footsteps?

Leroux: Yes! NEVER, NEVER, NEVER give up. Make your dreams bigger than the obstacles that will inevitably get in your way. If your interest is to enter the world of professional fitness/figure athletes as a competitor, I would recommend initially competing in a 'recognized fitness show', make your intentions known and contact everyone you can for help in the process. Dreams, when combined with a focused effort and relentless determination, can take you anywhere you choose to go.

I am often asked what type of assistance I can offer. In response, I have created and developed programs and online/phone coaching which are available on an individualized, 'tailor-made' basis to both aspiring competitors and those who are seeking to generally improve their levels of overall health, fitness, and well-being. Contact me at info@ShannonLeroux.com. I love sharing what I have learned along the way!



ETC: Can you offer our readers three tips for healthy living?

Leroux: Fitness is a lifestyle. First and foremost, I think the most important of any of these elements are a positive 'can-do' attitude – visualize perfection and you will achieve perfection. In your mind's eye,



capture and retain the image of the body you believe is suited to you. Utilize that image to develop your body through exercise. Make a commitment to verbalizing positive things regarding your physique. "I am a fit, healthy, lean person." Repeat it often enough, and it WILL become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Negativity hasn't a seat at the table!

Next, add lean protein! Protein is the building block of muscle. Muscle is key to increasing metabolism and to becoming a 'fat-burning machine'.

Third, strength training is critical, especially if you are a woman and not including this in your fitness regime. A continued habit of running on the treadmill takes a pear-shaped body and simply makes it smaller. If you are truly interested in changing the shape of your body, you need to include strength training to reshape your physique. Lean muscle burns fat at a high metabolic rate.

Lastly, grow to appreciate and believe in the law of attraction. Forecast success in your mind and continuously practice believing that your life is all that you wish it to be, and always trust in your ability to accomplish everything you desire! You are in charge.

ETC: Of your four occupations (fitness model, actress, on-camera host, voice talent) which do you enjoy doing the most and why?

Leroux: The exposure as a pro figure/fitness model was a tremendous boost to my career as an on-air television host, actress and voice-over artist. The synergy of all four elements allows me to bundle the combination into a thriving career that I am so fortunate to enjoy. Each area provides unique challenges and direct benefits. Voice artistry is wonderful because I am able to throw my hair in a ponytail and go into the studio without the scrutiny of the camera. In turn, on-air or red-carpet hosting is very rewarding because of the intimate relationship with the audience I get to create. I pinch myself most days and reflect on how fortunate I am to get paid for something I love doing so much.

ETC: Is there anyone in particular who helped you become the athlete you are today?

Leroux: My parents: Judy and Shawn Tobin. They have always been my biggest cheerleaders, encouraging me through challenges and celebrating the successes. Without their constant support in the pursuit of my dreams my story would be very different. I am so fortunate in so many more ways than I could ever have hoped for. My great thanks to two of the world's best! **ETC**

Shannon Leroux
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