

Local torchbearer encourages others to dream and enjoy life

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Bridlewood resident Dina Bell-Laroche was honoured to carry the 2010 Olympic torch during the relay in Huntsville. Her daughter Talia, 10, was proud to watch her mom in action.

Kanata EMC News - Dina Bell-Laroche has been to five Olympic games and on Dec. 30, as she took her first steps holding the torch, she said she felt as though she had the world in her hands.

Bell-Laroche said she always dreamed of making it to the Olympics and when she finally made it, she was working as a volunteer media attachée.

"It wasn't my athletic ability that got me there," she said. "Your dreams come together in different ways."

Bell-Laroche, at 41, has three children, Talia, Reece and Elisa Tracy, and has since left the excitement of the Olympic games to allow herself to be closer to home.

She is one of the co-founders of the True Sport movement and now is a consultant with the Centre for Sport and Law.

Bell-Laroche was invited to be a torchbearer by the Olympic Torch Committee. She was part of the Clean Air Champions team, which ran in Huntsville. She noted that the 2010 Olympic Torch Relay is the first relay in Olympics history that torchbearers ran as teams.

Clean Air Champions is a registered charity that advocates climate change and helps raise awareness among Canadians.

Bell-Laroche noted that running in Huntsville was an experience because 10 years ago, when the True Sport movement was first developed, she went to Huntsville to announce that it was the first True Sport community.

Bell-Laroche said that although she has worked at five Olympic games, holding the torch was on par with those experiences.

"It was the highlight of my Olympic experience," she said, adding that she volunteered in Barcelona, Lillehammer and Atlanta and was a staff member in Nagano and Sydney.

The team ran one kilometre between the 10 members, and Bell-Laroche said when it was her turn her 10 year-old daughter Talia, who accompanied her for the day, ran with her on the side.

"I felt that anything's possible," she said. "Carrying the torch is one thing, but it's being able to pass it forward. The flame is the possibility of greatness and the hope it ignites in communities."

Bell-Laroche kept her torch and plans to use her experiences as a gateway to speak to youth about her three themes in life: "dream, persevere and enjoy."

"It's only possible if you put it out there," she said about the importance of having dreams. "Put in the hard work and be equipped with the tools to achieve the dreams. It's not okay to give up."

When talking with students, Bell-Laroche said she plans on using the torch, which is a "powerful symbol."

"When you've lived it, it's so much easier to inspire people," said Bell-Laroche.