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POWERLIFTING: Thirteen-year-old girl among those ready for Red Brick

By Tim Schmitt

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Drop by the Red Brick Bench Press Championships on Saturday in Lewiston and you'll have little trouble picking Kerri McCaslin out of the bunch.

At 13, the wiry Albany-area native is built like the bar she'll be trying to lift — thin and tough to break.

But that frame won't stop McCaslin from shocking fans and competitors as she presses nearly twice her own body weight. The teen will try to beat her personal best of 145 pounds on the bench during Saturday's event — the sixth year the meet will turn



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TOUGH COOKIE: Kerri McCaslin, 13, is just one of the powerlifters who will strut their stuff Saturday at the Red Brick Bench Press Championships.

Lewiston's Red Brick School into a haven for powerlifters.

McCaslin's dad, Zane, is also a lifter. So is her mother (Sandi) and older sister (Sarah).

But the littlest McCaslin has been doing it for nearly half her life. She started with a toy bench at the family's home in the small town of Tribes Hill.

"She was giving seminars in the backyard for her friends. That's when we decided to let her start competing," Zane said. "Now, she's competing three or four meets each year. Hopefully, she'll get a personal best at 150 at this meet. But in the future, I see her being a very strong teen. She'll be a force to be reckoned with."

The McCaslins certainly aren't afraid of the spotlight. The family was on the ABC television show "Wife Swap" in October, an eye-opening experience in which Sandi spent time in Virginia.

But the whole family will be together in Lewiston on Saturday.

"Kerri's the only one who'll be competing," Zane said, "but we'll all be helping out."

Soon after the first Red Brick, organizer Dennis Brochey was reading an article in the Niagara Gazette about the lack of amenities for soldiers overseas. He decided to change gears, handing all the proceeds from the event to a group called Support Our Soldiers that helps families who need assistance.

The event started with 23 competitors, then jumped to 51. In each of the last two years, Brochey has seen 84 powerlifters at the event, and he expects it to keep growing.

"People are patriots," Brochey said. "I put the effort into this, but we don't have to push people to come. They do the work."

Brochey's Niagara Powerlifting Club puts the event on each year, and the group has added a new twist this year — a live Web cam.

Brochey said that he hopes the troops overseas who will benefit from the event will watch the event as it unfolds.

"We'd like it if they can live while it's going on," Brochey said. "They have lifting contests for the troops. A lot of the guys over there are pretty into it. We hope they watch."

If you go

- WHAT: Red Brick Bench Press Championships
- WHEN: 9 a.m., Saturday
- WHERE: Lewiston's Red Brick School
- NOTES: Among those expected to be in hand are Tonawanda High School graduate and UB assistant strength coach Paul Childress, who holds a world record. ... Travis Rogers of Depew will also be on hand. ... A Chinese auction will be held, with all proceeds going to Support Our Soldiers. ... Those willing to participate can do so by calling 200-3533.