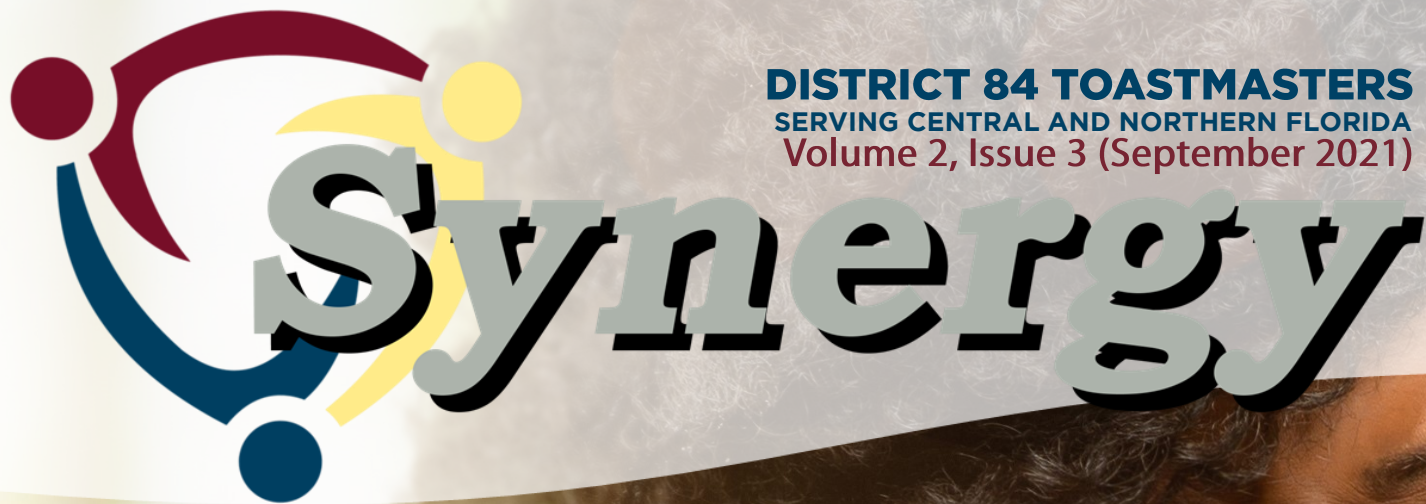




DISTRICT 84 TOASTMASTERS
SERVING CENTRAL AND NORTHERN FLORIDA
Volume 2, Issue 3 (September 2021)

BECOMING THE BEST VERSION *of yourself*

**Coaching Brings Out
Our Best**
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District Mission

We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.

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Synergy is a publication of Toastmasters District 84. Published once a month, the newsletter aims to inform our audience through relevant information and tools to help members and clubs to think and work creatively to achieve goals, inspire through ideas and stories that can be applied to our personal and professional lives and finally, entertain through content that is interesting and presented in a way that is fun to read.

Realize the Best Version of Yourself By Committing to Self-Development

by **Debi Jo Londono, DTM,**
District Director



Debi Jo Londono

Feb. 12, 2014, was a cool day outside, but in the conference room where I was presiding over a meeting with senior leaders of my company, I was sweating and squirming. I was questioned about every number, every graph, and basically everything I said. I knew my numbers and re-

ports were solid; I just didn't have a lot of confidence in presenting them.

That day I saw an ad for Toastmasters. By the end of the month, I was a member.

I joined — for me. I wanted to have more confidence. I wanted to be a better speaker. I wanted to be a better presenter. I have always been a fan of self-development, and I saw this as a great opportunity — for me.

I had no idea at the time how Toastmasters would change my perception.

Dr. Smedley said, "Ours is the only organization I know dedicated to the individual. We work together to bring out the best in each of us, and then we apply these skills to help others."

Yes, I joined for me, but I stay because of the impact that Toastmasters has had on my life and the lives of many others I interact with.

Dr. Smedley understood that becoming a Toastmaster was not a destination but a journey. Many members of our District have undertaken this journey, working together to bring out the best in themselves. Their journey did not end there. They are now applying those skills to help others - both inside their Toastmasters family and outside in their personal and professional lives. We have authors, TEDx speakers, coaches, and entrepreneurs in our clubs who have taken what they

have learned and elevated their skills to a lifestyle of helping others. I am proud to call many of them friends. If they can do it, so can you.

How do we work together to bring out the best in each of us? Just look at the Club Mission Statement. It starts with a supportive experience and ends with personal growth. "We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth."

Do you remember your first icebreaker speech? You were probably a little nervous. Maybe you stayed up the night before the speech, rehearsing in your mind, writing and rewriting. Perhaps you wanted to back out at the last minute and say you just weren't ready, but you went ahead and gave the speech.

Your club cheered, people gave you encouraging feedback. After you quit shaking and relaxed a little, you realized the adrenaline rush you experienced was more fun than jumping out of an airplane — and a whole lot safer.

That is how I remember my first icebreaker. I've seen many icebreaker speeches since then. Some made me laugh; some made me cry. I have watched, with great joy, the growth and personal development that results from the supportive and encouraging environment and feedback given.

Here's the thing: we all have the opportunity to work together to bring out the best in ourselves and others. We can apply those skills, which we acquire by attending our club meetings, to help others in the club do the same.

I encourage you to renew your commitment to your personal development and work together with your Toastmasters family to bring out your best, then apply those skills to help others.

Just for fun, invite a friend to join and discover the joy of participating in their development. ■

In Toastmasters, we all have the opportunity to work together to bring out the best in ourselves and others."

Debi Jo Londono

The Importance of Evaluations

by Paula Summa, DTM, Program Quality Director



Paula Summa

In our Toastmaster journey, we learn to be better communicators and leaders, which include enhancing both speaking and listening skills. We tend to practice our speeches, but how many of us actually practice evaluations? Unless we are competing in or judging an Evaluation Contest, most of us don't really take the time, or make an effort, to learn how to

give and how to receive effective evaluations.

As a speech evaluator, you are using and sharpening many skills. You are listening closely to the speaker, what they are saying and how they are saying it. You are watching the speaker, focusing on their body language, facial expressions, eye contact, use of the speaking area (stage), and much more. You are forming your opinion of the speaker's performance and mannerisms and thinking of what they did well. You also need to come up with a few suggestions of what they could do differently to improve their presentation.

Evaluators practice communicating in two mediums: written and oral. You must quickly create a written evaluation and deliver a brief speech for the benefit of the speaker and the audience. Your attention must be focused on the speaker and nothing else, focusing on your best listening skills during that 5-7 minute speech is essential. You are actually giving an impromptu speech when you present your oral evaluation to the club. Knowing what to say, and how to say it, is very important.

Do not repeat what the speaker said in his or her speech. Don't retell the story, or reflect on a similar story of your own. Personalizing your evaluation is good, but only briefly. Remember, the evaluation is about the speaker, not you. The key is to be positive and encouraging, sharing a few examples of what they did well, and always include at least one idea of what might have been done to improve the presentation. How did it make you feel as a listener? What emotions did it evoke? Could you picture in your mind what the speaker was describing? Could you feel the ocean breeze described, or smell the freshly cut grass? Did you feel the anger or the hurt from

the tone of voice or the look on the face?

As the speaker, receiving an effective evaluation provides us with immediate feedback. Supportive and positive comments, along with helpful suggestions, reinforce positive speaking behaviors, and also offer methods for improvement. An evaluator offers a speaker a different perspective that can allow the presenter to recognize room for improvement or positive changes. The speaker who takes those suggestions into consideration and applies them to future presentations, experiences improvement. Effective evaluations help to build self-esteem and confidence both for the speaker and the evaluator.

Evaluations are important for everyone in the club: the speaker, the evaluator, and the audience. Members want to stay with a club that provides positive and effective feedback that allows them to speak in a comfortable environment and encourages all members. When a guest or new member attend a meeting with positive energy, they want to keep coming back!

Keep your clubs strong and keep your members involved! Keep those effective evaluations coming! ■

District 84 Contest Update

As required by Toastmasters International, the District Executive Committee (DEC) voted in July to approve in-person contests for the Area, Division, and District levels. This decision was made with the understanding that D84 can change to virtual contests, depending on the CDC guidelines and health concerns to members. The DEC will be carefully monitoring conditions and has the ability to reassess this decision at the December DEC meeting.

Club contests must be conducted between October 1 and December 31, 2021. Clubs may decide whether they wish to hold their own club contest virtually or in person.

Leaders of D84 are dedicated to protecting the safety and health of all concerned, as well as providing members with a quality contest experience that promotes the best in contestants. ■

Coaching Brings Out Our Best

by Vickie Goodman, DTM, Club Growth Director



Vickie Goodman

“A coach is someone that sees beyond your limits and guides you to greatness!”

— Michael Jordan

Coaches are not restricted to sporting activities. Coaches in any walk of life can help guide us through the process of effectively identifying and maximizing our strengths to realize our potential.

A coach can provide training, resources, and tools to enable and empower us to achieve our goals. An effective coach can move us towards the goal line of our success.

Toastmaster clubs need coaches, too. Becoming a Club Coach creates a mutually beneficial relationship between the coach and the team – in this case, the club that is struggling for a win.

I remember the first time I volunteered to be a club coach quite a few years ago. Like most coach volunteers in Toastmasters, I was trying to earn the needed credit towards my DTM. Although I didn't know it at the time, this would be the least important bonus I earned from my experience.

I admit, I wasn't sure of exactly what a coach was supposed to do, but I thought, “It's a coaching job. It's bound to be fun.” As a procrastinator extraordinaire at the time, I appreciated the on-the-job training philosophy Toastmasters supports. In the Club Coach Packet I received from TI, I found my assignment: The Night Owls Club in Tallahassee. I also found a manual describing the job I'd taken on and some resource information and ideas to help me succeed. All I needed to do was recruit a few more members and push the member educational awards, and I'd be done. A piece of cake!

It took us the entire year to get the job done. But what an incredibly great year!

The first lesson a coach must take to heart: There is no “I” in TEAM. I realized that “I” wasn't going to fix anything.

WE – the club members and myself – had to do it together. I learned to listen better and ask others what they thought before jumping in as Ms. Fixit thinking I had the best solutions. I didn't.

I learned to work as a group to identify specific strengths in the club so we could build on those and target problem areas that we wanted to attract new members. A seemingly silly adjustment was to the name. The Night Owls met at noon on Wednesday. We all agreed it felt like false advertising. I explained the easy process for changing a club name and focus, and voila! Talk of Tallahassee TM Club was born. Believe it or not, we had one new member within the month. Was it the name change? Maybe or maybe not, but we were motivated to find out.

We discovered that fun and enjoyment are contagious; the more fun one member had, the more enjoyment we all had. We didn't care how many folks attended; we became committed to enjoying ourselves, regardless. We focused on building relationships rather than checking boxes for the DCP. We started applauding each other's successes and personal strengths and pushed each other beyond our comfort zones. We became cheerleaders.

Members returned to work happy and excited, and coworkers began to hear about our fun and asked how they could get involved.

It wasn't fast and it wasn't always easy, but we left our meeting feeling better than when we arrived. We made Select Distinguished after a year. I'm proud to say that Talk of Tallahassee has produced 2 Division Directors and 4 Area Directors since then, and I'm still a member!

Become a Club Coach – it will take you to uncharted territories that you never thought you would go to!

[Click here to apply to be a Club Coach](#) ■

Speech Contest Empowers and Enriches

by Sandy DePrimo, DTM

How does someone who raises the bar so high keep moving higher and pushing for more?

As District 84's 2021 conference co-chair, I asked myself this question while arranging for contest winners to be awarded at the conference: "How did our winners achieve this high honor?" I decided to email the contestants and ask.

Derrick Standifer—educator, author, PhD candidate at Florida A&M University, keynote speaker, and proud parent placed third in District 84's International Speech Contest. He is a goal setter and commits to playing big. His response was inspiring.

A key step in Derrick's success was choosing a mentor with a similar mindset and enhanced skills. Derrick chose [Bobby Blackmon](#), who had competed in the World Championship in 2017. Bobby had the skills and the attitude to help Derrick elevate his speeches to keep advancing while overcoming our new world of Zoom.

2021 was the first year that Toastmasters held competitions completely online. What a learning curve for both the functionaries and speakers, making competition season even more challenging! Most speakers feed off the energy of the audience. However, speakers on Zoom experience virtual rooms with muted audio and turned off videos—the energy is gone. It's like talking to an empty space. The room challenge, combined with the fear of possible family interruptions, can make one even more anxious. The right mentor can help find ways to create personal energy to sustain the speaker. You can see how Derrick created his own energy by watching his speech, "[Life is Like a Rubik's Cube](#)."

When asked, "What would you change on your competition journey, if anything?" Derrick said he should have incorporated more of the feedback from mentors and other club members. He said he needed to slow down and include more emotional points to expound on the following steps in his speech:

- ① Solve your cross by developing an intense reason to keep you going.
- ② Fill in the corners by surrounding yourself with positive people and listening to motivational messages daily.
- ③ Take it to the next level by continuing to grow.
- ④ See the bigger picture. Don't get sidetracked by frivolous things.

Learning never ends. There is always something that offers growth opportunities.

Derrick learned that developing a speech is a process, not relying on talent alone. We can continually elevate good speeches. Applying feedback from other points of view can transform a good speech into an even more dynamic presentation. Like solving a Rubik's Cube, dynamic speeches take patience and time, and a lot of adjusting and moving.

Derrick said about competition, "Like Nike, Just Do it!"

The best teacher is experience.

The more speeches you deliver or complete, the better you will be.

Shake the fear and jump in. The worst that could happen is that after your speech, you get great feedback on how to enhance it."

To learn more about Derrick Standifer, watch [Freedom Train Podcast Series](#) or <http://lifeislikearubikscube.com/founder/> ■



Derrick Standifer

Bringing Out the Best Through Effortless Networking

by Maria Martinez, DTM
Public Relations Manager



Maria Martinez

Those of us who recently attended Toastmasters International Convention, “A World of Difference”, are probably still taking it all in. We experienced an explosion of educational sessions to choose from, a myriad of informational opportunities, including observing an International Board of Directors meeting. We maximized our Club Experience by watching

club meetings occurring around the world and felt the excitement as we saw Verity Price emerge as the new World Champion of Public Speaking...the opportunities to grow, lead, learn and engage were boundless.

As the event started to conclude, we were all invited to partake in the Region 8 Gathering. Spearheaded by Region Advisor Netania Walker and International Director Roy Ganga - this event created a melting pot for over 200 faces and hearts from all over Georgia, Brazil, The Caribbean (28 territories!), Alabama, Mississippi, The Bahamas, and, of course, Florida...the inspiration was palpable.

The virtual gathering was kick-started with an inspirational message from the newly confirmed President-Elect for TI, Matt Kinsey. Matt was a past International Director and comes from our neighboring District 47, in South Florida. He reminded us that as Toastmasters, we help people understand who they are; we help people gain confidence; we help them recognize their significance and their own ability to help others. Before leaving, Matt invited us to cultivate relationships and lead from the heart... #favoritemoment.

Next, International Director Roy Ganga took the virtual stage and applauded our abilities during this pandemic to remain engaged, motivate others, and reshape our lives. Toastmasters around the world practiced and displayed compassion, understanding, and patience, even when it was difficult.



For us, Toastmasters, networking happens as a natural byproduct of the genuine interactions we experience within our clubs and with other Toastmasters. It's what I call *effortless networking*.

DR. MARIA MARTINEZ, DTM, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER

When it was her turn, Region 8 Advisor Netania Walker reminded us that everything we do in Toastmasters, whether small or large, contributes to the greater good of the organization we all love. She inspired us to take advantage of the opportunity to work together on a new and important task - not just to rebuild our clubs, Areas, and Divisions, but to *build back better!*

Many more joyful and celebratory moments followed as District after District bared their hearts on center stage to share their visions for the upcoming year. Virtual cheers roared as Errol Leandre, World Champion of Public Speaking finalist, and Antoinette Fox, the recipient of the President's Citation Award, were recognized as champion representatives of our region.

As I listened, I was suddenly able to connect the dots between these powerful and inspiring speakers. I realized one of the most important benefits of our Toastmasters membership is something that is not taught but is there for the taking—networking.

As Toastmasters, networking is a natural byproduct of the genuine interactions we experience within our

Continued on Page 8, Effortless Networking

Effortless Networking

Continued from Page 7

Clubs and with other Toastmasters. I find this to be a unique relationship because we always credit Toastmasters for its communication and leadership opportunities, yet we also experience the gift of what I call *effortless networking*.

Being a Toastmaster offers a powerful platform where we can safely learn to analyze data, manage conflict, lead in difficult situations, problem solve, innovate in challenging situations, and motivate others. Being a Toastmaster also includes the intrinsic value of being surrounded by people on the same journey as we are! Some are a little ahead, others are following, yet all of us are on a journey to become the best version of ourselves.

The currency of Toastmasters networking is the authenticity with which members interact and give to one another—qualities that simply bring out the best in each member! ■

BECOME A CLUB COACH & GET DOUBLE CREDIT!

ToastmastersDB4.org



1

Club achieves Distinguished status by 6/30/22

2

Coach serves min 6 mo

3

Club reaches min 20 paid members by 6/30/22

Serve as Club Coach and get **DOUBLE THE CREDIT** in recognition of the incredible effort and importance of this supportive role to club success. Coach a club to achieve criteria #1 & #2 and earn credit towards your DTM. Achieve Criteria #3 and get **ADDED CREDIT** for serving in a District Leadership role! Get more details and get started NOW:
Club Coach Chair, Bobby Blackmon, DTM

Club Coach & Mentor Training

With: WC "Bobby" Blackmon



First Monday of each month:
October 4th
November 1st
December 6th
8:00 PM

Each month a different focus, come and learn how to maximize club strengths, offer resources and tools to empower the club to achieve growth.

TOASTMASTERSDB4.ORG



Meeting ID 847 0417 6502
Passcode 318989

Honoring Becky Bolan - Charter Member of Turnpike Toasters

by Nina Martin, LD1

Turnpike Toasters Club respectfully honors the memory of longtime Toastmaster Becky Bolan, who has passed away from cancer, leaving behind her beloved husband and son, and many family members, friends, coworkers, and Toastmasters who cared about her.

Our little Toastmasters club will be 20 years old this fall, and Becky Bolan was one of the charter members of the Turnpike Toasters club.

For those of you who had a chance to meet Becky in person, you know that she was a warm and caring veteran Toastmaster with a ready smile and lovely voice. I feel privileged to have had the chance to attend meetings with her in person since I joined the club in Dec. 2018.

Becky was one of the expert Toastmasters who showed newcomers the ropes and made all of us feel at ease, gladly sharing her knowledge and experience. She was an accomplished public speaker with a flair for providing wonderful, constructive feedback to other Toastmasters seeking guidance on improving their speaking skills.

I always enjoyed Becky's impromptu Table Topics speeches, where she would expound upon the warm-and-fuzzy Hallmark movies she enjoyed and related to her love of family. You could tell how much she treasured her husband, Chris, and her son, Daniel, whose bright future will carry on her legacy.

As a civil engineer, Becky's work impacted countless Floridians who will remain unaware of her contributions. But those of us who knew her will never forget how much she mattered, how important she was, and how important she made us feel.

We will all miss Becky, and may God rest her soul for always. ■



Becky Bolan

CLUB CORNER

Becoming the Best

by Vickie Goodman, DTM, Club Growth Director

Build Relationships and Renewals Will Come

Does your club find itself in a constant cycle of “Dues are Due” reminders, emails, phone calls, and texts? Does your club Treasurer feel like that dreaded bill collector? Then STOP! Member renewals do not require nagging someone until they pay. We join Toastmasters to build our skills AND our relationships. It’s also those positive friendships and relationships that are visible to visiting guests - the fun that makes them want to be a part of the group. Take time to connect, to listen and encourage, to learn and practice. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to share what’s important to us, to bond as friends – that’s when we start growing and bringing out the best in one another. It’s friendship and trust that build commitment. As your relationships strengthen, so will each member’s bond with your club.

Once and for All (Year)

Discuss with your club members the benefits of streamlining their club renewal process by paying for the entire year, rather than a single, 6-month term. Not only will members not have to worry about Toastmasters renewals until September 2022, but your club will also receive a FREE ad in the 2022 D84 Conference Program Book, depending on the number of members who accept this opportunity. Striving to be your best self requires commitment, so go ahead and invest in yourself and your club. [Click here to find out more.](#)

Welcome your Area Director

Area Directors are your club’s immediate connection to everything going on in District 84. Raising the bar on their own leadership skills, Area Directors have volunteered to do everything possible to help your club grow and thrive. As they come to visit, welcome them and offer them an opportunity on your agenda to address your club members. Show them your club’s personality, and don’t be afraid to share any issues or difficulties your club is experiencing. Your Area Director can help brainstorm ideas to take you to the next level. Just as an evaluator offers a different perspective on a speech, your Area Director can provide objective observations

about your club climate or program that will motivate you towards the goal of becoming the best club you can be. Help your Area Director help your club by communicating your club’s plans for success.

Gain New Members through Speechcraft

Want a new way to let the world know about your club? How about sponsoring a Speechcraft program? Gather a few club members and target your potential audience of non- Toastmasters to focus your advertising. Use social media to offer this 4-8 week communication and leadership development course – a perfect way to become a better you and for a very reasonable fee (to cover the \$10/participant cost). You’ll be surprised how participants become ‘hooked’ and are excited to continue their personal growth as a member of your Toastmaster club. [Click here for more information.](#)

A Two-for-One Deal: Ask for a Club Coach and Get a Cheerleader, too!

Is your club struggling with 12 or fewer members, and you don’t seem to be able to get out of a rut? Your club qualifies to request a club coach to provide some new energy and some objective insight. They will also become your best cheerleader, recognizing and encouraging the very best in each member. A club coach is an experienced TM who will be assigned to work with your club to help it reach the Distinguished Club status or higher by the end of the year. But Club Coaches don’t just fall from the sky; your club has to vote to request one officially. So what are you waiting for? [Click here to request a club coach.](#) ■



On Mission: Part 3 of 4

Developing our Best Selves Through Communication and Leadership Skills

by [Debby Kerr-Henry](#), IP5, Immediate Past Area 90 Director

We provide a supportive and positive learning experience
in which members are empowered
to develop communication and leadership skills
resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.



Debby Kerr-Henry

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

Imagine, for a moment, if Martin Luther King Jr. had been a Toastmaster, and that he developed his communication and leadership skills to the level of brilliance for which he was known. Imagine too, that even though he developed into a masterful speaker and leader, he limited the use of his skills to Toastmasters meetings, speaking and leading only from behind a club lectern, or if it were 2021, through a computer screen.

Imagine.

The third part of our mission statement — nearing the climax of Ralph Smedley's vision for Toastmasters — addresses speaking and leading. This is what we, as Toastmasters, do. We learn to speak and lead more effectively.

Smedley did not say, however, to contain these skills within our clubs. The whole purpose of learning to speak and lead to our potentials is just that: to speak and lead to our potentials. Think about this for a minute. Where in our worlds can we improve our communication and/or leadership skills?

Perhaps it's at work, or at home in our marriage or with our children. Or maybe it's in our community as an influencer. Or maybe it's setting a professional example within Toastmasters by addressing conflict in a healthy manner or mentoring a fellow Toastmaster to find his/her voice. Or maybe it's finding our own voice.

However we can improve, the Pathways educational tracks

are designed to help us contemplate and then apply specific skill sets to real world situations, not just check off assignments and work through levels and paths. In other words, how can we benefit from each project? What can we learn? And how can we apply those skills?

For example, how can you benefit from, and apply the skills learned from the following projects?

- Active listening
- Connect with storytelling
- Team building
- Understanding conflict resolution
- Develop your vision
- Ethical leadership
- Understanding your leadership style
- Leading in difficult situations

Last year was a tough year for Toastmasters. And this year continues with challenges beyond our control. But one challenge that remains within our control is: developing communication and leadership skills to the best of our abilities. Think about it. That's what Martin Luther King Jr. did. He could not control his environment, yet, he used his communication and leadership skills, which were within his control, to contribute to forward movement.

Eckhart Tolle, another bigger-than-life speaker and leader, yet quiet and reserved, says, "Do not be concerned with the fruit of your action — just give attention to the action itself. The fruit will come of its own accord."

If we focus this year on speaking and leading to our greatest potentials, the rest will come of its own accord, regardless of what's happening outside of our control.

Imagine our year if we all speak and lead from beyond our lecterns and screens, then step out into our worlds, within our families and communities, and absolutely, full-heartedly live our Toastmasters mission.

Imagine.

Click here to revisit [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of "On Mission." ■

The Call of the Leader Past International President to Speak at District 84

"Great leaders are growing leaders."

—Michael Notaro, DTM,

International President 2011-12



Michael Notaro

Drawing from lessons Michael Notaro learned as 2011-12 Toastmasters International President, Michael will help you maximize the benefits of your Toastmaster membership. Past International President Helen Blanchard once said, "If you get all there is to get out of Toastmasters, you will never get out of Toastmas-

ters." Michael will show you why that is true. His speech will stir your spirit, touch your soul and reveal pathways for leadership growth.

Michael Notaro, is a lawyer, author and entrepreneur. A native of Chicago, Michael attended the University of California at Berkeley where he majored in political economy, played on the water polo team and joined the CAL Bears Toastmasters Club in May 1985. As a former US Congressional Intern, Michael is a practicing real estate attorney who founded his own commercial real estate company at 33 years of age. A resident of Alameda, California, Michael served as Toastmasters International President during the 2011-12 program year and is author of the bestselling book, *The Call of the Leader*.

As a bonus, District 84's Evaluation Champion, Jeremy Udell, will evaluate Michael's speech—a great opportunity to witness how to give feedback to an already polished speaker. To read more about Jeremy, see "Evaluations that Inspire" on the page 12.

Monday, September 20, 6-7:30 pm (virtual)

Hosted by [ACE Advanced Club](#)

Register now, as space is limited, shorturl.at/kmCQ3

Please submit any questions
to: gmytyckoson@gmail.com ■

Wowing Your Audience In A Virtual World Workshop

by Katherine Eaton, VPPR, Highway Safety
Toastmasters Club



Jason Doty

Highway Safety Toastmaster Club has exchanged their last weekly scheduled Tuesday meeting to a Monday night workshop. Guest speakers from a variety of fields are featured.

Jason Doty, Director-Executive, Leadership Solutions with Frost & Sullivan, shared his expertise as our

first guest speaker. We were provided with several strategies for keeping the attention of your audience, starting with a participation poll.

Our President Bert Mitchell was impressed with the example, "Never forget the audience," a good theme, especially in the virtual world. We learned the importance of eye contact, and awareness of the interest of your audience. He included several ideas on speech preparation.

Jason's friendly, positive, and professional style created an atmosphere of motivation and inspiration. His enthusiasm for speaking was demonstrated throughout his speech. Everyone left with at least one new idea for engaging their audience.

To quote our VPM/VPE Denise Badolato, DTM, "Members and guests enjoyed an interactive question and answer poll; driven discussion on public speaking and capturing your audience's attention".

In my opinion, we were WOWED! ■

Monthly Sessions

Learn how PATHWAYS is the companion on your Toastmasters journey!

Zoom ID: 853 1202 4512
Passcode: 448672

17th of every month* at 7pm ET

*except January 2022

September theme:

Working through the levels as a member

October theme:

Base Camp Managers

November theme:

Assisting new members

TOASTMASTERS
PATHWAYS
— learning experience —

Evaluations That Inspire

by Sowjanya Athmakuri Ramini, LD5, DL5, Area 93 Director



Sowjanya Athmakuri

Jeremy Udell, District 84 Evaluation Contest winner, says he owes his success to mentors who carved the path for him. In particular, he holds Scott Brown in high regard. "More than having talent, he had the time to sit and talk to me," Jeremy said. "He is a heck of a competitor himself, but he would take time to bring my game up, and he made me a better me."

Jeremy goes by a simple yet powerful rule of thumb: Successful evaluations are nothing but well-constructed speeches with an attention-grabbing opening, organized body, and memorable closing.

The best evaluators weren't just getting up there and giving feedback. They were giving mini 2-3-minute speeches. Jeremy realized that this is the skill he needed to develop. It was a challenge to organize his thoughts in a speech format in a short period of time.

He immediately focused on *what* he could convey to the speaker and *how* to convey the important bits interestingly and memorably. Speakers will want to remember and implement the feedback.

"Contest or not, I try to give a memorable evaluation that makes a lasting impression on the speaker."

Most people can come up with some decent feedback, but what makes an evaluation stand out are the minute details.

Successful evaluations are nothing but well-constructed speeches with an attention-grabbing opening, organized body, and memorable closing."

Jeremy Udell

Call back to the speech.

Step back into the moment of the speech by referencing something funny or memorable. Remember that the audience listened to the speech already, so we don't need to rehash it. A simple callout to interesting points will suffice.

"Don't be afraid to go back to basics. Call out the obvious—looking down to the notes, or a verbal crutch such as an um or a big so, especially from an otherwise polished speaker. But also find unique things to recommend, such as more use of the stage to anchor different characters, concepts, or moments in time."

Replicate the tone of the speech.

An effective way to grab audience's attention is to pay close attention to the tone you use in your evaluation. Jeremy suggests replicating the tone of the speech for maximum impact.

Relay the final emotion.

Jeremy stressed the importance of paying close attention to finding an emotion that impacted or motivated you or one you could empathize with. Ensure that you share your emotional point with the audience. Close with a punchline that was specifically used in the speech, or take it to the next level by building on the theme. For instance, if the theme of the speech is "Go, get it done," you might end with "You got it done!"

In conclusion, Jeremy suggests you give your feedback, but don't forget to get the feedback on your feedback. Talk to the speaker after your evaluation and ask if your feedback was helpful. Soon you will develop a good feel for how to give memorable evaluations.

To learn three takeaways from a first-time evaluation competitor, [read Serena Piper's story on page 18 in the August edition of Synergy.](#) ■

Advanced Clubs Build Upon Foundation

by [Debby Kerr-Henry](#), IP5, Immediate Past Area 90 Director

Advanced intimidates me. It conjures visions of polished and perfect presenters—presenters better than me. Funny now how I am a member of two advanced clubs.

Before I tell you how that happened, let me first say, neither of my advanced clubs are intimidating, but rather quite supportive, and places where I have mingled with more seasoned and knowledgeable Toastmasters than I would have otherwise. *Advanced*, I have learned, is subjective.

Every time I attend my advanced clubs, I learn something new, mostly about how to give effective evaluations, a skill I want to master this year, which leads me to why I wound up in two advanced clubs: I want to give effective evaluations that help the speaker continue to improve, something I want for myself as well. Iron sharpens iron, as the proverbial saying goes.

The “how” happened because an advanced club was part of my Area when I served as Area 90 Director last year; and the other club, I naïvely agreed to coach to fulfill one of the requirements for the DTM. I say naïvely because I didn’t know what I was getting myself into; but in the end, it proved to be a more-than-worthwhile experience. I learned sooooo much! And yes, I need to stretch the sooooo, to reflect how much I stretched. I was a bit sore afterwards, but in a good yoga stretch kind of way.

I had just learned about advanced clubs before first visiting one. I truly didn’t know they existed or why I would want to join one; after all, I liked my home club and didn’t need any more clubs. But what I quickly learned was this: home clubs lay the foundation, while advanced clubs build upon it.

Being engaged as an active



member gives me an opportunity to receive comprehensive feedback, but also an opportunity to learn how to give it—a valuable life skill that can be applied in personal and professional relationships beyond Toastmasters. And now, with contest season upon us, my advanced clubs are even more valuable, as I know members will provide solid feedback if I choose to compete this year.

Don’t let *advanced* intimidate you like it initially did me. I encourage you to check out a club and see for yourself the type of skill building they’re up to. ■

Advanced Club	Meeting Day	Meeting Time
Accelerated Pacesetters	2 nd Saturday	11:15 a.m.
Ace Advanced Toastmasters	1 st and 3 rd Mondays	6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Advanced Communicators	4 th Monday	6 p.m.
CIA Toastmasters	1 st and 3 rd Mondays	6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Citrus Toastmasters	Friday	7:30 a.m.
Find Your Funny Toastmasters	2 nd and 4 th Sundays	6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
First Coast Speakers	2 nd Thursday, 4 th Saturdays	6:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m.
Global Leaders	2 nd Saturday	10 a.m. to noon
Keynotes and More Advanced	2 nd and 5 th Saturdays	10:30 a.m. to noon
LensMasters Advanced	2 nd , 4 th , and 5 th Thursdays	7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Orlando Advanced Toastmasters	2 nd and 4 th Saturdays	10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Networking and Mentorship Seed Success

by Sandy DePrimo, DTM



Sandy DePrimo

Every year in Toastmasters, we hear the question, “Is anyone interested in competing?” I have wanted to raise my hand but was always terrified—the thought of being on display and having to speak put chills down my spine. I was better off *arranging* competitions and *watching* speakers. That was safer.

Flashback to Contest Season 2020–21 when the pandemic impacted

clubs, membership fell, and all competitions were on Zoom. I thought, “*Maybe this is an opportunity to face my fear of competing.*” This time, when I heard, “Is anyone interested in competing?” I raised my hand.

I had never competed before, and I was more nervous speaking in front of a broader range of Toastmasters I did not know. I needed feedback, so I enlisted one of my closest Toastmaster friends to help me practice. We set up weekly Zoom meetings to lend an ear to each other, as he was competing as well. We decided to ask one more competition friend to join us, adding more perspective. The three of us didn’t know how dynamic our triad would become. We discovered that one of us was a writer, one was a visionary, and one was an off-the-cuff speaker. The combination of strengths worked beautifully together.

In our first meeting, we laid out ground rules:

- We are here to grow and learn, not to win
- Our goal is to make the judges’ job harder
- We accept honest feedback with grace
- Make one adjustment every time we practice

With ground rules in place, we began our weekly sessions following a task-oriented style of coaching:

- Create a smooth, engaging storyline
- Use body language to bring the story to life
- Enhance the presentation with vocal variety
- Practice and tweak

It got to the point where we knew each other’s speeches by heart and could have each other’s back. We were comfortable.

The day came for the first club competition. Two of us had never competed before, and one had competed in the Area competition. Nerves set in but knowing our triad was in the audience, took the weight off. Speaking order was drawn, and guess who got the first slot? Me. Talk about panic. It was all over my face! I got chat messages from my triad members saying, “Breathe, you’ve got this.” I was magically relieved and focused on what I had learned and delivered the speech with ease. Well, I went on to win first place, and I owe it to my triad!

Between the three of us, we competed in four clubs and won all the first-place medals for Humorous, Evaluation, and International Speech—advancing us to the Area contests.

With the Area contest on the horizon, we went back to our Zoom sessions and practiced, practiced, and practiced more. We were still learning, even though we all placed in the Area contests and moved to the Division competition.

With the Division contest approaching, we went back to our triad Zoom sessions to rehearse more diligently. One of us ended up in the district contest!

“Toastmasters International defines a mentor as a member who serves as a trusted guide, advisor, or teacher.” We made ourselves mentors. We set specific goals that we achieved. We became better speakers. The pressure was gone, the anxiety was gone, and the competition became fun.

This is a journey that I will never forget. The next time you hear, “Is anyone interested in competing?” Raise your hand. Regardless of the outcome, you will win in so many ways. ■

Navigating Change to Realize Our Best

by Julie Salgo, Retired Learning and Development Consultant



Julie Salgo

In March 2020, Toastmasters attended our last in-person club meetings and then transitioned into our first Zoom experiment. Eventually, we adjusted to the change, and by now, we see the unexpected advantages of visiting far-away clubs and competitions that we could not have visited in the past.

Now, more clubs are experimenting with hybrid meetings that give different challenges. Are we still nervous about getting sick, or are we afraid of additional technological hiccups? Or both?

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, who lived from 540 BC to 480 BC, knew that “The only constant is change itself.” We are smart enough to know that too, yet we do not really welcome change. On top of that, we all respond very differently to any situation. Why?

Dr. Spencer Johnson says in his highly popular book *Who Moved My Cheese?* that human beings deal with change four different ways, just like the funny characters in his story:

Sniff anticipates change and is always on the lookout.

Scurry doesn’t hesitate to take action as soon as something unexpected happens.

Hem fears any change and hopes that the disruptions are temporary nuisances that shall pass.

Haw can imagine the positive impact of change, and after a while will go with the flow.

Which of the four responses represent your primary preference? And how can you move from resisting change to accepting and committing to it? Can you recognize the “players” during challenging Toastmasters years?

Can you name those leaders who quickly learned Pathways to be ahead of the game and helped others? Can you name those who knew what to do when the pandemic hit, without losing momentum? (Sniff)

Do you remember all the club members who immediately jumped on the bandwagon, experimented with Pathways, learned the essential Zoom tricks, and were willing to teach others, and who were eager to first look into hybrid meetings? (Scurry)

Did you keep the names of those who didn’t renew their memberships? Do you still hope to bring them back? (Hem)

Are you proud of those Toastmasters who needed more encouragement and hand-holding but are now comfortable with Pathways, Zoom, and hybrid events? (Haw)

Change happens, whether we are ready or not. To better prepare for it, find your answers to the following questions:

Why do I resist change?

How can I motivate myself and others to accept change?

How can I adjust my attitude and behavior, and influence others to check theirs?

How can I make change more manageable for myself and others?

Remember, “The only constant is change itself.”

Be ready and willing to assist your fellow Toastmasters to change with you! ■

Virtually Speaking: Inspired to Grow and Excel Together

Dwight Dillon, Virtually Speaking Mentor

When I joined Toastmasters, I was impressed with the leadership structure and the dedication of so many Toastmasters. I made a commitment that I, too, would give back to Toastmasters in some way. Of the many options, my most substantial interest was in chartering, mentoring, or growing a club.

I received many awards and designations on my Toastmaster journey, such as advanced communicator and advanced leader. My goal of becoming a Distinguished Toastmaster was nearly in sight. However, while experiencing personal business growth, homeschooling my children, having a newborn, and going through the pandemic, my Distinguished Toastmaster goal moved to the back burner. One day while discussing my goals and challenges with a friend, I realized I was closer than I thought. My friend said, "You are almost there, all you have to do is be a club mentor or sponsor." I immediately reached out to the club Growth Director, saying, "If there's an opportunity to fulfill that goal, sign me up!"

I was invited to mentor a charter club and immediately responded, "Absolutely!" The proposed club name alone caught my attention, Virtually Speaking. The club also has a diverse array of members and professions. Everyone was super enthused at the demo meeting. I was inspired and knew the club would be a success.

The club was chartered on January 1, 2021 and earned distinguished status within the first five months. Achieving my goal while helping others is fulfilling and a dream come true! I have learned a lot about goal setting. Often, we are closer to achieving our goals than we imagine. Key Lesson: "When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." - Paulo Coelho. All you must do is to say "Yes!"

Rita Pilate, Virtually Speaking Club President

The inspiration for Virtually Speaking was simple: a desire to help others to overcome public speaking fear and become better communicators. Interestingly, I had never been much of a public speaker. You might assume that fear of public speaking was holding me back. While that may have been part of it, my lack of interest was the real culprit. Speaking never even hit my radar screen until I gave a big speech as part of my corporate job. I had the benefit of intense professional preparation and tons of practice that really showed. I experienced success on stage. I learned that with proper training and preparation anyone (even me) could be a successful speaker.

Fast forward to being a small business owner who wanted to find a way to give others the kind of support I received in the corporate world, I knew there was a need. I had heard great things about Toastmasters, so I knew the solution. Ironically, chartering

a Toastmasters club to help others sparked a fire in me to speak professionally.

Part of the strength of our club is the members' ability to inspire each other to excel. We strive to make meetings fun and show our team spirit with club T-shirts and bags. "Teamwork makes the dream work!" - John C. Maxwell

Here are some thoughts from other members ...

"Forming Virtually Speaking has been a phenomenal experience!" "Meeting virtually has afforded an opportunity to bond with individuals throughout the United States." "The club's leadership provides an exciting and inviting atmosphere, which is infectious." "Members are comfortable sharing their stories via speeches or extemporaneously during Table Topics." "The Toastmasters Virtually Speaking experience has been rewarding both personally and professionally."

We all highly recommend and invite others to join us. [Come check us out](#) on Thursdays at 7 pm ET. ■



Competing Might Just be Better than Winning the Lottery

by Marjane Taylor, DTM



Marjane Taylor

Do speech contests bring out our best? Or do they just bring out our best stress?

Many years ago, when I was a brand-new baby Toastmaster, one of the wise club elders convinced me to compete in the club's Table Topics contest.

"You can do it," he said. "It's just for the club. It's the same as answering Table Topics every other week."

I agreed to compete only because I was sure there was no chance of winning. Competing against my club members was scary enough. I didn't want to think about competing against strangers from other clubs. In the few months that I'd been a member, I had never once been voted "Best Table Topics Speaker." Two more experienced members always seemed to have a wittier answer than what I could cobble together. They were funny! One of them almost ALWAYS won, and they were both competing in the club contest. I assured myself that winning this contest would be about as likely as my odds of winning the lottery.

I stressed. I practiced. I read multiple Table Topics questions, coming up with answers to each. Every time I spoke to someone, I told myself that responding was like giving a Table Topics answer. I was convinced that after the club contest, I could relax and watch one of the other members compete in the Area Contest — that's after I found out that there was an Area Contest, which the "wise elder" had neglected to mention.

I was wrong. (Why couldn't I be wrong about winning the lottery?!)

The day of the contest, when the question was asked, it wasn't one that would easily be answered with a funny quip: "Where were you when the World Trade Center was attacked on 9/11?" Since then, I've wondered how much the two more experienced members offered to pay the judges for NOT placing them first. If I was astonished to win at the club level, imagine my surprise when I also won at the Area level.

I became "hooked" on the adrenaline thrill of contests. Yes, I was a contest junkie. There hasn't been a contest season since when I have been eligible that I didn't compete in at least one contest.

Each time I wondered why I put myself through the stress. And each time, I am reminded that I do NOT want to embarrass myself in front of my friends. But each time, I look at the trophies and ribbons I have already won, and my greedy little heart wants more, more, more. (I may have been a crow in a past life. I hear that they like shiny baubles too.)

I've hyperventilated, forgotten punch lines, and told myself I would never compete again. So why did I? Because each time I became less nervous. Each time, I made fewer (or at least different) mistakes. And each time, my speaking abilities grew far more than if I had not competed.

If you haven't yet competed in a speech contest, try it. You may find out that you are more competitive than you imagined, that the fear of failure is a great motivator to practice those speeches you've put off, and that you (secretly) enjoy the adrenaline. With practice, you may even find that you have a message that someone in your audience needs to hear. And that might just be better than winning the lottery. ■

Humorous Social Media Musings

by Bob Costello



Bob Costello

Frozen. Staring at the screen. What do I say? I question *blogging* as my social media challenge. Countless questions flutter in my thoughts as I nervously prepare an adequate website presence on this aspect of *Engaging Humor*.

How do I create a humorous blog in a social media marketplace?

In a manner of speaking, in my social media ignorance, I had to 'find my funny.' Is *Engaging Humor* funny? *Pathways Level 4* offers several options that appear as obstacles to overcome. With my knowledge as a writer I relied on my backbone, hambone and funny bone to create a worthy broadcast.

Let me fill you in, in the manner of Paul Harvey, humorist and recipient of the Medal of Freedom bestowed by President Bush. "*For the rest of the story and for what it's worth...*" he touted.

The Broadcast Origins

"Hello Americans!"

This is Bob Costello, your syndicated columnist and author, reporting as the '*Man in the Street*,' broadcasting on social media. Now staying inside, away from the hustle and bustle of crowded streets, I report on humor driven by this pandemic of Covid-19 and its deviant derivative, the Delta variant.

I recognize our need for socialization. To effectively communicate, social distancing forces us to "un-mask" our conversations.

Level 4: Create a blog or build a social media presence with a humorous bent are amongst the many electives listed in the overview of the elective project. The purpose is to connect with others, allowing the growth of skills in communications, even though we are sequestered.

Unmask...speak out...use humor...use a smile in your voice within your tone and tenor. Our blog is to set the tone. It is the verbal canvas in which we share our thoughts, feelings, and diverse views. After all, humor is serious fun.

Our blog is made to be a humorous conversation via tweets and texts, much like other social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

The Rest of the Story

We rely on our ability to laugh at ourselves as we relate to one another with wit, wry humor or puns. The irony of man is that this new social landscape is dynamic, spreading... pandemically.

Ensconced in our Covid-19 crisis, 'social distancing' was getting "*spaced out*", as I heard it. Even Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs have been affected by recent health restrictions predicated on 'social distancing'. When it came to limiting groups to no more than six, six of the seven dwarfs were not Happy!

Everything is changing. This morning, I stepped on the scale as it said, "Please use social distancing... only one person on the scale at a time." Then, bored to death, my daughter gave me a dart to throw at a world map. She told me that we will vacation where it lands, when the Covid crisis is over. It looks like we will be spending two weeks behind the refrigerator.

History of Man: Cavemen drew on the cave walls as social media. Egyptians had hieroglyphs. We have 'Social Media.' However, at my age I purchased a book: "*7 Habits of Highly Effective Social Media - for Dummies*."

The power of social media is the power of humor in an impromptu interchange of thoughts and feelings. We, humans, crave socialization as a necessity for life and to be happy.

Therefore, in closing, I'll get back to you when civilization returns to civilization.

This is Bob Costello signing off. "*Good Day!*" ■



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