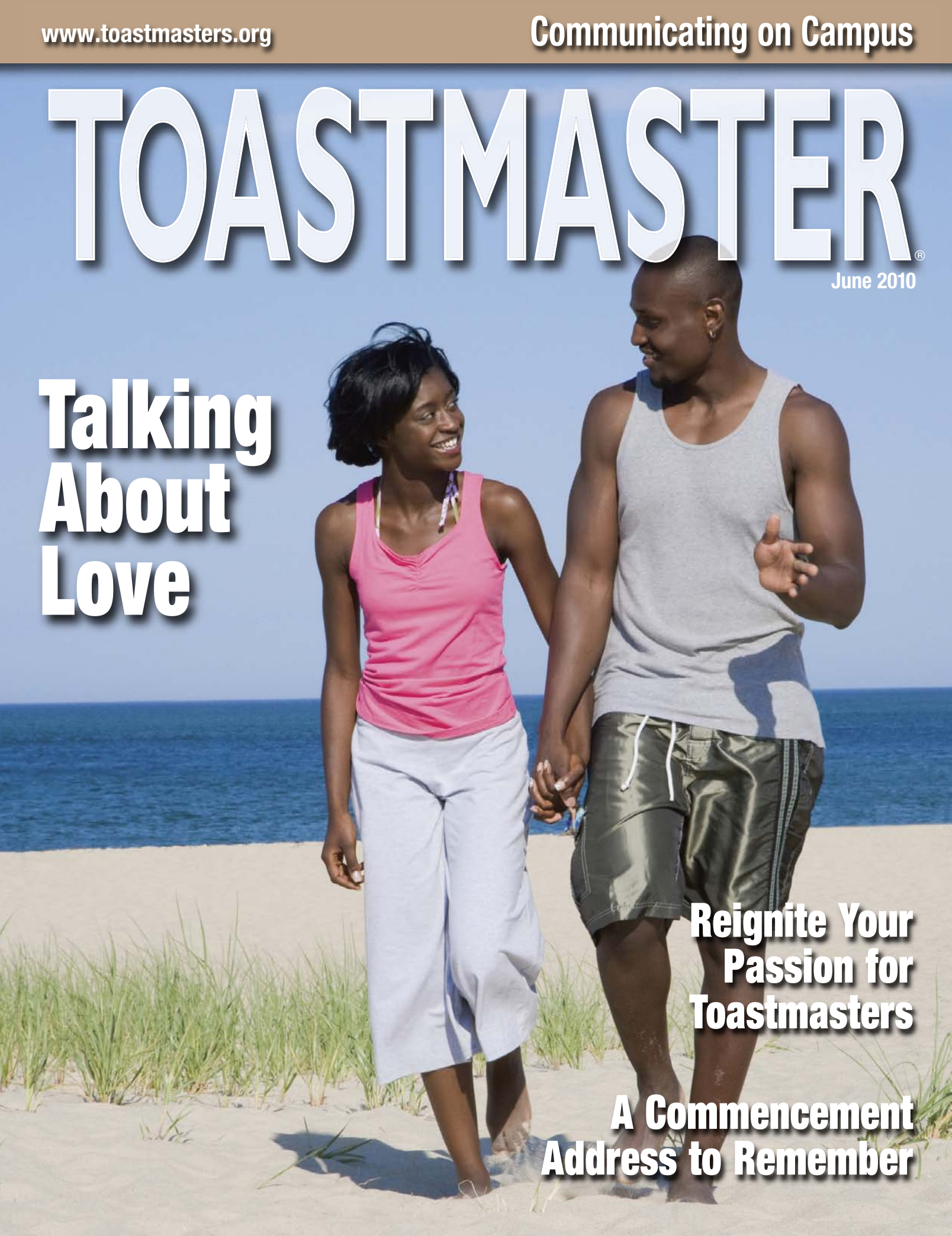
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Communicating on Campus

# TOASTMASTER®

June 2010



## Talking About Love

## Reignite Your Passion for Toastmasters

## A Commencement Address to Remember



# Never Give In

When I was in the seventh grade, I decided to run for student council president of my junior high school. This was an interesting endeavor, as I had never been involved in student government before. I also did not meet the criteria of most successful candidates – I was extremely shy, played trumpet in the school band and was not well-known by my peers.

I stood for election and lost. Undeterred, I ran again for president six months later. I lost again. The following year, I had one last opportunity to run for president. To stand out, I determined my campaign speech on election day would include music. This speech would be delivered in front of the entire school. Remember, I was very shy.

Every time I practiced my campaign speech, my tape-recorded music was miscued. My teachers encouraged me to give a traditional speech, without the music. My parents, out of great love, suggested I give a traditional speech as well. My friends were more direct – they said all the students would laugh at me if the music did not work properly.

All these important people in my life simply wanted to protect me from potential embarrassment and disappointment, except for one person: my friend and campaign manager, Jenny, who told me to go for it. She said, "I know you can do this. I believe in you."

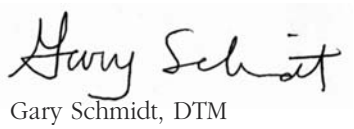
I delivered the speech as planned in front of all the students and teachers. The music worked perfectly. I won the election.

It took just one person to believe in me to give me the confidence to believe in myself. And I never gave up.

Fellow Toastmasters, as we reach the final month in the Toastmasters program year, I want you to know that I believe in you. I believe in the power of your dreams. Your goals are meaningful and are meant to help you achieve the greatness you deserve. If you reach with all your might and fall short, then you pick yourself up and start again. Never give in.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, "Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

Never give in on your goals and dreams. Your lifelong journey to discover courage and confidence – in yourself and others – begins now!



Gary Schmidt, DTM
*International President*




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**The Toastmasters Vision:**
Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

**The Toastmasters Mission:**
Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

*Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it with your name, address and club affiliation and send it to* **letters@toastmasters.org.**

## Celebrity Encounter

I enjoyed Beth Black's article, "What Do You Say to a Celebrity?" (March), especially having recently witnessed a close encounter of the celebrity kind.

I was with a group of friends in a restaurant in Berkeley, California, when one of them noticed the presence of actor Jake Gyllenhaal, seated in the area where people wait for their tables. Not wanting to make a scene or get all goofy at the sight of this popular actor, my friend Heather simply posed herself with two of our friends, and nonchalantly asked across the table to Mr. Gyllenhaal, "Would you mind taking a picture of us?"

He agreed, and after he took the photo, they thanked him and left the area without giving even the faintest indication that they knew who he was. When Heather posted the photo on Facebook, she noted that it was taken *by* Jake Gyllenhaal – but was obviously not a photo *of* him.

**Jay Davidson, ATMG • Rainbow Toastmasters**
**San Francisco, California**

## *Who*-ver in Canada

Apropos encounters with celebrities: After leaving office, U.S. President Herbert Hoover traveled and stopped one night at a hotel in a small city in Canada. As Hoover registered, the clerk noticed his name and asked him if he was related to FBI man J. Edgar Hoover.

"No," replied the ex-president.

"Then, are you related to the Hoover vacuum cleaner company?"

"No," replied Hoover.

"Oh well," said the clerk. "It's just that we get such a thrill when someone connected with a celebrity passes through town."

**David W. Olson • Duwamish Toasters Choice • Tukwila, Washington**

## A Magical Mentor

After reading "The Magic of Mentoring" by Karen Novek (February), I felt moved to write this tribute to an exceptional mentor.

I met Davender Gupta at a networking event. He convinced me to try Toastmasters and made me feel very welcomed. Davender spurred me to reach beyond my wildest dreams, encouraging me to serve as VP Membership after just four months in the club. Regular, weekly e-mails gave me food for thought and inspiration to reach for new heights. His gentle nudging and constructive comments bolstered my confidence. His kindness touched me often, but never more than when he changed his busy schedule to be present for my final CC speech. The standing ovation I received was largely a result of his support.

**Sandra Holman, CC • Quest Toastmasters • Quebec City, Canada**

## The Path To My CC

Last year, I attended my first Toastmasters meeting and found it to be everything I wanted to be a part of. I work at a manufacturing center on the night shift and take three college classes during the day. I didn't have time to practice my speeches, so I practiced at work. Co-workers found me speaking to myself while running my machine.

The practice did pay off, but I still couldn't overcome my nervousness. So to improve, I visited other Toastmasters clubs at noon to present speeches. This way, I was able to complete 10 speeches in eight months.

Toastmasters has truly been a life-changing experience. Joining was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

**Brehon Mills • SPBC Toastmasters • Richmond, Virginia**

**Important Notice to All Members**

# Preparing for Single Sign-On at www.toastmasters.org

The way members log in at **www.toastmasters.org** will change when the Toastmasters Web site is upgraded in July 2010.

- Each member will need their own individual e-mail address updated in their profile at **www.toastmasters.org**. This e-mail address cannot be shared with another member.
- Club and district officers will no longer be required to have a separate login to conduct club and district business. Your single member login will give you access to everything you need.

Members with a complete profile at **www.toastmasters.org** will be able to conduct business, purchase products at member-only prices and enjoy other online membership benefits. Those who share e-mail accounts with another member will not be able to log in to the Toastmasters Web site after June 30, 2010.

Simply log in at **www.toastmasters.org/login**, access "My Profile" and make sure your e-mail address and other information is complete and accurate.

By Richard Baker, DTM



# Politically Speaking

## TI experience boosts run for Congressional seat.

When you join Toastmasters, you are never sure where the enhanced speaking and leadership skills will lead you. In my case, they led to a run for the United States House of Representatives.

Five years ago, shortly after I started working at 3Com Corporation in Marlborough, Massachusetts, I joined the 3Talkers Toastmasters. Having done four years of high school debate, I enjoyed the challenge of facing an audience again, but my public speaking skills were quite rusty, and I nervously stuttered through my Ice Breaker. However, I was hooked.

Meanwhile, a seat opened up on the Pentucket Regional School Committee, which covers several cities north of Boston. At the last minute, I ran a write-in campaign and won the seat. Now I was faced with microphones and television cameras every week as the school committee worked through a number of fiscal and personnel issues with the district. Toastmasters became a great asset for me.

The skills I developed in Table Topics helped as I organized my thoughts during our school-board deliberations. Furthermore, I used my club speeches to address issues that the Pentucket committee was facing, which improved my school-board presentations. The first advanced manual I dove into was on public relations, since dealing with the public and the media became a weekly duty for me. The manual's advice proved invaluable in my political career.

I was soon elected president of the 3Talkers Toastmasters and led the club to President's Distinguished. As my two years on the school committee came to an end, I set my sights on a larger office: Congress.

Pushing forward in Toastmasters, I completed manual after manual until I had my Advanced Communicator Gold. I finished the *Competent Leadership* manual, and then set my sights on a DTM.

### Hitting the Campaign Trail

Meanwhile, I took out the Republican nomination papers for Congress, and started attending Town Committee meetings throughout the 6th Congressional District. The Republican nominee for the seat in 2006 decided that he would run again, but I continued forward, challenging him. For several months he and I spoke, one after the other, at various events. It was very scary, and my voice often trembled as I started speaking, knowing that everyone was comparing me to my opponent. It was like competing in a Toastmasters contest every day. But the practice at my club meetings helped me stay calm, and soon I was speaking confidently.

My opponent dropped out before submitting his papers, and I was placed on the ballot as the Republican nominee for the district seat.

My next step in Toastmasters was becoming an area governor, which added to my leadership experience. As we developed a cadre of volunteers and organized the growing Congressional campaign, my Toastmasters leadership skills proved invaluable. A Congressional campaign is a significant undertaking, similar to starting and running a small business in a six-month time frame.

The speaking opportunities ramped up from several a week in the spring to several a day as we approached Election Day. I became adept at walking into a room, heading straight to a microphone, and speaking off the cuff on a regular basis. The political stump speech is an impromptu combination of short speeches and ideas that are combined on the fly to fit the audience. The 3Talkers Toastmasters club was a great resource for trying out new frameworks for speeches and practicing speaking on new subject areas.

Thanks to my Toastmasters experience, we mounted one of the most formidable Congressional challenges in Massachusetts in a dozen years. While I did not defeat the Democratic candidate, I received just under 95,000 votes, the second highest vote count for a Congressional challenger in the state since 1996 – a very successful campaign by Massachusetts standards.

> **"As we organized the Congressional campaign and made a strong run for the office, my Toastmasters leadership skills proved invaluable."**

You never know where Toastmasters will lead you. Or where it will lead me next.

**Richard Baker, DTM,** is a member of the 3Talkers Toastmasters club in Marlborough, Massachusetts. When not dabbling in politics, Richard is the Director of Intellectual Property Licensing for 3Com Corporation. Reach him at **richard_baker@3com.com**.

By Julie Bawden Davis

**Burn victim inspires others with his music and speeches.**

# Dan Caro: Turning Tragedy into Triumph

Talk to Dan Caro about his life and he'll tell you that things are just as they should be. The motivational speaker and professional drummer suffered a devastating childhood accident but says, "There are no negatives in life."

A former Toastmaster, Caro is the author of *The Gift of Fire: How I Made Adversity Work for Me*. He says, "I believe in owning your life and being 100 percent accountable for your actions and reactions. I've come to terms with my history and realized that everything happens for a reason."

When Caro was 2 years old and playing near a water heater, a gas can fell over, igniting a 2,500-degree fireball that engulfed him. His tiny body became so hot that once he arrived at the hospital, doctors had to cut him with a scalpel to release trapped heat. During those first tentative hours, he died three times. Eighty percent of his body received third- and fourth-degree burns, which meant extensive loss of skin, including on his face. He also lost his fingers and most of his hands.

As a child, Caro spent more than four years in the hospital undergoing 80 grafting and reconstruction surgeries. Much of that time was spent in isolation rooms because his thin skin made him susceptible to staph infections. It was during this period that Caro discovered how people truly treat one another and where they place their values.

"All of that self-reflection set me on a path to discovering my *dharma*, which is my life's purpose," says Caro. "I've always felt compelled to excel so that I can inspire people to live their lives to the fullest without complaint or excuse."

During childhood when other kids were fretting over skinned knees and homework assignments, Caro struggled to achieve tasks that many take for granted, such as tying his shoelaces.

"I attended a private school from preschool through eighth grade, and initially the kids made fun of me until one day when I chased after the class bully and overpowered him," he says. "From that day on, I was friends with everyone."

## Determination Pays Off

With no fingers or even hands, Caro's seven-year struggle to tie his shoelaces wasn't as quickly overcome, but the experience taught him a wealth of other great skills, including patience and persistence. "Though I lacked the dexterity to grip the shoelaces, I tried every day until I finally tied them," he says. "I can only explain it as a spiritual energy. On that particular day, things clicked and I suddenly had a new-found strength. I believed so strongly that I could tie my shoes that my intentions led to the manifestation of the goal."

After succeeding with his shoelaces, Caro decided to tackle the drums. "I have a functional thumb on my left hand, but not on my right one, so it's hard to grip anything, such as a drumstick," he says. "After a few unsuccessful attempts that included painful things like glue, my dad called a drummer friend and he suggested wrist bands, which I supplemented with rubber bands, creating fully functioning hands."

Caro began playing the drums at age 12 and found steady work for many years throughout his hometown of New Orleans, Louisiana. At one time he was the primary drummer for 11 jazz bands.

"Dan is a remarkable drummer, which is especially impressive when you consider his situation," says Stanton Moore, a professional drummer in New Orleans who has known Caro for several years. "I've seen Dan power through a gig with such determination, and he does it all with a smile. He is one of the most inspirational people I've ever met. Whenever I think my life is tough, I just look at him and realize that I have no excuses."

It was Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 that prompted Caro to change his career path from drumming to professional speaking and writing. "Katrina taught me to not ground yourself with a location or


Dan Caro

get attached to your stuff, because it can all go away suddenly. I realized that who you are and what you have inside of you – your consciousness – is all that really matters."

Caro's speaking career actually started two years before, in 2003, when his father suggested he attend a Toastmasters meeting. "Back then if someone asked me a question, I would freeze up and had difficulty expressing myself," says Caro. "Going to Toastmasters was one of the best decisions I've ever made. The organization gave me the tools and confidence to do what I'm doing now."

## Becoming a Toastmasters Leader

He quickly earned his Competent Communicator award and became president of his club, Totally Toast - masters in Mandeville, Louisiana, bringing it back to Distinguished status by his second year. Today Caro is a sought-after speaker and author who regularly presents to audiences numbering in the thousands.

Steve Siebold is a professional speaker who met Caro at a speech workshop several years ago and became Caro's coach. "Dan's message was unbelievably compelling and inspirational; he just needed some refinement in how he shared it," says Siebold, who speaks on the topic of mental strength. "Considering his heart-wrenching story, there is the challenge of the audience feeling emotionally drained after hearing it. But Dan connects with the audience and shares the wisdom he acquired because of his tragedy, convincing listeners that they too can succeed, no matter the odds. He makes the presentation even more uplifting by playing the drums."

While Siebold helped Caro develop his speaking skills, he has learned a great deal from Caro in return. "Dan is never really out of my mind as I go about my life," he says. "When I compare my challenges to his, I just laugh."

Toastmasters Past International President Bennie Bough, DTM, agrees. "As a burn victim, Dan electrifies his audience with his message and demonstrates that being handicapped is not an obstacle," says Bough. "He captivates your heart and inspires you to higher levels of success."

Today Caro is busy speaking and writing. His current mentor is Wayne Dyer, who wrote the forward for Caro's newly released book, *The Gift of Fire*. While he doesn't play the drums professionally anymore, Caro still enjoys music and has started composing. He is also a spokesperson for Shriners International, a philanthropic organization that supports Shriners Hospitals, an international health care system of 22 hospitals that – specializes in treating children free of charge for burns, orthopedic– conditions, spinal-cord injuries and cleft lip and palate. "It was at Shriners Hospitals that I had my 80 surgeries, and I feel it's my duty to give back to the organization that saved my life," he says.

Caro plans to continue sharing his message of determination, strength and hope. "I have come to realize that people looked at me differently throughout different periods of my life because of how I looked at myself. I don't get many weird looks anymore, and I think it's because when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. When you live with no judgments or terms or conditions, things manifest the way you want them to – with no negatives."

**"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."**

For more information about Dan Caro, visit **www.DanCaro.com**. T

**Julie Bawden Davis** is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*. You can reach her at **Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com**.

# Talking About Love

**Toastmasters couples around the world share their stories.**

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., ATMS, CL

*When I decided to join Toastmasters, my husband was thinking of coming too. But because he was already such a strong speaker, I asked him to hold back a month or so, until I could establish my own identity in the club. He never did become a member.*

Now, a dozen years later, my six closest friends in Toastmasters are three couples. This has caused me to wonder: What have I missed by flying solo? I decided to travel the globe – virtually – to find out.



Warwick Fahy and Rebecca Hong

## Communicating in China

First stop: China, home of District 85 Governor Rebecca Hong, DTM, who has seen many happy couples in the organization.

Rebecca says marriages between Toastmasters are a natural outcome of people sharing common interests and values. "It's important for couples to share values, and all members share one important value: self-improvement," she says. What's more, while the com - munication skills learned in Toastmasters are essential in any relationship, they are especially important in a cross-cultural marriage like hers.

Rebecca lives in Shanghai, China, with her London-born husband, Warwick John Fahy, DTM, who was the founding chair of the China Territorial Council. The couple met at a club co-founded by Warwick in 2003. Soon after joining the club, Rebecca asked Warwick to be her mentor. They didn't start dating until 2006, after working together on organizing their country's first national Toastmasters Convention.

"I was one of his organizing committee members," Rebecca recalls. "We had lots of interactions – including frictions – which ultimately led to the start of our love relation-ship the day after the convention ended." They were married exactly a year later.

When their Peoples Square Club was founded, Rebecca says Warwick discouraged its members from dating each other, calling it unprofessional. He told the club's co-founder, Samuel Jones, "Neither of us should date any girl in Toastmasters."

On the couple's wedding day, Jones, who served as witness, joked about this. Warwick replied: "I never said we shouldn't *marry* Toastmasters!"

## Sydney Sweethearts

Next stop: Sydney, Australia, where Richard and Karen Stacey met in 1988. At the time, they were members of different clubs, both in District 70. Karen's club had



Richard and Karen Stacey

conducted a Speechcraft program and Richard, a district officer, was invited to present the certificates at graduation night. When Karen told Richard she wanted to join another club as a dual member, Richard suggested she join his.

One thing led to another, and three years later, the couple celebrated their honeymoon at the International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Karen went on to accompany Richard to Toastmasters events throughout the district as he progressed through the ranks to District 70 Governor. Ultimately, she also ended up serving as District 70 Governor.

"Our usual Saturday date," she jokes, "was a quiet night for 100. But that's okay. Most people join Toastmasters to improve their communication and leadership skills. I joined to find a husband, and I ended up marrying the district governor."

"Toastmasters is a wonderful interest to share," Richard adds. "It's enabled us to meet new people and travel to different parts of the world as a couple. We also enjoy evaluating each other at club meetings. Our fellow members tend to look forward to this, and we do not disappoint them. Each of us finds a point for improvement in the other."

The Staceys' Toastmasters experience also works well long after the club gavel has sounded. They find that the "Oreo cookie" evaluation technique is useful when telling each other about negative feelings or discussing difficult issues. Says Richard, "It helps avoid unnecessary arguments and conflict in our relationship."

## Tigard Tenderness

Oreo cookies also play a role in the marriage of past International Directors Dorothy and Carl Cottingham, who are DTMs and live in Tigard, Oregon. That's because the major area in which Toastmasters membership has influenced the Cottinghams is in managing disagreements.

"Our evaluation training has been so firmly ingrained in both of us," Dorothy explains, "that we tend to use the Oreo cookie method to resolve conflict. I might say, 'You do these things really well. Could you have done as well as you did with the lawn and picked up the clippings too?' It's not that we don't fight; we do. But we can always stick to the point – just like in a good speech."

The Cottinghams met when Carl was a division governor in 1981 and went to Dorothy's club to install officers. Dorothy recalls that she admired his charm, energy and "twisted" sense of humor. They soon became good friends, but didn't start dating until 1985. At their wedding two years later, nearly all of the guests were Toastmasters.



Dorothy and Carl Cottingham

The Cottinghams say their relationship didn't change anything for them in the club. "We're both pretty confident of who we are," Dorothy explains. "There's no problem. We didn't evaluate each other in the club setting for quite a while. But we supported each other and bounced ideas off one another."

"A lot of people say, 'Good grief, you're always going to Toastmasters together,'" she says. "They want to know if we have a life! I tell them that my in-laws were square dancers together, and my parents had a cottage industry. We go to Toastmasters."

## Cape Town Companions

Craig and Lois Strachan, of Cape Town, South Africa, are both DTMs and joined Toastmasters together. Craig is the current District 74 Governor, and Lois is immediate past district governor.

Unlike the Staceys and Cottinghams, Craig and Lois rarely evaluate each other at meetings. "I'm not sure if it was a deliberate choice," Craig says, "or if it just worked out that way. But we do give a personal meeting evaluation on the drive home."



Lois and Craig Strachan

Instead, the Strachans share Toastmasters activities outside their club meetings. "Having somebody to practice the speech with, a couple of times before the meeting, really helps," Craig says.

"That's especially true if they can hear the actual speech on the day we're going to perform it.

"It also helps that Lois followed a similar leadership journey to the one I'm on," he adds, "and has been a wonderful mentor and sounding board for me. District leadership takes a lot of commitment, and it would have been far more difficult for either of us had the other not been as involved as we are."

As for whether or not Toastmasters skills translate into their marriage, the jury is still out. "Hmmm," Craig says, "that's difficult to assess. We do generally communicate well with each other, but we are, after all, just human."

## Lake Forest Love

It never occurred to Cliff Shimizu, of Lake Forest, California, to ask his wife to join his club.

"Ann is very outgoing and didn't seem to have a problem speaking in front of other people," he said. "Besides, Toastmasters was *my* thing, sort of like golf or bowling with the guys."

Then, one day, the topic of Toastmasters came up, and Ann mentioned that she could never do "that Toastmasters thing."

"Without realizing who I was talking to, I automatically launched into my club recruitment spiel about how wonderful Toastmasters is. Ann got very excited and said, 'Really?' At that point, I snapped out of auto-pilot and thought, *uh, oh . . . what have I done?"*



Cliff and Ann Shimizu

Suddenly, Cliff had to share his "comfortable Toastmasters world" with his wife. Not only that, but the VP of Education assigned him to be Ann's mentor. The experience was so earth-shattering for him that he wrote a humorous speech referring to his wife as the asteroid that changed his world.

"From time to time, I make jokes about the hazards of being in a club with my wife," he says. "But it really has been a great experience for the two of us. We keep each other on our toes and sometimes have friendly (more or less) competitions for reaching various Toastmasters goals. It has also given us something that we can both relate to. Before she joined, she could never truly understand or appreciate many of my tales about Toastmasters."

Being in a club with your spouse can be successful, Cliff says, as long as the club is a good fit for both parties. But if the time, structure or personality of the club doesn't match husband and wife, equally, he recommends separate clubs.

## Can You Find Love Faster as a Toastmaster?

So if you're looking for love in Toastmasters, run, don't walk, to your next club meeting, district conference or even the International Convention taking place this August in Palm Desert, California. Spencer Fawkes even chose a Toastmasters setting as the site of his marriage proposal. He and Sue Milledge first met in Toast - masters, in March 2002. When it came time to pop the question, he did so in particularly dramatic fashion.



Spencer Fawkes and Sue Milledge

In November 2009, at the District 42 Fall Conference in Grand Prairie, Alberta, Canada, Spencer – under the guise of presenting Sue with an award – got down on bended knee with a ring and proposed to her at the District Governor's Ball.

The couple, who are members of the Valley Echo club in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada, tied the knot in December 2009. (And adding to their Toastmasters togetherness, Spencer and Sue received their second DTMs together at the District 42 Spring Convention.)

If you've already found your mate in life and plan to invite your outspoken spouse to your beloved club, heed the advice of Cliff Shimizu, who recommends waiting until you have a few meetings under your belt, so you don't get overshadowed.

In fact, now that I've been a member over a decade, I'm just about ready to invite my husband. T

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By Tony Bieniosek, DTM

**Club honors engaged couple with a wedding-themed meeting.**

# A Matrimonial Meeting

Luiz da Silva and Jody Berwick met in the fall of 2007, when Luiz joined Flagship Speakers Toastmasters club a few months after Jody joined. They attended the District 25 Speech Evaluation Contest, and afterward Luiz asked Jody out to dinner.

Thus, a romance was born. Luiz and Jody fell in love, sharing a mutual interest in Toastmasters and pursuing personal development together in our club, which meets at American Airlines headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas. Nearly two years after they met, the couple happily announced their engagement during a club meeting.

What better way to honor our friends than to host a wedding-themed club meeting? The future bride and groom were a little anxious about what to expect but agreed to our offer. The resulting meeting was a truly special occasion, filled with speeches from Luiz and Jody about their love for each other and a Table Topics session providing insights about marriage – and Toastmasters.

"We were very, very grateful to the club for doing that for us," says Luiz, who works in information technology for American Airlines. "The meeting was a good opportunity to practice before the wedding."

## Wedding-Meeting Plans

In planning the theme meeting, a group of members gathered information from the couple, such as their wedding colors and wedding theme, so we could decorate the room appropriately. When the day of the meeting arrived, agendas were printed on wedding-announcement paper, and members and guests signed a guest book before walking to their seats. (Many of Luiz and Jody's coworkers at American Airlines attended as first-time club guests.) In keeping with the matrimonial spirit, the word of the day was "cherish" – with noisemakers used for emphasis.

The meeting ambiance was certainly worthy of a wedding: The Toastmaster of the day donned a tuxedo; love songs quietly played on a portable stereo in the corner; sparkling cider, punch and decorated cupcakes were served; and a door prize was awarded to the person who was in the longest-lasting marriage. Even a photographer was there to document the event.

The future bride and groom sat at the front of the room, facing each other from either side of the lectern. They were the two speakers that day, scheduled to deliver toasts to one another. Luiz went first. He mentioned that Jody was a scheduled speaker at the first Flagship Speakers meeting he ever attended. Quipped Luiz: "For those of you thinking that it was love at first speech, actually it was not – she had way too many *ahs* and *ums*."

Then, getting serious, he spoke of what he loved about his fiancée – her sensitivity, her volunteer work, how she had helped him become a better person. He praised the way Jody had helped many people in the club become better communicators. Five to seven minutes didn't seem long enough for Luiz to extol the many attributes of his future bride – but he did qualify for time.



▲ Luiz da Silva and Jody Berwick met in Toastmasters and married on October 10, 2009.

In her speech, "I Found Love at Toastmasters," Jody, a senior analyst for American Airlines, spoke of how she and Luiz perfectly complemented each other, and how much she appreciated his enduring support and encouragement.

In their respective speeches, each also mentioned how much Toastmasters meant to them. Luiz and Jody both served as club officers and as Distinguished Area Governors in 2008-2009.

## The Flagship Family

Toastmasters is a communications and leadership program; however, the Flagship Speakers club operates more like a family, with many members sharing personal experiences through the years. It was poignant for both Luiz and Jody to stand in front of a group that knew them both so well and talk about their new beginning together, fostered in our club's encouraging, safe and transparent environment.

Our extended round of Table Topics featured toasts to the future bride and groom, as well as

*(Continued on page 15)*



**You have just a few brief moments to give the speech of your married lifetime.**

**By Barbara Neal Varma**

# Wedding Vows that Wow

*After your special someone says, "Yes! Oh, yes!" to your marriage proposal, the list of wedding to-dos grows exponentially every loving minute: the tuxedo, the dress, the food to serve to around 200 guests without breaking the honeymoon piggy bank. Then, just when you're feeling a bit overwhelmed with it all, a helpful someone chimes in, "But what about your vows?"*

The answer depends on your personal preference, of course, but whether you take the follow-the-recipe route and recite ready-made vows, or write the words yourself on long reams of perfumed paper, you still have to face the inevitable truth: You will be giving a speech. You will prepare and practice loving words to say in front of an audience of your betrothed, future in-laws, and friends and family members – millions more if the wedding video makes it to YouTube.

Fortunately, your Toastmasters training has given you all the tools you need to write and recite wedding vows that wow. Approach it as you would any presentation and you'll do just fine when the officiant cues you to take your beloved's hand and "say a few words you've prepared." Be inspired by a few intrepid souls who've boldly proclaimed their polished promises.

### Made Her Laugh, Made Her Cry

Tiffany and Brian Neal weren't sure what to say to each other at the wedding altar, this being their first leap (and last, they affirm) into wedded bliss. But with help from their minister – a Toastmaster, by happy coincidence – the young couple were able to jot down some thoughts and sentiments to share in public. When the bride began to say her lines, however, she began to cry and then laugh, overcome with the moment's emotion. No problem – her groom handed her the handkerchief he'd tucked away for just such an occasion, proving early on he could meet her every need.

**Love and Learn:** Ask the officiant to keep a printed "cheat sheet" of your vows nearby to use if emotions temporarily block your memory.

### A Vow of Silence

Carol Meekins and her fiancé, Bart, faced a dilemma as their wedding day drew near: Bart, usually a Chatty Charlie, was losing his voice. Nerves? Wedding-crashing cold? Probably a little of both, but by the time the big day arrived, Bart's ability to say his part of the wedding vows was completely gone. Fortunately, his friends had conferred privately a few days ahead and secretly prepared a Plan B in the form of raised signs that proclaimed "I do!" at the opportune moment. The two were delighted by this surprise. "Bart had no idea," the bride recalls. "It was great!"

**Love and Learn:** Never miss an opportunity to use effective visual aids.

### Love Extemporaneous Style

Sheli and Michael Easton had been together many years before making it official. They were vacationing in Hawaii when "get married" seemed the thing to do for the day, especially when they saw other couples enjoying their nuptials in the warm and romantic surroundings. They quickly acquired a minister and said their vows above the romantic roar of the ocean. "Nothing was planned, so we just spoke from the heart," says the bride (and former Toastmaster). She attributes their success to Toastmasters training and notes, "Thank goodness for Table Topics!"

**Love and Learn:** Continue to hone your "off the cuff" speaking skills at Toastmasters meetings during Table Topics and other extemporaneous exercises. You never know when you might want to add "get married" to your day's agenda.

> **"Fortunately, your Toastmasters training has given you all the tools you need to write and recite wedding vows that wow."**

### Your Turn: Six Ways to Say What you Want to Say on Your Special Day

1 **Get the all-clear.** Remember: Even the most modern minister, rabbi or other wedding official will want to review your words in advance. Catholic and Episcopal churches, for example, may require you to recite all or part of the traditional vows, although in most instances, that's left to the priest's discretion. (Time to use your persuasive speaking techniques.) In short, make sure the kind soul who is marrying you will accept personalized vows.

2 **Make a plan.** Tackle the logistics and make sure you and your intended are both on the same proverbial page: Will you show the vows to each other before the ceremony? Are you each going to write your own? If you're feeling shy, you might want to write your vows together and even recite the same verbiage. Don't forget the Golden Toastmasters Rule: practice, practice, practice. One benefit of saying the same vows is you can have fun practicing together.

## India: The Seven Vows

Around the globe, various countries and cultures prepare their vows in ways significant to their history and tradition. In India, betrothed couples recite the Seven Vows (*Saat Phere*) while walking around a sacred fire. With each circle, the couple pray for the blessings paraphrased here: 1) nourishing and pure food, 2) a healthy and prosperous life, 3) shared wealth, 4) increased love and respect for each other and their families, 5) healthy, heroic and noble children, 6) a peaceful and long life together and 7) companionship and understanding between themselves. After the vows are completed, the husband says to his new wife that now they have become friends and they will not break their friendship in life.

# Make the Most of the Toast

Once the vows have wowed, it's time to start the party. Barbara's husband, Michael Varma, ATMG, ALB, happens to be an expert on wedding toasts and offers these sample toasts.

**The groom raises his glass to his bride and says:**

Here's to sharing our future and honoring our past
To the adventures that will make our marriage last
Together we'll share love and laughter
And begin our journey of… *happily ever after!*

**The bride raises her glass to her groom and says:**

Here's to enjoying our life and all we must do
Beyond being faithful, fond and true
Remember that dose of love and laughter
To *ensure* we live… happily ever after!

3 **Create your outline.** Here's a helpful outline format you can use: Plan to talk first about how great your betrothed is, then about how great you are as a couple, and finally, what you're vowing to each other. As with any presentation, prepare an opening, body and conclusion. An outline helps to establish a structure that you both can follow.



Alex thinks his role is *Boastmaster* of the day.

4 **Find your voice.** What overall tone do you want? Humorous and touching? Poetic or practical? It's your call – the most important thing is that your vows ring true and come from your heart. A great way to assure a polished presentation is to videotape yourself beforehand, another Toastmasters technique that can be applied to your marriage mini-speech. When saying your vows, face your beloved but project your voice for the audience to hear and enjoy!

5 **Cut it down.** Finally, pick a length and stick to it by keeping the message pithy and with the point in mind – anything longer than three minutes, and no matter how great your prose, the wedding audience will start to get fidgety.

6 **Put it in writing.** Use the following prompts below to start you and your intended on your way to vows that wow:

- **At what point did you realize you were in love?** Be specific to add depth to the story. Was it when he arrived at your place with a present for your cat tucked under his sleeve?

  *Application 1:* I knew I was in love when _____.

- **What do each of you bring to the relationship?** Focus on the mind and soul, not baubles and things. Has he taught you the value of patience? Has she taught you the virtues of a clean kitchen?

  *Application 2:* Before I met you, I _____. Now I _____.

- **What do you miss about each other when you're apart?** Simple things resonate here more than the profound – what about his laugh when watching a TV sitcom or the way she cuts your tuna salad sandwich in four sections just like Mom did?

  *Application 3:* You are such a part of me that when you're gone, I _____.

- **And finally, what goals do you both have?** Stating your common ground may just expose your inner Shakespeare in love. These bonds – whether a shared faith or your mutual love of classic movies – will also help demonstrate why you were made for each other.

  *Application 4:* We share _____ _____, so together we can _____. T

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## A Matrimonial Meeting

*(Continued from page 11)*

questions on marriage. Table Topics speakers were asked to give advice on marriage-related topics, and many of them referenced Toastmasters strategies in their answers, such as:

- Like a good Toastmasters evaluation, your day together should always begin and end on a positive note. (Don't let the sun go down with anger in your heart.)
- Be open and honest with your answers to each other.
- Greet your spouse's friends and guests warmly.
- Tell your spouse what he or she did well today.
- Pause when you're not sure what to say.
- Remember that your body language and vocal variety, or lack thereof, can communicate more than your actual words.

The wedding-themed Toastmasters meeting was a big hit with everyone. Many first-timers were introduced to our club, and all had a good time and learned something new.

It just goes to show: Toastmasters is great training, not only for your career but for every part of your life – including dating and marriage!

**Postscript:** Luiz and Jody were married two weeks after the wedding-themed meeting, on October 10, 2009. What better way to lead into their big day than our festive Toastmasters event? At the end of our special club meeting, a group photo was taken and copies were shared with the club. An enlarged print was framed and delivered as the club's wedding gift to Luiz and Jody, and it is now proudly displayed in Jody's office.

Luiz says the practice he gained at the club meeting when speaking about Jody and the marriage was greatly helpful on the wedding day, especially when it came time to say the wedding vows, deliver the toasts and say a few words at the cake cutting.

The Flagship Speakers club holds a permanent place in both their hearts. "It's very special to us," Luiz says. "That's why we stay very involved with Toastmasters."

**Tony Bieniosek, DTM,** is president of Flagship Speakers in Fort Worth, Texas, and is manager of International Sales Programs for American Airlines. Tony can be reached at **Tony.Bieniosek@aa.com**.

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How to keep the love alive.

By Narges Nirumvala, ACB, CL

# Reignite Your Passion for Toastmasters

*After the honeymoon is over and the rush of passion has given way to stable, mature love – what do you do to reignite the spark that drew you to Toastmasters in the first place? Like any relationship, the passage of time may take you from the emotional rush of wine and roses to a humdrum evening on the couch watching TV. So it is important to work hard and keep the proverbial fires burning. How do you do that?*

Rev up your Toastmasters engine with these 10 tips:

1 **Ask yourself: Why did I join Toastmasters?** Was it to meet new people or work on your fear of public speaking? Or maybe it was to improve your English or learn how to chair a meeting? Perhaps you have met this initial goal and now it's time to a set a new one. For example, let's say you joined to conquer your public speaking fears. Now months (or even years) later, you no longer dread giving presentations at work or taking part in Table Topics. It's time to take it to the next level. Look for fresh opportunities for exhilarating motivation.

2 **Mentor another member.** Now that you are comfortable with your Toastmasters activities, it is time to share your time, experience and knowledge with other people. You could start by mentoring a fellow member in your club. Mentoring someone provides an invaluable gift to that person and gives you something valuable in return – a unique relationship where one person leads and another follows but both depend on each other. Toastmasters has some great educational materials that can help you, such as the "Mentoring" module from the *Successful Club Series*.

Rae Stonehouse, DTM, is a 16-year Toastmasters member who has served as a district governor and mentored dozens of people over the years. "One of the most touching moments in my life occurred at a staff meeting at my workplace, as a result of Toastmasters mentoring," says Stonehouse, a member of two clubs in British Columbia, Canada. "I work



as a registered nurse in a community psychiatric facility, and have mentored several of my co-workers over the years, helping them with self-actualizing."

3 **Attend the International Convention or a district conference.** Attending or volunteering at a district conference or the International Convention is one of the most enriching experiences you will find in Toastmasters. Listening to contest participants and winners will fill you with new admiration for what is possible. It might also fuel your own desire to compete. You'll meet and connect with an amazing community of people that shares your passion for communication, leadership and teamwork – truly, friends you haven't met yet. To learn more about the Toastmasters International Convention, visit **www.toastmasters.org/2010Convention**.

4 **Work toward your educational goals.** It's easy to lose interest in something when you don't have specific goals to work toward. You'll find a renewed sense of pride every time you accomplish a goal. People sometimes lose momentum in Toastmasters before they have even achieved the level of Competent Communicator. Many advanced Toastmasters stay motivated by planning their speeches well ahead of time. For example, you could arrange with your vice president education to do

a speech every two, three or four weeks. That way you'll always have a finish line to work toward.

5 **Repeat an educational level.** Breathing new life into a relationship can be as simple as getting back to basics. Many advanced Toastmasters repeat the *Competent Communication* manual because it gives them even greater challenges the second time around. If you have already completed your ACS or ACG and need a new challenge (other than working toward your DTM, of course), why not repeat your CC? Or you can repeat an advanced level. Did you know that there are 15 advanced manuals to teach you specialized skills in areas such as public relations and storytelling? Have you tried them all? Find something new to learn at **www.toastmasters.org/shop**.

One Toastmaster who has enjoyed a devoted, long-term relationship with Toastmasters International is Barry Monaghan, DTM. He is a member of two clubs in Vancouver, British Columbia, and is working on his *third* DTM. On the subject of repeating educational goals, he says, "I am quite sane, I assure you! The reason I continue my Toastmasters journey is that there is always something new to learn.

"Toastmasters isn't just about public speaking, or even leadership. What I learn from others and the stories our members have to share is what keeps me coming back. Toastmasters has some of the most interesting people, and they have lots of very colorful and amazing stories to tell."

6 **Get involved as a club executive.** Have you ever complained about how things are done at your club? It's easy to do, especially if you have been a member for some time, but perhaps you've managed to stay out of the inner circle. Well, what's stopping you? If you feel that your club experience is getting stale, then why not open up your experience and let in some fresh air? Remember: You'll enjoy the side benefit of building closer bonds with the other executive members.

7 **Take part in a Speechcraft program in your community.** An essential part of any Toastmasters experience is community outreach. Speechcraft programs allow you to improve your public speaking skills, give back to your community and – most importantly – go beyond your comfort zone. You are sharing a valuable gift: your passion and enthusiasm for Toastmasters International. Perhaps one of your students will embark on a new relationship with Toastmasters. Discuss Speechcraft with your club, and discover how your group can present this program. Speechcraft workshops take place in a wide variety of settings, from community centers to high schools.

8 **Sponsor, mentor or coach a club.** While mentoring a new member in your club is a satisfying experience, exercising your leadership skills within a larger context is the next step. Whether you decide to sponsor a new club, mentor a club from its inception or coach a struggling club, you are taking part in something significant and inspiring. That is why Toastmasters International makes this activity a requirement to achieve your Advanced Leadership Silver designation.

9 **Lead a "Moments of Truth" education session at your club.** Without a doubt, the single most important education session in the Toastmasters repertoire is the "Moments of Truth" section of the *Successful Club Series*. It is considered to be so important, in fact, that you can download the materials from the Toastmasters International Web site free of charge. It would be impossible to sit through a session without feeling invigorated. Being the facilitator means that you will also gain a great sense of clarity about the program while sharing its information with your Toastmasters friends and family.

10 **Volunteer to become a trainer.** You may have attended club officer training or your district's last Toastmasters Leadership Institute, but have you ever been a trainer at one? It is a completely different learning experience. If you have held a club officer's position before, then why not speak to your district leaders about becoming a trainer? You can help other people put their best foot forward in that same position. Or if you prefer to stay within your club, you can teach one of the modules from Toastmasters International's *Better Speaker Series*, *Successful Club Series* or *Leadership Excellence Series*. Not only will you learn valuable facilitation skills, but you'll be able to practice interacting with your students and weaving your personal experiences into the material provided.

The four pillars of any healthy relationship are communication, trust, collaboration and commitment. Sound familiar? Of course they do, because they also form the basis for the Toastmasters experience. Just like in a real relationship, you need to go beyond your own needs and wants. Over the years you learn that love isn't about romantic meals or expensive gifts; it's about an unselfish, boundless enthusiasm for time spent with your beloved. So rekindle the flames of your relationship with Toastmasters International and enjoy a life of abundance and bliss.

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**Members find double happiness in specialty clubs.**

**By Craig Harrison, DTM**

# Speaking from the Heart

One day, while brainstorming potential new clubs for our district, Cassandra Cockrill and I hit on the idea of a club dedicated to nurturing and growing relationships. We envisioned it as helping members understand the opposite sex, learn about gender communication, explore the art of the apology, discover how to build and deepen trust, broach delicate issues and more.

This year, that club was chartered in Oakland, California. Its name: Heart2Heart Toastmasters. And for its members, it was love at first speech.

## Two for All

Heart2Heart Toastmasters is for singles, couples and those in between! It features a blend of guest speakers, veteran members and brand-new Toastmasters. The club aims to help with communication in relationships; that might mean courting a potential mate or deepening existing relationships – whether with partners, parents, children or siblings.

Speech topics range from the drama of blind dates to the lessons we learn about gender roles and communication as kids. Table Topics cover many aspects of relationships: breaking up, making up, getting to know the secrets to opening each other's hearts.

Guest presenters entice non-Toastmasters and veteran members alike to attend. Local authors, therapists and relationship coaches speak, read from their books, answer questions and also lead interactive segments to engage the group. Relationship coach Dr. Elayne Savage, author of *Don't Take It Personally* and *Breathing Room – Creating Space to Be a Couple*, recently helped attendees deal better with rejection. And blogger Rachel Sarah, author of the book *Single Mom Seeking*, recently addressed the significance of one's "relationship status" and whether or when to disclose it to online services such as eHarmony, Match.com and Facebook. Another blogger and the author of 13 e-books, "The Dating Goddess," addressed the importance for all couples to keep romance, surprise and delight in their relationship repertoire.

The club meets on a Saturday night, once a month, at a plush high-rise. Members joke that now they have at least one date each month on "date night!" The club's use of a meetup.com Web site, **www.meetup.com/heart2heart-toastmasters**, allows it to attract new members by promoting its geographic proximity. Meetup.com also sends reminders, provides handouts of guest presenters, contains a member roster and features feedback from attendees.

## Bachelors & Bachelorettes

Another specialty club is Bachelors & Bachelorettes Toastmasters of Las Vegas-Boca Park, Nevada. Founded in 1978, its educational goals are the same as your typical Toast - masters club – however, this club is exclusively for single people. Meeting weekly at a restaurant for dinner and drinks, Bachelors & Bachelorettes boasts 50 members, and has done so for years.

Terry Benson, DTM, a member since 1993, says one advantage to having a singles-oriented club is that there's no big rush to end the meetings on time. "Nobody needs to hurry home for dinner with their family," he notes. Over the years, Benson adds, dozens of members have quit the club – because of marriage: "It's a rule of the club! In fact, one couple, Paul Sgobba and Rachel Earhardt, delayed marriage seven years so they wouldn't have to leave the club they loved so much." Now, that's loyalty!

## Las Vegas Weddings

Benson recounts the night one member, Ernie, brought his girlfriend to the club to hear his speech. It was the ultimate sales speech: At the end of it he dropped to one knee to propose to his intended. She said yes, and soon he left the club and married her. Terry recalls one year when 13 members left after tying the knot. Of these, six of the couples had met in the club and one person used Toastmasters skills to woo and wed someone from the larger community.

For more information about Heart2Heart, visit **www.meetup.com/heart2heart-toastmasters.**

For more information about Bachelors & Bachelorettes, visit **http://bandb.freetoasthost.us.**

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**Craig Harrison, DTM** – a bachelor – is a member of Heart2Heart Toastmasters. He is a professional speaker and the author. Reach him at **www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com**.

**Explore ways to connect besides talking.**

**By Neil Chethik**

## For Fathers:

# How to Communicate With Your Son

It's a movie moment that makes grown men cry. In the climactic scene of the 1989 hit *Field of Dreams*, the character played by Kevin Costner steps onto the baseball diamond that he carved out of his Iowa cornfield. Then, wordlessly, he tosses a ball back and forth, back and forth, with the ghost of his long-dead father.

The scene brings many men to tears because it reminds them of how they communicated with their own fathers – or how they wished they had. In a world where communication is often equated with talking, *Field of Dreams* reminds us that the father-son connection is sometimes less about words than it is about actions.

As a 40-year-old male friend told me recently, recalling his childhood, "My dad showed up. He showed up for Little League and band concerts and graduation. I can't remember

**Listen more than you talk.**

**By Carol Dean Schreiner**

## For Mothers:

# How to Speak With Your Daughter

When that tiny baby girl is placed in your arms for the first time, what thoughts come to mind? *I want a perfect relationship with this little gal all of her life. We will have the best of times and become the best of friends always.* Those are wonderful ideals. Many of your hopes and wishes can happen, but it takes work to build the bonds of your dreams.

If you were designing a perfect relationship for mothers and daughters, what would it look like? No arguments ever? No rules and regulations? Experience will soon teach you that a life without rules will not work. Communicating with a daughter can be challenging. Girls may speak more than most boys, but you won't always like what they say. However, a healthy mother-daughter relationship can lead you to an ongoing dialogue with your daughter that is extremely rewarding. Use these tips to communicate with the young woman in your life:

- **Listen.** Often mothers forget the most important part of communicating: the art of listening. Without planning to, a mom can come across in a way that suggests she



much of what he said, but he always showed up. I could count on that."

Today's fathers tend to do more than show up. But no matter how many words fathers and sons say to each other, *sharing space* remains the foundation of father-son communication. So here are a few suggestions for fathers who want to be remembered as the man who was always there:

- **Play early and often.** Because they can't breastfeed, some dads think that their newborn sons don't need them. In fact, father-son connection starts in the first days of life. Fathers can enhance that connection from day one by playing affectionately with their sons. That can involve holding, cooing, sharing music or introducing safe toys for the infant to touch and hold.

- **Read together.** As the infant grows, fathers can add reading to their interactive repertoire. A recent Texas A&M University study showed that fathers who read to their children feel better about themselves and about their relationships with their kids. Reading together, fathers and sons share laughter and adventure. Years after I stopped reading to my now 16-year-old son, we still talk about Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and other literary characters we discovered during our reading-together

knows all the answers, that she's been there and done that and that her way is the only way. Even though you don't want your daughter to make the same mistakes you've made, it's important to allow her to make her own decisions. A good mother advises and then allows her daughter to exercise her decision-making skills. Then, when the daughter wants to discuss outcomes and consequences, a *great* mother listens.

- **Give her what she needs… including space.** Open communication does not mean a mom should tell her daughter everything. She must tell her only what she needs to know. Some mothers try to make their daughters their personal confidantes. Don't try to confide in your daughter about those dreams you've left behind. Pushing her in a direction because it was something you missed is a bad idea. Instead, it's better to learn about her strengths, interests and joys, and then encourage her to pursue her dreams.

- **Stay positive.** A daughter will not benefit from repeated lectures about how much worse her mother's childhood was or how impossible it is to succeed. What she needs, instead, is to hear how to make the most of her life by following her heart and making informed, thoughtful and bold decisions. Every woman, young and old, must face occasional challenges, and your positive encouragement as she leaps over the hurdles will warm her heart for a lifetime.

- **Share experiences, skills and fun times.** Experienced mothers let their



days. (Reading to my son also helped me as a public speaker; every night, I could practice making my voice scary, wary or wild.)

▪ **Coach his team.** Participating on teams is a rite of passage for boys, and it prepares them for cooperation, competition, and winning and losing with grace. Sons whose fathers are coaches or assistant coaches often feel safer and closer to their dads; they've been through a season together, with all the challenges and triumphs that entails.

Of course, not all team activities are sports. If a son isn't interested in basketball or football, and prefers music or academics, his father should affirm the choice and offer to coach, chaperone or otherwise participate in the son's passions and hobbies. Fathers shouldn't try to force sons to play a sport they loved when young but the sons don't care for at all.

▪ **Explore nature.** Boys tend to love the woods and all that goes with it: sticks, tents, campfires, marshmallows, sleeping bags, waterfalls and wildlife. Take some time away from cell phones, iPods and PlayStations. Participate together in a scouting organization or invite other fathers and sons to join you on a camping trip. Then, tell ghost stories under a starlit sky. Practice your Toastmasters skills as you make the story memorably haunting.

▪ **Take a road trip.** Fathers and sons often talk most easily when they're side by side rather than face to face. While driving together for an afternoon, or a few days, the two of you will have a chance to connect in a relaxed atmosphere. After your son gets his driver's license, share the driving as a way of showing him that you trust him. (On the topic of side-by-side communication, you may find that your son – especially if he's a teenager – talks more readily when you're watching a game, shooting hoops or are otherwise involved in another activity together. Take advantage of those opportunities!)

▪ **Ask for his advice.** Many fathers like to act as if they know everything. We're usually ready to give advice to our sons whether or not they've asked for it. If you want to help your son feel good about himself as he matures, turn the tables: Ask for his help or guidance. When you have a computer problem, ask him to show you how to fix it. If you have a challenge at work, or with a friend, see if your son can suggest ways for you to solve it. (One caveat: Don't ask him for advice about your marriage!)

▪ **Tell him that you're proud of him.** No matter what age, sons want to

daughters help with whatever task comes along. My daughters and I have concocted some pretty dubious food. We may have decorated cupcakes that looked questionable a few times, but we always enjoyed being creative and having fun. Laughter speaks volumes.

▪ **Nurture your mother-daughter relationship.** A great relationship is built over years of being open, honest, caring, supportive and loving. Mothers don't always love what their daughters are doing, but they still love their daughters. A smart mom allows her daughter the freedom to live her own life, but she also keeps the dialogue going. She doesn't hesitate to e-mail, Facebook, call or write a postcard – whatever it takes to maintain communication, no matter where her daughter may travel.

For a special togetherness activity when they're young, I heartily recommend reading together. Then, when they grow older, you can share books and great discussions. My daughters and I have enjoyed some amazing conversations about the pros and cons of the books we've read.

**"Girls may speak more than most boys, but you won't always like what they say."**

▪ **Be active in their lives, now, and you'll have more in common later.** My daughters now give me advice, share recipes and offer tips in many different ways. I am so blessed to have wonderful relationships with all three of my daughters. What's most important is that we love and support one another; we always know that whatever happens, we are there for each other.

As a mom to grown sons as well as a daughter, Barbara Barger, DTM, of the Sooner Toastmasters club in Norman, Oklahoma, appreciates the differences in communication styles between boys and girls. When she asked her boys, "What went on in school today?" Barger usually received the shortest answer possible. Her sons would say, "Nothing," or "Same old, same old."

"When I asked my daughter the same question," says Barger, "I was bombarded with a detailed accounting of the movements, conversations, feelings and opinions of every

hear their fathers express pride in them. For some reason, statements of pride don't have the same impact when they come from Mom; maybe sons just expect their mothers to be proud and love them unconditionally. But sons seem to crave expressions of pride from fathers. Whether the son is in grade school, high school, college or is married with his own kids, take a chance every now and then to say five simple words: "I'm proud of you, son."

▪ **Say goodbye to him.** This may seem morbid to some, but as the author of a book on father-loss, I'm aware of how important it is for sons to receive a "goodbye" from their dads. As fathers age or become ill, they should say goodbye by speaking openly about their illness and their spiritual, religious or philosophical beliefs. Fathers can also discuss the contents of their wills or their instructions for late-life medical care. Such conversations can help the son cope later with his father's death, and teach the son to accept his own mortality.

**"No matter what age, sons want to hear their fathers express pride in them."**

Most fathers will attest that fatherhood is more challenging than anything they've ever done. And fathering a son may be extra hard, with its stirrings of competition and high expectations on both sides. To help me through it, I keep the comforting words of the comedian Bill Cosby always within reading distance: "If the new American father feels bewildered and even defeated, let him take comfort from the fact that whatever he does in any fathering situation has a 50 percent chance of being right." T

**Neil Chethik,** a member of the Downtown Lunch Bunch Toast - masters club in Lexington, Kentucky, is the author of *FatherLoss: How Sons of All Ages Come to Terms with the Deaths of Their Dads* (Hyperion). Reach him through his Web site, **www.fatherloss.com**, or at **neil@neilchethik.com**

person in our small high school." Barger took her Toastmasters skills to heart and became a tuned-in listener. It paid off in a close relationship with her girl. Barger notes, "I surely do miss the daily gossip update now that she is an adult and living in another city."

As the mother of three daughters, I've enjoyed an experience that has been wonderful but also frustrating at times. Each daughter is so different! My three girls vary not only in looks but also in activities and personalities. When you have more than one child, you must learn how to communicate with each one differently. I wish I'd been in Toastmasters when I was raising my girls. Table Topics would have been invaluable to me when my daughters were growing up: I could have asked each one the same question and received completely different answers. One decision might work for one daughter, but not for all three.

What's more, in Toastmasters we benefit from guidelines that help us with our speeches and our evaluations. Raising children, I didn't always have the right guidelines or the right questions to ask. And as a result, once in a while my evaluation was simply the cold hard fact that I'd made a mistake. Somehow, my daughters managed to survive my mistakes. And yours, most likely, will too.

In the end, communication isn't always about words. Barger makes the most of this now that her daughter is grown. "One of our favorite things to do is to shop together. Our fashion tastes are very different," she notes. "So when my daughter holds ups an article of clothing and says, 'Isn't this the cutest thing ever?' I've learned that verbal language is not needed. My facial expression tells her my opinion of the article in question. When I find something that I think is just what one of us needs, my daughter responds with a slight frown and a shrug of her shoulders."

Although her daughter is now 32, Barger still offers motherly advice; she can't help herself. But one type of mother-daughter communication remains her favorite. "One of the best things is that when we are talking on the phone or she is leaving after a visit, our communication always ends with 'Love you!' and we mean it." T

**Carol Dean Schreiner, DTM,** is a member of the Sooner Toastmasters club in Norman, Oklahoma. She can be reached at her Web site: **www.caroldean.com**.

***Editor's Note:*** Are you a mother of sons or a father of daughters? Care to share your secrets for successful parent-child communication? E-mail **letters@toastmasters.org** and tell us about your experience.

How to go from uninspiring to unforgettable.

# A Commencement Addr

*Chances are you have endured at least one commencement address, with "endured" being the key word. And chances are, you can't remember the speaker ("It was some guy in a robe") or the message ("I think it was something about success").*



Of all the speeches you may be asked to give, a traditional commencement address is the most predictable and most easily forgotten by the audience. "Commencement speakers have a good deal in common with grandfather clocks," said the late W.Willard Wirtz, a former U.S. Secretary of Labor. "Standing usually some six feet tall, typically ponderous in construction, more traditional than functional, their distinction is largely their noisy communication of essentially commonplace information."

It doesn't have to be so.

To understand why commencement speakers and addresses are so under-appreciated, you must first understand the makeup and mood of the audience. Graduation ceremonies are celebrations given to astonished students by relieved teachers in front of grateful parents. If there was ever an occasion that demands brevity and humor, commencement is it. Be brief and be funny. If you can toss in a cleverly disguised message, you'll be a hero.

Should the honor of speaking to a roomful of graduates ever fall on you, use these five suggestions to help you move from unimpressive to unforgettable:

1 **Be aware of the obvious.** As Ellen DeGeneres said in her delightful 2009 commencement address at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, "I realize most of you are hung over and have splitting headaches…but you can't graduate until I finish, so listen up."

Commencement ceremony hangovers and headaches may not be a universal problem, but the listeners' inherent lack of investment in your message is. Those listeners – students, teachers and parents – are there to celebrate, not to learn. If actual learning takes place, consider it a pleasant surprise.

2 **Be entertaining.** Again quoting DeGeneres's Tulane address: "Look at you…all wearing your robes. Usually when you're wearing a robe at 10 in the morning, it means you have given up." A laugh or two in a commencement address is a most welcome relief. On this occasion, laughter trumps learning.

3 **Be brief.** Graduation ceremonies can seem interminable. By the time you are introduced as the keynote speaker, the audience has progressed from "restless" to "easily provoked." Want to learn how to handle a hostile audience? Speak too long at a graduation ceremony and you'll find out. I was once asked to give a high school commencement address. The organizer asked me to speak for 10-12 minutes; I gave them nine. When I sat down, the principal leaned over and said, "That was the best speech I ever heard. It was *short*!" If I had known that was his measure of success, I could have made it even better.

Typical commencement addresses last no longer than 20 minutes, and shorter is better.

4 **Be original.** How many times have you heard someone quote Robert Kennedy's famous remark (as inspired by George Bernard Shaw): "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why…. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

I love the quotation and its philosophy – but put it to the freshness test: Recite the quote up through "I



dream of things that never were," and see how many can correctly finish the phrase. If two or more in your audience can complete the quotation, consider it at risk of overexposure.

Yet that doesn't mean you can't make the point. If your example is too widely known, rewrite it, as author and environmental activist Paul Hawken did in his 2009 commencement address at the University of Portland in Oregon: "Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done."

Same message, different words.

5 **Be personal.** Building on the concept of originality, don't simply take someone else's example to make your point. Use *your* examples. If you have attended even a handful of graduation ceremonies, you have no doubt heard someone read or recite Dr. Seuss's poem "Oh, the Places You'll Go." It's a great message, but overdone. Instead, take the core message and rephrase it, and use your life's story for the examples.

### A Prime Example

Perhaps the best example of this that I have seen came from Patton Oswalt, a stand-up comedian and actor best known for his role as Spence on the U.S. television show

By David Brooks, DTM

# ess to Remember

# Graduate with Style

By Tammy Miller, DTM

How does a commencement speaker inspire graduates to soar into their future? Try the acronym BRIEF:

**B** **Brevity** – Speak for 10-20 minutes. This will force you to focus on the most important aspects of your message while improving the overall event

**R** **Relate to the audience** – It doesn't matter how many accolades you have or how many letters are behind your name. As the commencement speaker, you are there for the members of the audience. At Duke University's 2009 commencement, Oprah Winfrey offered personal stories about the ways other people touched her life. One of her stories centered on a woman who told Oprah, when she was a girl, that she was pretty. Winfrey said, "And it made me see myself differently from that day forward," which she followed with advice to the grads, "If you can be generous enough to say kind, affirming words to those who may long to hear them, you will be a huge success."

**I** **Inspire and offer hope** – Leave them with a tidbit to ponder. School textbooks don't teach feelings from the heart. The Dalai Lama addressed this beautifully in his 1998 Emory University commencement speech, "Education and the Warm Heart," when he talked about a "good, warm, compassionate heart" combining with a person's knowledge to better the world.

**E** **Engaging** – Audiences relate to stories about real people. Steve Jobs, in his 2005 Stanford University commencement address, "Find What You Love," used three personal stories to illustrate his points. Each offered a valuable lesson that resonated with the audience. He spoke about his early life as an adopted child, dropping out of college, and his battle with cancer.

**F** **Fun** – Humor gets your message across. Actor Tom Hanks spoke at Vassar College's graduation ceremony in May 2005. His speech, "The Power of Four," described how any four actions, people or things can change the world. He discussed four letters: h-e-l-p. Then he played it as only a great actor could: "Help. HELP. HEEEELLLLLLPP!" he pleaded. Fun and humor is not about cracking jokes, but about making the situation lighter. Humor helped Hanks connect with his audience, lightened heavy concepts and made his message more memorable.

**Tammy Miller, DTM,** is a Pennsylvania-based professional speaker who served on Toastmasters' Board of Directors in 2005–2007.

*King of Queens*. As he gave a commencement speech at the high school he graduated from, in Ashburn, Virginia, he started off with these words: "First off, I want to thank the faculty…for inviting me to speak here. I am touched and humbled. And you have made a grave mistake." In five seconds, he set the hook. He then explained "why I am here and why you should be amazed," before launching into a deeply poignant personal vignette.

Oswalt told a story of being given a college scholarship – to his bewilderment – and the local banker who presented it to him: "[The banker] says to me, 'There are five environments you can live in on this planet. There's the city. The desert. The mountains. The plains. And the beach.

'You can live in combinations of them. Or you could choose just one. But you need to get out there and travel, and figure out where you thrive. If you belong by the ocean, then the mountains will ruin you. If you're suited for the blue solitude of the plains, then the city will be a tight, roaring prison cell that'll eat you alive.'"

As I read Oswalt's story, I was moved by the writing and the vivid imagery. The actor continued: "And I remember, driving home from that [college scholarship] dinner, how lucky I felt to have met someone who affirmed what I was already planning to do. I wanted to explode. I devoured books and movies and music and anything that would kick open windows to other worlds, real or imagined. And I followed that banker's advice. I've seen endless daylight and darkness in Alaska. I've swum in volcanic craters in Hawaii and saw the mystical green flash when the sun sinks behind the Pacific…"

Then Oswalt delivered his punchline: "And I missed the banker's lesson. One-hundred percent, I completely missed it." He was ready to drive his point home: "Telling me about the Five Environments and urging me to travel? That was advice. It wasn't a lesson. Advice is everywhere in this world. Your friends, family, teachers and strangers are all happy to give it. But a lesson is yours and yours alone."

Patton Oswalt's commencement speech successfully illustrated the five strategies: It acknowledged the obvious. It was entertaining. It was brief. It was original. And it was intensely personal.

I wish I could have been there for his address that day, for it is definitely one to remember. T

**David Brooks, DTM,** is Toastmasters' 1990 World Champion of Public Speaking. Contact him at **www.DavidBrooksTexas.com**.



Vikas Jhingran poses after winning Toastmasters' 2007 World Championship of Public Speaking.

**From Massachusetts to Dubai, college clubs enrich academic life.**

**By Paul Sterman**

# Communicating on Campus

Vikas Jhingran is a textbook example of how college clubs can benefit their members. A native of India, Jhingran was a doctoral student at the renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) when he joined two campus Toastmasters clubs. In 2007, he advanced steadily toward the World Championship of Public Speaking, winning at each level – and continually honing his contest speeches at club meetings.

"I absolutely received valuable feedback from club members," he says.

How valuable? Jhingran won the International Speech Contest that year, at the International Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

But the two clubs on the Cambridge, Massachusetts, campus – Toastmasters at MIT and the Humor and Drama club – didn't simply help Jhingran score big at speech contests; the clubs also had a dramatic impact on his Ph.D. studies in ocean engineering. At club meetings he delivered presentations centered on his field of expertise – explaining the nature of tsunamis, for example. As a result, Jhingran says he became a much more confident and commanding speaker.

The career payoff? After earning his doctorate, he landed a position as a senior engineer at Shell Oil in Houston, Texas, and says his communication skills are vital to success in his job. "It's beneficial to be in college clubs and to be in Toastmasters in general," says the 36-year-old, who is now a member of the Speaking of Shell Toastmasters club.

## Academic and Other Benefits

Jhingran's comments echo those of other members in college and university clubs around the world. Students say their Toastmasters training is a valuable asset, helping them gain confidence and communicate more effectively in academic – and other – settings.

"Toastmasters practices have helped me with my oral presentations and my leadership skills," says Amin Karbassi, a Ph.D. student in civil engineering at University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada. Karbassi has been a member of the McGill Toastmasters at McGill University in Montreal since 2007. The club has flourished since forming at the university more than 10 years ago; last year, it had 65 members.

Dustin Chan, a member of a campus club at the University of

California in Irvine, credits Toastmasters with helping him relax when he talks – to "unstifle" himself, as he puts it.

"It's helped me in social situations at school," says the UCI sophomore. "Toastmasters helps you to be more outgoing in general."

College clubs are a vibrant mix, reflecting a cross-section of the campus population: undergraduates, graduate students, staff members, and sometimes faculty, alumni and community residents as well. College and Toastmasters make a perfect fit: People go to college to learn and grow, to experience new people and cultures, and to develop new skills. All those things happen in a Toastmasters club as well.

Carolynn Bramlett and Kim Hau Kerwin are staff members at UCI. They joined the campus Toastmasters club – called ZotSpeak – to improve their professional communication skills. It's certainly been worthwhile, they say. What makes the club rewarding, they add, is being part of such a diverse group. In addition to the cultural diversity, students and staff vary widely in age and life experience. Yet they all work together toward a common goal.

"I learn so much from the young people," says Bramlett, the administrative assistant for the UCI Center for Research on Immigration, Population and Public Policy. "On this campus, a lot of professors tell their graduate students, especially those for whom English is a second language, to join Toastmasters to improve their second-language skills. It's fascinating for me to hear these students give speeches. And it's fun to work with them, mentor them and watch them grow."

Jennifer Blanck, founder of Georgetown Toastmasters at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., agrees that college clubs are a dynamic demographic. The longtime Toastmaster, who is assistant dean of career and alumni services at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, relishes being with staff and students from so many academic disciplines. Club meetings, she notes, are always stimulating.

"The speech topics are so varied, and the people are so great," Blanck says, "that no matter what mood I'm in, at the end of our Toastmasters meeting I always leave happy – or happier."

**"A lot of professors tell their graduate students, especially those for whom English is a second language, to join Toastmasters to improve their second-language skills."**

**– Carolynn Bramlett, University of California, Irvine**

## Overcoming Challenges

Membership turnover is an inherent difficulty for college and university clubs because college students are by definition a transient group. They're only on campus while school is in session and often leave for holidays. When they graduate, they often leave the state or country for a job. In addition, when students are facing especially stressful times in the school year – finals, for example – club attendance can be way down.

But many college clubs work with their students. In Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Dubai Men's College club holds two meetings a week – one in the morning, one at night – to accommodate student schedules and interests. Dean Sheetz, who teaches in the school's business department, is a member of that club. He says all the students in the group speak Arabic as their first language, meaning that delivering their speeches in English is that much more challenging. But they tackle the test head-on.

"I really admire these guys," says Sheetz.

He notes that many graduates of Dubai Men's College become leaders in Dubai's business and legal communities, and the DMC club helps them develop the leadership skills they need to succeed. "I believe that the more students we can get involved in Toastmasters at the college, the better off our country as a whole will be five, 10 and 15 years down the road."

Tellingly, three of the college's last four Student Council presidents have been Toastmasters.

For college students in technical fields – such as engineering and the sciences – Toastmasters can fill a crucial void. These students are often so deeply immersed in their technical training and research that they're not as comfortable when it comes to communicating their findings. Yet Jhingran says colleges often fail at providing communication training for students in technical fields.

"That really hurts you when you come out of school and try to get a job in your industry," he notes.

"Communicating is a very important part of the work we do," he adds, "and to not be able to capture

what you want to say in a very concise and effective way can be a big drawback in your career."

### Toastmasters Do Some Teaching

At MIT, Jhingran and fellow club member Bil Lewis – drawing on their Toastmasters training – presented a three-day course, open to the entire student body, on how to deliver technical presentations more effectively.

"We talked about the importance of getting your big points across without getting buried in the details [of the data]," says Lewis, a member of MIT's Humor and Drama club. "That's a really common problem. The speakers will focus so much on the specifics, and then they'll say, 'Oh, and by the way, we're curing cancer.'"

One young scientist who has flourished in Toastmasters is Kandarp Shah, a member of UCI's ZotSpeak club. He joined the group in his first year as a doctoral student – in developmental and cell biology – and the skills he developed in the club have produced major academic and career benefits. Shah, who credits club practice and feedback from fellow members, has used his speaking skills to ace presentations to UCI faculty, teach science to local high school students and present his research at high-profile academic conferences.

> **"The more students we can get involved in Toastmasters at the college, the better off our country as a whole will be five, 10 and 15 years down the road."**
>
> **– Dean Sheetz, Dubai Men's College**

"It becomes more and more obvious over time," he says, "that Toastmasters is definitely helping me." T

**Paul Sterman** is an associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine and a member of Le Gourmet Toastmasters club in Costa Mesa, California.


# Wish You Were FUNNIER?

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*2001 World Champion of Public Speaking*

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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

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# Your 2010-2011 Officer and Director Candidates

You will have the opportunity to vote for the international officer and director candidates of your choice while attending the Annual Business Meeting on Saturday, August 14, 2010.

The International Leadership Committee nominated officer candidates for the positions of President, President-Elect, First Vice President and Second Vice President. International director candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

The Committee's selection is presented in accordance with Article VIII, Section 1, of the Bylaws of Toastmasters International.

To review details of each officer nominee's qualifications, visit the Toastmasters Web site at:

**www.toastmasters.org/officernominees**



**International President, Pat Johnson, DTM**



**President-Elect, Michael Notaro, DTM**



**First Vice President, John Lau, DTM**



**Second Vice President, Bash Turay, DTM**



**Second Vice President, Ralph Wallace, DTM**

To view details of each director nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters Web site at:

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**From Region 2**
Kevin Doyle, DTM
Debra Ledsinger, DTM
Gary Pettigrew, DTM

**From Region 4**
Patricia Hannan, DTM
Jacquie Schnider, DTM

**From Region 6**
Gina Cook, DTM
John MacDonald, DTM

**From Region 8**
Patricia Gann, DTM
David Hollingshead, DTM

**From Region 10**
Roberta Perry, DTM
Lois Sicking, DTM

**From Region 12**
Mike Storkey, DTM

**From Region 14**
Gea Ban Peng, DTM
Adelina Royo, DTM

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the Convention or by proxy. If you are attending the Convention, you will have an opportunity to meet and talk with all the international officer and director candidates before the election. Additional nominations for officers and directors may be made from the floor at the Annual Business Meeting.

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