



DISTRICT 84 TOASTMASTERS
SERVING CENTRAL AND NORTHERN FLORIDA
Volume 2, Issue 6 (December, 2021)

Synergy

This holiday season,
Give the Gift
OF YOUR PRESENCE

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District Mission

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

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**TOASTMASTERS
DISTRICT 84**
Serving Central & North Florida

**Empowering
individuals
through personal
and professional
development**



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.

My Christmas Miracle

by Debi Jo Londono, DTM, District Director



Debi Jo Londono

Have you ever had a stranger unexpectedly show you kindness when you needed it the most?

A month before Thanksgiving 1998, my husband got laid off from his job. We had 3 small children and very little savings. We were barely getting by. We took the kids out of daycare, ate more rice and less meat. I picked up more work hours. Then one evening at work I got a call. It was a paramedic telling me I needed to come home right away. My husband had suffered a

heart attack.

We hadn't converted his insurance to Cobra and we were uninsured. Fortunately we were able to take the little money we had and back pay Cobra so that he would have insurance. He survived open heart surgery. We were scraping by and Christmas day was coming soon.

We talked to the kids and let them know that Santa Claus had to give all the toys to other kids that weren't as fortunate as us. They were disappointed but they were so sweet and tried to hide their disappointment.

But early CHRISTMAS morning, we found out there really was a Santa Claus.

His name was Quinton. I had never met him before and I have never seen him since.

He knocked on our door. He brought GIFTS for the kids. He brought FOOD and CASH.

I have no idea how he knew what the girls liked, but they got Babe the Pig, a Cabbage Patch Kid and a Baby Alive. They were so very happy with their toys.

They played and I cried. I was in shock and I am sure I wasn't able to express how very grateful I was.

Many Christmases have come and gone since then, and every year at Christmas time we talk about the year that a stranger made such a difference in our lives.

If by some Christmas MIRACLE this article finds you, Quinton, I want you to know that I think of you every Christmas and I pray for you often.

I am so grateful for you and what you did for my FAMILY.

Merry Christmas and GOD BLESS you Quinton, wherever you are. ■

January 13, 2022 Reaching for the STARS: Goal-Setting for Success with Key Note Speaker Toastmasters International President, Margaret Page, DTM

In Toastmasters, we are called upon at virtually every level – from club to district – to set goals in the form of a Success Plan. Goal-setting is a valuable tool for Toastmasters, but it's also a powerful practice for our lives, careers, and personal Toastmasters journeys.

Goal-setting pumps up our motivation, helps us focus and prioritize, and enables us to develop new skills. Research shows that the more challenging the goal we set, the higher the performance.

District 84 is proud to welcome Toastmasters International President Margaret Page, DTM, as she guides us through her S.T.A.R.S. model for setting inspiring and lofty goals. ■



District 84

Keynote Speaker:
Toastmasters International President
Margaret Page

**REACHING FOR THE STARS:
Goal Setting for Success**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13TH AT 7:30 PM
GENERAL ADMISSION: FREE
VIP: \$5.00
To register: <https://bit.ly/3orWKJC>

'Tis the Season to Celebrate!

by Paula Summa, DTM, Program Quality Director



Paula Summa

'Tis the Season to be Jolly (as the song goes), to be thankful and to celebrate with family and friends.

I reached out to our clubs and asked members to share some of the special events that they are having this year to celebrate the season. I'm happy to report that people are back to having events in person again, as well as having online or hybrid events. Parties, gift exchanges, award banquets,

whether it's online or in person, sending cards or emails, playing games or having a cookie exchange, let's enjoy this holiday season together!

Here are some fun events being planned by several of our D84 clubs. Perhaps you can share these ideas with your own clubs (or your families) and start a new holiday tradition.

Oviedo Toastmasters has a fund-raiser each year:

Stressed out over EBay? Try T-Bay! Members bring new or gently used items that they don't need any more and auction them off in a fun way. With each item, the member gives a Table Topics speech stating why you must have this item! This year's event will be held on January 20.

Omni Toastmasters has a very special event this year:

Omni is celebrating the festive season with their take on an iconic British TV quiz, "15 to 1." With this general knowledge quiz, members and guests will attempt to utilize their three lives effectively and be the last person standing. We'll all be learning how to play together. Sounds fun! Everyone is welcome. Thursday 12/16 @ 5:45.

Contact: Kathryn@ManifestingClientsAcademy.com

Orlando Toastmasters celebrates club officers and the holiday season:

Orlando Toastmasters combines a holiday party with an officer turn-over meeting. "We decorate, then the out-

going president gives their farewell speech and the incoming president gives their inaugural speech. It is always a lot of fun!"

Toastmasters at Twelve is having a toast! (Marshmallows, that is!)

Toastmasters at Twelve is toasting marshmallows around an open fire to bring everyone together in our beautiful Florida outdoors. Food, fun, and holiday games will add to the energy of being live and in-person!

Beachsiders is celebrating their 18th anniversary along with the holiday!

A party at the home of one of the members is a dual celebration for Beachsiders members. They will be celebrating their 18th anniversary, along with Christmas. We know it will be a wonderful time for all.

Orlando Conquerors always has a blast with special awards presented to their members.

Triple Crown does a holiday dinner and a few others respond with fun traditions like doing a Secret Santa gift exchange, a pot-luck dinner or a party at someone's home.

One of my favorite gift exchange games was the "left/right" story of "Twas the Night Before Christmas." A narrator read the story out loud, as the participants sat in a circle holding the wrapped gift that they brought to the event. As the words "left" or "right" were spoken, each person in the circle handed the gift to the person on their left or right. By the end of the story, whatever gift was in your hand, was yours to keep! It was always lots of fun and only ONCE did we end up with our own gift! I had to add more to the story, so the gifts could be passed along further. Just Google "left/right" Christmas game and you'll find several versions!

It is an honor and a privilege to serve on the District Trio! I thank each and every one of you for all you do for our District and our members.

Happy Holidays everyone... stay safe, stay happy and stay healthy!

CHEERS! ■

Presence – The Gift That Keeps On Giving

by Vickie Goodman, DTM,
Club Growth Director



Vickie Goodman

Most join Toastmasters to receive its many benefits: improved presentation skills, better organization, and leadership development; increased confidence and focused listening skills; and reduced nervousness and anxiety when required to speak in front of others or on an impromptu basis. The gifts are plentiful. And we look forward to receiving them.

- 1 the gift of organization and confidence for planning and preparing;
- 2 the gift of constructive feedback from fellow members who help us grow;
- 3 the gift of appreciation from club members for fulfilling our responsibilities, setting a good example, and for giving others the opportunity to learn from our presentations.

Are you truly present in your leadership role? Where else can you get on-the-job training and experience without the fear of failure? Our focused presence offers specialized training, management experience, team building, motivational management and fun! That's a lot of presents for simply deciding to show up, pay attention and make the effort to help others.

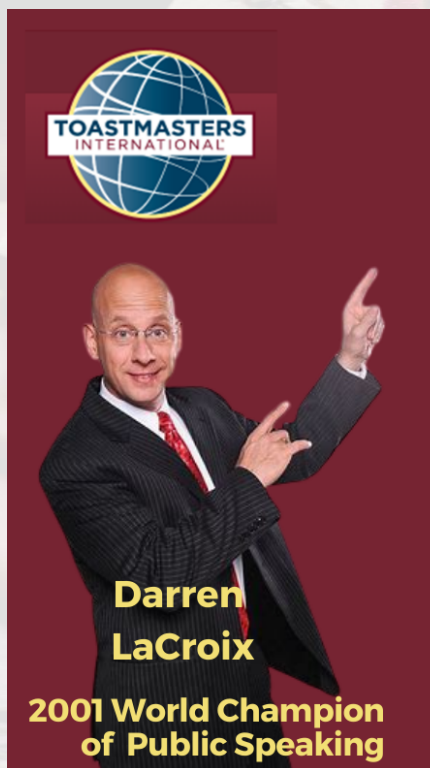
When we focus on **being present**, we become recognized as a person **with presence**, one who impresses others with our appearance and manner. Our presence will always mean more than any presents ever will. It is the gift that keeps on giving, and the biggest beneficiary of that incredible gift is **YOU!** ■

But to benefit from Toastmasters' unique and valuable presents, *we must be present.*

Are you *present* at your club meetings? Whether in-person, online or hybrid, do you attend meetings? We must show up to benefit from the fun, camaraderie, encouragement, and practice that brings us closer to opening some of those gifts we hoped to receive when we joined.

Is your presence at your club meetings recognized? Are you playing an active role at your meetings? Are you willing to jump in to fill an empty agenda slot? So, you're not fully prepared. What better place to reap the rewards of encouragement and appreciation from fellow members; to exercise initiative by volunteering rather than hiding in fear and dread that you might be asked to actually *do something*? When we make our presence known, we are rewarded with the gift of confidence and leadership.

Is your presence and attention to your goals and objectives propelling you to success in Pathways? If you do not work the program, the program will not work for you. The very word "presentation" demands that we be present. When we focus our presence and attention on the various projects and presentations, and schedule accordingly and stick to our schedule, every time we step up to present, we receive at least three gifts:



17 Minutes to Your
Dream!

A Simple Strategy to
Transform Who You Are
as a Speaker & Leader

Free Online Event!

December 18, 2021
2-4 pm

Zoom ID: 871 8668 2992
Passcode: 252525

Hosted by Find Your Funny
Toastmasters Club

The Gift of Our Presence

by Maria Martinez, DTM, PRM



Maria Martinez

As we embark on this season when so many of us celebrate holidays around the world, I pause to reflect on a special kind of gift; that of our presence.

Presence: the state and energy that is generated when people feel valued, seen and heard by another. It is that feeling which fuels interactions and strengthens relationships amongst people as they share parts of their journeys.

Our entire lives were upended as we unsuspectingly entered the year 2020 and were soon faced with a pandemic. Almost overnight, we had to reinvent much, if not all, of our lives and were forced to look at things differently. Our beloved Toastmasters meetings and their intrinsic social networking opportunities became extinct and what was worse, while dealing with the uncertainty, we did not know when or how we would ever regain any sense of normalcy.

Thankfully, online meetings gave us an option to continue to gather. Not perfect by any means, yet an option. Something we could not have managed if this had happened 5-10 years ago. Technology became the life-line and the only means of communication and connection amongst our Toastmasters clubs.

Let's face it - for many of us, Toastmasters is more than a club; more than a platform to develop skills. Like my friend and mentor, John Morrow says, "Toastmasters are family." Although we are not there yet, we have started to see the resemblance of a new normal with some activities and events we can partake in.

For instance **FusionFest**, celebrated the last weekend in November, drew people from more than 110 cultures and introduced music, dance, food, visual arts, games, activities, and spoken language arts to those who attended over the course of two days. Several of our District 84 members were there to share the Toastmasters message with the general audience while many others were featured on the Spoken Word Stage. Among others, *Pim Parpart, Ron Parpart, Claudia Atkins, Beth Ram-*



say, Paula Summa, Vickie Goodman, Dwight Dillon, Lee Rushin, John Morrow, and Fred Bergeron all bravely took the stage and enthralled us with their stories. They made us laugh, made us curious, transported us to foreign places and inspired us. Suddenly it became clear: I realized that being there was an opportunity to share the gift of presence not just with that community, but with one another.

Your leadership team is planning various activities and events over the course of the next weeks and months. As you consider all the items on your to-do list and the events on your calendar, I invite you to make a point to give the gift of your presence. It can make a big difference. Being there to acknowledge, validate and hold the space for a fellow member is one of the best gifts you can give. Give generously. ■



Together Everyone Achieves More

Toastmasters D84

SYNERGY "THE PODCAST"





Hosted by Distinguished Toastmaster John Morrow

<https://toastmastersd84.org/the-d84-synergy-podcast/>

Club Corner: Presence over Presents

by Vickie Goodman, DTM,
Club Growth Director

"Let your presence be known. Let your absence be felt."
B. Saudat

In this season when so much focus is on gift-giving, why not give the best present of all: your undistracted presence. Let your fellow Toastmasters feel your presence through your undivided attention to their speeches, active listening, and exuberant participation (whether prepared or not!).

Semi-annual Officer Lists are due: If your club elects officers twice a year, be sure members are present to hold club elections and notify World Headquarters of the results before Dec. 31, 2021. Download the Club Officer Information form and submit your new officer list online via Club Central.

Use a Corporate Email Signature to extend your presence outside of your club as a way to share Toastmasters with coworkers and colleagues. Instructions and artwork are available. Just download now from the Resource Library.

Empower Your Leadership Presence: Register and attend the Toastmasters Leadership Institute in January. Learn to be a better club officer through Officer Training Classes or broaden your knowledge through the many enrichment courses available. To receive credit in the Distinguished Club Program, be sure that your club sends at least four officers to officer training. Online training will be offered on January 8th, 12th, and 16th via Zoom, so look for the registration jotform in your email.

Club, Area and Division Contests Need Your Presence: It takes a team to run an effective and successful contest. If you are not competing, step up and volunteer to fill a contest functionary role. You will help the contestants have a wonderful experience, and you will benefit as well. Volunteering to help run a speech contest offers an exceptional opportunity to refine leadership and communication skills and amplify your experience of simply being a Toastmaster.

Participate In Toastmasters Beyond Your Club: District 84 offers so many opportunities for members to add knowledge, skills, and confidence. Attend one or more of the many webinars, forums, or social activities available via zoom: New Member Orientation, Club

Coach/Mentor Forum, Pathways Support Sessions, Special Guest Presentations....the opportunities abound every month. You will not want to miss special presentations being given to our District 84 members by Toastmasters International President Margaret Page (Jan. 13, 2022), and the 2021 World Champion of Public Speaking Verity Price. Keep current on these special events by regularly checking the D84 Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/toastmastersd84>.

Members who put in the biggest effort – at club meetings, in Pathways, at training, and Area and District events – reap the biggest rewards. Plan ahead and make your presence known! ■

Mark Your Calendars

International President Margaret Page: January 13 at 7:30 pm

World Champion of Public Speaking, Verity Price: February 5 at 11 am

Toastmaster Leadership Institute (TLI)

January 8, 2022, 12:30— 4 pm

January 12, 2022, 6— 8pm (officer training & MOT only)

January 16, 2022, 12:30— 4 pm

So You've Joined Toastmasters.
Now What?

New Member Orientation with
the Trio and Pathways Chair

1st Sunday of Each Month
7:00pm ET on Zoom
Meeting ID: 962 7944 2148
Password: NewMembers

Lending An Ear This Holiday Season

by Angela Ardrey-Reynolds, IP5



Angela Ardrey-Reynolds

This is a story about real people and events. A story about being human. A story that recently happened to Synergy editor Andy Seepaul.

Please listen.

As I chatted with Andy, he shared the tales of his recent trip to Salt Lake City. Away for a week at a conference, he told me how he set aside a few days to tour the

city. Being the scientist he is, he made sure to witness the Natural History Museum and Red Butte Garden. His day was filled with sightseeing.

With four attractions down and two more to visit, Andy sat down and waited for the next city bus. That is when an unexpected stranger—an older woman carrying a heavy load—changed the course of his well-planned outing.

“When is the next bus?” she asked.

The next bus was to arrive in 30 minutes.

Sitting down next to Andy to rest, she started to engage in conversation. She too was educated in the field of science, only she was a clinical psychologist who helped people navigate through mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. As Andy and this smart older woman sat together, she started to unpack her heavy load. Not a load of material things that could be left behind or have another help carry. No. This was her load to bear. And sadly, it seemed as if it was starting to crush her.

Andy sat quietly...and listened.

The older woman proceeded to unpack all her pain as Andy, a complete stranger, listened.

She needed to say the words that were causing her to suffer, as Andy listened.

She needed to release her heavy load, as

Andy listened.

“By her talking to me, she was able to start letting go,” Andy said. “I think it was therapy for her soul.”

30 minutes later when the bus arrived, Andy and the woman boarded as she continued to talk, and Andy continued to listen—for 35 more minutes, missing his stop and never seeing his last two sites.

“By allowing her to speak, she was able to navigate through those emotions,” Andy said. “I think it brought some kind of resolution. Before we parted ways, she declared that she finally felt free.”

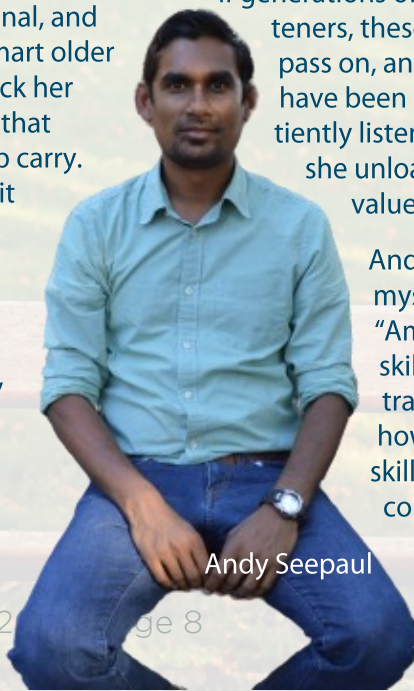
After hearing this story, Andy and I discussed how we humans are designed to bring healing to another and how we can change each other’s lives by offering the simple act of listening.

Andy understands the necessity of being an active listener because of his heritage. He holds in him a legacy that only *he* can pass on—his family’s oral history. Andy is grateful for his parents and grandparents being good listeners because he strongly depends upon those family stories. They contribute to who he is now.

“All I know are my family’s stories,” Andy said. “There is no recorded history of them.”

If generations of family members had not been good listeners, these stories would not have continued to pass on, and in turn a rich family heritage would have been lost. Perhaps this is why Andy could patiently listen to a perfect stranger for over an hour as she unloaded her weights. He understood the value of being heard.

Andy’s bus stop story got me listening to myself—more like pondering the notion, “Am I truly a good listener?” Listening is a skill of selfless intention. It requires concentration and being present. Do I truly know how to listen? Toastmasters helps with this skill. Founder, Ralph Smedley, purposely incorporated listening components into the



Andy Seepaul

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Unlocking Potential Through the Power of Presence

by Vickie Goodman, DTM, Club Growth Director

We often confuse *attendance* with *presence*. Attendance is what most of us offer the many activities, gatherings, meetings and even personal interactions that we experience every day. We go and we participate, hoping our participation is a positive reflection on *ourselves*.

Presence, however, is more than just showing up. It requires keen, focused attention on people and things outside of yourself. Presence requires that you put forth the energy, enthusiasm and encouragement that communicates the value and appreciation you have for that particular person(s), activity or experience. Presence can involve quiet, contemplative listening or boisterous displays of enthusiasm.

At a recent visit to Gadsden Correctional Facility, a women's prison in the Florida Panhandle, I was privileged to experience an emotionally uplifting display of group presence that I continue to feel to this very moment. I was an invited guest to the Driven by Destiny TM Club's

'Celebrations Around the World', honoring the club's 8th Anniversary and paying tribute to the volunteers who have helped the members believe in themselves and their futures.

The meeting room was crowded with the 30 club members as well as staff members (including Warden Buscher) who had yet to realize they'd been invited to receive special appreciation from the club members. Handmade posters, balloons and decorations added an especially festive air. I was part of the 'outside guest' contingency and impressed by the enthusiastic welcome of members stepping forward to introduce themselves. We were given agendas, invited to have a seat and enjoy conversation among members waiting for the program to begin.

The gavel came down and rapt attention was paid to the opening ceremonies, words of inspiration and formal

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Driven by Destiny Toastmasters Club members, volunteers, mentors and MTC staff celebrated eight years of building confidence in communication and leadership on December 9, 2021.

Presence

Continued from Page 9

introductions before guests were invited to lead the line for a delicious dinner prepared by the culinary team.

Although our setting was deep inside a restricted location surrounded by walls, fences and razor wire, we were transported around the world as members took turns sharing personal stories about their cultural heritage, native countries and customs. Ms. Giorgio took us to Korea and Ms. Araujo, to Cuba; Ms. Gutierrez shared her Mexican heritage and customs and we were inspired by Ms. Pierre's love and sadness for her island republic of Haiti. These stories served to both educate and celebrate the diversity that surrounds all of us, while uniting us in our love and appreciation of family, tradition, hard work, and the desire to give our children a better opportunity.

The bonds of dignity, appreciation and humor were evident as the club members awarded certificates and heartfelt words of appreciation to the volunteers who help maintain their beloved club, and to the staff members who support and encourage the weekly club meetings and activities, bringing some to tears. Member testimonials about their personal TM journeys brought nods of agreement and understanding, including well-deserved applause which was like music to the ears of those visitors, like myself, who have been trapped in those nearly silent zoom-meeting environments for two years.

The focused presence of every member was palpable throughout the meeting – rapt attention to each speaker from every audience member; smiles, head nods and, always, rousing applause. Fun and laughter abounded as members were awarded crowns and pageant banners for their contributions to the club – both serious and humorous.

DTM Andy Seepaul, described it perfectly: "The members always work to keep the meetings fresh with infused creativity and innovative spins.... The short testimonials mixed with around-the-world cultural insights were the right blend to keep the program interesting, engaging, and refreshing."

Be inspired by the lessons learned at Driven by Destiny: Grab the opportunity afforded by your Toastmasters Club. Take pride in every activity. Show appreciation to every member and guest. **Choose to be present and make your presence felt!** ■

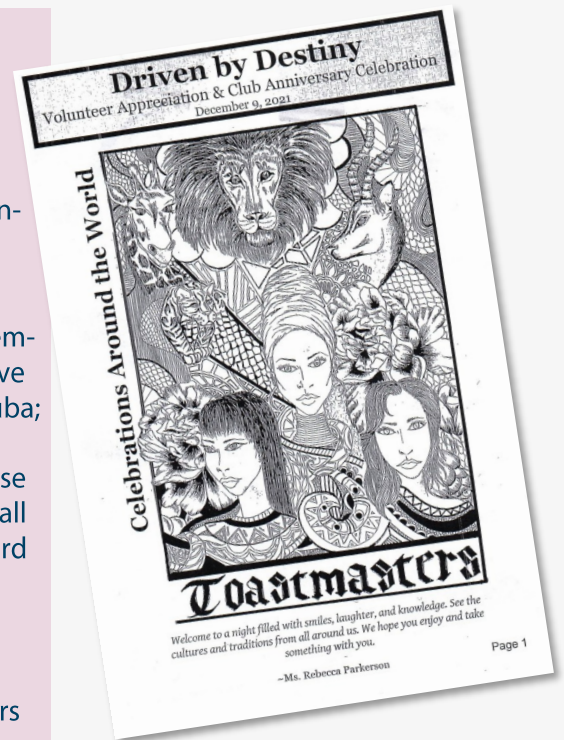


"Toastmasters has given me a strength I can't explain. With the helpful guidance and the unconditional support we create in the club, I'm empowered each day."

— Shanovia Mack

When I arrived at Gadsden, my self-esteem was something I walked on daily. I joined Toastmasters a year later; my self-esteem now lives somewhere near the sun. As one of the club officers, I strive to create a balance between learning and leading. We made mistakes, but truly we are Driven by Destiny!"

— Kylee Copeland



Driven by Destiny Volunteer Appreciation and Eight Anniversary Celebrations featured member testimonials who shared how they've gained confidence in communication and leadership as well as cultural explorations of Korea, Cuba, Mexico and Haiti. Volunteers and MTC staff members were recognized for their support and contributions to the club. Long term club members were also recognized.

Driven by Destiny represents a commitment to becoming better people, speakers, leaders — and supporting one another with hope.

"As volunteer mentors from the community and fellow Toastmasters, our weekly commitment comes easily, knowing we make a difference. We are energized by the meetings ourselves as witness to life-altering shifts."

— Patty Goodwin and Chuck Rabaut

I Did It, So Should You!

by Pim Parpart, DTM, Immediate Past District Director



Pim Parpart

Thinking back to the time that I served as the Club Growth Director in 2018-2019, Program Quality Director in 2019-2020 and District 84 Director in 2020-2021, I still can't believe how lucky I was to have had the privilege to do the jobs I love. I love Toastmasters, and serving our members in District 84 was a dream job for me.



Director, an Area Director, or a combination of these.

Club Growth Director

At the time of taking office, the Club Growth Director must have served at least six consecutive months as Club President and at least 12 consecutive months as a Program Quality Director, a Club Growth Director, a Division Director, an Area Director, or a combination of these.

Division Directors: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I

At the time of taking office, the Division Director must have served at least six consecutive months as a member of a District Council.

District Council Members are District Executive Committee members, Club Presidents and Vice Presidents Education.

A call for candidate declarations will be sent to your mailbox by January 15, 2022.

The deadline for candidates to declare their intent to run is February 25, 2022.

Candidate Interviews will be held Saturday March 12, 2022, at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in Kissimmee.

Elections will be held at the District Council Annual Meeting on May 14, 2022

Candidates should be familiar with [Protocol 9.0: District Campaigns and Elections](#).

Remember: "If you can dream it, you can do it." - Walt Disney

If Pim can do it, you can do it too! ■

As the Immediate Past District Director this term, I am continuing to serve as the District 84 Leadership Committee Chair.

What is a District Leadership Committee?

The District Leadership Committee (DLC) evaluates all candidates for District-elected positions and nominates the best candidate(s). To ensure successful District elections, the District Director appoints the DLC Chair, who is a past District leader, preferably a past District Director.

The DLC Chair then appoints the members of the District Leadership Committee with the approval of the District Director. The committee must be equally represented by each Division in the District.

District 84 is now hiring: we are looking for new leaders for the 2022-2023 term. It is now time to start thinking about what District Leadership position you want to serve in next term. This is the opportunity of a lifetime. If you love Toastmasters, we're looking for you!

District Elected Positions:

District Director

At the time of taking office, the District Director must have served at least six consecutive months as Club President and at least 12 consecutive months as a Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Division Director, or a combination of these.

Program Quality Director

At the time of taking office, the Program Quality Director must have served at least six consecutive months as Club President and at least 12 consecutive months as a Program Quality Director, a Club Growth Director, a Division

Offering Presence to Those Grieving During the Holidays

by Debby Kerr-Henry, IP5, Immediate Past Area 90 Director

a•men

/ä'men, ā'men/

A concluding word or as a response to a prayer.
Also used colloquially to express strong agreement.
It is true. And let it be so.



Debby Kerr-Henry

With a pandemic claiming lives from the unsuspecting, I think now is an appropriate time, during this holiday season, to talk about grief. I learned much about this unwelcome topic after experiencing four significant losses in 14 months. My losses were difficult in and of themselves, but together

they forced me into an abysmal numbness.

I found it difficult to sort through my swirling emotions.

I found it difficult to accept that people who were just here, were now gone.

I found it difficult to know how to best support those closest to these Significant Ones.

Samuel

Samuel was the first. He was 19 years old and the son of one of my best friends. I met Samuel when he was six years old. He and my son got into an argument at recess over the rules of soccer. Samuel was from Louisiana and the new kid in the class. As far as he was concerned soccer was stupid. "In Louisiana we play football," he had said. The teacher called me, which then led me to calling Samuel's mom, who suggested to gather our hoodlum sons at a park for a play date. I had never met someone so gracious as Samuel's mother, and as a result, a deep friendship developed between the two of us. As the years continued, she and I would often process life's difficulties over chocolate martinis.

Samuel was on his way to Nashville on July 25, 2017, to visit his sister when he offered a hitchhiker a ride. That



in the darkness of grief, I am learning to just be present with the discomfort by offering silence—to my loved ones and to myself—as a flicker of eternal light."

— Debby Kerr-Henry

was the last anyone saw of Samuel. I was horrified. And there are no words to describe how his parents felt. Samuel's trial finally happened this past summer, four years after his death and during the same week his life was taken. I suppose the guilty verdict provided some closure, as life, however tragic it might be, must go on, right?

Jakin

Jakin was next. He was 24 years old and the son of another one of my dearest friends. Jakin was my oldest son's best friend, was like a big brother to my youngest son, and an employee of my husband's. Jakin was working on his beloved Mustang when he and a friend left to purchase a car part. The accident happened October 7, 2017, a few miles from his parents' home. Jakin was the passenger, sitting on the side that slammed into the tree. Again, I was horrified. And again, there are no words to describe how his parents feel.

Grandmother

The third Significant One was my sweet, funny grandmother. She served a critical role in my life as she intervened on behalf of my siblings and me, resulting in our biological father being stripped of all parenting rights. I was five or six at the time. I do not remember ever missing my biological father. My grandmother was the most courageous and beautiful person I knew. She changed the trajectory of my life for the better. I loved her dearly.

I thought I was ready for her passing on April 18, 2018. She was just shy of 100 and had lived a full life. I was glad she would finally be free of her daily pain.

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Grief

Continued from Page 12

On the day of her funeral, I found myself filled with emotions as my grandmother's casket rolled past on the way out of the funeral parlor, on the way out of life.

Brother

And then, on September 14, 2018, my brother, age 57, unexpectedly died. I felt numb when I received that call. I remember just wanting to be still. Memories of his kindness stood out, especially in the last years as we had more genuine conversations than ever. My brother's employer, Southwest Airlines, transported his casket from Indiana to Missouri as if he were royalty, conducting a water-cannon salute and a period of silence as employees lined the runway. Fellow employees remained by my brother's side until he was buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery. We would later learn that my brother had had an undetected heart condition.

I knew little about grief before this 14-month period. I had experienced loss before, but never so close and within a compacted time. I hurt for my two friends as they grieved their young sons, and I hurt for my sister-in-

law who had been married to my brother for 35 years—most of her life. It all seemed so ruthless. I was learning to just be present with loved ones as they uniquely navigated this unknown territory; to listen and to cry, and to include names in conversations, as if to say, "They are still significant."

Now, as we transition into yet another holiday season, I ask, "How does one—in the face of grief—face holidays of thanksgiving, holy nights, and new beginnings?"

"How?"

As a Toastmaster, I naturally want to speak and provide meaningful words, especially to those who are hurting. But in the darkness of grief, I am learning to just be present with the discomfort by offering silence—to my loved ones and to myself—as a flicker of eternal light.

Amen. ■

Nonfiction Creative Writer | Memoir Writing Coach

[Momentous Living](#): "Better self. Better world."

Connect with Debby on [LinkedIn](#)

Table Topics and Toys . . . Plant City Toastmasters is at it Again

by Angela Ardrey-Reynolds, IP5

Each year, Plant City Toastmasters celebrates the holidays and the joy of giving with an annual toy drive. Members bring in new toys for someone else to speak about, Table Topics style. All toys are donated to a local charity. FUN, LAUGHTER, and GREAT MEMORIES. ■



SpeechCraft Around the World — Literally!

by Karen Rittweger, DTM



Karen Rittweger

Leona Vlacancich, Area 73 Director and secretary of Club Sponsor for Talk of the World Toastmasters in Ocala, coordinated a four-week SpeechCraft program from October 12- November 2. This was only made possible by Zoom, as our five SpeechCrafters worked in the same Wyndham hotel in the Philippines. Their personal

coaches included Toastmasters David Wesenberg, Peter Kenjosian, Rob Vlacancich, Cathy Gorgensen, and Pam Winter DTM.

Leona began the first session by welcoming our SpeechCrafters, explaining Toastmaster club leadership, introducing volunteers and conducting an icebreaker. She then discussed public speaking skills and reviewed the self-assessments previously taken by the SpeechCrafters.

Educational presentations in the first three sessions included "Selecting a Speech Topic" by Karen Rittweger DTM, "Introducing a Speaker" by David Wesenberg, and "Speech Purpose" by Chuck Field DTM. Other Toastmasters and additional volunteers Jen Yatsenko, Kim Dombrowski and Pim Parpart DTM filled the roles of Timer, Ah Counter, Grammarian, Table Topics Master and General Evaluator.

In the beginning, SpeechCrafters were nervous and their speeches and answers were often brief and disorganized, but improved from one meeting to the next. By the fourth session they spoke with improved skills and more self-confidence.

The SpeechCrafters predominantly led the last session by themselves. SpeechCrafter Junelmer conducted a Table Topics Session with some great questions, some of which were: Who inspires you? What do you look for in a friend? And what activity do you enjoy?

When SpeechCrafters presented their "Know Your Purpose" speeches, the two men talked about practical issues such as tourism in the Philippines and how poor job performance reviews may be caused by boredom on the job, while the three women chose more thought-provoking topics such as: if things could work out differently; and their outlook on and purpose in life. A special treat was having four of their Wyndham bosses join the last session to hear the SpeechCrafters' final speeches. One of them had been to a SpeechCraft session and had encouraged their attendance at our program.

Pam Winter closed the session by offering the SpeechCrafters an invitation to join Toastmasters. She later noted that, "It wasn't so much a matter of improvement in speech presentation, but the confidence gained to be able to speak and the trust they gave the coaches."

Continued on Page 15



Lending an Ear

Continued from Page 8

Toastmasters program as he too understood the importance of listening, perhaps as much if not more, than the act of speaking. I will never undervalue the roles of Grammarian, Ah-Counter, or Evaluator again.

Thank you for listening.

Oh, and Synergy editor, Andy Seepaul? I thought you might want to know that he is now on a quest to gather as many family stories as he can to document, in writing, his Guyana heritage. I'm all ears Andy, if you ever want to share them. ■

Strong Mind | Strong Body | Believe the Unbelievable.
Professional Coach, Speaker, Writer and Photographer.
Connect with Angela on [LinkedIn](#).

Speechcraft

Continued from Page 14

Especially with regard to SpeechCrafter Herson, who initially wouldn't even turn on her video or audio when on Zoom, for her to speak of such personal issues at our last meeting was a leap of faith and trust. Her speech ripped away the layers of the onion and gave us the heart."

"What impressed me the most out of the Speechcraft sessions I attended was the growth of the Speechcrafters," Cathy Gorgensen said. "In my opinion it helped change the trajectory of their lives and careers. They're all young 20s to early 30s, and confidence, along with a major dose of self-esteem help anyone make better life choices, both personally and professionally."

Not only did the program bolster the skills of the participants, but some of the facilitators benefitted as well. Leona, the coordinator, said "I learned things about Toastmasters that I didn't know before, or had taken for granted, so SpeechCraft brought me a new awareness of Toastmasters."

Sometimes when we're in an organization for any length of time, we may start to overlook the basics. When we go back to the beginnings with SpeechCrafters or Youth Leaders, we can recall our own learning process. If we bring that refreshed outlook to the rest of our club members, the club as a whole can benefit as well.

The SpeechCraft program is one of the advanced projects leading to a DTM award. It can be offered as a 4-, 6-, or 8-week program, and can lead to new club members or even formation of a new club. If you think you might want to coordinate or participate in one, check out the following link:

www.toastmasters.org/education/speechcraft. And if you have questions or would like to organize a SpeechCraft yourself, contact District 84 SpeechCraft Chair Cathy Gorgensen @ cgorgensen84.e.52@gmail.com ■

Club Coach & Mentor Training

With: **WC 'Bobby' Blackmon**



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

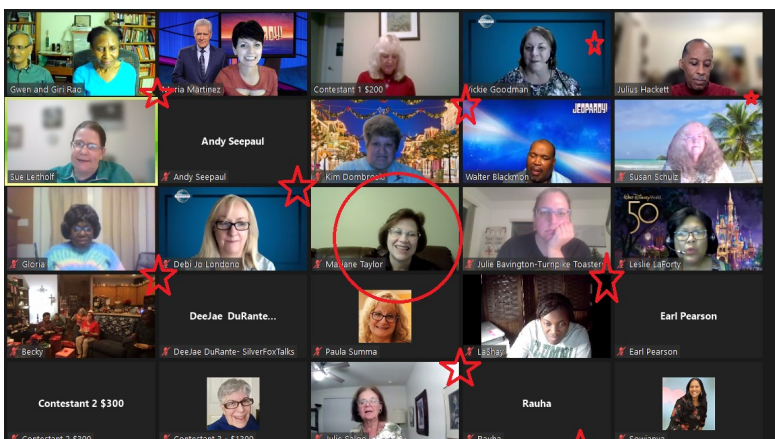
Each month a different focus, come and learn how to maximize club strengths, offer resources and tools to empower the club to achieve growth.



Meeting ID 847 0417 6502
Passcode 318989

TOASTMASTERSD84.ORG

Alex, for \$500: "The first D84 Jeopardy champion."
Who is Marjane Taylor?



Blended Families Blend Holiday Traditions

by Dolores Bilia, Presentation Mastery L1



Dolores Bilia

Blended and fluid—two words that describe over thirty-two years of holiday memories. Coastal Carolina Beach, North Carolina, Ft. Lauderdale suburb of Davie, Florida, and finally Deltona, in Central Florida, have all been my homes for the past fifteen years.

Blended from uniting families and cultures—stepdads, stepmoms, stepkids and step pets; and Mexican, Israeli, and US Southern cultures melding into a unique mix.

Fluid because my holiday traditions have changed, mostly for the good.

Guilt used to be my strong driving force during this season. Literally! After moving to South Florida, I would drive thirteen hours to my ex-husband's home in North Carolina where I spent almost every Thanksgiving and Christmas. My sons chose to live with their dad and stepmom. Being a divorced mother, I somehow wanted to make everything right by showing up for the holidays. My ex-husband, his gracious wife, and later our sons were all in the medical field. Someone was almost always on call from the hospital.

For all of us to pull this gathering off, the logistics just worked out better this way. My husband and I always had an open invitation to stay with my ex-husband and his wife. We usually did just that.

My ex-husband and his wife eventually moved to Florida, reducing my road trips to four hours. Alligator Alley and I became very familiar with one other, the Alley being the East-West highway that cuts across to Florida's southern West Coast.

My Israeli-Jewish husband was such a good sport. He did not celebrate the same holiday traditions, but he loved the two families' gathering and sharing good food and adult beverages with many stories and laughs. We joined Mediterranean, Mexican, and Southern foods, and we decorated for Hanukkah and Christmas, combined with a lot of love and patience.

Nothing is perfect though. We have had our family issues. Doesn't every family? But our holiday traditions continue being fluid with the addition of two wonderful daughters-in-law, a grown-up step-granddaughter, and a four-year-old grandson born the week before Thanksgiving. With the addition of more families and customs, each gathering changes and continues being uniquely blended and fluid. My hope is that my children and grandchildren will cherish our holiday memories as much as I have. ■

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*

December focus:

Working through the levels as a member

February focus:

Base Camp Managers

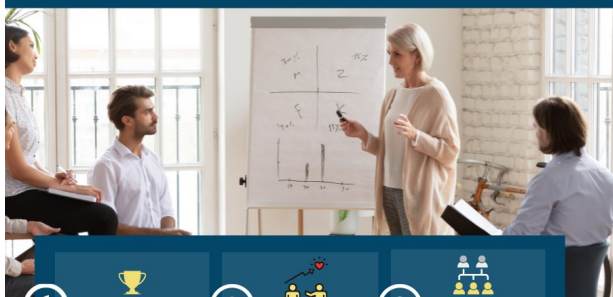
March focus:

Assisting new members

TOASTMASTERS
PATHWAYS
— learning experience —

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

Pleasantly Packaged Presents

by Julie Salgo, Retired Learning and Development Consultant



Julie Salgo

Do you prefer giving or getting gifts? I prefer giving, trying to guess what would make the other person happy. If you can use my gift, you will feel happy and grateful, and I will feel delighted.

When we evaluate speeches during Toastmasters meetings, we point out things the speaker did well, and provide improvement

opportunities that we may call “gifts.” The mentor / protégé relationship can be considered a gift exchange: the mentor’s experience can provide advice to the protégé, while the protégé can enrich the mentor’s experience with positive influence and a different viewpoint. A coach, after careful observations and listening, can create awareness, show new perspectives, and inspire actions. Those insights are also gifts, which enhance individuals who wish to be more effective and efficient together.

Some time ago I came across a quote: “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift, that’s why we call it the present.” (Unknown Author.) First, I thought the quote was too corny, but by now I appreciate the notion behind this message. Let me share a few examples to support it:

How many of us have expressed regrets, saying “I wish I had ...?” Do you ever fall into this trap? Let’s declare the trap to be dangerous and avoid stepping into it. Why? Because we do not want to later cry over something we cannot change (i.e., the past). We must live in the present.

How many of us use the socially acceptable excuse almost daily, “I do not have time to do something?” If the “something” is worthwhile for our career, health, family, and our life, we should never postpone it. Procrastination is okay when we do not consider the action to be performed either urgent or important. Eventually these will fall off the radar. Before the day is over, we should find time to choose and act on a step that can lead us closer to our goals. To quote Lao Tzu, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” Let’s surprise

ourselves today with numerous daily “presents.”

How can Toastmasters use these ideas? Let me plant some seeds for you:

- Ⓐ Invite a friend, family member, or a coworker to an upcoming Club meeting by starting with a question: “Would you like to receive a gift today?”
- Ⓑ When someone is trying to explain to you that now is not the right time to join Toastmasters, you may respond: “One can never find the right time. Life will always interfere with your carefully designed plans. The best time is today to grab an opportunity. In the future you will thank me for the ‘gift’ you accepted way back when.”
- Ⓒ When a club member misses too many meetings, how can you approach him/her? Make a call and say: “You may not realize how much your presence means to the success of each club meeting. We have been getting gifts from you while evaluating speeches, assuming roles, and contributing to Table Topics. I have also witnessed your amazing progress because you accepted similar gifts from others.”

It is not enough to pay dues and occasionally drop by to visit a club meeting. You must be present physically and mentally, to reap the full benefits. One can easily lose momentum if a meeting is skipped. Your maximum benefit comes from continually volunteering for filling roles and choosing leadership responsibilities. It’s true that the more you put in, the more you get out.

I am hooked on smart quotes. Here is another one by Art Buchwald: “Whether it’s the best of times or the worst of times, it’s the only time we’ve got.” Let’s focus on the present. ■



Looking Forward: Goals for Growth in 2022

by Serena Piper



Serena Piper

At the end of the year, we often choose to reflect on all that happened the previous year—places we traveled to, career achievements, and relationship anniversaries, and then make resolutions that we plan to (or at least hope to) see through the next year. More often than not, those resolutions turn out

to be something like finding an exercise routine and eating healthier. But weight loss and eating our vegetables aren't the only ways to work on personal growth. Toastmasters offers opportunities to improve communication skills, polish presentations and practice our sense of composure. Shortly after joining Toastmasters in May 2019 I began to see its positive impact on my life, both personally and professionally. And since becoming Vice President of Membership for "Toastmasters at Twelve" Club this year, I've also seen the positive impact of holding a leadership role.

Since these are all benefits, obviously I would like to carry them into 2022. When I think about the new year, I hope Toastmasters can help me achieve the following three goals:

Ⓐ Continue Clear Communication

All the feedback or evaluations I've ever received on a speech have made me infinitely more aware of how I sound while speaking. Not just tone and volume, but content too. Clear communication is key whether we're talking with a coworker, resolving a conflict with a family member, writing an email or texting a friend.

As Toastmasters, we quickly learn how crafting a speech is similar to communicating in our personal and professional lives. Gathering our thoughts and organizing them into a cohesive, coherent message is critical to effective communication. Although perfection isn't my goal, I know there will always be tweaks and touch-ups to be made in this area.

And because I've been so hyper-focused on my com-

munication skills, I've been able to "polish up" current relationships with family and friends, and more effectively work with coworkers to carry out my job responsibilities.

Ⓑ Keep Asking for Help

Like many people, I struggle with asking for help. I believed that doing things without depending on others was quicker and easier. However, the easy things usually have their caveats, like becoming more stressed than I would've been if I'd asked for help in the first place.

I accepted my officer role under the silly impression that I needed to be Chicken Little and "do it myself," but becoming overwhelmed soon forced me to get comfortable with asking for help, whether it's for Toastmasters or in my personal life situations. That is key not only to my club's success, but my own mental health as well.

Ⓒ Don't Be Afraid to Lead

At work I am often tasked with leading a project or event. Since I'm used to being a follower, leading is sometimes worrisome for me. But Toastmasters has taught me that it's more like *guidance* and working *with* your team to reach a common goal.

Thanks to my officer role, I no longer have a love-hate relationship with leading, since I can apply those same skills to my professional life. While I may still get jitters, Toastmasters has instilled in me a new level of self-confidence that I hope to strengthen in 2022.

What are your goals for professional or personal growth in 2022? Take a few minutes to write them down and work out how Toastmasters can help you meet them! ■



December Holiday Celebrations Around the World

by Sandy DePrimo, DTM



Sandy DePrimo

Ahh, the Holidays—sparkling trees, beautiful lights, and a feeling of joy and goodwill in the air. It's time to celebrate! We navigate bustling shopping malls filled with Christmas songs to buy gifts for our loved ones. Big family gatherings are planned, and houses are filled with the scent of a great holiday feast. December is a month of gratefulness, forgiveness, and renewal in celebrations around the world.

During the month of December, the world celebrates in many ways, for many different reasons. Let's have a look at the list of world-wide December Holidays.

November 28 — December 6: Hanukkah, an eight-day Jewish festival celebrating the story of miraculous provision.

December 4: Farmer's Day /Father's Day (Ghana). Honoring farmers and fishermen.

December 5 — 6: St. Nicholas Day (Europe), Sinterklaas (Belgium), Sinterklaasavond or Pakjesavond (Netherlands)

St. Nicholas Day honors St. Nicholas, patron saint of Christmas, gift giving, and children. He is also called Sinterklaas or Pakjesavond.

In Belgium, children put their shoes, filled with carrots and sugar cubes, and a cup of coffee near the hearth on St. Nicholas Eve in hopes that Sinterklaas will leave gifts.

In the Netherlands, children put their shoes by the bed the night before St. Nicholas Day in hopes of receiving gifts and candy.

December 8: Bodhi Day (Japan). Buddhists celebrate the day of awakening or enlightenment. through meditation.

December 12: The Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Mexico). Mary, the Virgin of Guadalupe, is celebrated by Catholics across Mexico who pay pilgrimage to see

an image of Mary (Virgen Morena).

December 13: St. Lucia Day (Sweden, Norway, and the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland). The festival of lights honors St. Lucia who was a Christian Martyr killed by Romans in 304 CE due to her religious beliefs. This festival marks the beginning of the holiday season.

December 24: Christmas Eve (many countries)

December 21— January 1: Yule (Germany). Yule has been celebrated since the 4th century. The festival lasts for twelve days. The word Yule originated from the word jól. It may also be the root of the English word "jolly."

December 25: Christmas Day (many countries). The celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

December 26 — January 1: Kwanzaa (USA), Boxing Day (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and many Commonwealth countries)

Kwanzaa, a seven-day African holiday celebrating African heritage, unity and culture. Festive food and recognition of seven principles of Kwanzaa are honored.

Boxing Day originated in recognition of servants, tradespeople and the poor by presenting them with gifts.

December 27: St. Stephen's Day (England). Patron Saint of horses and sporting events

December 31: New Year's Eve (many countries), Omisaka (Japan). Omisaka, the Japanese tradition of welcoming the New Year with friends and family.

December is a month of gratefulness, forgiveness, and renewal in celebrations around the world. Honoring relationships is a global tradition. No matter the celebration, the tradition, or the country, people use this holiday season to reconnect and strengthen bonds; to give thanks and start the renewal process with the ones they love.

Celebrating the heart of humanity gives meaning to the holiday season around the world. ■

Speakers Bureau Ramps Up for 2022

by Edith Tiencken, DTM, Speakers Bureau Chair



Edith Tiencken

As we look toward a new year, D84's Speakers Bureau (SB) plans to elevate to a new level. Read on to learn about its key elements and success plan.

Speakers Bureau Vision:

The District 84 (D84) Speakers Bureau (SB) serves as a Community Choice Hub that provides the best-in-class Toastmasters

who deliver inspiring, educational, and edifying messages to meet audience needs. The Bureau will enhance members' professional and public speaking status by promoting their expertise and creating a sense of belonging in an exclusive forum.

Speakers Bureau Five Key Elements:

- ① Elevate current services to members and D84 communities
- ② Its strategy will enrich D84 and Toastmasters International (TI) as a whole
- ③ Improve standards of practice through selection qualifications, speaker promotions, and visibility of the SB in professional forums and other community-related platforms (e.g., conferences, employee programs, association meetings, trainings)
- ④ Incorporate a more active role of advanced clubs to help with recruiting, evaluating, and maintaining standards of quality
- ⑤ Foster a win-win environment for both member and district growth and community enhancement

REST into Success:

Recruitment: To ensure standards of excellence, the SB will further improve the member selection criteria, while utilizing a RISE selection committee (see below) and will lean on members of advanced clubs to evaluate SB presentations.

The RISE Selection Committee consists of Distinguished Toastmasters who support by example, the Toastmasters mission statement through elevated standards of Respect, Integrity, Service, and Excellence (as defined in the committee qualifications), and thus serve as a member selection committee for the SB to assist with recruitment.

If you'd like to be part of the Speakers Bureau, contact [Edith Tiencken](#).

If you'd like to be part of the Speakers Bureau RISE Selection Committee, contact [Debby Kerr-Henry](#)

"The Bureau will enhance members' professional and public speaking status by promoting their expertise and creating a sense of belonging in an exclusive forum."

Engagement: To foster an environment of collaboration and participation, the SB will provide conversational forums intended to gain insights, brainstorm new ideas, host relevant speakers, and identify opportunities for speaking engagements.

Support: To provide relevant continued education, the SB will provide sessions identified and facilitated for its members on topics related to the field of professional speaking.

Talent Promotion: In collaboration with D84's promotional efforts, Maria Martinez, Public Relations Manager, will develop a branding campaign including a logo, speaker classification badges, LinkedIn and Facebook pages, and a web presence that caters to the community at large with the goal of promoting and showcasing SB talent and activities. ■

CHERISHED Holiday Traditions



Julie Salgo

Girl-Talk and Toast-Stars

St. Nicholas Day

"December 6 was a St. Nicholas Day tradition for children, but it was simply called Nicholas Day. I remember putting my shoes in the window on December

5, before I went to bed, and by the next morning, they had a few candies in them. Only "good" children ended up with candies, and the bad ones were supposed to get birch (rod for whipping)."



Pamela Winter

Talk of the World Toasta-masters

Hanukkah

"Hanukkah has always been a family tradition for me. Hanukkah celebrates the miracle of the oil and rededication of the temple of Solomon after it was defiled by the Romans. Each night another candle is

lit on the Hanukkiah (from right to left) for 8 nights in a row and then gifts are exchanged. One traditional food that is served is potato pancakes. It's a joyous holiday with lots of love and makes great family memories."



John Morrow

Lakeland Toastmasters

Christmas

"For 45 years, my late wife and I always put our Family Christmas tree up on November 1st. Two and one-half years ago, she died suddenly and without

warning. It's been hard. This year, the tree went up "Nov 1st". Every decoration is Cherished & ties Donna and me to the ones we love. My granddaughter has helped me to transform and heal. She is named after her late grandma. She'll be two on January 27th."



Pim Parpart

South Beach

New Year

"Some Thai people visit their local temple on New Year's Eve to meditate and chant until Midnight. Many businesses will organize a New Year's Eve party with great food, good music, and dancing. On New Year's Day, Thai Buddhists make merit by giving alms to the monks, listening to sermons by the monks and releasing birds or fish. January 1st is also the day of family gathering for a great meal and gift exchange."

Tips for Holiday Toasts

by Marjane Taylor, DTM



Marjane Taylor

The holidays can be the perfect time to celebrate the people and occasions in our lives that are memorable, and what better way to do that than with a toast?

First, to clarify, toasting can be done with any beverage, so your toast can be work- or family-friendly. Even water works but having a nice sparkling non-alcoholic beverage on hand can

make everyone feel special.

However, if the grinch side of your personality has taken over, causing you to feel less tolerant, and you want an early end to a less-than-fascinating evening, try handing out prune juice for your next toast. If you can convince your guests to drink it, they'll be going, going, gone, before you know it.

Assuming you've got the green light, remember to **keep the toast brief!** (You'll want to leave before the traffic jam occurs at the restroom.) Think of your toast as a Table Topic. Aim to keep it at less than two minutes and commit to a single theme for the toast.

Find common ground. One way to do this is to include a few gracious comments to the host. You will be especially grateful that you did this if the guests linger too long at your host's home after consuming the prune juice.

Other considerations:

- ① If you drink too much alcohol before speaking, you may be prone to these common faux pas:
- ② Making this a speech about yourself. (I am sure you find yourself endlessly fascinating.)

③ Using inappropriate language or embarrassing stories. Grandma won't appreciate it, and the boss may fire you. That's okay. You probably won't remember anyway.

④ Apologizing for everything - your scratchy voice, getting too emotional, or stumbling over the words. (If you've been drinking too much, it is highly likely you will be stumbling over words, and there's a good chance you'll be very emotional about that.)

⑤ If you mistakenly combine the alcohol with the prune juice, you will have more regrets than even I can imagine.

“

Delivering a holiday toast is a great honor, and if it's not something you've done at past holiday gatherings, this would be the perfect time to begin a new tradition.

”

This is a toast, so raise your glass, and pause to give guests time to lift their glasses as well. Lower your glass to waist-height, before you begin. Starting with a little humor is good, it will help your guests to forgive you once the prune juice kicks in. (Some of the older guests may actually appreciate the “extra benefits” of this toast.)

Most importantly, be sincere and **speak from the heart.** (You may want to avoid doing this if you have consumed too much alcohol and if you want to keep at least a few friends.)

Delivering a holiday toast is a great honor, and if it's not something you've done at past holiday gatherings, this would be the perfect time to begin a new tradition. We can all use a little motivation and a holiday prune juice toast is a fantastic way to eliminate the negatives and go forth positively.

I'll toast to that! But not with prune juice. And seriously, please do not drink either alcohol OR copious amounts of prune juice before driving. It is not safe. ■

Guilt: The Gift That Keeps On Giving

by Joe Dertien, DTM, Katherine Eaton, Marjane Taylor, DTM

Tis the season to hear harmonious voices singing. Wait a minute...Did I remember to sign up for the role of a soloist in the Christmas Cantata? I feel a twinge of guilt.

'Tis the season for baking. Did you remember you volunteered to bake ten dozen cookies for the homeless shelter? That feeling of guilt is rising faster than those unbaked cookies as the timer turns red.

'Tis the season for donations to the "bell ringers." "Did you try to avoid the entrance door where the bell ringer was taking donations? I wanted to give a speech, explaining I'd already given at five other stores, but the guilt was present and accounted for.

'Tis the season for sending out the family Christmas letter. At least it USED to be the season, back when Mom was sending it. Now I feel guilty for sending it out late (or not at all) and guilt when my family's "accomplishments" don't measure up. Why is it that other families have cards that describe their fabulous European vacation, and their children's graduation from law school, medical school, and engineering school? Mine runs more along the lines of, "We finally made the drive to the Spam Museum and spent a full 30 minutes there before Susie got sick, the dog ran away, and I discovered I had a severe allergy to Spam."

'Tis the season for mailing presents. Was it my procrastination that caused me to stand in line for two hours counting my "Ahs" and "Ums"? I had full-blown guilt when an elderly lady dropped her packages in front of me and I didn't offer to help her pick them up. She kindly evaluated my stress level and offered me her place in line.

'Tis the season for office solicitations for donations. First, there was Janie's birthday, then Pete's retirement, and now "a collection for the poor orphans at St. Mary's who won't have a Christmas this year without our donations." What is a guilty but poor office worker to do? If that wasn't enough, someone else is organizing "helpers" to volunteer time at the local homeless shelter and soup kitchen. If I volunteer any more time,

I'll feel the guilt of being homeless myself after my family kicks me out for desertion.

I believe I'm seeing a pattern of traditional guilt here. Am I perpetuating this learned behavior by reacting like an "Ugly Sweater" contest participant? I need to Find My Funny or at least a Joke Master!

'Tis the season for holiday office parties. Did you hear that toast given by the CEO? Was my guilt justified when that old Scrooge said, "No bonuses this year?" That was my ONLY reason for attending.

'Tis the season for hot chocolate, Christmas cookies, dry turkey, and regifted fruitcake. Some of us may need our Toastmasters skills to keep from rehashing the same family disagreements that we've had since we were kids.

'Tis the season for kissing under the mistletoe. Since our lips can't stretch the required 6-foot social-distancing span, let's just plan to show our vaccination cards and go for it.

Does guilt have to be the gift that keeps on giving throughout the year? Gratitude instead of attitude may just shorten your pathway to enjoy being in the present without guilt being the word of the day.



Since the Three Wise Men were unavailable, these Three Wise Guys were happy to share their holiday guilt experiences:

*Joe Dertien, PMI Toastmaster Club
Katherine Eaton, Highway Safety Toastmaster Club
Marjane Taylor, Leadership and Find Your Funny Toastmaster Clubs. ■*

Toastmasters Word Search

by Julie Salgo, Enigmatologist

Toastmasters exude these emotions, qualities, behavior, and activities

U D T W L V M N M T P F I T T E X
L E A D R E Z S P A L D M Y C T U
I V F H N M A E A G E L J O Z A S
S O C E I X C R M I H J U Y F U F
T L O S E C J S N V S R L R L L I
E U A A A D V I C E A U I O I A N
N N C N U F B Y B G C E H Y R V I
J T H T N H R A E R N I E T T E S
X E U D Y T A Q C D A L T N N J H
O E O G M U Y V L K P V E C U E Q
L R O S Q F C Y N M M M E F A H U
T P O L E V E D A E E B Y M F R C
W U K M F H E X N L D K L J K U P
C O X H T K E T P C Q C E Z A Q D
S S R Q G O O M C X X S M F E A R
Z I W G Z R I A F F L Q I U Q K Z
T E T A P I C I T R A P T C Y T Q

ACCEPT
ADVICE
BRAVE
COACH
COURAGE
DEVELOP
ENTHUSIASM

EVALUATE
EXAMPLE
FEAR
FEEDBACK
FINISH
FRIENDLY
FUN

GROW
HELP
IMPLEMENT
LEAD
LEARN
LISTEN
MENTOR

PARTICIPATE
PRACTICE
TIMELY
TRY
VOLUNTEER



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