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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, CO, USA 80112
+1 720-439-5050

www.toastmasters.org

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For information on joining

or building a club, visit:

www.toastmasters.org

Article submission:

submissions@toastmasters.org

Letters to the Editor:

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Finding Diamonds in the Rough

When I was in high school, only one elective was open to me: typing. Imagine the boredom for my teenage brain! I could not see the advantages of doing such repetitive work, but I dutifully slogged through my elective and did my best to get good marks.

After I graduated and began applying for jobs, I discovered that my typing skills were in high demand. Perhaps that awful class hadn't been such a waste? By the time I launched my own business, I knew that typing had been a part of my growth process. I just couldn't see it at the time.

Sometimes the tasks we're most resistant to are the ones that help us the most. I remember my first Toastmasters meetings. I was a member of a club full of wonderful people with great ideas ... and our business meetings were exercises in frustration! We couldn't make effective decisions because we were speaking over each other and didn't know when or how to make our point.

When someone brought up Robert's Rules of Order, I sighed inwardly. Do we have to? Here was another system I had to learn. Where the heck would I use it? Certainly not outside of Toastmasters. Of course, you can guess—once our rules were in place, we were able to make efficient decisions that propelled our club forward. But the experience propelled me forward, as well.



Sometimes the tasks we're most resistant to are the ones that help us the most.

Once I was willing to learn the lessons from my club meetings, I became known as someone who could run meetings while keeping conflict to a minimum. I chaired contentious sessions between community members and salmon farmers. I led discussions for women who felt they weren't being heard in the political process. I was able to step up for my community in ways that really mattered—all because I learned a model and a process that I initially didn't want to consider.

Our learning curve often involves steps we don't anticipate or want to take. I went through many wasted sheets of paper during typing class. I made mistake after mistake as I learned how to effectively lead a meeting so everyone was heard. But once I committed, I was willing to be temporarily terrible in pursuit of growth.

As a Toastmaster, you've already proven you're someone who is willing to work hard. Be confident in your capacity to grow. Consider how annoyances might provide opportunities. You never know what diamonds you'll find in the rough.

Margaret Page, DTM
International President

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Pictured on cover: Farzana Chohan, DTM, Ph.D.

News

New Speechcraft Flier

For clubs looking to promote Speechcraft events to local companies and business-focused individuals, this new [corporate-focused flier](#) promotes the transferable skills gained through the Speechcraft program and can be customized with your club's event information.

Women in Leadership Webinar

Toastmasters is celebrating women in leadership with a webinar on March 8, International Women's Day. [Register today](#) to join in and hear a panel of compelling women from a variety of disciplines talk about communication and leadership topics. And make sure to read this month's article about five exemplary and inspirational women leaders who are Toastmasters!



Does Your Club Have Gift Certificates?

Gift certificates to redeem for Toastmasters merchandise must be mailed to World Headquarters along with the order details. (Find our mailing address on the [Contact Us](#) page.) You can create an order summary on the Toastmasters website to send with your certificates that will include the cost of shipping and applicable taxes. You can do this by going through the purchase process and stopping when payment is requested. If you need additional help, email supplyorders@toastmasters.org.

Resources

Toastmaster Magazine—Online Extras

There's much to celebrate in the month of March! Visit the [magazine website](#) to learn how we're honoring International Women's Day; discover the power of poetry and tell us about your favorite verse for World Poetry Day; and find out how to take part in a special March Madness magazine feature.

Tips for Club Meeting Roles

The success of a club meeting depends on the participants. At each meeting, there are many roles to fill, and they play an important part in making the club experience enjoyable. Visit the [Club Meeting Roles webpage](#) for a description of each role and find helpful *Toastmaster* articles filled with tips for taking them on.

The Guiding Light of Club Central

Are you a new club officer? Or a current club officer who is looking for a way to provide receipts to your members? Great news! The [Club Central Tutorials](#) walk an officer through all the different tools in Club Central, from Adding Members to Club Achievements.

Reminders

Dues Renewal

To ensure your club is in good standing and receives credit for the Distinguished Club Program, remember to log in to Club Central and submit your dues payments by April 1, 2022. Per Policy 2.0, the minimum renewal requirement is eight paid members—at least three of whom were club members during the previous renewal period. Unpaid officers lose access to Club Central 30 days after their membership expires. Email the Club and Member Support Team at renewals@toastmasters.org if you have questions.



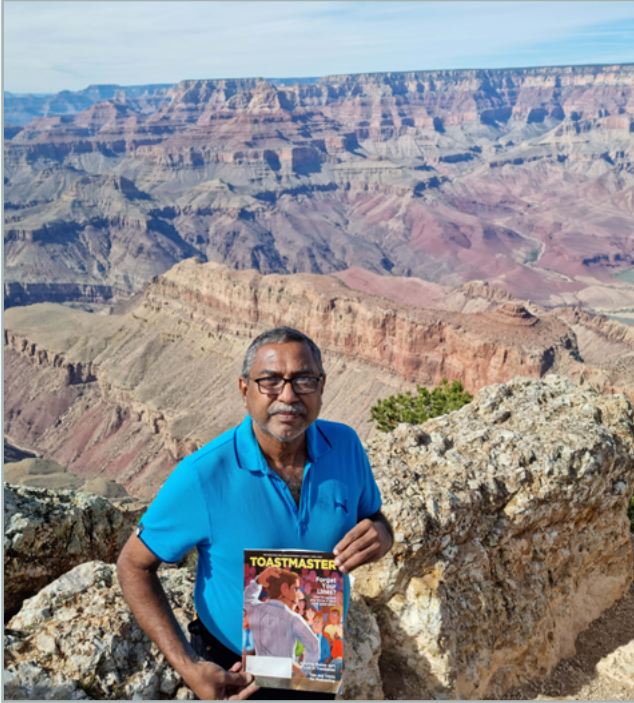
Help New Clubs Charter in Your District

Do you have prospective clubs in your District hoping to charter? Set these clubs up for a successful chartering process by ensuring they use the most up-to-date version of our charter documents, located in the Resource Library and in the ["How to Build a Toastmasters Club"](#) guide.

Support Members With Path Selection

When viewing your club's roster in [Club Central](#), look out for members who do not have "Pathways enabled" below their name. This indicates that they have not yet selected their first free path. To get them started in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience and help them choose their first path, have them navigate to their profile and follow the prompts to select a path. If members need additional help, have them email educationprogram@toastmasters.org.

Traveling Toastmaster



MOHAN MORAIS of Colombo, Sri Lanka, visits the Grand Canyon in Arizona.



ANNE VISDELOUP of Paris, France, begins a nautical race in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria—one of the Canary Islands.

Member Recognition

A Toastmaster's Centennial Milestone



Edwin "Ted" Cecil, DTM

Edwin "Ted" Cecil, DTM, a Toastmaster of 58 years, will celebrate his 100th birthday in March, amid accolades from the Fort Harrison Toastmasters Club and Daybreakers Club, both in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he is an active member.

"Ted is a treasure," says Dana Scruggs, Vice President Education for the Fort Harrison club. To mark the milestone, the club recently met Cecil via Zoom to ask him questions about his colorful life.

Cecil joined Toastmasters in 1964 as a charter member of a club, now expired, in Rochester, New York. He went on to serve as an Area 14 and Area 25 Governor and District Governor. In 2001, he was among 20 members chosen by the Toastmasters International President for the prestigious Presidential Citation. He received the DTM award in 2005, at age 84.

Cecil still cites specific goals and motivations for remaining a Toastmaster, even after all these years. "I don't need the speaking prowess that I required many years ago. But I do need the exercise of speech preparation—the research and the thinking," he explains. "I also want to give back, as best I can. I feel overall that my life, at this age, is not going to be a vacuum. I have things I have learned, and I want to say them! With Toastmasters I'm keeping my ability to speak in public."

When asked about the greatest speech he ever heard, Cecil, who was born and raised in Northern England, quickly affirms it's Winston Churchill's 1940 speech to rally England's support during World War II.

"We shall fight on the beaches ... we shall never surrender," Cecil begins to recite in an instantly recognizable Churchillian voice. "He was saying we'll never give up. And that's my motto, even today."

Snapshot



The Knowledge Club Toastmasters of Marietta in Marietta, Georgia, celebrates with an annual awards ceremony to recognize the members who completed educational awards and won club speech contests in the 2020–2021 program year.



Member Recognition

A 50–Year Anniversary Tour

In October 2021, Tony Nelson, DTM, of Fenelon Falls, Ontario, Canada, celebrated 50 continuous years in Toastmasters. To commemorate the occasion, he decided to visit five of his previous clubs in a week and take on a speaker role at each of them—something he describes as his anniversary tour.

Nelson explains how both he and Toastmasters have changed (he joined before women were officially admitted), and the many ways that the organization has impacted his life.

“I was never told explicitly how to do things at Toastmasters, but I absorbed so much,” he notes. He took advantage of countless opportunities through the years and then “watched what people did and I learned from all of that.”

He credits Toastmasters with giving him the confidence and skills needed to take business risks and eventually make a career switch into



Tony Nelson, DTM, receiving the Presidential Citation from then-International President Lark Doley, DTM.

teaching. He has supported the formation of countless clubs in District 60, was a Pathways Ambassador when the education program was rolling out, served as chair of the District

Reformation Committee, and in 2019, received the Presidential Citation at the Toastmasters International Convention.

Passionate about giving and receiving feedback and evaluations, Nelson has been a mentor to countless members, “whether they wanted me to or not,” he laughs. He has been known to write long, thoughtful evaluations to speakers after a meeting.

Retirement hasn’t slowed him down. He continues to visit clubs around the world, offering his feedback and insight, and enjoying the camaraderie and growth he finds. “When I’m at a club meeting, and I see a visitor or new person and they’re clearly uncomfortable or ill at ease, I know within a few weeks or months, they’re going to change. That’s a real joy for me.

“I found my voice in Toastmasters, and I’ve used it for all kinds of positives.”

From City to Gritty to the TEDx Stage

How a move to the mountains and joining Toastmasters prepared me for the talk of a lifetime.

By Rachel Cronin

I live off-grid in the mountains of the Colorado wild, which is something I never thought I'd say. As a mom of two active boys, I enjoy modern luxuries that make life easier, but I also love nature and escaped to the mountains every chance I got.

When my husband and I found a 35-acre mountain property for sale, something clicked for us. We saw an opportunity to blend the conveniences of modern living with the beauty of nature and went “all in,” trading our city life for a live-in recreational vehicle (RV), gritty dirt roads, and the challenge to build our dream in a place no one has built before.

Going all in is a theme for my family. We went all in with swapping lifestyles, building our businesses, and documenting our journey into the wild through blogging and social media.

When a potential speaking opportunity came my way last year, I again decided to go all in with learning how to speak by joining an organization I knew nothing about: Toastmasters.

In just six months I went from being a new Toastmaster in an online club to onstage performing not only my first-ever public speech, but a [TEDx Talk](#)—something that most would consider to be the talk of a lifetime.

How on earth did I get there? And so quickly?

This story begins with Downtown Toastmasters, an online club based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I chose this club because as a busy mom, I needed to meet during school hours, and the time they met seemed perfect. Little did I know, this club was also Distinguished, which means they consistently provide their members with a high-quality experience, have active members who regularly progress through the Pathways program, and retain a large club membership. They have maintained this prestigious recognition for almost a decade.

If that wasn't amazing enough, the Vice President Membership at the time also happened to be an official TEDx speaker coach—all factors that contributed to my rapid growth.

Because of these things, I noticed and experienced an incredible club culture. The officers



I'm forever grateful I said “yes” to Toastmasters and the impact it has had on my life both personally and professionally.

and members made the effort during each meeting to encourage participation, welcome guests, and motivate progress in Pathways.

The turning point came when I decided to work in a mastermind group geared toward developing TED speaking skills with Sandy Lamb, the TEDx speaker coach; current Club

President Patrick Linfante; and author Laurie Sullivan-Hellman.

This mastermind group, led by Sandy, goes to show that Toastmasters isn't only about public speaking—it is also about networking and meeting people who will change your life forever.

Part of the mastermind program involved applying to participate in TEDx events. All I wanted was to be prepared for one potential speaking opportunity. I never imagined applying to other events, but of course I did as part of going all in with Toastmasters and this mastermind group.

To my surprise, not long after applying to audition for TEDxBreckenridge, I received the incredible news that my application was accepted. I doubled down my all-in effort and practiced my audition speech for my club members before performing it for the TEDx panel.

The effort was worth it. I walked away from my audition feeling ecstatic that I had gone outside my comfort zone, and was happy with my performance regardless of the outcome.

But again, to my surprise, I was met with the best email of my life telling me that my audition earned me a spot on the official TEDx stage, and I had three months to write and prepare a longer version of my audition for the big event in October 2021.

During that time, I never missed a Toastmasters meeting and continued to work one-on-one with Sandy to prepare for the TEDx stage. This all-in effort meant everything when I walked onstage in front of the sold-out event and nailed my message despite the obstacles of being a brand-new speaker.

The catalyst for my rapid growth was a combination of joining an established club with members who take growth seriously and my all-in attitude. I'm forever grateful I said yes to Toastmasters and the impact it has had on my life both personally and professionally. **T**

Rachel Cronin is Vice President Public Relations for Downtown Toastmasters Club in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Welcome to Toastmasters

Three tips to get started in your public speaking journey.

By Bill Brown, DTM

Congratulations! You are now a Toastmaster. Welcome to the family. You have embarked on a journey—a journey to improve your speaking and leadership skills. Your club and the Pathways learning experience will give you a great start.

One of the first actions you should take is to select your path in Pathways. This is the primary tool that Toastmasters use to guide us as we develop into stronger communicators and leaders. You have a wide selection of paths. Although there are many common elements, each one has its own unique set of projects that pertain to that topic area. Select the path that best fits your objectives and get started. Your club can help you here.

In this article, I want to give you a few tips I have learned that can help you get the most out of the program.

Tip #1: Finishing a path is not a race.

If you are like me, it is easy to want to finish a path as quickly as possible. The problem is you don't become a competent speaker or leader by completing a path. You become competent by mastering the skills taught in the path. Each path consists of five levels:

- Level 1 focuses on the primary, foundational skills that you need as a speaker.
- Level 2 is targeted to help you discover your communication and leadership styles.
- Level 3 is chock-full of electives that help you develop your skills further.
- Level 4 also continues skill development by focusing on real-world situations.
- Level 5 pulls it all together through larger projects.

While you do not have to do the projects in order, I strongly recommend that you do so. Mastering the skills in Level 1 will make the balance of the program a lot easier.

Your first three speeches get you comfortable onstage and teach you how to write and deliver a speech with effectiveness.

Evaluations are a core part of the Toastmasters program. Your final Level 1 project gives



Select the path that best fits your objectives and get started.

you experience in receiving, incorporating, and giving feedback.

Take the time to master these important skills.

When you take on one of the projects, don't start with writing the speech. Start with learning the information in Pathways. Then work to incorporate the lessons you learn into your speech. And don't be afraid to push the envelope. You will be amazed at how much you will learn that way.

Tip #2: Map out your speech topics early.

I have seen many Toastmasters become paralyzed because they don't know what to speak about next. I recommend that you sit down

today and start a list of potential speech topics. Carry that list around with you and add new topics as they come to mind. It is always easier to come up with topics when you aren't under the pressure of a deadline.

When you have a good topics list, review it and map out which topics might be most appropriate for the various projects. For instance, a speech that allows you to be very expressive with your voice and body would be great for the "Introduction to Vocal Variety and Body Language" project in Level 1.

Tip #3: Use your mentors.

Your club has, hopefully, assigned you a mentor. This person will assist you as you write your first speeches and guide you in the various meeting roles.

You may be thinking, *Of course I would use my mentor.* The truth is many do not. In fact, more times than not, my mentees haven't even returned my phone calls. Big mistake! Don't be like them. Embrace your mentor. He or she is a resource who can greatly enhance your Toastmasters experience.

You will note, however, that I wrote "mentors." You should have an officially assigned mentor, but you are not limited to talking to just that one person. You will quickly figure out that there are some members in your club who stand out as strong speakers. Ask them for their input. Most will be glad to give you some tips.

These are just a few points to keep in mind as you begin your Toastmasters journey. It is easy to get caught up in the rush to get projects done. Instead, get caught up in mastering the art of the speech. What a difference it will make. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette, and Evening Stars Club in Denver, Colorado. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Metaphorically Speaking

Use visual language to build a bridge between you and your audience.

By Oscar Santolalla, DTM

On March 5, 1946, in the wake of World War II, Winston Churchill said, “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an **iron curtain** has descended across the continent.” On August 28, 1963, amid the enduring struggle for civil rights, Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Now is the time to lift our nation from the **quicksands** of racial injustice to the **solid rock** of brotherhood.” What do these two historical statements have in common?

They reflect visual language. When we read or hear these phrases, we can’t help but create visual images in our mind: an iron curtain, quicksands, a solid rock. To be more precise, the speakers use metaphors, a powerful figure of speech.

We use and hear metaphors all the time. Do you remember the last time a politician was **cherry-picking** statistics to support their points? Are you following the **Swiss cheese** advice for protecting yourself from COVID-19? My aim is that in this article, you’ll learn the **nuts and bolts** of speaking in metaphors.

What Is a Metaphor?

A metaphor is a word or a few words that form an image, reflecting the point you’re making in figurative rather than literal language. Etymologically speaking, “metaphor” comes from the Greek word *metapherein* (meaning “to transfer”). Instead of saying, “Marta is very knowledgeable,” you might say, “Marta is a **walking encyclopedia**.”

Why You Should Use Metaphors

- Metaphors use visual language. Visual language can evoke the senses and create long-lasting memories, and this is where the power of metaphor comes in.
- Metaphors simplify complex concepts. I work in the tech industry, in which sooner or later we have to introduce a novel or complex idea. When you find it hard to explain a difficult or unfamiliar concept, a metaphor can be the right tool to use.
- Metaphors help you connect your new concept with an idea that is already familiar to your audience. Every audience has developed deep familiarity with some movies, popular songs, sports, food, commonplace technologies, etc. Metaphors help **build a bridge** between that familiar idea and your new concept.

How to Create Your Own Metaphors

The title of my second book, *Rock the Tech Stage*, is an example of a metaphor. Also, I often say to speakers: **Tele-transport us to your living room** to convey the

power of audience interaction in virtual presentations. Your audience wants to feel like we’re in front of each other, not at the computer on the other side of the world.

Here are a few simple steps to create your own metaphors:

1. Choose a field or theme your audience is familiar with or fond of.
2. Make a list of specific objects, people, or ideas that represent that field.
3. Now consider the idea or concept you want to transform into a metaphor.
4. Use one of the items on your list to visually represent or symbolize the idea you’re trying to get across.

You’ve created your own metaphor! Now test it with friends or colleagues. Here’s an example in action:

1. **Field or theme your audience is familiar with:** Space.
2. **List of ideas that represent it:** Planets, stars, satellites, comet, galaxy, black hole, gravity, probe, meteor.
3. **Your idea:** The keynote speaker struck me with her passion.
4. **Metaphor:** You saw the keynote speaker? Her passion is **from another galaxy!**

Will My Metaphor Work Everywhere?

Probably not. People share a lot in common across the globe, but in every country and region there are beliefs, laws, products, famous people, pop culture, and history that are unknown to the rest of the world. A well-crafted metaphor can work wonders in one country and be cryptic elsewhere. Know your audience well. And once you craft a metaphor, test it on friends or colleagues before using it widely.

Let’s Use More Metaphors

Metaphors are powerful tools of persuasion, or as speech-writer Simon Lancaster would say, “Metaphors are **the nuclear weapon of communication**.” And as any powerful tool, they can be used for good or for bad. Metaphors can persuade us that some products or technology are superior or inferior, metaphors can persuade us of injustice and convince us to take health advice seriously. But all in all, metaphors will make our words paint pictures in people’s minds.

Use metaphors, and you will be **head and shoulders** above all speakers! **■**

Oscar Santolalla, DTM, is a member of the Finlandia Toastmasters and Northern Stars Toastmasters, both in Helsinki, Finland. He is author of the book [Rock the Tech Stage](#).



The Power of POETRY

Stretch your imagination and celebrate the wonders of verse.

By Aine O'Neill

Poems can express what we are feeling like no other medium. As the poet Muriel Rukeyser says, “Breathe in experience, breathe out poetry.” Poems sharpen our senses, put words on our emotions, and help us savor the world through the light of the poet’s eyes.

I am honored to hold the role of Poet in Residence for District 71 (United Kingdom and Ireland) for the 2021–2022 program year. It is a new role for our District, and it’s exciting to be involved in such a novel project.

present or recites one of their own at the beginning of the meeting. This helps elevate members’ use of language, or at the very least gets them thinking in creative ways. That, in turn, sharpens our speechwriting skills. As part of my role as Poet in Residence, I write poems to inspire members to reach high, believe in themselves, and achieve their goals.

It is one thing to read poetry and enjoy it, but why not use your creative juice to *write* some poetry? Start by noticing things around you. Keep a [notebook](#). Jot down

Poems sharpen our senses, put words on our emotions, and help us savor the world through the light of the poet’s eyes.

I have loved writing from a very young age, and I have written many poems for milestones in people’s lives and as holiday gifts and for sick or elderly relatives. It has been my experience that people are very touched by this form of expression.

March 21 is [World Poetry Day](#), a time to celebrate the benefits that poetry brings to our lives. Writing, reading, and hearing poems help us:

- Foster a connection with nature
- Tap into our emotional and inner lives
- Develop an understanding of the world around us
- Increase our empathy for others
- Create a stage for our own experience


Many Toastmasters clubs include a role for poetry in their meetings. In our club, the Irish Life Toastmasters in Dublin, we have a Poetmaster who chooses a poem to

anything quirky or observations you have noticed during your day.

Follow these basic steps to writing a poem (as devised by poet Pat Boran in his book *The Portable Creative Writing Workshop*).

- Pick an object in the room where you are now.
- Write down its texture, feel, weight.
- Write down where it is taking you in your head.
- Pick out words that would help convey the function of that object.
- Check if they invoke the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing).
- Begin your poem by writing two or three verses.
- Try writing in either rhyming couplets (a pair of lines in a verse) or free verse (unrhymed poetry without a regular meter) to begin with.
- Attempt to incorporate a universal message in the end of your poem. This can deepen the impact of your poetry, as it taps into our common humanity.

As part of my role, I am holding a series of workshops for the District. In the first of these workshops, held in October 2021, participants wrote poems about objects in their room, such as a pen, a rocking chair, a golf ball, and an ornament, to name a few. The quality of the poetry produced gave me immense pleasure. There’s no reason why you can’t give this a go—you might just surprise yourself at what you can achieve.

So for World Poetry Day, why not read, recite, and revel in the work of poets around the world. I promise you will feel all the better for it. Enjoy! 

Mark the Day

World Poetry Day, on March 21, celebrates linguistic diversity; promotes the reading, writing, and teaching of poetry; and spotlights the oral traditions of poetry recitals. In the spirit of the occasion, people are encouraged to read and savor the work of poets around the world. The event was started in 1999 by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). In commemorating World Poetry Day last year, UNESCO head Audrey Azoulay, of France, said poetry has the power to “shake us from everyday life and the power to remind us of the beauty that surrounds us and of the resilience of the human spirit.”



Aine O'Neill is a member of the Irish Life and Viking Voices Toastmasters clubs in Dublin, Ireland.

5 Social Media Tips for Club Leaders

Learn how to effectively use social media to gain and retain members.

By Victoria Salem

Is your club using social media to connect with prospective members? If not, is it because you're not sure where to even start? Social media helps foster communication with club members and guests, and if used effectively, can be a member recruitment tool. Through social media platforms, you immediately connect with your audience.

How do you create content and successfully share your message? How often and on which platform should you post?

Alina Paul, DTM, of the Desert Pioneers Toastmasters in Salmiya, Kuwait, outlined five strategies in a social media workshop for District 20. Below are Paul's strategies to effectively utilize your club's social media along with advice from other social media savvy Toastmasters.

1 Set a goal and make a plan.

Ask yourself what your primary objective is. Does your club want to grow your followers or attract new members? "Keep in mind that goal when creating your strategy and sharing content," says Paul. Your goal will change over time depending on your club's needs, and therefore your strategy will also change.

Now, who is in charge of creating and sharing content for your club? An easy choice is the Vice President Public Relations (VPPR), but it could be another officer or member. Whoever is selected should get help from others. For example, ask one or two people to take videos or pictures during meetings, create design templates, or tackle other tasks as needed.

If you give multiple members access to the platforms, coordinate to keep consistency. Some elements in your posts should remain the same such as the Toastmasters logo, colors, and hashtags. Paul suggests having pre-designed templates. Consistency is key to ensure your audience recognizes your club's posts and where they come from. Sticking to the Toastmasters International [Brand Manual](#) will help.

2 Identify your target audience.

Your choice of platform depends on your audience demographic: Instagram has a younger, more active

audience than Facebook or LinkedIn, according to a Pew Research study. While there is plenty of data on general social media demographics, Chamodith Ranasinghe, professional marketer and VPPR of Oasis Toastmasters in Nittambuwa, Sri Lanka, prefers knowing exactly who is viewing his club's pages. He suggests distributing a questionnaire to the club to learn what mediums work best for your existing membership. Ranasinghe says, "This really helps not only understanding your members' perspectives and expectations but also defining the key success factors for your club and areas of improvement."

Of course, you need a social media account before you start identifying your audience. When creating an account for your club, be sure to make it a business account, not just a personal page. This will ensure you have access to page insights, which can only be accessed on business accounts and provide valuable information, including your followers' most active times, locations, how they interact, pageviews, likes, etc.

Paul suggests reviewing these often. They are located on the profile page of your social platforms. Get to know who you are speaking to and consider who you are trying to reach. Knowing your audience will allow you to communicate effectively and achieve your goal.

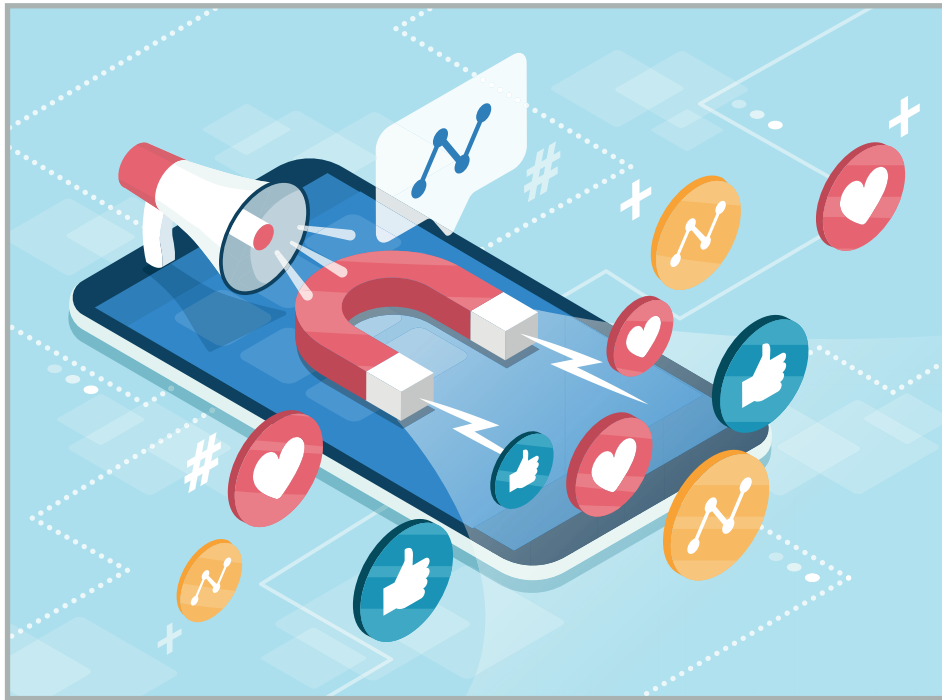
3 Create strategic content.

Meeting details are good to share, but posting about members' achievements, birthdays, contest times, and events can garner engagement.

Georgia Huntley, social media expert and member of the UofG Toastmasters in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, suggests defining three main topics for your posts—your "key content pillars." Her club's pillars are testimonials, working through Pathways, and ongoing club activities.

Sharing your club activities will inspire other members as well as showcase what your club does. Be positive and show how Toastmasters helps members grow, while having fun and building community.

Include photos of club members along with fliers and other graphics. Canva offers many free templates. For video editing, look at FilmoraGo or InShot.



Depending on your platform, you will need to size images differently, and your captions may vary. On Instagram—a visually-driven platform—use less text and be more creative with your images. Huntley recommends portrait size images (1080 x 1350 pixels). “It takes up the most

space on people’s feeds when scrolling through.”

LinkedIn focuses on professional development, so try sharing achievements, leadership opportunities and tips, and members’ development. This platform aligns nicely with the professional nature of Toastmasters so if you want to create a paid advertising campaign, opt for

Building a social media presence takes time and effort, but can be rewarding if done strategically.

space on people’s feeds when scrolling through.” The images you post shouldn’t be cut off and it’s best that they are high quality and resolution.

On Facebook—a platform meant for social networking—posts are usually more descriptive. Even with more information, it’s important to engage your audience. A good way to grab their attention is to start your post with a question.

Huntley gives three valuable tips for writing posts on any social platform:

- Spend time writing your first sentence. Capture your reader’s attention immediately.
- Use hashtags to help followers find your posts. Huntley suggests up to 30 “smart” hashtags. These are words and phrases consistent to the content you are sharing. For example, #Toastmasters, #PublicSpeaking, #Leadership, #PersonalDevelopment.
- Keep it short and get to the point quickly. “Long-form captions are out,” says Huntley.

doing it on LinkedIn. Toastmasters International created the [LinkedIn Ad Guide](#) for this purpose.

A paid advertising campaign requires a schedule, but you should create an agenda for your standard content as well. It is helpful to schedule your posts. Hootsuite is a tool that allows you to link social media accounts and set specific dates and times for your posts to go live. Organize your posts depending on the content, the platform, your goal, and your followers.

4 Encourage activity.

You want your followers to interact with your posts. Tag members so they can see your posts, and their friends and connections will see them too. Use a call to action and invite followers to share your content. Ask members to post on their personal channels about what is going on in your club and about their achievements. They could share a lesson learned at a meeting

or a photo when preparing for a speech—remind them to tag the club account.

Another efficient tool for interactions is to ask questions or create polls. You could ask your audience what they would like to see more of or what information would be helpful to them. Your followers need to feel included.

Regularly check the performances of your posts. With the insights tab on your account, you can see the number of people reached, numbers of reactions, comments, shares, etc. This information also helps you discover the best times to communicate with your followers.

5 Get your members involved.

With the help of current members, the Oasis Toastmasters gained nine new members and supported 10 other prospective members with just one campaign!

Ranasinghe, the club’s VPPR, created an extensive social media and public relations plan to unite members and attract guests. He customized club members’ Facebook profile pictures using the Toastmasters logo and branding. Members shared it on their profile and gained traction with their Facebook friends. Ranasinghe says, “It’s all about word of mouth.”

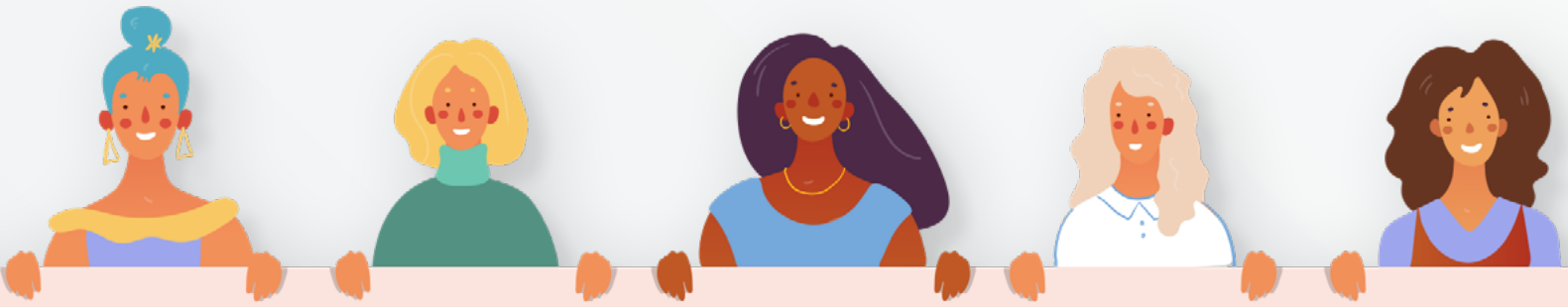
The best way to gain visibility while improving your members’ engagement and energy is to get them involved in campaigns. Create a social media vote where members compete to be awarded best speech from social media followers. Be creative and check what other clubs are doing to get inspiration from them.

Building a social media presence takes time and effort, but can be rewarding if done strategically. Paul says, “Each post is a new learning experience.” By trying things out, like on stage, you discover what is working and what is not. You can then adapt your communication style.

So jump right in and start working on your social media strategy! 📱

Editor’s Note: “Build a Social Media Presence” is an elective in *Pathways Level 4*.

Victoria Salem is a former member of the Covent Garden Speakers in London, England. A professional coach and networking expert, she helps individuals build better relationships so they can be more successful and create more opportunities for themselves. Learn more at tgncoaching.co.uk.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN HAVE THEIR DAY

How five Toastmasters are using their communication skills to speak out.

By Ruth Nasrullah



March 8 marks [International Women's Day](#), a day set aside each year to acknowledge the many achievements and challenges women around the world experience in their daily lives. It's both a celebration and a sobering reminder that equity and opportunity are still beyond the reach of many women.

The event's 2022 theme, Break the Bias, highlights the importance of women in a world that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

Toastmasters International began to break the bias years ago. After finally admitting women members in 1973, the organization has elected seven female International Presidents and chosen six women as World Champions of Public Speaking.

In 2022, women are holding top officer and board positions, including International President. Additionally, females are leaders and decision-makers for Toastmasters clubs, Districts, and regions around the world.

Toastmasters is a great place for women to grow. The organization welcomes diversity, supports self-directed achievement, and fosters real gender equality in speaking, leadership, and career advancement opportunities.

Read on to meet five female Toastmasters and learn how they've applied inherent talent, education, life experiences, and Toastmasters skills to make their mark on the world.



Arlyne Simon, Ph.D.

Does a patented inventor with a Ph.D. really need Table Topics® to prepare for answering kindergarteners' questions?

For one very accomplished woman, the answer is yes. Arlyne Simon, from Hillsboro, Oregon, is a platform architect in Intel's Health and Life

Science group and a biomedical engineer by training. She joined Speakeasy Toastmasters two years ago because she wanted to present confidently to any audience, be it fellow engineers, corporate staff—or children.

“Honestly, sometimes I have been more stumped by the questions kids ask than grown-ups,” Simon notes.

“We show middle school girls there’s a place for them in science.”

—ARLYNE SIMON, PH.D., ON ADVOCATING FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Her sessions with elementary school students stem from her education startup, [Abby Invents](#). Simon creates science-oriented picture books and other materials to inspire young students to create inventions. “Abby” has been praised by Purdue University, *Science* magazine, and the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

From 2019-2021, Simon served as a national STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) advocate for girls through the IF/THEN Ambassadors program sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

“We show middle school girls that there’s a place for them in science regardless of their skin color or their cultural background,” Simon explains.

“For Black kids and brown kids, it’s about exposure and opportunity,” she says. “Kids must first be exposed to inventors who look like them. Then they must be given opportunities to actually try being an inventor.”

As a Black woman in the male-dominated tech industry, Simon understands the value of opportunities. That’s one of the reasons she feels Toastmasters has given her an edge in a competitive field.

“When I had to give my first keynote, I was able to practice with officers in my club,” she explains. “They helped me improve my hand gestures and camera lighting for virtual meetings. It really helped me deliver a good presentation and it’s something that has had a direct application to my work.”

Nirmala Lilly, DTM

As a girl, Nirmala Lilly was told “boys are for education and girls are for marriage.” It seems she disagreed, as today she is president and CEO of Infinity Hospitality Services, a firm specializing in tourism industry consultancy and training, which she founded after years of working her way up in the hospitality industry.

Lilly is Charter President of Kerala Toastmasters in Kochi, Kerala, India, and Immediate Past District 121 Director. She credits joining Toastmasters in 2006 with helping her gain the confidence to start her own business.



“Leadership is all about empowering others to make an impact as individuals and in society.”

—NIRMALA LILLY, DTM

She’s also been active for years in organizations and initiatives that benefit and empower women. Lilly is passionate about helping women succeed; she herself relied on the support of friends and colleagues as she pursued a challenging career path.

Lilly ardently believes in mentoring, a practice she carries from Toastmasters into her volunteer activities. Just one example: She leads her state’s chapter of the Women’s Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry, a nonprofit that advocates for women by pressing for policy change, fostering networks, and offering business development assistance.

Her view on leadership? “It’s all about empowering others to make an impact as individuals and in society,” she explains.

She is especially proud of her work with the ALL Ladies League, an organization that supports women and hosts an annual World Sisterhood Day celebration.

“I enjoy sharing this network and offering a new world of opportunities and sisterhood to all women in the world,” Lilly says.

Despite coming from a childhood where the highest expectation of her was to become a wife, Lilly has shown repeatedly that women can achieve whatever they strive for, especially if they work together to strengthen each other.



Patricia Mensah-Larkai, DTM

Growing up, Patricia Mensah-Larkai, from Accra, Ghana, had the best mentors she could hope for right in her own home—her father, a military officer, and her mother, a police officer.

“My late father ensured his children had strong self-esteem and belief in ourselves to accomplish anything we put our minds to,” she says.

Mensah-Larkai is an administrator for the Ghana Border Commission, which manages the country’s internal and international boundaries. She joined Toastmasters in 2010 to develop better leadership skills. A member of the Perissos Horizon Toastmasters Club in Accra, her passion is coaching and mentoring, both with fellow Toastmasters and beyond. She uses her experience to impact other women’s and youth groups. She also volunteers for the annual National Commission for Civic Education’s Citizen Week programs, which seek to sensitize students on the rights and responsibilities of good citizens.

“Where I come from, the patriarchal society has had a huge impact on how some people still perceive the place of a woman.”

—PATRICIA MNSAH-LARKAI, DTM

She is especially proud of serving as Accra’s governor for World Speech Day, giving the opportunity for unexpected voices to be heard. The event celebrates live public speaking activities every year in more than 100 countries. As the city’s representative, Mensah-Larkai hopes she is a role model for others, especially for women in her region who may need encouragement to use their voices for positive impacts.

“I want to empower them to fulfill their dreams and aspirations,” she says. “Where I come from, the patriarchal society has had a huge impact on how some people still perceive the place of a woman as someone who should be seen and not heard.”

However, it hasn’t been that way in her life, Mensah-Larkai says. Her husband, like her father, gives her his full support.

“He encourages me to be the change I wish to see in the world,” she says.



Farzana Chohan, DTM, Ph.D.

Farzana Chohan, of Chesterfield, Missouri, is an architect, author, and organizational leadership expert. She’s active in a variety of women-empowering endeavors, including Leadership IN Women, an advocacy initiative to raise awareness of women leaders in non-traditional STEM fields, through her thought leadership, public speaking, and consulting engagements.

Chohan was raised in a culture where girls and women were discouraged from speaking up. When she immigrated to the United States, she brought that mindset with her—for a time.

“I was always self-monitoring,” she explains. “I would sit back in the room and not share my opinion. I was fine doing architectural presentations and leading projects, but in any unfamiliar environment there was a real barrier.”

She remembers volunteering to introduce a panel at a conference of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). She was asked to read two paragraphs to an audience in the hundreds. “I was standing on the stage and reading, and I felt heat rising from my toes to the top of my head,” Chohan says.

“... Unless you start to understand what human beings’ sufferings are ... you will not be able to see human-centered advancement in our society.”

—FARZANA CHOCHAN, DTM, Ph.D.

Unsurprisingly, she decided that public speaking was not for her. Then she discovered Toastmasters.

“I came across a good mentor—Past International Director Charles ‘Chuck’ Carpenter—when I joined Creve Coeur Toastmasters in Creve Coeur, Missouri. He directed me both in the leadership roles and speaking roles,” Chohan says. “Speaking confidence came gradually.”

The combined sense of practicality and compassion that has motivated Chohan to help others, first showed itself in an unusual project. While pursuing her undergraduate degree in architecture at NED University of Engineering and Technology in her native Pakistan, she undertook a project to design a center for people suffering from leprosy. She visited several existing centers to understand the residents’ lives and needs.

“The first resistance I encountered was from my own cohort and faculty,” she recalled. “They said are you out of your mind? You will come back and spread the infection to us.”

“That was a watershed moment in my life,” Chohan says, “because I realized that unless you start understanding what human beings’ sufferings are and where they are in their life, and you don’t provide for them, you will not be able to see human-centered advancement in our society.”

It is a lesson she carries with her to this day.

Allison Coffin, DTM, Ph.D.

Allison Coffin, an associate professor of integrative physiology and neuroscience at Washington State University, in Vancouver, Washington, started her career with an unusual goal: to chase sharks. She was an undergraduate marine biology major with a yearning to get to know the big fish better.

“I had no idea what I was going to do when I caught them,” she says. “But sharks are amazing, so why not chase them?”

She never did become a shark wrangler, but instead began to study human hearing loss, eventually centering her research on the zebrafish and its ability to regenerate hearing cells. The research, she says, offers promising applications for hearing-impaired people.

Coffin was introduced to Toastmasters through her mother, and quickly saw the benefits.

“I was finishing my master’s degree and the final milestone was a public thesis defense. I felt like joining Toastmasters would help me prepare for it. Instead of being afraid because people were staring at me, I could really focus on the message and what I was saying and enjoy the moment as much as anybody does in the middle of that stressful situation.”



“Having that [Toastmasters] leadership foundation gave me the tool set to be a leader beyond the organization.”

—ALLISON COFFIN, DTM, Ph.D.

Coffin has been confidently talking science ever since. In fact, she is a passionate supporter of scientific literacy—helping ordinary people understand how basic science affects them. She is a founder of [Science Talk](#), a nonprofit organization for science communicators. Its focus is to support professional science communicators and increase the impact of science in society.

Coffin says her Toastmasters skills helped her to bring her Science Talk vision to life.

“When I look back, starting Toastmasters and moving into leadership roles such as Club President or Area Director, really was the impetus for founding Science Talk,” she says. “Having that leadership foundation really gave me the tool set to be a leader beyond the organization.”

Her comment is apt. In looking at the work and lives of women who are leaders in Toastmasters and in their professions and communities, it seems clear that a strong foundation of knowledge, combined with the opportunity to grow through mentoring, is the catalyst for visionary women to become great leaders for professional and social change. **T**

Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance journalist and member of the Pearland Toastmasters Club in Pearland, Texas. She is president of the Houston chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and recently was honored with the Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member award from the society’s national organization. She is also a co-founder of the [COVID-19 Wall of Memories](#). Read more about her at www.ruthnasrullah.com.

Toastmasters and Rotary: Stronger Together

Members of both organizations share successes of local collaborations.

By Kate McClare, DTM

If you want to go fast, says an old African proverb, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Members of Toastmasters International and Rotary International are going very far indeed, through an alliance that unites them in their shared goals and builds new ones. The two organizations formed a strategic [alliance](#) in 2019, enabling Toastmasters members “to make new connections, contribute more to communities, and potentially elevate clubs” while allowing Rotary members to develop new communication and leadership skills.

Toastmasters and Rotarians who’ve been working together on a local level say the alliance has taught them how much they have in common and how much they can teach each other.

Benefits to Both Groups

In Mauritius, Port Louis Toastmasters—the first Toastmasters club on the island—and Port Louis Rotary Club—the first Rotary one there—have collaborated on several events. Kavish Ramful, a Past President of Port Louis

speaks in new settings other than our usual club settings. In a sense, we are given the opportunity to speak in the ‘real world’ and to finally be able to use those skills that we practiced for all this time.”

It has been gratifying to help Rotarians expand their skill set, Ramful adds. He notes that members of the organization have a great need to help others. “Collaborating with Rotary helps us to fulfill this need to help others that is found in Toastmasters as well.”

Teaming Up in Peru

Toastmasters and Rotary clubs in Lima, Peru, had a similar vision. “We wanted to learn from one another respectfully and generously,” says Carlos Millones, DTM, a member of both Lima Toastmasters and the Rotary Club of Lima. Through attending each other’s club meetings, Toastmasters wanted to test their own training and leadership skills, while the Rotarians sought to enhance skills like project management. “Rotarians knew they had the people and the tools,” he says, “but it was helpful to

“Collaborating with Rotary helps us to fulfill this need to help others that is found in Toastmasters as well.”

—KAVISH RAMFUL

Toastmasters, says both groups benefit from their alliance: Toastmasters share tips on communication and leadership, while Rotarians offer opportunities to serve people in need. The two clubs worked together on a fundraiser for Safe Haven Halfway Home, a temporary shelter for homeless teenaged girls. Besides helping the cause, Ramful says the project helped him strengthen his impromptu speaking skills.

With joint projects like this, he says, “speaking in front of an audience becomes easier. We get the opportunity to

give them the training in the use of the tools. Through the alliance, that could be done.”

The partnership had benefits beyond the members of the two clubs. They conducted a youth program in September 2020 with local children ages 10–12, loosely based on the Gavel Club concept for non-traditional Toastmasters groups. At weekly meetings, the young participants served in the various roles of a traditional Toastmasters meeting, from Toastmaster of the meeting to prepared speaker, evaluator, and timer. Members of the two clubs



Members of the Port Louis Toastmasters and Port Louis Rotary Club, both in Mauritius, gather for a fundraiser to benefit a shelter for homeless teenaged girls. In the center are Port Louis Toastmasters Past President Kavish Ramful (in blue shirt and glasses); Anushka Virahsawmy, director of the Safe Haven shelter; and Serge Riviere, Port Louis Rotary Club Past President.

Do you have a Toastmasters-Rotary collaboration story you would like to share? Please write to magazine@toastmasters.org.

even organized a competition following the standards of the Toastmasters International Speech Contest.

“It was a great opportunity for the youth to see that the future depended to a great extent on how well they could express themselves,” Millones says, “and for the organizing team to see that there is much more value beyond the mere fact of giving speeches and facing audiences. It gave meaning, and it gave direction as to what we were here for.”

Even as a 30-year veteran of Toastmasters, Millones says he could still add to his communication and leadership skills, including time management, which he did when presenting strategies to Rotarians. “Working with people who were open to learning and eager to implement new things gave us the strength and commitment to prepare ourselves, even to the extent of chartering a new club [Structures College Toastmasters, chartered in May 2021], with members who are more aware of these chances to grow together as a result of the alliance.”

Working Together Around the World

There are other examples of [Toastmasters-Rotary collaborations](#):

- Toastmasters in Australia presented at two Rotary district training workshops, breaking down what makes a speech dynamic and engaging.

- In Kenya, Rotary district leaders and their Toastmasters counterparts forged a plan to incorporate leaders and speakers from the other organization into their conferences and training programs.
- Leaders of a Rotary district in Nepal have established an alliance committee comprising members of both organizations. The committee has held joint webinars, some of which have attracted more than 3,000 participants.

The mutual advantages of a Toastmasters and Rotary alliance were irresistible to Laura Lobo. She’s a member of two Toastmasters clubs—Bemidji Area Club in Bemidji, Minnesota, and the Cass County Club in Fargo, North Dakota—as well as the Rotary Club of Park Rapids in Park Rapids, Minnesota.

“I joined [Rotary] largely because of the partnership,” says Lobo, who started working on a local alliance as part of a Level 5 project in the Innovative Planning path of the Pathways education program. She says more than 100 people expressed interest in participating. Organizers

are working with [Community Changemakers](#), a Facebook group formed to help Rotarians and Toastmasters connect and grow as leaders.

Lobo believes that Toastmasters and Rotary teaming up builds goodwill between the organizations and helps them reach the audiences they’ve been seeking on their own. She’s been promoting the alliance throughout her Toastmasters and Rotary Districts and encouraged clubs and Districts to “take a look and see how they can make this happen.”

In Lima, the alliance has energized members of both organizations. They want to bring the experience to more Toastmasters and Rotarians, to show them the value of sharing their skills with each other and in their communities. **T**

Kate McClare, DTM, is Vice President Education for Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida. She earned her DTM in 2018 under the traditional education program.

For more information on the strategic alliance between the two international organizations, and how to connect with your local Rotary club, visit the [alliance webpage](#). You can also [view examples](#) of the Toastmasters-Rotary collaborations around the world.

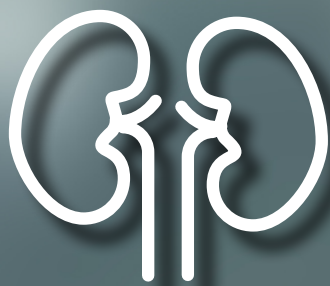


Speaking Up **FOR HEALTH**

Some members use their powerful voices to put others on the path to wellness.

By Mitch Mirkin

There's nothing like a pandemic to get people to focus on health. But even before COVID-19, some Toastmasters were using their public speaking and communication skills to spread the word about health. Whether promoting mental health, organ transplant awareness, or any number of other health causes, these members are passionate about educating audiences and helping them ward off illness and increase wellness.



Below, meet three of these health ambassadors and learn how Toastmasters is helping them craft and deliver their messages of healing and hope.

Retired Physician Preaches Prevention

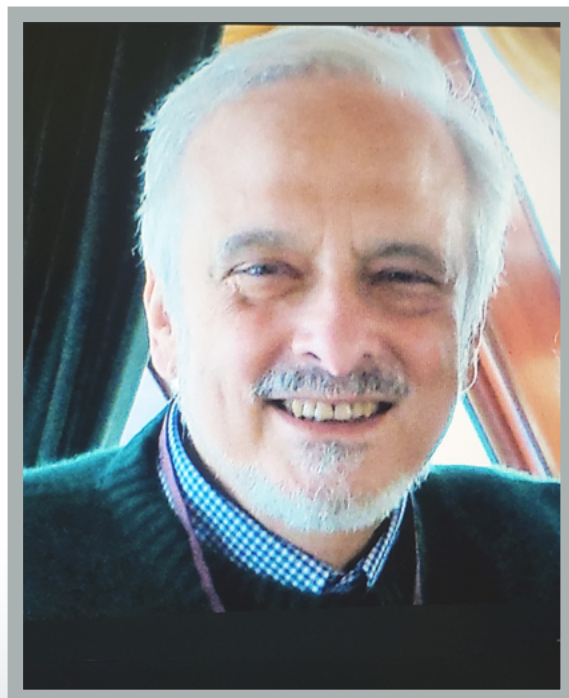
Back in 2008, Henry Farkas believed he had only a few months to live. Cancer had eaten away at his lungs. It had spread to his brain. Surgery and other treatments had helped somewhat, but not enough.

That's when Farkas became a medical miracle. It was new technology—a precise form of radiation—that finally squashed the tumors.

Today, Farkas, a retired physician, is a man on a mission. As someone who escaped a brush with death, he wants to spread the word about disease prevention. “Back when I was in medical school, they taught us that prevention is way, way better than treatment. That's one thing that is still true,” says Farkas, a member of Randallstown Network Toastmasters in Baltimore, Maryland. To achieve his mission, he aims to take advantage of any speaking opportunity that comes his way.

Farkas spent decades as an emergency room (ER) doctor in rural Maryland. He treated wounds from farming or hunting accidents and just about every other type of medical emergency that brings people into an ER. He also cared for hospice patients. And he survived his own battle with cancer. But these days, more than any other issue, it's COVID-19 that is on his mind. He is an impassioned advocate for vaccination.

The message boils down to this, in his eyes: “You have a one-in-a-million chance of having a bad effect from the vaccine. But you have a one-in-ten chance of getting a bad effect from COVID, even if you have just a mild case.”



Retired physician and cancer survivor Henry Farkas



Greg Van Borssum, at microphone, speaks about overcoming adversity and suicide prevention.

“If your brain isn’t healthy, your body isn’t healthy, and vice versa. We need to take care of all of it.”

—GREG VAN BORSSUM, AS

Award-winning action film *Mad Max: Fury Road*. He found himself toiling as a laborer in a construction lift shaft, struggling to support his wife and two kids.

“We were broke and I was broken,” he recalls.

But it was at that building site that his life found new direction, after a fellow worker took his own

Public speaking is not new to Farkas—he did plenty as a physician, partly to educate others about opioids, drugs that work as painkillers. (He often had to prescribe them as a hospice doctor.) But he seldom got feedback on his talks. He had joined a Toastmasters club close to work, but his schedule didn’t allow him to attend regularly. In 2021, he joined the Randallstown club near his home in Baltimore. Now Farkas feels he is getting the hands-on feedback he needs to improve as a speaker. He values the direct, no-nonsense critiques offered by fellow club members.

“One thing that’s helped me is when they point out how many times I said ‘you know’ as a filler.” He recognizes the habit and is intent on dropping it. Another valuable tip from club members: how to organize your content.

“They say I should tell the audience what I’m going to talk about, say it, and then summarize. That seems like an effective way of doing this.”

Farkas is eager to absorb these lessons and continue writing and speaking out about disease prevention. He hopes the urgent need for COVID vaccinations will subside before long. But there will be plenty of other topics on his list when that day comes.

Accredited Speaker Is a Warrior for Wellness

Greg Van Borssum might seem like a super-confident, multi-talented high achiever. And he is. The articulate, athletic Australian has racked up impressive accomplishments in realms ranging from bodybuilding, martial arts, and speed-shooting to cinema and public speaking.

But he didn’t start out that way. Van Borssum, a Toastmasters Accredited Speaker, grew up in a hardscrabble neighborhood and always found himself in trouble at school, from kindergarten all the way up to high school—where teachers told him he would be in jail or dead within a couple of years.

He was a skinny kid with severe eczema that felt like sheer misery, physically and mentally. He was regularly bullied by local kids.

More of life’s challenges would come later. By early 2014, Van Borssum had sunk from the top of his professional game, which had him working as a fight choreographer, weapons specialist, and actor for the Academy

life. Van Borssum and others witnessed the tragic event.

“After the police interviewed me,” recalls Van Borssum, “I headed into this large holding area to see all these big, strong, tough guys just sitting there staring at nothing, not knowing what to do or what to say. I was clinging to life by a thread myself, but I knew something needed to change. I stood up and spoke to the guys honestly and openly about depression, the importance of raising your hand when you’re struggling, how it takes courage to ask for help.”

He offered to walk and talk with anyone who needed support. Six of the men stayed behind and took him up on the offer—even admitting that they, too, had been contemplating suicide.

“Those six guys are still alive today. So that day we sadly lost one life but we saved seven—those six guys and me. It gave me even more reason to live.”

Van Borssum set out to learn how to beat depression. He joined Toastmasters in 2013 to hone his speaking skills. (His mother had once been involved with the organization.) He went on to become an Accredited Speaker—the first from the Southern Hemisphere—with engagements worldwide, focusing on teamwork, overcoming adversity, and suicide prevention.

All this happened relatively soon after he had just “come back from the edge of life,” as he puts it. “That’s why I say to people, ‘When life pushes you to the edge, appreciate the view and get back in the game, because that was just to test your mettle for the comeback of a lifetime.’”

A member of Sea Eagles Toastmasters in Brookvale, north of Sydney, Australia, Van Borssum says he still values the tips, encouragement, and constructive feedback he gets from fellow members.

“One of my toughest chores is my delivery speed. I spent 20 years running major movies, and sometimes had hundreds of people to organize, so I had to do it fast. This made my delivery rate like a shotgun. So I am always working hard on that.”

While some see him as a speaker on “mental health,” he rejects that label.



Leesa Thompson, far right, shares her story with audiences about the kidney donation that saved her life.

“Toastmasters has equipped me with tools that allow me to tell my story clearly and succinctly.”

—LEESA THOMPSON

“Some of the shakiness that I felt a year ago is still there. However, I’ve given so many speeches in the past year that I know I can do it. I’m really excited about tonight’s presentation. I’m excited to face my emotions and prepared with strategies to keep going and present myself professionally in spite of them.”

Thompson now works full-time for the National Kidney Registry,

“I don’t talk about mental health—it’s all just health. If your brain isn’t healthy, your body isn’t healthy, and vice versa. We need to take care of all of it.”

Grateful Kidney Recipient Pays It Forward

Leesa Thompson is gradually growing into a new role as a public speaker. Her personal story—about the kidney donation in 2018 that saved her life—is both an asset and a challenge, from a public speaking perspective.

It’s a powerful, heartfelt tale that can move and inspire audiences. “It’s an amazing story of triumph against overwhelming odds,” reflects the retired speech pathologist. “Unless I found a kidney donor, I was going to die, and soon.”

But as many times as she’s shared the story, it still shakes her up, to the point where standing in front of an audience becomes difficult.

“My biggest challenge is that my story is so personal and compelling that I get emotional telling it. In the beginning, I would get so choked up that I would become teary and need to talk through my tears to get my story out. I’ve learned some breathing techniques that help get me through those moments.”

In 2020, Thompson joined Peekskill Toastmasters, north of New York City, to get better at telling her story. She had already been interviewed by local newspapers and radio stations about her experience, and she wanted to share it more widely.

She remembers being filled with fear when it was time for her Ice Breaker.

“I woke up worried about it. I practiced all day long while shaking, tearing up. Even while practicing alone it was so hard to get through my four-minute speech, especially the part about needing and getting my kidney and my recovery journey since.”

Since joining Toastmasters, Thompson has made huge strides. She completed the Motivational Strategies path in Pathways by moderating a virtual panel on [kidney donation](#) in October 2021. She shared a note about how she was feeling prior to that event:

trying to help clients find living kidney donations. She works as a “microsite coach,” helping other kidney patients build small websites and leverage social media and other outreach tools to share their story, in hopes of finding kidney donors. A fellow kidney recipient had helped her do the same when she was in dire need of a transplant. Her site garnered 32,600 views in six weeks.

Thompson made it through the panel event in her club just fine, in part with the help of her club mentor, Sarah Cossette. More importantly, she’s been getting involved in lots of outside speaking opportunities. She also started and maintains a Facebook group called Move More With Friends that now has more than 6,000 members.

“Toastmasters has helped me develop my confidence and equipped me with tools that allow me to tell my story clearly and succinctly,” she says.

Thompson is still working to improve in areas like using gestures effectively, and mastering the mechanics of online virtual meetings. She admits it’s still uncomfortable to watch herself on video. But she’s committed to doing so. “I find it’s the most useful tool in correcting the issues I’m working on.”

She is a big believer in the power of personal stories to move people to action. “They will do more to influence decision-making than all the statistics pulled together. But no one wants to hear a sob story. It has to be about hope and inspiration.”

She even wants to start what she calls a “global Toastmasters club,” named Kidney Stories Toastmasters Club, to raise awareness of the need for living kidney donations. (Email kidneystories.toastmasters@gmail.com for information.)

“I don’t think the nation’s kidney problem is going to be solved soon, so I plan to continue working in this area as long as I can.” **T**

Mitch Mirkin is a member and Past President of Randallstown Network Toastmasters in Baltimore, Maryland. He is currently acting director of communications for the medical research program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

How to Network Like a Pro

Use your Toastmasters training to create a connection.

By Victor David

The first time I was invited to a high-level networking event, I handed out business cards like confetti. I was hoping to connect with the diplomats and CEOs, but I probably blew more opportunities than I made with that over-eager approach.

I feel networking is such an important skill that three years ago I founded a company to train individuals solely in the nuances of networking, so that they feel more comfortable, make more connections, and get more out of these newfound professional relationships.

Whether you are a seasoned business professional or just starting a career, networking doesn't have to be hard. Or, as in my early efforts, a case of trying too hard. Many people feel uncomfortable when attending in-person or online networking events because chatting with strangers isn't something most of us do every day. We are all likely to feel awkward. So, when you start a networking conversation, break the ice for those you're talking to, even if it's just small talk. In fact, I'll bet if you view networking events as one big water cooler break, you'll start to feel more comfortable immediately.

Create Curiosity

People connect with people. Focus more on making a connection than making an impression. For example, the simpler you can answer the question, "What do you do?", the easier it is to establish a connection. You've opened the door.

In the first few minutes of a conversation, you want to inspire and create curiosity. I recommend initially trying to describe what you do for work as aspirational rather than task-specific. Ask yourself the question: How does what I do relate to my industry or the world? You don't need to be a Nobel Prize nominee to make a difference somewhere; display good energy and a positive outlook and people will respond. The nitty-gritty of how your work impacts the world can come later and be an excellent foundation for a follow-up conversation.

If you are struggling to keep the chat moving, try to view the conversation as a Table Topic®. Practice in

Toastmasters comes in handy in so many ways! Just ask simple, open-ended questions about what is happening in their industry or what the person likes about their work. If they do the talking, you have time to think about what to say next. Even if the conversation doesn't lead to a business deal, at least you have shown interest in the other person, making you memorable. They may even refer you to someone they know.

The Golden Rule

I learned the hard way that the golden rule of networking is to avoid talking about what you have to offer, even if your product is relevant to the people you meet. That sounds like counter-intuitive advice, I know. From experience, the indirect approach works better. It makes you stand out from all the "sales sharks" and lifts the eventual sales meeting to new heights.

If you want to connect with someone, approach them with great ideas instead of cramming in the advantages you could bring to the table. That was my mistake years ago. I started with a business card as an entry point to deliver a pitch, hoping it would bring an opportunity for a richer conversation. Do this in reverse order or even leave the pitch to another day, and you'll be much more successful in your networking endeavours.

The Online Opportunity

Online meetings are often designed to get through the agenda without casual chit chat. I recommend creating the opportunity for informal conversations.

If you want to connect with someone from the meeting, ask if you can contact them through email or social media. Think of one or two interesting points you discussed in the meeting and refer to those when you reach out. Even if the other person forgot your name, they will remember topics you connected on.

Online networking widens the opportunity to connect with virtually anyone on the planet. On the downside, that potential may cause some people to guard who they let into their network. If you want to connect



Enrich newfound professional relationships by making connections rather than impressions. Talk about great ideas; you can leave the business pitch for another day.

Photo: Ilya Shirshov

with someone who appears to be out of reach, a friendly connection request might not work, as some of these individuals are over-ap-proached. Instead, try connecting with them through their social media channels by leaving a comment on their posts. It shows genuine

interest in their ideas and skill set rather than an interest in their buying power.

networks. It's okay if the connection is passive for now. If it ended on a positive note, you could resume the conversation later.

Networking is like a mini-Toastmasters meeting. It begins with a few Table Topics, leading into deeper conversations. Usually,

Trust is perhaps the biggest factor in making networking work.

People may not have the time to sift through connection invites from someone they don't know, but they will pay attention to what people write in the comments section. A short but engaging comment will make you stand out, and the person will be more likely to accept your connection request later.

the person with the most compelling story, explained with relatable clarity, wins the audience's favor.

The next time you attend an in-person or online networking event, go with the same mindset you take to a Toastmasters meeting. You'll feel more comfortable, you'll be more talkative, and you'll connect well with the new people you meet. **T**

Victor David is Immediate Past President of the City Tattersalls Toastmasters Club in Sydney, Australia, where he works for the government as a senior communications advisor. He is founder of [The Networking Experience](#), a platform that trains professionals in networking skills. Contact him at victor@thenetworkingexperience.com.

Maximize the Toastmasters Mindset

Building a meaningful connection takes time. A quick chat before your meeting starts may not be enough time to determine if you'll be relevant to one another in the future. Try to connect anyway, via colleagues, email, or social

How to ACT

When you want to take the next steps in a networking relationship, the most important aspects to consider are Accountability, Comfort, and Trust (ACT).

- ◆ **Accountability** means doing what you say you are going to do. Demonstrate accountability so that you become recommendable within a network. Be careful what you promise, as a broken promise sticks with you longer than an initial benefit.
- ◆ **Comfort** is more than politeness. Comfort means you're helping to create a networking process that is smooth, informative, respectful, and satisfying for all participants.
- ◆ **Trust** is perhaps the biggest factor in making networking work. Trust is built on mutual sincerity and consideration. Asking to join someone's network is like asking for the keys to their house. You'll only get them if you're trustworthy.

I can't stress enough the importance of building trust. I see it fail all the time at networking events. If you only take one thing from this article, I hope it is this one.

After all, the professional relationships you build are more important than a haphazard sale or another short-term objective. Keep this in mind: A sale is beneficial at one point in time; a network is beneficial for a lifetime.

Club Mentor Program: A Win-Win-Win!

How your club can benefit from a strong member mentoring program.

By Diane
Windingland, DTM

A relationship between a mentor and a mentee offers a clear win-win situation. But what about the duo's Toastmasters club? The benefits of mentorship can create a win-win-win situation for all parties involved. It's a win for the mentee, who gains support and guidance; a win for the mentor, who gains experience communicating and connecting with new people; and a win for the club when a personal connection increases member satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

"Having a personal relationship is very valuable, especially during pandemic lockdowns," says Srianthie Salgado, DTM, of Lyceum Toastmasters Club Nugegoda in Sri Lanka. Salgado is mentoring eight members in her club. "Toastmasters meetings helped us stay connected, and even learn new things together. Those of us who were more tech savvy could personally guide others in learning how to navigate online meetings. Mentoring isn't just checking on progress," she says. "It's more the personal touch."

So, what is the mentoring program in Toastmasters? It's an organized way of pairing a new member with an experienced member to ensure individual goals and development are being achieved. New members are onboarded quickly, with mentors guiding them through club meeting roles and member responsibilities. When both mentors and mentees see growth and strengthened personal connections, members say they are more likely to continue their club participation.

Read on to discover the benefits of a mentor program for your club, and how to start one.

Mentorship Benefits for All

Aside from the benefits gained by the mentor and mentee, there are significant advantages to organizations. Almost 70% of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs to help meet organizational and employee needs. Mentoring has even been found to reduce turnover.

In a case study at Sun Microsystems, retention rates were significantly higher for mentees (72%) and mentors (69%) than for employees who did not participate in a mentor program (49%). Studies also have found that

employees who have a mentor are more satisfied with their jobs, and when it comes to inclusion, according to a Cornell University study, a formal mentoring program can be especially beneficial for racial and gender minority employees. They discovered mentoring programs increased minority representation at the management level and improved promotion and retention rates.

And it's not just employees in the workplace who find benefits from mentorship relationships—Toastmasters do too. Salgado says, "Mentoring is a way to encourage leadership skills. A mentor can encourage a member to try meeting leadership roles, club leadership roles, and leadership roles beyond the club as well."

She also points out how mentors can help new members build confidence—from meeting roles to navigating Pathways, and in some clubs, confidence in speaking English. "When your club has members who are not native English speakers, that adds another level of nervousness. Having a mentor helps them build their confidence and feel more comfortable within the group."

A mentoring program also can be a plus in club recruitment, converting guests to members, Salgado says. "At the end of the meeting, we preview what [guests] can expect once they join. We let them know that they'll be assigned a mentor to guide them."

How to Begin a Mentoring Program

Once your club is ready to get started, look to the [Club Mentor Program](#), part of The Successful Club Series. This includes the Mentor Interest Survey, a one-page guide on managing the program, and more.

You can modify the program to meet your club's needs. For example, the survey recommends giving the completed form to the Vice President Education (VPE). However, for many clubs, the VPE needs to focus on scheduling speakers, so the Vice President Membership (VPM) may be a better choice to monitor the program.

"The VPM converts visitors to members, officially helping them go through the membership application," says Marty Dickinson of Professional Presenters



What Makes a Good Mentor?

- ◆ Is available, within set expectations
- ◆ Listens actively
- ◆ Shares relevant knowledge
- ◆ Helps set and monitor goals
- ◆ Gives guidance, not directives
- ◆ Provides constructive feedback
- ◆ Models respect and is nonjudgmental
- ◆ Maintains confidentiality of conversations
- ◆ Learns from the mentee
- ◆ Advocates for the mentee

While there is a Pathways Mentor Program, it is entirely different program, and not a requirement for being a club mentor. All that is required to be a mentor in the Club Mentor Program is a desire to help another member improve their skills.

Matching Mentors and Mentees

In the Club Mentor Program, members are paired based on the Mentor Interest Survey, which identifies interest in mentoring or being mentored, at what level of experience, and if there's a specific focus.

"We connect people based on personality type and goals but encourage people to ask any member for help if needed," says Phipps.

As with the rest of the program, the way mentors and mentees are matched can be modified for your club. For example, even if the VPE monitors the program, the VPM can provide input to help assign appropriate mentors. Other clubs might give the mentee a choice in who will mentor them.

"When a mentor genuinely cares and the mentee works hard to lean in, learn, and grow, we have success," says Vallampati.

No matter which method is used to match mentees and mentors, relationships created through a Club Mentor Program can be a win for the mentee, a win for the mentor, and a big win for the club. **T**

Diane Windingland, DTM, is a presentation coach from St. Paul, Minnesota, and a member of two clubs: PowerTalk Toastmasters and Readership Toastmasters. Learn more at www.virtualspeechcoach.com.

Toastmasters in Denver, Colorado. In his club, the VPM is the perfect officer to take on the responsibility of the mentor program.

And, if you want to call your mentoring program by another name, you can. Dickinson, who has mentored more than 100 members since 1990, belongs to a club whose mem-

bers are mostly experienced Toastmasters or seasoned professional speakers. Some of the members didn't like the term "mentor" so they changed it to "onboarding partner."

decide how much training and time is needed." Each mentoring relationship will be different. "You should treat every mentee the same, which means that you treat them all differently. Every mentee needs to have the mentoring that they need," says Accredited Speaker Clare Crowther, DTM, of Armada Speakers in Plymouth, England. Crowther [created a mentoring program](#) for her club as her Distinguished Toastmaster project. "The key is to listen, listen, listen. Be willing to help your mentee in the way they need to be helped. At the same time, a mentee needs to respect the mentor's time. Mutual respect is important."

Your club may want to approach the Club Mentor Program as a pilot project. "Pilot it with six or so mentors until such time that tangible results can be shared," says Sravanthi Vallampati, DTM, of Diversity 4 Success Toastmasters in Aurora, Ohio. Vallampati, who has mentored more than 30 Toastmasters, is currently piloting two group mentoring programs, one to provide support in achieving the DTM and another for Pathways support.

When both mentors and mentees see growth and strengthened personal connections, members say they are more likely to continue their club participation.

Your club can even create its own unique mentoring checklist. A checklist gives guidance to the mentors and helps ensure that the basics are consistently covered for new members, such as assisting with speech practice and explaining meeting roles. "We have a checklist of the important information," says Tricia Phipps, VPM of Engaging Humour Toastmasters Club in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. "Mentors help guide mentees through accepting roles at meetings. All new members get a mentor that sticks with them until Pathways Level 1 is done. After that, it's up to the mentor and mentee to

Election Directions

Of right wings, left wings, and a plane with both on a possible trip to Switzerland.

By John Cadley

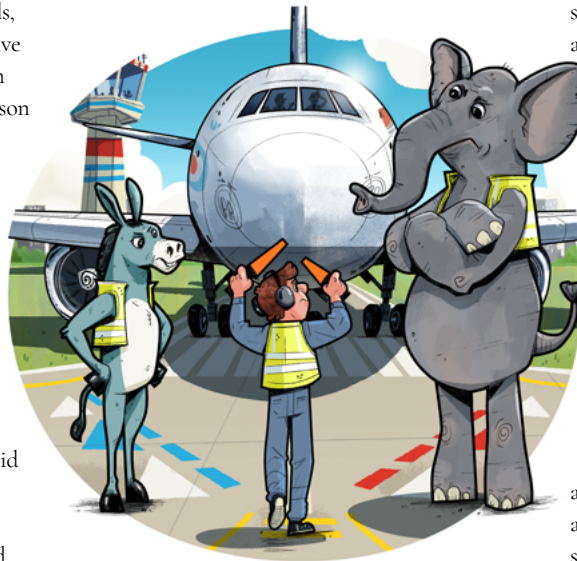
Like most people, I automatically refer to conservative and liberal political opinions as being “on the right” or “on the left,” respectively—without having the slightest idea why. What do left and right have to do with politics? They’re spatial designations and we have them all over our bodies—arms, legs, eyes, ears, nostrils, feet. If you’re right-handed are you conservative and thus forbidden from parting your hair on the left? If your left eye is dominant, is it treason to pick your right nostril? If your right and left arms are equally strong do they punch each other until you have to be physically restrained? When a liberal is riding in a car with a conservative driver and says, “Turn left,” does the conservative turn right instead, even if it’s into a cornfield?

This, of course, is ridiculous, and yet here we are, referring to “right wing” media and “left wing” activists as if it were the most natural thing in the world. How did this come to be?

I’m glad you asked. If we go back to the French Revolution of 1789, and if we attend a meeting of the National Assembly that replaced—to put it mildly—the monarchy of Louis XVI, we will find a parliamentary gathering in which, for strictly arbitrary reasons, supporters of the king stood to the right of the president while adherents of the revolution occupied the left. Hence, two words that have caused untold *sturm und drang* throughout modern history began as seating arrangements. *Royalists? Party of four? Right this way.* It wasn’t until the Third French Republic of 1870 that people noticed this might be a pattern relating to politics. HELLO!

In the broadest possible terms, then, left has come to represent change while right indicates a preference for the status quo. As an example, we might say that all parents are right wing in that they insist their children adhere to the established order, and all children are leftists in

that they rebel against any traditions inhibiting their personal freedom. My own early years were like that. I saw my parents’ rules as products of the Dark Ages and my childhood as the Enlightenment. My mother and father did not share that view, and when my actions justified



it they would enlighten me in ways that had more to do with Torquemada than Descartes.

Before we leftists and rightists start yelling at each other, however, we might consider the research of Ryota Kanai, a cognitive neurosci-

What do left and right have to do with politics?

entist at University College London, which suggests that biology may play a part in our political orientation. This is promising because it allows either side to say, “Don’t blame me—I was born this way!” While his work is far from definitive, Mr. Kanai did discover that conservatives had a strong sympathetic nervous system, heightening their sensitivity to perceived

threats (like change?). Those of a liberal bent had more gray matter in the anterior cingulate cortex, predisposing them to more easily detect errors in recurring patterns (like status quo?). Interesting. If there is truth in this, one could imagine a fiery leftist anarchist suffering some sort of brain trauma and waking up with an intense desire to chair the Conservative

Political Action Committee.

If left and right seem like improbable political symbols, what about the elephant and the donkey? How did *that* happen?

(For readers not familiar with American politics, the elephant represents the Republican Party and the donkey stands for the Democratic Party.) This can be traced directly to Thomas Nast, a political cartoonist working in the mid-19th century who saw politics then as most of us view it today: a menagerie of wild creatures acting in a way that resembles a circus. The story of how each party got its animal is too long for this space. Suffice it to say, Republicans have officially adopted the pachyderm for its portrayal of size, strength, intelligence ... and a long memory. Democrats have not adopted the donkey, even though its intelligence and memory rival the elephant’s. When people see a donkey they think “jackass” and people don’t vote for jackasses (well, they do but ... never mind.) Thanks to Mr. Nast, Democrats are stuck with it just the same.

As a compulsive people-pleaser with both liberal and conservative friends, I belong to the Spineless Appeaser Party. I agree with both depending on who I’m with, confident I’ll never get caught because they never speak to each other. If they do, I can always book a flight to Switzerland. **T**

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter, freelance writer, and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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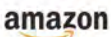


CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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