

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JUNE 2024

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9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, CO, USA 80112

+1 720-439-5050

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For information on joining or building a club, visit:

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Article submission:

submissions@toastmasters.org

Letters to the Editor:

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.

**WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE**

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Finish Strong to Start Strong

We have one more month to go of this Toastmasters program year. I believe our members will continue to reach their goals and achieve educational awards, our clubs will continue to welcome new members and become Distinguished, and our club builders will take the chance to add those last remaining clubs we need for their Districts to be Distinguished.

World-renowned leadership expert and bestselling author Robin Sharma, the 2011 Golden Gavel Award recipient, said, “Starting strong is good. Finishing strong is epic.” When we finish strong, we have more energy and momentum, and we bring more motivation and inspiration to start the next Toastmasters year strong. If we don’t finish on a high note, it’s easy to get weighed down by that baggage the next year. It’s easier to get going on July 1 if we finish the current year on a high note—because we start the new program year feeling stronger.

What are you telling yourself about success? Are you doubting what is possible, are you lacking belief? We can allow our beliefs to set our limitations, or we can look at our reality and

When we finish strong, we have more energy and momentum, and we bring more motivation and inspiration to start the next Toastmasters year strong.

work out what is possible and determine what needs to be done to make our goals happen. We are all surrounded by people who can help. We simply need to ask. Our beliefs determine our behavior, and we get to choose the difference we will make.

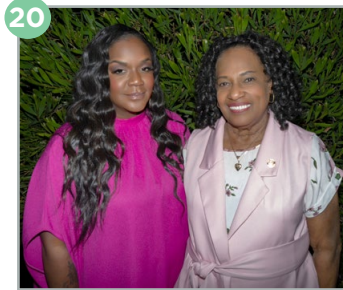
As we prepare to finish this program year strong, it helps to remember our goals and break them down into achievable actions we can take. Meeting the small milestones and celebrating the small victories builds momentum and stops us from feeling overwhelmed when the larger goals seem unattainable in the time available. Pay attention to those small details that will make a difference. If our tried-and-tested approaches are more trying-and-testing than reliable, why not invite and embrace fresh ideas to help us make that final leap to success?

As we work toward a strong finish, let’s remember the support our loved ones have given us, and the contributions our team members have made all year. Remember the encouraging words they spoke at the right time, how they challenged us, and how they helped us develop as leaders. Appreciate how you, and they, have grown as you have worked together, and express your gratitude.

I encourage us all to concentrate with clarity, execute with excellence, and appreciate with audacity as we finish strong for a strong start!

Morag Mathieson, DTM

2023-2024 International President



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Snapshot



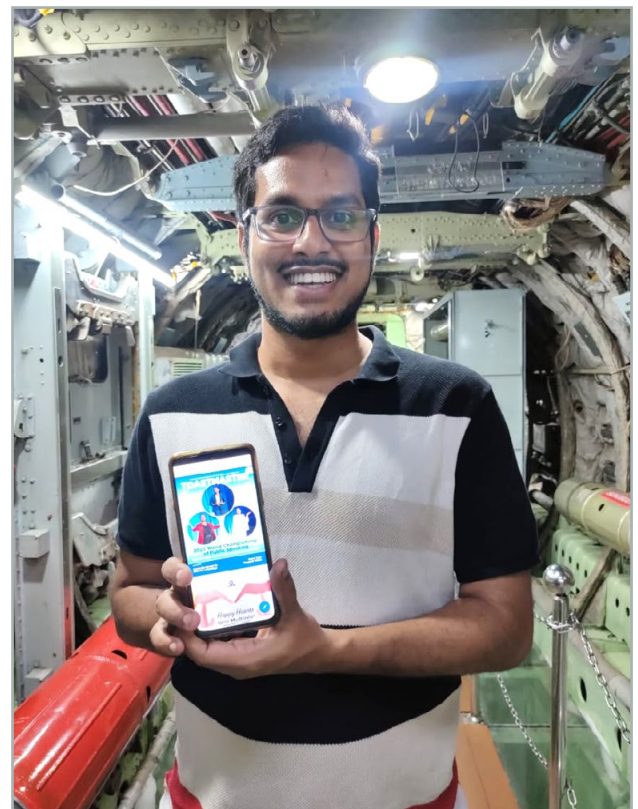
Members of **SETÚBAL TOASTMASTERS CLUB** in Setúbal, Portugal, hold printed copies of the Bucket List Bingo card published in the January 2024 edition of the *Toastmaster* magazine.



Traveling Toastmaster



VIJAYETA BHATTACHARYYA of Pune, Maharashtra, India, holds the digital magazine while visiting the Marina Bay Sands SkyPark in Singapore.



MANIKANTA TORAM of Hyderabad, Telangana, India, visits the TU 142 Aircraft Museum in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Official Notice of Vote

Vote for the
Board of
Directors
Candidates.

Your International Officer and Director Candidates for the 2024-2025 Board of Directors

You will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice at the Annual Business Meeting on Friday, August 16, at 7 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) - 7, in Anaheim, California, and online.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International Officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President,

and Second Vice President. International Director candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The committee's nominations are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII](#).

Visit the Toastmasters International website to [view the qualifications](#) of each officer and director nominee.

International Officer Candidates



INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT
Aletta Rochat, DTM



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Stefano McGhee, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Harold Osmundson, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Gauri Seshadri, DTM

International Director Candidates

Region 2

Mark Lucas, DTM

Region 4

Srinivas Saineni, DTM

Region 6

Jenilee Taylor, DTM

Cyndi Wilson, DTM

Dwight Yamada, DTM

Region 8

Khalid Abdulla, DTM

Brillian S.K., DTM

Sujit Sukumaran, DTM

Region 10

Francesco Fedele, DTM

Patricia O'Reilly, DTM

Region 12

Christine Lennon, DTM

Monique Tonna, DTM

Region 14

Viola Lee, DTM

It is the right and duty of all Member Clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the Annual Business Meeting or by proxy. Delegates may make additional nominations from the floor for International Officer and Director candidates.

Matching Missions

An online club and its corporate sponsor mirror one another's core values.

By Stephanie Darling

“What we learn by exchanging cultures, accents, rituals, knowledge, and friendship is incredible.”

—ANAND NAGARE

What better place to charter a corporate Toastmasters club than within a company that champions employee growth in its mission statement?

That logic, and the pandemic, led to the launch of the online Qualfon Toastmasters club, supported by Qualfon, a global business process outsourcing provider. The company is passionate about nurturing employee growth as a workforce investment, reasoning that superior employees deliver superior client service. Qualfon even has a mission office that supports various employee enrichment programs, including the Toastmasters club.

Marisol Sanchez, a Toastmaster since 2019 and a former Qualfon employee, was the founding President of the Qualfon club, which chartered in 2021 during the COVID pandemic crisis. As many of the company's 15,000 employees began transitioning from in-office to remote work, she saw the club as an ideal way to help employees nourish existing connections, make new ones, and continue to achieve the personal and professional growth advocated by the company.

Not surprisingly, Qualfon leadership quickly signed on to fund and support the club.

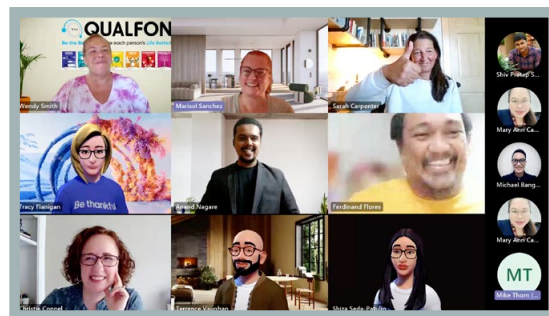
“Toastmasters’ mission seamlessly aligns with Qualfon’s core values,” says retired executive Mike Marrow, who was the chief executive officer when the club formed, and still sits on the company’s advisory board. Qualfon prioritizes its employees’ “continuous improvement,” just as Toastmasters does through ongoing speaking and leadership training, he noted.

The Qualfon club was not only a mission match but a much-needed connection to colleagues isolated by the pandemic, says Christie Connel, the club’s Vice President Public Relations. The club has allowed her to maintain longstanding relationships, along with the opportunity to meet a cadre of new, intriguing co-workers.

“In one meeting I went from feeling isolated to making connections with colleagues from around the world,” she says. “It really made a difference in my outlook and gave me something fun and exciting to look forward to.”

Sanchez agrees. “In a diverse company like Qualfon, it isn’t always feasible for employees who work on different projects or lines of business to get to know each other, especially when so many are working remote.” The club is a bridge across those kinds of disconnects.

Club President Anand Nagare adds that the club thrives on its diversity.



“We have members from the U.S., India, Philippines, Guyana, Mexico, and Columbia, and from every segment of the business, including supervisors and directors. What we learn by exchanging cultures, accents, rituals, knowledge, and friendship is incredible.”

Connel agrees that the free-flowing cultural exchange, especially when it comes to language, is a hallmark of the club and a benefit to everyone, regardless of where they’re located or the nature of their Qualfon work.

“English is not the first language for some of our members, so club meetings let everyone practice their speaking skills and listen to native English speakers,” she explains.

Three years after chartering, the Qualfon club has 31 members. In that time, it has earned Select Distinguished and President’s Distinguished Club status, and is on track to earn President’s Distinguished status again for 2023–2024.

Nagare is just one example of a member who embraced the Qualfon club’s can-do culture. He jokes that he had to Google Toastmasters, as he’d never heard of it before joining. Once he realized what membership offered, especially since English isn’t his first language, he “grabbed the opportunity with both hands.” In his first year of membership, he won the Division level of the International Speech Contest, became Club President, and was invited to speak at Qualfon’s annual leadership meeting.

Nagare and his officer team have created a club culture that values both fun and fundamentals. He kicks off meetings on a light note, with tongue twisters, silly riddles, and other fun activities that quickly engage attendees. Prepared speeches and practicing functionary meeting roles simply elevate the experience. The bottom line: Everyone grows from club meetings.

“For every five-minute speech we give, we spend 10 times more listening to others’ stories and encouraging one another,” Connel says. “And everyone leaves the meetings smiling.”

Qualfon’s management seems to be smiling, too. Current CEO Doug Kearney says, “Toastmasters has been a powerful addition to the programs we offer to help our employees learn and grow.”

Stephanie Darling is a former senior editor of and frequent contributor to the Toastmaster magazine.

An Unwanted Honor

The story of officiating my mother's funeral.

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.

The day my mother died, I asked my cousin, a rabbi who had led the funeral for my father years earlier, to officiate at Mom's service. When she said she couldn't, I panicked. We knew no rabbis in my hometown, and the funeral was two days away.

I had been the celebrant at my niece's and nephew's weddings, but this was different. It was crazy for a daughter to lead her mother's funeral—right? And then I got to thinking. My mother would not have wanted a religious ritual. She simply wanted to be remembered.

So, I started to remember. I thought of things Mom loved. And then, Toastmasters-trained speaker that I am, I planned the “presentation.” Not only did I want this event to be as meaningful as possible, but I also knew that the more I prepared, the less nervous and upset I would be. I didn't want to let my mother down.

I started to compile quotes from things that were important to Mom, like her favorite TV show and movie. A line about libraries, and another about the arts. Then I thought about who would attend and who would want to speak formally at the lectern. Eight of those who didn't plan to speak received small slips of paper bearing a quote, its source, and the order in which they would read the material aloud.

I began the service by welcoming everyone. I then told a brief story about celebrating a life well-lived. Next, I had asked people to read about the things my mother loved. Asking people to read prepared material not only ceded some of the responsibility and attention to others, but also seemed to make people feel extra welcome and integral to the process.

I pointed one by one to the readers I'd selected, and they stood and recited their parts. Some of the lines—like Clark Gable's words from *Gone with the Wind* (“Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.”)—got a chuckle, which helped to ease some of the tension. Others, like



Caren Schnur Neile and her mother, Gloria Schnur

Thanks to Toastmasters,
I was able to honor my
mother in a way I know she
would have loved.

the quote from the Broadway sensation *Hamilton*, which Mom had attended with my niece, drew sighs. (“And when you're gone, who remembers your name? Who keeps your flame? Who tells your story?”)

After that, I read the eulogy I had written months before, when my mother first went into hospice. I tweaked it plenty, but I had known too many distraught mourners writing such speeches the night before a funeral not to have begun the process months earlier.

After my immediate family members came to the lectern to talk, I asked the group if anyone else had anything to say. To my delight,

maybe half of the two dozen attendees rose to give impromptu remembrances of my beautiful mother. I had hoped that by asking people to stand and read at the beginning, the informality and intimacy of the event would encourage others to speak up, but I was still overjoyed.

Finally, I asked my rabbi cousin to help me with the closing prayer. By the time the service was over, 50 minutes had gone by. I was shocked that it had lasted so long.

Although my mother had received a send-off she would have loved, this was not what you'd call an ordinary speaking engagement. I was exhausted and overwhelmed, and not everything went as smoothly as I would have liked. Online viewers couldn't see or hear when people stood and spoke from their seats. I skipped over one

cousin in the order of readings. I misread an important line in my eulogy and had to correct myself. I couldn't read the tiny print of the prayers. But fortunately, I had established such a comfortable atmosphere with the readings at the beginning that I could easily recover from these mishaps.

The last thing I expected when I learned of my mother's death was that two days later, I would find myself leading her funeral. And yet, thanks to Toastmasters, I was able to honor her in a way I know she would have loved. As sad as I felt, I could do what needed to be done. And although it would have been okay, I didn't break down. My Toastmasters training kicked in and saw me through one of the most difficult experiences in my life, and certainly the most painful speaking gig.

My family and I will be forever grateful.

Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., teaches storytelling studies at Florida Atlantic University and has presented at three Toastmasters International conventions. Visit her at carenneile.com.

Are You Going to the International Convention?

Discover all that Toastmasters has to offer.

By Bill Brown, DTM

It seems like just yesterday we were celebrating Toastmasters' 90th anniversary. And here it is, the 100th. That is quite a milestone. Will you be at the International Convention, either in person or online?

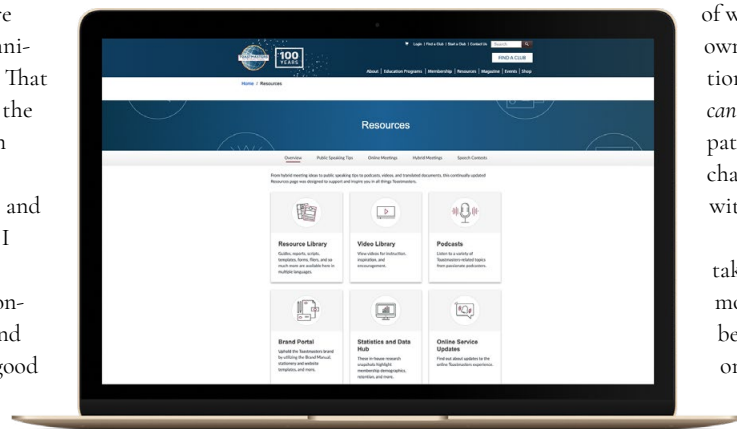
I have been to three conventions and came away with four main benefits. I have listened to top-notch speakers, both in the International Speech Contest and in keynote presentations, and raised my own aspirations for how good of a speaker I can be. I have met Toastmasters from around the world and came away with a much bigger picture of the organization. I have attended the officer elections and seen the caliber of our International Officers. And I have come away with a much bigger understanding of what we have available in Toastmasters.

But what if you can't make it to the convention? Can you still gain those benefits?

Attending an International Convention can help you attain a worldwide vision. But even if you aren't able to go, you can still reap the benefits. A great way to do this is to view a recording of a past convention. Many are available [On Demand](#), or you can go to the [Toastmasters YouTube channel](#) and watch winners from the World Championship of Public Speaking® and the candidates who received the Accredited Speaker designation.

By just taking advantage of the tools available online, you can expand your vision of Toastmasters. I am amazed at how much information and training is available on the Toastmasters website itself. There are 122 educational videos and over 250 episodes of *The Toastmasters Podcast*. In addition, there are tips on public speaking, online meetings, and hybrid meetings. You will find all of these under the [Resources](#) tab on the site.

Additionally, how much time have you spent in Pathways? I mean, really spent time in it. My observation is that members tend to go through the material quickly, so they can check the project off the list and



By just taking advantage of the tools available online, you can expand your vision of Toastmasters.

get on to the next one. But each project is chock-full of information that is not usually available in a standard club meeting. Are you learning from it?

Your District has many events as well, both in person and online, so everyone can attend. If nothing else, I recommend that you attend the Area, Division, and District speech contests. You will learn a lot just by listening to some of the top speakers in your District.

And you should look for resources from the World Champions of Public Speaking and the Accredited Speakers. The Accredited Speaker Program is tailored to those who are professional speakers. Not only do these Toastmasters have great information to offer, but they each have a speaking style that is a cut above. And, of course, the World Champions are on a whole other level. I have learned a lot just by plugging into their resources.

In addition to expanding your vision of Toastmasters, you can also expand your vision

of what you can accomplish with your own skills. As I listen to those exceptional speakers, I find myself saying, *I can do that, too*. And as I have participated in the speech contests, I have been challenged to become better and better with each level of the contest.

Toastmasters doesn't just happen. It takes leaders at various levels to keep it moving forward. And that takes members who are ready and willing to take on leadership responsibility, be it as a club officer or just for a short-term event or project. If you have any leadership aspirations

yourself, whether at work, in your community, or in your personal life, you have to gain experience. Toastmasters gives you the opportunity to do that. In addition to your club, leadership opportunities abound within your District.

Not only will you learn from the process, you will grow just by being around other leaders. I have learned over the years that if you want to gain expertise in an area, find people who are experts themselves. It is amazing what you can learn.

And, in the post-COVID era, many clubs are either online or hybrid. That gives you the opportunity to visit and even join clubs from around the world. Don't be shy about attending a meeting.

Many people initially join Toastmasters to get over a fear of speaking. Hopefully that quickly fades, but Toastmasters goes way beyond helping people get over that fear. It can take you to the top of the speaking or leadership fields.

Are you gaining all that you can from Toastmasters? If not, maybe your vision of the organization is too small. Take some time to explore all that is available. And be sure to attend the convention. You will be glad that you did.

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at billbrownspeechcoach.com.



Analyzing Your Audience

Why reading the room isn't always reliable.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

While delivering a speech, have you noticed someone fiddling with their phone, furrowing their brow, fidgeting in their seat, or failing to make eye contact? Perhaps these observations undermined your confidence because you concluded that listeners thought you were an ineffective presenter.

Please stop!

Facial expressions and body language are notoriously bad indicators of audience attitudes. After all, there are good explanations for these behaviors: The person fiddling with their phone may be taking notes; a furrowed brow may indicate intense concentration; and the individual fidgeting in their seat or avoiding eye contact may be neurodivergent, which can make it uncomfortable to make lasting eye contact or to sit still for an extended time.

Take it from three presentation experts who know firsthand that trying to read nonverbal behaviors is an unreliable way to gauge how an audience feels about a presentation. Learn what you can do instead when nonverbal behaviors seem to suggest disinterest or disagreement, and how to collect more trustworthy feedback.

Don't Read the Room

"You should never try to read the room. It's impossible," says Chris Graham, a Toronto-based speaker coach and keynote speaker at [TellPeople](#), who argues that it is as easy to read the room as it is to read minds. "Based on my personal experience, 100% of the time somebody in the audience looks like they want to punch me in the face," he notes. "Lots of people have very aggressive listening faces."

Graham recalls a listener shaking their head back and forth, as if saying "no," whenever he made a point. During a break, Graham approached the person and said, "I see you shaking your head and I'm curious about your disagreement." They responded, "I didn't know that I do that." Once aware of the nonverbal behavior, the person stopped shaking their head for the rest of Graham's session.

David Henderson, Toastmasters' 2010 World Champion of Public Speaking, is a speaking coach and a civil-rights lawyer. Similarly to Graham, Henderson learned early in his legal career not to trust facial expressions and the body language of audience members.

He says misreading listeners can go two ways: assuming listeners don't like you when they do, and assuming they agree with you when they don't. "The law firm that I started my career practicing at used to send all the fifth-year litigation associates to this weeklong trial-training seminar," says Henderson. "They would always come back and say that they were shocked because the jurors in a simulated trial who seem like they're with you—they're nodding along and smiling at you from the jury box—always go against you in the back room, which you actually get to see because it's not a real trial and you are able to watch the jury deliberate."

Because many listeners are unaware of their nonverbal behaviors, Graham recommends ignoring them, though it can be difficult. He suggests that speakers draw on the more common experience of talking to someone in everyday conversation who doesn't make the facial expression you expect. For example, you likely have continued to smile when speaking to an attendant at a service desk who exhibited gruff behaviors, continued to try to look at the eyes of a colleague who stared at their computer and typed vigorously during a meeting, and continued to

explains. "You've got to go back and figure out how to adjust. You keep working on your speech until people aren't reaching for their phones at those points. That's how you get better."

Find Connection in Advance

Graham also warns against changing course mid-speech based on a listener's nonverbals. "Even if you wanted to respond differently to someone's facial expression, what else would you say? You spent all this time preparing speaking material. It seems very unlikely that your spontaneous change of course would be better than what you spent hours preparing."

Instead of responding in the moment, he suggests using prior preparation to increase the chance your message resonates. "Try to schedule a call beforehand with an event organizer to learn what audience members worry about and find a few stories about them that you can incorporate into the presentation."

Cathey Armillas, DTM, a member of Toastmasters for Speaking Professionals in Portland, Oregon, is an international speaker and speaker coach. Like Graham, she wants speakers to focus on doing the heavy lifting before a presentation

Here's how you can, too: When you sense someone with negative energy in your audience, intentionally focus attention on the person in the room who is giving you the most positive energy. "Look directly at that person and get close to them," instructs Armillas. "Cling onto their positive energy, which then catches on fire and helps dissipate the negative energy. It's like spraying an air freshener of positivity." It should take just a few seconds for the rest of the audience to pick up on that person's positive energy.

For seasoned presenters, Armillas advises you cultivate awareness of the overall energy in the room. If the energy feels low, be ready to change gears by acknowledging a story wasn't resonating and telling a different one, cutting the PowerPoint and talking for a while without slides, or getting the audience physically engaged in a discussion, show of hands, or other activity.

Effective Feedback Strategies

When you encounter a listener with negative facial expressions or body language, there are options—from completely ignoring it to focusing on an audience member displaying positive nonverbals instead. But ultimately, reading nonverbal behaviors is not the best way to gauge audience opinions.

To get a more accurate read of audience member reactions, speakers should select a method of gathering feedback appropriate to the situation. Some strategies to consider:

- A questionnaire to survey audience members
- A series of debrief conversations with some or all audience members
- A test at the beginning of a training program or informative presentation and a test at the end to measure what was learned

Until you have data to suggest otherwise, it's best to stay optimistic and assume positive intent on behalf of your audience members. This will allow you to speak confidently and not get thrown off needlessly when you see an errant glance at a phone or an occasional glare from the back of the room.

Christine Clapp, DTM, is the founder and president of [Spoken with Authority](#), a presentation skills consultancy that elevates the presence and expands the influence of subject-matter experts, leaders, and emerging leaders. She is the co-author of three books, most recently [Presenting Now: A Guide to Public Speaking and Leadership Communication Online, in Person, and Beyond](#).

When you sense someone with negative energy in your audience, intentionally focus attention on the person in the room who is giving you the most positive energy.

engage in conversation with a teenager who was more preoccupied with their phone than you. The exact same perseverance that allows you to manage these behaviors in one-on-one situations is helpful in front of a room, too.

Henderson knows this phenomenon is especially prevalent on Zoom where self-awareness of nonverbal behaviors can be even lower than during in-person encounters. While he doesn't want speakers to make assumptions about what a specific listener is thinking or feeling based on their facial or body movements, he does suggest that speakers pay close attention if they get an immediate nonverbal response to something they say or if they see trends among audience members.

"Are there specific times in your presentation when you notice quite a few people are on their phones? What that's telling you is that your presentation is failing in those moments," Henderson

to ensure material will resonate rather than waiting to read the room.

"I teach the 'I-You Balance,'" Armillas shares. "You have to think if it's about them or about you. Stories are from you but for them. Presentation content is from you but for them. If you aren't making material for your audience, you are doing it wrong, and I don't have to be in the room to tell you that they aren't with you."

Armillas believes there are strategies speakers can use to respond to unfavorable nonverbal behaviors. First, she encourages nervous and novice speakers to take a cue from the American singer-songwriter Neil Diamond, who she has seen in concert kneel and sing directly to an adoring fan in the front row. The whole audience gets goosebumps because they can feel the positive connection between singer and fan. She calls this the Neil Diamond Effect and has used it successfully in presentations.

Meet Shawn Ellis

Keynote speaker
for the 2024
International
Convention
reflects on the
value of resilience.

By Ruth Nasrullah

“We can all
name moments
that have
shaped us,
but our lives
are actually
defined by how
we shape the
moments.”

—SHAWN ELLIS

Public speaking is not the field Shawn Ellis ever pictured for himself. He moved to Nashville, Tennessee, from his home in rural Missouri when he was 17 to pursue a music career. When he realized that was not the career path for him, he enrolled in college. There, he wrote a paper about “how to help people find more meaning in their work” and the topic sparked his passion.

“I fell in love with the intersection between life and business,” says Ellis, the keynote speaker at this year’s International Convention in August.

After college, he considered several careers before taking a job with a speaker’s bureau—as someone who booked public speakers, not as a speaker himself. Five years later he started his own company, which managed and marketed speakers, but it took some musing about resilience and inspiration before deciding professional speaking was his path.

“The phrase ‘the moment matters’ just came to me,” he says of the phrase that became a guiding principle, reflecting the importance of staying in the present. “That was the beginning of my speaking career.”

In the 13 years since then, he has been expanding this message, a process informed by events in his own life. After a divorce, he moved from Nashville to Columbus, Ohio, to be closer to his family. Adapting to change became as much of a personal mantra as a speech topic.

“Zooming out beyond my own experience, I realized that really what we’re doing [in life] is just adapting,” he says. “We never know what’s going to happen from one day to the next or one moment to the next. Enhancing our skills in adaptability is really critical.”

Dealing With Change

In his keynote session, Ellis will share strategies for transitioning and thriving in an ever-evolving world. His focus on the art of resilience has been especially strong as the world has seen changes come at a faster and broader pace—think the growing prevalence of artificial intelligence or the COVID pandemic. He labels one approach the “5 Cs”: calm, clarity, courage, confidence, and community.

Ellis has written a book about the 5-C system, and how to incorporate it into one’s life, and also discussed it on his podcast. The system emphasizes the importance of being clear about your values and goals and being guided by them in your life and career choices. Being crystal clear



about your values while also being flexible is a success mindset, according to Ellis.

Ellis describes himself as a storyteller who draws on strategies rooted in mindfulness, neuroscience, and psychology to help people lead better lives, and leaders and teams to flourish when faced with change.

When it comes to his “moments matter” mantra, he says, “In essence, the idea is that we can all name moments that have shaped us, but our lives are actually defined by how we shape the moments.”

Ellis uses this concept as a framework for his speeches. He also finds humor to be key, particularly because groups he speaks to generally have undergone, or are undergoing, what he describes as “a season of change.” Humor defuses the stress of change, says Ellis, noting that “it’s a way to bring levity to topics that are heavy, or to bring light to areas that can be dark.”

Jan Lawson, an independent-event consultant who has known Ellis for many years, describes him as “super authentic.”

“Shawn is very service oriented,” she says. “He doesn’t just go up there and read a prepared speech. He really walks the talk.”

Ellis sees his theme of resilience reflected in Toastmasters’ history. The founder, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, had a vision and the organization has carried it out through these many years of change.

“I’m sure there was no way that [Smedley] could have imagined where the organization would be 100 years later. It’s just a testament to resilience and adaptability.”

Recognizing how his philosophy and Toastmasters’ mesh has him enthusiastic about speaking at the annual convention.

“I’m just grateful for the opportunity to join the members and share something that I hope will continue into this next 100 years,” Ellis says. “It is an honor.”

Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance journalist based in Houston. She joined Toastmasters in 2006 and since then has belonged to several clubs in the greater Houston area. Visit ruthnasrullah.com to learn more about her and her writing.

Benefits of Attending the International Convention

Toastmasters share what they've gained from the 4-day event.

By Mackenzie Eldred

“There isn’t just one benefit. I feel energized by the information and resources I gather during the convention that I take back to my club.”

—MARY SWANSON, DTM

Since it began in 1931, the Toastmasters International Convention has brought members together from around the world. Hear about the knowledge and benefits Toastmasters have gained from attending the annual event.



Jan Vecchio, DTM

Kingscliff, New South Wales, Australia

“Apart from the obvious benefits of attending world-class educational sessions, listening to world-class speeches, participating in the Annual Business Meeting, helping and working with candidates seeking election to the Board of Directors, and having fun at Ted [Corcoran]’s Sing-Along, the big benefit for me has been networking and building friendships that will last a lifetime.”



Mary Swanson, DTM

Jordan, Minnesota

“There isn’t just one benefit. I feel energized by the information and resources I gather during the convention that I take back to my club. Networking with members from around the world helps me be aware of different cultures, viewpoints, and techniques. The stories that members share about their Toastmasters journeys inspire me.”



Carolyn Kaldy, DTM

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

“In the working world and the volunteer world, I have found myself second-guessing whether I should even attend a physical gathering and face the intimidating prospect of walking into a world full of strangers. By attending the International Convention, Toastmasters has given me the confidence to take those steps into an unknown physical group of people. To me, it is an important space that I can renew my confidence, practice creating face-to-face connections, and enhance previously made connections.”



Zaid Kaliya, DTM

Karachi, Pakistan

“The International Convention isn’t just an event; it’s a refueling station for the motivational tank, replenishing my spirit for the year ahead. Meeting individuals from across the globe, encountering the World Champions of Public Speaking, and bringing back positivity to my homeland—all these experiences enrich my journey and inspire me to reach greater heights.”



Frank Storey, DTM

Linthicum, Maryland

“The benefits are numerous: attending all the great educational sessions, the International Speech Contest, the Golden Gavel event, and, of course, making new friends and reconnecting with old friends. This is especially true when you have connected with people online and then finally get to meet them.”



Carmen Lee-Pow, DTM

Newark, Delaware

“The benefits are unbelievably abundant. The unexpected connections you make, the melting pot of personalities, and the Parade of Flags from various countries around the world leaves you speechless and sometimes in tears. One cannot help but be overjoyed to be a part of an organization that has changed so many lives by being flexible with its programs for unlimited growth of self-confidence, self-development, and leadership opportunities.”



Anthony Longley, DTM

Nassau, Bahamas

“I would encourage every Toastmaster to attend an International Convention. Embrace the opportunity to see the organization through a larger and brighter prism. Learn how things truly work while rubbing shoulders with the leaders who work hard on our behalf as they serve with humility and pride. Enjoy the networking and make new and lasting friendships.”



Arnaud Sartre, DTM

Faversham, England

“Such global exposure is rare, if not unheard of, at least at this scale outside the corporate world. Outside the convention, I have never had the opportunity to hold deep, meaningful conversations with so many people, on so many topics, from so many backgrounds and cultures.”



Beth May

Mount Airy, Maryland

“Few experiences offer the kind of personal and professional enrichment that a Toastmasters International Convention can provide. Even if you attend only one convention, you may find the benefits to be profound and long-lasting.”

Mackenzie Eldred is editorial coordinator for the Toastmaster magazine.



Celebrating a Century at the 2024 International Convention

Make a lifetime of memories at this milestone event in sunny Southern California.

By Toastmaster magazine staff

This year's International Convention will transport you back in time to the 1920s—a roaring era of economic prosperity, cultural change, exuberant optimism, and Dr. Ralph C. Smedley. Take a trip to Southern California, where the first Toastmasters club meeting was held in 1924.

Join fellow members from around the world for a centennial celebration and take part in a heritage of convention highlights, including Opening Ceremonies, the Golden Gavel Award Presentation, the World Championship of Public Speaking®, and more.



Join fellow members from around the world
for a centennial celebration and take part in
a heritage of convention highlights.

This dazzling four-day event will take place in person in Anaheim, California, or attendees can enjoy an online portion that will be livestreamed and On Demand. Be inspired by expert speakers and valuable education sessions, take time to network with other members, immerse yourself in Toastmasters history, and enjoy a 1920s-style formal dinner/dancing during the President's Celebration.

Keep reading to find out how you can make this year's convention a milestone to remember.

Experience Convention Online

The convention will be a hybrid event. Attendees will have an option to experience the event live online or On Demand after the event has concluded. The online convention experience can be accessed from any internet-connected device, including your phone, tablet, computer, or TV. Livestreamed events will be in real time; check the agenda where they are listed in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). On Demand replay will be available by end of August. Once On Demand, recorded program events will be available with unlimited access to online attendees.

Opening Ceremonies

Don't miss the highly anticipated convention kickoff on August 14, featuring the popular Parade of Flags, an empowering keynote presentation, and an introduction of the 2023–2024 Board of Directors, as well as the candidates for the 2024–2025 Board of Directors. This long-standing event showcases the truly international spirit of the organization.

Keynote Speaker

Shawn Ellis is an American motivational speaker whose focus is resilience and adaptability. He has more than 20 years of leadership and business experience, and offers tips to help individuals, leaders, and teams succeed in a world full of change.

In his upcoming book, *Mastering the Moments*, Ellis lays out a path to resilience, growth, and fulfillment. He also hosts *The Better Life Better Business Podcast*. Ellis's keynote session is titled "[Mastering Real-World Resilience and Adaptability](#)."

Learn more about Shawn Ellis on page 12 of this issue.



Golden Gavel Award Presentation

Lisa Sun is the recipient of the [2024 Golden Gavel Award](#). As an entrepreneur, Sun founded the inclusive clothing brand Gravitas in 2012 with a mission to boost women's confidence. The company's origin story dates back to her first professional review, where she was told that she "lacked gravitas," and "should go buy a new dress, big jewelry, and great shoes."

Sun is also a professional speaker and the author of the national best-seller *Gravitas: The 8 Strengths That Redefine Confidence*. She says she has always had a passion for style, inclusivity, and helping people look and feel their best. Prior to founding Gravitas, Sun spent 11 years as a management consultant at McKinsey & Company.

Read more about Sun in [this Toastmaster magazine profile](#).

Convention Education Sessions and Speakers

This year's convention is putting the spotlight on networking and connecting with fellow members, while exploring Toastmasters International's rich history. In that spirit, listen to a panel of Past International Presidents recap some of the organization's historic highlights and milestones in the education programing and growth around the world.

Other education sessions include a focus on negotiating conflicts in your clubs and beyond, and a Road to Leadership—an enlightening conversation that will explore the importance of leadership roles.



Toastmasters History Panel

Neil Wilkinson, DTM, Past International President 1993–1994, will moderate a [panel of Past International Presidents](#) as they discuss Toastmasters' last 100 years, including its major milestones, how Smedley started the organization, as well as how it has evolved and how it has stayed true to Smedley's vision.

Panelists will include: Tim Keck, DTM (1999–2000), Ted Corcoran, DTM (2003–2004), Dilip Abayasekara, DTM (2005–2006), and Pat Johnson, DTM (2010–2011).

Toast Talk Sessions

Hear three back-to-back 18-minute sessions, all designed to enhance your Toastmasters journey. Experienced Toastmasters will give informative talks on how they market the organization to guests, onboard new members, and engage and retain all members. Learn more about their experiences and how you can do the same in your club. Stay tuned for additional details to be announced soon.

Toastmasters Through the Years Exhibit

This in-person exhibit will have you journeying through 100 years of Toastmasters history. Explore how the organization has evolved over the



years, from a group of men in a basement meeting room in Santa Ana, California, to a global powerhouse in 148 countries. Attendees will be able to view artifacts, understand how the organization grew and expanded, watch a video that highlights events and milestones, and talk to various leaders.

New Leadership

Your vote counts! Elect 2024–2025 International Officers and Directors and vote on important issues that guide the future of the Toastmasters International organization at the Annual Business Meeting on Friday, August 16. You can learn about [the candidates](#) for international office in the Candidate Showcase event on August 15.

World Championship of Public Speaking

Experience the thrill as eight finalists, representing different parts of the world, compete for the top honor in the 2024 World Championship of Public Speaking. The semifinals take place on August 15: four separate contests with seven speakers each. The top two from each contest advance to the championship held two days later. [Find out](#) who is representing your region in the semifinals!

Convention Time

The convention will take place in Anaheim, California, and all events and activities will be in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) -7, which is the local time in Anaheim.

Convention Details

Toastmasters International is excited to host the 2024 International Convention at the Anaheim Marriott in Anaheim, California, United States, from Wednesday, August 14 through Saturday, August 17. Go to the [convention website](#) to register and to learn more details about the four-day event.

Need to justify the value and cost of the Toastmasters 2024 International Convention to your supervisor? Download, modify, and use [this letter](#) to convince your boss to let you go.

Accredited Speaker Program

The 2024 Accredited Speaker Program will be conducted as a hybrid event from Anaheim, California. Each candidate will have the option to present onsite from Anaheim or online from their home country. Candidates for the designation speak on a specialized topic in their field; those who attain the title combine expert knowledge with mastery of the spoken word. The candidates give their final presentation before the judges at the convention.

Visit the Toastmasters website to learn more about the [Accredited Speaker Program](#).

Mix and Mingle

It wouldn't be a Toastmasters convention without the networking and socialization! When you're not busy watching speeches and listening to education sessions, make sure to check out these social activities below. Most require a ticket, so you'll need to make your selections while registering.

Social activities include:

- A 1920s-style formal dinner and dancing in celebration of the new International President.
- Engaging with other members via a new centennial history book, including many pages to capture signatures and memories of your time with fellow Toastmasters.
- A gathering of first-time convention attendees.
- Networking lunches.
- Toastmasters Marketplace.
- Smedley Fund Eras of Exercise Experience.
- The Sing-Along, a favorite convention tradition started in 1992 by Past International President Ted Corcoran, DTM, of Ireland.

Events and information are continually being updated; visit the website to [view the agenda](#).



Ready to [register](#)? You'll meet a global network of Toastmasters during this special convention where you can learn, connect, and commemorate the organization's centennial. To start the celebration, use **#CelebrateToastmasters100** on your social media channels.

The Toastmaster magazine staff is composed of five editorial team members.

Accessibility

The Anaheim Marriott provides services and accommodations to help guests who may have additional needs or requirements. The hotel offers mobility- and hearing-accessible rooms, roll-in showers, closed-caption TV, and more.

The meeting space where the convention will take place is located on one level and accessible throughout. In addition, ADA-compliant door openers will provide easy access into and out of the meeting center and hotel.

2024 Convention Takes You to Southern California

From Disneyland to dazzling beaches, there are plenty of area attractions.

By Paul Sterman

The [2024 International Convention](#) in Anaheim, California, promises to be a magical experience. Not only are there special activities in celebration of the organization's centennial, but attractions abound in the host city and surrounding areas of sunny Southern California. Think beaches, baseball, and Disneyland!

Anaheim is imbued with Toastmasters history. After the organization's first club formed in nearby Santa Ana in 1924, the second club formed in Anaheim. Anaheim Club 2 is still active, as is the Smedley Chapter One Club in Santa Ana. Toastmasters has held several International Conventions in Anaheim, including in 1974, which marked the organization's 50-year anniversary. (On the cover of its August 1974 issue, *The Toastmaster* magazine ran a full-color photo of fireworks over Disneyland.)

With plenty of excitement in store this summer, here are some local places to check out during your stay—or even better, if you extend your trip beyond the convention.

Local Offerings

Anaheim, a city of nearly 350,000 people, is in Orange County, bordered by Los Angeles to the north and San Diego to the south. The House of Mouse—as in Mickey, as in the [Disneyland Resort](#)—is a mile down the road from the convention venue, the **Anaheim Marriott** hotel. The Disneyland Resort, home to Disneyland Park and California Adventure Park, attracts millions of visitors a year with its blend of Disney characters, roller coasters, colorful parades, and familiar haunts such as the Pirates of the Caribbean ride, Sleeping Beauty Castle, and Star Wars: The Galaxy's Edge.

Though Disneyland is more well-known, [Knott's](#)

[Berry Farm](#) is also

a popular theme park in the area; it's located about 15 minutes from Anaheim.

Knott's has its own spate of scary rides, along with treats like Old West Ghost Town, Soak City Waterpark, and Camp Snoopy. Fun

bit of theme park trivia: The famous actor and comedian Steve Martin, who grew up in Orange County, did magic shows at Disneyland as a teenager and performed in skits and plays at Knott's Berry Farm's Bird Cage Theater.

If you want to watch some professional baseball, the Los Angeles Angels play at Anaheim's **Angel Stadium**, the team's home since 1966 (it's the fourth-oldest ballpark in Major League Baseball). It's a great place to watch a ballgame. (The Angels are scheduled to play home games here August 12–14 against the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team, and August 16–18 against the Atlanta Braves. You can find more information on [MLB.com](#).)

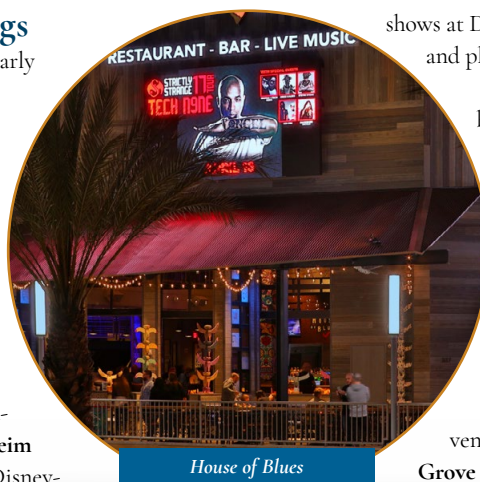
Anaheim has several notable performance venues, including **House of Blues**, the **City National Grove of Anaheim**, and **Honda Center**, which hosts major artists like Usher, Jennifer Lopez, and Janet Jackson (and is also home to the Anaheim Ducks hockey team).

Eat Up!

There are a host of fun food options nearby, with many eating spots around the hotel. Muna Zain, a longtime



Knott's Berry Farm



House of Blues

Toastmaster in Anaheim, suggests a popular location—one that has more than just food—within walking distance.

“If you’re looking for a great outdoor dining, entertainment, and shopping spot in the heart of the Anaheim Resort District, I highly recommend Anaheim GardenWalk,” she says.

Restaurants there include Casa de Pancho Mexican Grill & Cantina, and McCormick & Schmick’s.

Another draw is the **Anaheim Packing House**, a facility once used for processing Sunkist oranges that is now a food hall showcasing the diverse culinary fare of Southern California: everything from Japanese crepes and cheese-burger egg rolls to a bonanza of barbecued smoked meats and craft beers. (Or catch a ballgame at Angel Stadium and relish such ballpark staples as hot dogs, peanuts, nachos, and garlic fries.)

There are also enticing restaurants of myriad cultures—Mexican, Vietnamese, Korean, and Indian, just to name a few—throughout Orange County.

Beach Time

Southern California beaches are famed for their scenic beauty and prime surfing spots (memorialized in song by the Beach Boys). The area’s coastal expanse includes Newport Beach, highlighted by dazzling ocean views, glitzy shops and hotels, and the much-frequented Balboa Island; Dana Point, whose picturesque harbor is a hub for boaters, fishermen, and others who enjoy water activities; Huntington Beach, home of the International Surfing Museum; and Laguna Beach, a historic oceanside arts mecca.



Anaheim Packing House

“I love strolling around Laguna Beach, appreciating its nature and art,” says Zain, a member of the Humor Masters Toastmasters club in Anaheim. “The city is famous for its abundance of art galleries, coves, and beaches.”

Those staying for extended vacations might enjoy a day trip to **Catalina Island**, located about 25 miles off the Southern California coast.

There is also an array of mountains to enjoy in the region, including the Santa Ana, San Bernardino, and Santa Monica mountains.

Beyond Orange County

From Anaheim, **Los Angeles** is about a 45-minute trip by car. (Train rides are also available.) The city has many well-known attractions, such as Universal Studios, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the

Santa Monica Pier, the Griffith Observatory, and others. Renowned performance venues include the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Ahmanson Theatre, the Laugh Factory comedy club, and the Hollywood Bowl.

San Diego is about 90 minutes away from Anaheim by car. (Train rides go here, too.) The city’s highlights include: the San Diego Zoo, Balboa Park, Legoland, SeaWorld, and the La Jolla Cove and other scenic ocean spots.



Laguna Beach



Anaheim Marriott

Convention Site

The [Anaheim Marriott hotel](#) is located in a vibrant area of restaurants, shops, and hotels. And of course, it’s right near the sprawling Disney playground, which in addition to the two theme parks includes Downtown Disney, a dining-and-shopping district.

All convention events will take place at the Marriott. The hotel has two ballrooms, a restaurant called nFuse, an outdoor swimming pool, a social lounge, and a well-equipped fitness center.

There are plenty of other places to see in Southern California, as well as recreational activities to enjoy. When you gather in Disney-flavored Anaheim to experience the convention with fellow Toastmasters and friends from around the world, you’ll be in the happiest place on Earth.

Paul Sterman is senior editor, executive and editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.

Convention Information

The [Toastmasters 2024 International Convention](#) will be held August 14-17 at the [Anaheim Marriott hotel](#) in Anaheim, California. An excellent resource for finding fun things to do in the area is: [Visit Anaheim](#).



Jessica Allen, DTM (pictured left), and Joan Lewis, DTM

Convention Co-Hosts Welcome You to Anaheim!

Get to know the mother-daughter duo co-hosting convention.

By Laura Mishkind

The 2024 International Convention will be here before we know it, and no one knows that better than this year's convention host co-chairs, Joan Lewis, DTM, and Jessica Allen, DTM. This duo is excited to welcome Toastmasters from around the world to Southern California for an extra special event. In addition to the usual convention excitement, members will be celebrating 100 years of Toastmasters International. Lewis, a member since 2001 and a 2018–2020 International Director, says she is eager to share the “grandeur of it all!”

Lewis and Allen are a unique duo themselves—they are a mother-daughter team. The two Southern California residents are savvy business owners and have a close relationship. For 16 years, Lewis has run a company specializing in lien processing, and prior to her foray into entrepreneurship, she spent three decades as a paralegal and associate pastor. Today, she enjoys playing an active role in her church.

Allen is a mother as well. She has two daughters and owns an IT company with her husband. When she's not working or volunteering with Toastmasters, she is a singer in her band, which has two Los Angeles-based residencies.

In their role as host co-chairs, these two members have plenty of responsibilities, including recruiting and coordinating Helping Hands volunteers and committee chairs, helping Toastmasters World Headquarters meeting planners where needed, connecting with local agencies and officials for support services, and promoting the convention.

Together, Lewis and Allen have chartered a Toastmasters club, started a business, mentored more than 20 leaders who went on to serve at the District level, and have both served as District and region leaders themselves. In 2011, they were both in District roles and that year, the District was Select Distinguished. They have also at various times both belonged to the same two clubs: the online-only Parliamentary Toastmasters and the hybrid club Praise-masters in Los Angeles.

This mother-daughter pair is no stranger to working together or Toastmasters, and they are eager to welcome you to convention. Allen says, “Be ready to high-five me when you see me walking through the hallways. Say ‘hi’ when you see our team in those Helping Hands vests. We are here for you and ready to make this a memorable experience for you!”

Are you from Southern California originally?

Joan: I am originally from New York City. Although being born and raised in New York, I never got used to the cold winters. I told my mother that as soon as I was old enough, I would move to someplace warm, and I did. My husband and I moved to Los Angeles where the weather is much more to my liking.

Jessica: Being a native Californian, especially in the vibrant and diverse region of Southern California, is indeed something to be proud of! My connection to the Golden State and its unique culture, landscapes, and communities undoubtedly shapes my identity in a special way.

Have you attended a Toastmasters convention before?

Joan: I have attended almost every Toastmasters convention since 2008. The first time I witnessed the flag ceremony at the opening session, I was hooked. I have never been disappointed. The annual convention has become my summer vacation.

Jessica: My very first convention in 2010 was in California, so this is a full circle moment. The energy and sense of camaraderie at Toastmasters conventions are often contagious, uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds and locations under the common goal of self-improvement and mastery of public speaking. It's inspiring to be surrounded by like-minded people who share a passion for communication and personal development.

What is your dynamic like as mother and daughter and co-chairs?

Joan: Over the years, my daughter and I have worked on many projects both inside and outside of Toastmasters. ... We have always enjoyed working with each other. This project is an exciting journey. Having the honor of being selected as co-chairs for the historic 100th anniversary convention will be the greatest and the most memorable Toastmasters experience we will share together as Toastmasters mother and daughter. My husband, who is also a Toastmas-



Joan Lewis, DTM

ter, always says, "The family that Toastmasters together, stays together."

Jessica: I couldn't spell out our working and personal relationship better than my mom has done. However, I will add that we just make each other better. We are total opposites but, somehow, we make it work every time. It is a real blessing for me to have the opportunity to learn from and work with my mom. She is truly my hero and mentor in life. Any opportunity I get to work with her and soak up all that wisdom, I'm taking it!

Is your relationship beneficial to working together, and if so, why?

Joan: Yes, because our motto is the same when we work with teams. We want to have fun. We want to get the job done and remain friends. We share the same work ethic and values, and we understand each other.

Jessica: We are both strong and established leaders in our own right. We understand the importance of collaboration and synergy. By coming together as a unit, we are able to combine our individual strengths and talents to achieve even greater success.

What do you find most rewarding about the convention planning process?

Jessica: It's truly heartwarming to hear about the excitement and anticipation from members as we prepare to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Toastmasters. Their enthusiasm reflects the deep appreciation and connection they feel toward the organization and its rich history.

Collaborating with my mom, as well as the staff at Toastmasters International [World Headquarters], offers a unique opportunity to witness firsthand the behind-the-scenes efforts that go into organizing such a historic event. [The staff's] enthusiasm also underscores the importance of creating a memorable and meaningful event that honors Toastmasters' legacy while also celebrating the members and the organization's future. It's inspiring to see the passion and hard work that everyone brings to the table, as well as the camaraderie and support that fuel our collective efforts.

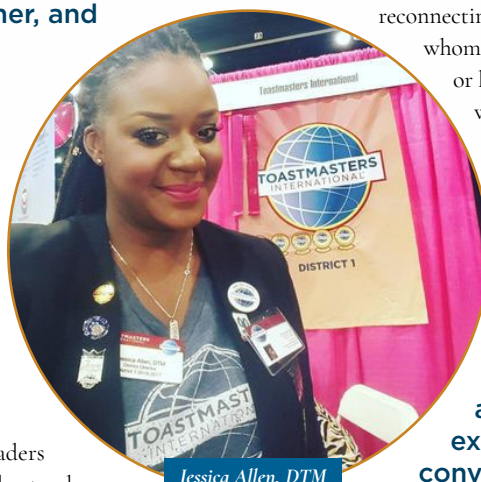
Joan: Being able to share this experience with my daughter is incredibly rewarding. It allows us to create lasting memories and embark on fun adventures together, which we can cherish and share with our families. I'm also grateful for the enthusiasm and willingness of numerous members to volunteer their time and support, especially my home club, Praisemasters.

Additionally, I'm eagerly anticipating reconnecting with old friends whom I haven't seen in years or have only interacted with online. It's an exciting opportunity to reunite with familiar faces and strengthen our bonds within the Toastmasters community.

What should attendees expect from this convention? Why should they attend?

Joan: They should expect to be amazed. This convention is going to be beyond all their expectations. The energy and excitement are already at a high pitch.

Jessica: They should expect a convention like no other! Expect surprises and some new things to be added. But also expect the traditions we love so much that have made us who we are for the last 100 years. This is going to be an event to be remembered for decades to come.



Jessica Allen, DTM

Laura Mishkind is associate editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

Connecting Through Communication

How you can use your Toastmasters skills to help strengthen society.

By Andrew Miller

As a Toastmaster, you appreciate human connections. You enjoy honing your communication skills, delivering speeches, and participating in contests. When asked, you take pleasure in extolling the virtues of Toastmasters. Communicating with others is an essential part of who you are.

But in the last few years, something has happened to our society. Our discourse has become polarized and angry. People have always had honest differences of opinion on important subjects; however, now everything seems controversial. Often just mentioning a topic like immigration, health care, or religion can lead to heated arguments.

Can the skills you've learned in Toastmasters—such as listening, evaluating, and sharing—help tamp down this anger?

Recently, I discovered several authors who recognize this growing problem and have developed strategies to help turn down the volume on these contentious issues.

Talk to Me

My first stop was the book *I Have Something to Say*, by American author, speech expert, and former Toastmaster [John Bowe](#). In 2010 Bowe learned that his cousin, who had spent 43 years living as a recluse because of severe shyness and insecurity, had gotten married. Bowe wondered what brought this about—drugs? Counseling? No, his cousin joined Toastmasters and developed his communication skills and self-confidence. Later, he met a woman and started talking to her, and in five months, they were married.

As Bowe describes in his book, that stimulated his curiosity about Toastmasters. He joined, studied founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley's writings, and read Aristotle's lectures on rhetoric. What he learned made him a better speaker and changed his views on human interactions.

Before joining Toastmasters, Bowe believed public speaking was mostly about transmitting information. Study up on a subject and tell others about it. However, after giving a few speeches and contemplating what he read, Bowe realized that the primary purpose of rhetoric is to persuade. It wasn't so much *what* you said but *how* you

said it. And that, he admitted, “did not mean clobbering others with your opinion.”

Over 2,000 years ago, Aristotle wrote that a good speech should have three components: logos (information), pathos (emotion), and ethos (the speaker's moral character). Of the three, ethos was the most important. The audience must relate to the speaker. They won't be convinced of anything if they don't relate to the speaker's worldview.

Talking with another person formally or informally should be a social transaction, not just an information transfer. Speakers should ask themselves, *why should this person listen to me?* If the audience misses the main points of the speech, it's not their fault. It means the speaker didn't relate favorably to them and failed to communicate the message. Aristotle summed it up in a single sentence: “The audience is the end and object of the speech.”

We could blame polarization and rude behavior on all sorts of externalities—social media, digital technology, shady politicians, the pandemic—and these certainly have had their role. But Bowe argues that if we learned to communicate better, these problems would dramatically diminish. Effective communication means delivering your message so others can understand it.

For the Greeks, effective speaking was central to building character. Bowe believes that the ability to speak and think clearly must be integral to education systems. Every young person must be taught effective speaking techniques. No one is born with this skill. Teaching this skill to everyone would be a simple, inexpensive solution to our “fraying social, emotional, and political health,” says Bowe.

The Listening Project

Diving more into Bowe's point about teaching young people effective speaking, I found sources who said that education should be about nurturing their human capacity to explore, discover, and engage with each other, as well as with their teachers and other adults. Dr. Niobe Way, author of *Rebels with a Cause: Reimagining Boys, Ourselves, and Our Culture*, and a professor of applied psychology at New York University, pointed out that many middle



John Rowe, author of *I Have Something to Say*, pictured on left.

school students are in a “crisis of connection.” And that age group is significantly more likely to be suspended for misconduct than older students. She and Dr. Joseph Derrick Nelson, associate professor at Swarthmore College, believe education should be more than filling students’ heads with information and then testing to see what they retain. So, they developed The Listening Project to counter this trend.

In The Listening Project, students break into pairs and conduct “transformative interviews.” These usually begin with questions about parents and upbringings, then quickly transition to open-ended queries designed to delve into more interesting topics or “gold nuggets.” As discussions proceed, interviewers learn about themselves and those they are interviewing.

The goal is to replace judgment with curiosity and negative feelings with empathy. When the interviews are over, each student writes a short biography of their partner. Way believes this will help head off a lifetime of bigotry and violence by fostering meaningful interpersonal relationships. The key is to avoid categorizing people based on superficial interactions.

How to Know a Person

After learning about why we communicate and how we can start teaching it to younger generations, I observed what leads to a healthier society.

David Brooks, a political and cultural commentator, states that in a healthy society, everyone should feel valued and understood. He points out in his book, *How to Know a Person*, that if we want to combat the recent wave of negative social and political discourse, we must start treating each other better. Communication, he feels, begins as soon as we meet a person, and if

Effective communication means delivering your message so others can understand it.

we disagree, we must do so courteously. Everyone should develop their social skills and strive to be great conversationalists. In a discussion, everyone should feel “respected, heard, and understood.”

Brooks draws from the fields of psychology, education, philosophy, and neuroscience, as well as the arts, to develop suggestions for improving human connections and becoming a better communicator.

What Can We Do as Toastmasters?

We can do a lot. When a stranger asks about Toastmasters, it’s tempting to start at the personal level. You point out the advantages of developing your communication and leadership skills. You describe how friends and colleagues benefit from this organization.

But as Toastmasters, we shouldn’t ignore the societal benefits of effective speaking and listening skills, especially during these divisive times. We need to demonstrate our character—our ethos—to others. We need to show new acquaintances that we strive to be good listeners and good speakers. And we should always treat our audience respectfully—whether it’s one person or a roomful.

For the last 100 years, Toastmasters has been an inwardly directed organization. But as we enter the second millennium, we should help quell the angry rhetoric that has become too common. Even Smedley believed from the beginning that Toastmasters have a responsibility to

advocate for good. We are more than a speaking organization—“listening” and “connecting” are significant components of the program.

Other ways we can help temper angry rhetoric:

- Discuss with other Toastmasters how extreme polarization could negatively affect the world our children and grandchildren inherit.
- Ask club members to deal with this issue in prepared speeches, Table Topics® questions, and evaluations.
- Add this topic to Speakers Bureau presentations.
- Read and discuss books, such as *I Have Something to Say*, *Rebels with a Cause*, *How to Know a Person*, and others.

When Rowe became involved with Toastmasters, he worried we might be “quaint or out of date.” It is true that once a week, we interact like members did 100 years ago. We meet in a small room to talk, listen, and ask questions. That may seem out of date. But that simple activity could be the key to the more connected and open society we desperately need.

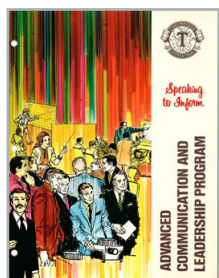
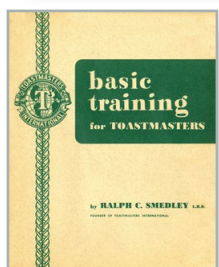
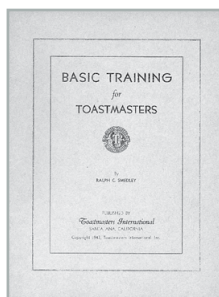
Andrew Miller retired in 2013 from a career that included research in aquatic systems and university teaching. He is a member of We Can Speak-Podemos Hablar Toastmasters Club in Florida. He volunteers in prisons, restores antique stained-glass windows, and writes. Visit his website at andrewcmiller.com.



Evolution of the Education Program

Discover how
Toastmasters' learning
experience
has developed
through the
decades.

By *Toastmaster*
magazine staff



Education is at the heart of the Toastmasters program. People become members because they want to learn (in addition to other reasons). You learn how to develop communication and leadership skills, critique other speakers, actively listen, write and deliver speeches, and achieve many other proficiencies along the way.

Since Dr. Ralph C. Smedley founded Toastmasters International nearly 100 years ago, the organization's education content has evolved along with the times. There has been tremendous effort to build the best learning experience possible for members.

Here are some highlights of key milestones in the education program.

1928 Toastmasters founder Ralph C. Smedley writes the first manual for clubs, called the *Manual of Instructions*. It includes a pamphlet titled "Ten Lessons in Public Speaking."

1942 Smedley introduces a 12-project manual called *Basic Training for Toastmasters*.

1950 Toastmasters adds another manual, *Beyond Basic Training*, for members who complete the original manual and want to further their speaking skills.

1963 *Beyond Basic Training* is divided into two basic manuals: One contains 10 speeches emphasizing leadership through speech, and the other contains 10 projects focusing on advanced speech techniques.

1969 *Beyond Basic Training* becomes the *Advanced Communication and Leadership Program*.

1978 Toastmasters expands the *Advanced Communication and Leadership Program* from a single manual to a series of 15 projects.

1979 The *Success Leadership Series* is introduced. This seminar-style set of programs targets specific skills that would be beneficial in the work environment, such as listening, evaluation, thinking, leadership, training, and management. The first two programs of the series released are "How to Conduct Productive Meetings" and "Parliamentary Procedure in Action."

1980 Toastmasters' first educational audio cassette program, *The Effective Speaker*, debuts. The program is developed to complement the speaking projects in the basic and advanced *Communication and Leadership Program* manuals and includes inspiring recorded speeches by famous orators such as Will Rogers, Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King Jr., as well as accompanying narrative.

1985 *Be Prepared to Speak* is the first video program released by Toastmasters. The 27-minute program gives new members a step-by-step guide to public speaking.

1993 *The Successful Club Series* is created to help club leaders take steps to build a successful club. The first program released is "Moments of Truth," which defines and discusses six factors critical to a club's success.

1997 The organization establishes a two-track education system (communication and leadership) to strengthen the place of leadership training in the education program.

2006 The *Competent Leadership* manual is released to further strengthen leadership training. The 10-project manual is designed to help members develop leadership skills while serving in club meeting roles.

2017 The Pathways learning experience launches after years of research, planning, content development, and testing. Designed to modernize the communication program and further strengthen leadership training—both a mandate from the Board of Directors in the 2010 Strategic Plan—Pathways is a digital system where users work online in learning paths.

2020 Pathways officially becomes the organization's only education program. Previously, members had been allowed to work either in that program or the prior education program, or both, for credit.

In honor of Toastmasters International's 100th anniversary, this is the sixth in a year-long series of articles commemorating historic milestones.

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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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