



MESSAGE FROM MAX

Preparing to Transfer Leadership

by Max E. Rasquinha, DTM, District 56 Governor



We are ten months into the current term and can count many achievements. We are prepared to achieve more that will make District 56 "Distinguished" once again. More work is required to make our dreams a reality.

It's also time to prepare for new District officers who will assume responsibilities on July 1, 2005. New leadership brings new ideas and new challenges in this fast moving and fast changing world. New ideas come with new assignments and new commitments. Our dedication to the Toastmasters program must remain strong. Teamwork is an important success factor.

Every area governor and division governor has provided tremendous support to the district. A few assistant area governors and assistant division governors have shared additional burdens and responsibilities. Toastmas-

ters friends and well-wishers, leaders in their own right, have worked together to ensure the district's success.

Whether we are current or future district officers, we each possess and share a special type of leadership. We cherish our special bond of friendship, and we help one another regardless of our titles and positions. This is part of the beauty of Toastmasters, part of our Toastmasters obligation, and part of our Toastmasters commitment. We are family.

Let us, therefore, cast our vote for new district officers on May 14, 2005. Let us help our new leaders achieve greater successes next year. Most of them have contributed to our successes this year. Remember that working together, we can achieve great things. Thank you and God bless.

Yours sincerely,

Max E. Rasquinha, DTM
District Governor



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Theme of the Month: "ANTICIPATION"



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Allen Prescott, DTM — Candidate for District Governor

by Allen Prescott, DTM



I have been in Toastmasters for over 10 years. My home club is Clear Lake Communicators. I have served in all club officer positions and as Distinguished Area Governor 2001-2002, Division Governor 2002-2003, LGM 2003-2004, and am currently LGET 2004-2005. I received the Area Governor of the Year Award and the Excellence in Marketing Award. I attended two Region III training sessions as Lt. Governor Marketing and Lt. Governor Education and Training.

Professionally, I am a software process analyst with United Space Alliance. My education includes a BS in computer science and an MS in software engineering.

On a personal note, I've been married to Betsy for 18 years. We have two sons, Michael, 10, and Baker, 14. Our household includes two Basenji dogs, three Koi fish, a cat, a

cockatiel, and a gerbil. I enjoy playing the piano for relaxation.

As District Governor, I will:

- Focus on four critical success factors — CTMs, ATMs, clubs, and members
- Create a club rescue committee for struggling clubs
- Assign mentors for CTMs, DTMs, and advanced communications and leadership tracks.
- Create club and membership extension committees
- Provide High Performance Leadership opportunities
- Appoint a quality contest chairperson
- Ensure that all clubs have a club success plan

My ultimate goal for the district is to be, at the very least, a Distinguished District by April 30, 2006!

Pamela McCown, DTM — Candidate for Lt. Governor Education & Training

by Pamela McCown, DTM



A charter member of JPMorgan Chase Firm Speakers since October, 2001, I have served as vice president membership, vice president education, club president, vice president public relations and sergeant at arms. I obtained the CTM within my first year as a Toastmaster and achieved Distinguished Toastmaster certification as of January 26, 2005. I have truly done it all in Toastmasters. I have competed as a speech contestant at club, area, and division contests. I also served as 2003 spring conference co-chair for the UNITED FOR FREEDOM conference, as

Division O Governor, 2003-2004, and most recently as Lt. Governor Marketing, 2004-2005.

I try to bring out the best in others with my positive attitude and smile. I take time to encourage people to stretch to reach their goals, and have been instrumental in sponsoring four JPMorgan Chase Toastmasters Clubs in Houston. As LGM, I have added 11 new clubs to District 56. Ten more clubs are expected to charter by the end of June 2005. I have made many new friends while serving as a district officer and look forward to future opportunities to be of service to District 56 Toastmasters.

I seek your vote for the position of 2005-2006 Lt. Governor Education and Training for District 56. I will continue to

be a mentor and resource person.

I truly believe in the power of positive thinking. Be positive, and in all things give thanks. Thanks to all the District 56 Toastmasters who have been personal mentors and assisted me and others along the path of learning and growing in Toastmasters.

I think you'll agree that one of my favorite writers, the Apostle Paul, left us some priceless wisdom: "Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about." (Philippians 4:8) That's worth thinking about!



Region III and International Conference Proxies Mailed to Club Presidents

Club presidents should have received a large white envelope from Toastmasters International world headquarters. The mailing contains stiff cardboard ballots (proxy forms) for the upcoming Region III and International business meetings.

Our proxies represent the votes of the district in all important matters affecting the clubs. Only if all proxies are returned will District 56's voice be fully heard at the regional and international levels.

Complete forms and return them to the district governor or John Martin. For more information, contact John Martin (281-558-9900 or andmore@alief.com).

Cynthia St. Dennis, DTM

Candidate for Lt. Governor Marketing

by Cynthia St. Dennis, DTM, Division L Governor



A charter member of Greenspoint Area Toastmasters since October 1993, I've served in every officer position in my home club and currently serve as secretary/treasurer. I obtained my DTM in 2004 after serving District 56 as area and division governor from 2000 to 2004. I was awarded Division Governor of the Year for 2003-2004 for leadership in achieving 100% President's Distinguished Status in Division L.

Being a current member of 7 clubs within District 56, my Toastmaster skills and expertise are continually challenged. I try to motivate others with a positive attitude and focus on excellence.

International Communication Skills

by Shirley Gilbuena, DTM, District 56 Chief Editor



Next month Linda Posey, CTM/CL has a special opportunity to practice her communication skills. She and her husband will spend two weeks in Amsterdam, Moscow and St. Petersburg. The trip was prompted by an invitation from friends stationed with the US Embassy in Russia.

"Our friends are near the end of their tour of duty in Moscow, so this was our last chance to visit them there," Linda says. "The opportunity to see Russia – especially with someone who speaks the language and can show us around – was too good to pass up."

A highlight of Linda's trip will be attending a meeting of the Moscow Free Speakers Toastmasters Club. "The minute I found out we were going to Russia, I went to the club finder on the TI website. Fortunately, the club that meets while we'll be there holds their meetings in English."

Linda has been studying Russian in her spare time, but it's a complex lan-

I communicate the Toastmasters mission to generate interest and encourage people to get involved. I have been heavily involved in club charters, both as a sponsor and mentor. I have served on committees to develop and promote District 56 conferences. I consider Toastmasters as my "extended family" and attend district-wide activities whenever possible. A long-time Toastmaster friend of mine says that Toastmasters' blood courses through my veins.

I ask you to vote for me as Lt. Governor of Marketing for 2005-2006. I welcome the opportunity to continue to serve District 56 by embracing the responsibilities.

Set your sights on the horizon and Sail with Me for District 56 Success!

guage with an alien alphabet. "I've learned a few basics. By the time we get there, I hope I can order food in a restaurant and ask for directions. But I'd be helpless at a standard Toastmasters meeting."

"I've exchanged email with the VPPR and the president of Moscow Free Speakers," Linda says. "They're very cordial and their English is excellent."

The Moscow club has invited Linda to give her contest speech when she visits their meeting. She's glad she doesn't have to give it in Russian.

District Governor Max Rasquinha is helping Linda put together some surprises for the Russian Toastmasters. Linda adds, "Meeting new friends who share my interest in Toastmasters – like having our old friends show us around – it's priceless."

Linda is VPPR of Unity Toastmasters and associate editor of *Forum 56*. She is also a member of Wordcrafters Toastmasters. She promises a full report on her Russian adventure and her "diplomatic mission" to the Moscow Free Speakers Club when she returns.

D56 Highlights

April 2005

Division Contest Winners

International Speech Contest

- L 1st Louis Roesch
"Do You Have Gas?"
2nd Charlie Pitts
"Soaring to Victory"
- M 1st Barbara Shareef
"Let Go"
2nd John R. Mann
"Take Advantage of Every Opportunity"
- N 1st Scott R. Adams
"Look How You've Grown!"
2nd Mike Stackhouse
"The Wisdom of My Big Brother Butch"
- O 1st Jatika Manigault
"I Found My Soul on the Mountain"
2nd Yolanda Bynum
"Don't Let Their Last Time Be Your First Time"
- P 1st Julian Franklin
"When I Grow Up"
2nd M. Ali Khalili
"Today Is a Day"
- Q 1st Bill Murray
"What's Important"
2nd Ola Joseph
"The Silver Lining"

Evaluation Contest

- L 1st Mark Nemeth
2nd David Bell
- M 1st Connie Barnaba
2nd Deborah Vermillion
- N 1st Scott R. Adams
2nd Shannon Quadros
- O 1st Paul T. Bukowski
2nd no contestant
- P 1st Louis A. Cioletti
2nd Sara Campbell
- Q 1st John Martin
2nd Ola Joseph

Kashmira Sutaria
ATM-G/CL
candidate for
Division L Governor



I joined Successfully Speaking Toastmasters in October 1995. My current home club is Greenspoint Area Toastmasters. In addition to serving in most club officer roles, I won many awards at the club, area and division level speech contests. Upon completion of my present Area L-43 Governor term, I will receive my DTM.

Working with my fellow Toastmasters, encouraging them to strive for excellence, and sharing the opportunity to improve the quality of life and career by learning leadership skills, gives me great pleasure. I will accelerate growth in the largest division in District 56, Division L.

Professionally, I worked in the banking industry in Bombay, India and New York. Currently, I am manager: letters of credit at Vinmar International Ltd., Houston.

My significant achievements include winning various intercollegiate awards in essay and debate competitions. I won 1st prize at the International Essay Competition and represented India at the International Seminar, Barcelona, Spain, July 1979.

All my life I have given my very best to every task I have taken in hand. Challenges energize me. I enjoy communicating and listening effectively. I believe in the Toastmasters organization and the member's promise.

Division L Sails to Success with Leadership.

Mary Spain
DTM
candidate for
Division M Governor



I am a candidate for Division Governor for the Magic M. I have been in Toastmasters since January 2002, received my first DTM in July 2004, and I am committed to a second DTM by 2007. I am past Area Governor for M32 and a member of Houston Speakers Forum in Area M31. I am also a member of Pride of Houston in Division N and Dining Out Toastmasters in Division O. I have served as secretary, VPE, and president in various Toastmasters clubs over the past three years.

My goal is to help every area in Division M be distinguished in 2005-2006. Division M has a history of being distinguished, and I fully expect to see that tradition continues.

I am a native of Cullman, Alabama and moved with my family to Texas when I was in sixth grade. I have one son, a wonderfully supportive husband, and two cats who wish I would stay home more often. I work for the executive director of the Houston-Galveston Area Council. If I had any spare time outside Toastmasters, I would be quilting, gardening, or doing genealogy research.

Mary of the Magic M



Stephen Siegel
ATM-S/CL
candidate for
Division N Governor



Division N Governor is a great responsibility. I would like to help all clubs achieve their goals by networking similar clubs to help other clubs. An example is:

I had a corporate club whose members had been laid off and the club was reduced to six members. What they did in nine months was remarkable. Their membership is now up to twenty-three. Another area governor has a similar club problem and doesn't know what to do. I would bring the successful club president to explain what their club has done to rebuild membership.

This is only one thing I believe a division governor can do. Other things a division governor can do are to help their area governors achieve their goals and maybe groom them to be a division governor in the future.

My credentials are as follows: Area N-22 Governor 2004-2005, sergeant at arms, vice president membership, vice president education, and treasurer of HUPS. I also was president of South Main Speakers and helped charter a club.

By giving to other clubs and areas you can help so many people. That is why I would like to be Division N Governor.

Jocelyn Williams
ATM-S/CL
candidate for
Division N Governor



As Division N Governor, I would embrace the opportunity to support the area governors, present quality contests, help members and clubs successfully reach their goals, and lead Division N to becoming Distinguished in 2006.

I was appointed Area N-20 Governor in Nov. 2004, and have been a Toastmaster since May 2003. I hold dual membership in the ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil (Downtown) clubs, serving as vice president public relations for ConocoPhillips. Previously, I have held vice president education twice and sergeant at arms. I'm *Forum 56* assistant editor, joint Division M and N contests co-chair, and ExxonMobil Speechcraft program coordinator.

As the daughter of a career Air Force colonel, I lived in many of the 50 states and Korea. I experienced diversity in wonderful ways and appreciate the diversity of D56 Toastmasters. Now I reside in Katy with my husband, RJ, and our son, RJ II, 3 1/2.

I'm no stranger to leadership. I served as 2003-2004 president for the Houston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), a professional organization with more than 400 members. During my term, the Society recognized STC Houston as a Chapter of Excellence.

I want your vote for Division N Governor. Successfully Navigate the TM Communication and Leadership tracks with me in 2005-2006.

Shawn Lacagnina
ATM-B/CL
candidate for
Division O Governor



I am currently Area L-42 Governor and president of Cyfair Super Speakers Club.

Joining Toastmasters only 14 months ago, I have achieved my ATM-B and CL. Yes, I believe in the Toastmasters program.

My passion is helping individuals and organizations strive for and achieve their goals by teaching real world skills – *life skills* – that not only affect the bottom line of individuals and organizations, but change people’s lives. My company, Smoothstone Consulting, focuses on subjects such as communication, leadership, trust, and sales skills, working to help people understand how to work more effectively together.

It is not hard to see why I believe in Toastmasters and the Toastmasters program for success.

I am a graduate of St. Thomas High School and Texas Christian University. I am very involved in Metropolitan Baptist Church and, of course, Toastmasters. I am celebrating my 13th year of marriage this month and have three beautiful girls, Darbi, 9, Kendal, 6, and Jensen, 6. I am truly blessed with an incredible family that inspires me to be better than I am everyday.

Entrust me with your vote and I promise to continue to work hard, remain accessible, and do all that I can to help each area, club, and member accomplish their goals and continue the momentum of District 56.

Richard Lehman
DTM
candidate for
Division P Governor



I joined Toastmasters in 1993 after being laid off my job at NASA. One of my NASA co-

workers invited me to join the JSC Toastmasters and even paid for my first 6 months of membership. David told me that Toastmasters was a great place to meet people. David was right. However, he did not tell me the learning experience Toastmasters International would bring to my personal life and me.

I continued my membership at JSC until about my 6th speech when I transferred my membership to the Lockheed/Martin Toastmasters. There I completed my 1st CTM and started my career with Toastmasters International. Along the journey Lockheed/Martin was renamed the Clear Lake Communicators (CLC) where I remain today. Through CLC I earned my DTM and 2 additional CTMs. I have held various club offices and in the 2003-2004 year I was elected CLC Member of the Year.

I have been involved at the district level since 1996. I served as chaplain for District Governor Mary Ellen Hughes, DTM, as Area P-3 Governor twice, Speechcraft coordinator, public relations officer, and secretary. I currently am district parliamentarian.

I plan to make Toastmasters International a continuing part of my life. This is why to better serve you I am your candidate for Division P Governor.

Jeannie Pullen
ATM-B/CL
candidate for
Division P Governor



Hi, let me introduce myself.

I taught Math at College of the Main-

land until 1981. Since then I have worked for three NASA Contractors in some phase of programming and web development. I currently work for United Space Alliance.

If you attended any of the Dining Out Toastmasters meetings last year, you may have met my husband, Gerald Pullen. We have four sons; only one is still at home – John is a freshman at University of Houston. Jason, the oldest, is an attorney in Fort Worth. Eric is an architect, and David is still trying to figure out what he wants to do.

I joined Space Team Toastmasters in 1999. When I completed my CTM, I served as club president (twice), VP education, VP membership, and VP of public relations. I competed in contests in both Division O and Division P. I will soon complete my AL and have about 1/3 of the work completed on my ATM-G. Currently, I am serving as the P-3 Area Governor, and in October 2004, I sponsored the Space Explorers Toastmasters that meets at JSC.

As division governor, I will attend the district executive meetings, strive to get all Division P club officers trained, and motivate the area governors to in turn motivate the clubs.

I would like your vote for Division P Governor.

Richard Kummins
ATM-B
candidate for
Division Q Governor



I am a candidate for Division Q Governor, and welcome your support. As District

56 has assumed greater visibility in Toastmasters by our achievements, its leaders have a greater responsibility to continue to raise the bar, and help all in the district achieve the goals of excellence in communication and leadership. Our mission must also be to take our message and the proven benefits of the Toastmasters program out into the community, and to continue to foster the growth of the district.

Over the last 12 years I have dedicated much time and effort to district, as a club officer, area governor, speech contest finalist, educational presenter at district conferences, and mentor. I want to see Division Q be number 1 in District 56 by leading and guiding the area governors, club officers, and club members to even greater achievements.



Message from Public Relations Officer

More Than Just a Conference

by Diane Niño, CTM/CL



Did you know that your fellow Toastmasters are busy preparing themselves for a little friendly competition?

Over the next few weeks, candidates for top positions in District 56 will be campaigning. In addition, the final contestants for the Evaluation and International Speech Contests will be polishing their evaluation skills and their speeches. With all this preparation, you as individual Toastmasters can also get a piece of the action.

You can learn about the leadership process from your district leaders by attending the District 56 business meeting, Saturday, May 14th, at 4:00 pm. There is no fee to attend the business meeting, and each club is encouraged to send at least one representative with the club's proxies.

If you are interested in perfecting your communication skills, be sure to register for the Spring 2005 District 56 Conference on May 13-14. You'll be inspired by the finalists in the Evaluation and International Speech Contests. At the educational sessions you'll find ideas and motivation for pursuing your next educational goal. You'll mingle with fellow

Toastmasters from across the city as well as district leaders and visiting dignitaries.

Give yourself a break from your everyday routine and step into a little bit of history. The District 56 Spring 2005 Conference takes place in the Houston Alamo, located at the Northwest Forest Conference Center, 12715 Telge Road, Cypress, Texas, just 30 minutes from downtown Houston.

This conference will be more than just a club meeting, more than a speech contest, and more than an evening get-away. The District 56 Spring 2005 Conference will be an event to remember!

Toastmasters Leadership Institutes for 2005-2006

Bigger, Better, and More Fun!

by Allen Prescott, DTM



Mark your calendars now for the Toastmasters Leadership Institutes (TLI) 2005-2006. Based on feedback from past TLIs, **next year's TLIs will be bigger, better, and more fun!** TLIs will be open to all District 56 Toastmasters. These TLIs will be jam-packed with activities, so they will last all day (8 am-5 pm) and include lunch and keynote speaker. Three TLIs are scheduled for June-August 2005: June 11,

July 16, and August 6.

Each TLI will have **two educational tracks**: New Toastmasters and Experienced Toastmasters. TLIs have been geared towards new Toastmasters and those who have never been club officers. The new Experienced Toastmasters track will appeal to those who have already held most club offices.

Here is a preview of TLI activities:

- **Distinguished Club Program.** Participants will break up into mock clubs, create a Club Success Plan, and present their plan.
- **Toastmasters Trivia Game Show** (beginner and advanced). Participants who correctly answer Toastmasters questions are eligible for prizes.
- **Meet Your Area Governor.** Participants can meet their area governor, ask questions, and dialog with other area Toastmasters.
- **Moments of Truth *Successful Club Series*.** Participants will discuss this powerful module in groups and

present a summary of their discussion.

- **Better Speaker Series, Successful Club Series and Leadership Excellence Series.** Participants will hear a presentation on each series. These educational modules will be on sale in the district bookshop.
- **Demo of "Perfectly" Executed Toastmasters Meeting.** Participants will observe the demo, critique the meeting.
- **Membership: New, Dual, Transfer, and Reinstated.** Participants will learn about the four membership categories and how to fill out membership forms.
- **Educational Completions.** How do you apply for a CTM, ATM, CL, AL, or DTM? Participants will learn about the requirements for each award and how to fill out the forms.
- **Handling Conflict within the TM Club.** Participants will role play different situations and learn how to diffuse conflict among club members.
- **Contests.** Participants will learn how to conduct a quality club contest. Training for judges and chief judges will be conducted.
- **"Terrible Toasties,"** Hilarious skit about a fictitious club whose officers are tried for dereliction of duty. Participants will have the opportunity to turn this club into the "Terrific Toasties."

Look for details about upcoming TLIs in the next issue of the *Forum 56* and at the Spring Conference, May 13-14.

Make Sure Your Club Gets to Vote

by Linda Posey, CTM/CL



While we'd love to have 100% attendance of all club officers at the District 56 Spring Conference, we know that sometimes stuff happens to keep people from attending. It's important that every club have at least one representative present at the district executive council business meeting. Important district business will be conducted, and your club has two votes in any decision that is made. However, those votes must be cast by the club president and vice president education – or the club members carrying the proxies of those officers.

If you are your club's president or vice president education and you can't attend the conference, be sure to assign your proxy to a club member in good standing. (Even if you're planning to attend, you might want to assign a proxy just in case a last-minute family or business emergency keeps you from being there.)

Only the written proxy forms in your packet from TI, a personal authorization email from the president or vice president education, or the forms below will be recognized. You may copy the forms, but your signature must be original. Be sure your club's voice is heard at the district business meeting – assign your proxy today.

Spring 2005 District 56 Conference

May 13-14 at the "Houston Alamo"
Northwest Forest Conference Center
12715 Telge Road, Cypress, TX 77429

International Speech Contest
Evaluation Contest
Business Meeting/Election of New District Officers
Educational Sessions
Three Prepaid Meals with Full Registration

A LA CARTE PRICES

Friday Events:

Buffet Style Dinner \$25.00
Evaluation Contest \$10.00

Saturday Events:

Educational Sessions \$20.00
Lunch \$15.00
International Speech Contest \$15.00
Gala Dinner \$30.00

Full Registration \$99.00

Proxy Forms for District 56 Business Meeting

Proxy

District 56 Toastmasters Business Meeting

May 14, 2005

I hereby authorize

a member in good standing of

Toastmasters Club number _____,

to cast my vote at the District 56 Toastmasters

Business Meeting in Houston, Texas on May 14, 2005.

Signed by:

Club President

This proxy is for one vote only.

You, as Club President, may designate, in writing, any other member of your club to vote in your place at the District 56 Toastmasters Business Meeting. Each club is entitled to two votes. One Toastmaster from your club may carry both proxies - yours and the one from the Vice President Education. District Officers entitled to one vote may cast a maximum of 3 votes. All other Toastmasters are limited to a maximum of 2 votes. Reproduction of this form is acceptable. Signature must not be reproduced.

A printed copy of an email from you designating a proxy is also permitted.

Proxy

District 56 Toastmasters Business Meeting

May 14, 2005

I hereby authorize

a member in good standing of

Toastmasters Club number _____,

to cast my vote at the District 56 Toastmasters

Business Meeting in Houston, Texas on May 14, 2005.

Signed by:

Club Vice President Education

This proxy is for one vote only.

You, as Club Vice President Education, may designate, in writing, any other member of your club to vote in your place at the District 56 Toastmasters Business Meeting. Each club is entitled to two votes. One Toastmaster from your club may carry both proxies - yours and the one from the President. District Officers entitled to one vote may cast a maximum of 3 votes. All other Toastmasters are limited to a maximum of 2 votes. Reproduction of this form is acceptable. Signature must not be reproduced.

A printed copy of an email from you designating a proxy is also permitted.

Proposed Increase in Membership Dues Effective October 1, 2005

Jon Greiner, DTM, International President of Toastmasters International, sent the following letter to District Governor Max Rasquinha to be shared with all Toastmasters in District 56. The proposal for the increase in dues will be brought for a vote at the business meeting at the International Conference in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in August.



*Jon Greiner, DTM
2004-2005 International
President
Toastmasters International*

April 27, 2005

Dear Toastmaster:

You may have received an e-mail containing statements about a wide variety of issues that relate to the proposed dues increase. As your elected president, I'm pleased to take this opportunity to provide you with more information about the proposed dues increase and respond to some of the issues that have been raised.

Since I have a lot of information to share with you, I've divided this correspondence into several sections for easier reading. Many members have expressed a desire to access more detailed and comprehensive information than I have sent previously. I hope this document provides the information you need to support your Board of Directors in voting for the proposed dues increase.

The Role of the Board of Directors

Your Board of Directors is composed of Toastmasters members who have been elected by you, the membership, to oversee the organization. Board members are fiduciaries responsible for ensuring the continued health and success of the organization. They have duties that include regular review of the organization's financial results, ensuring that the organization is fiscally sound, and developing policies and procedures that govern the organization. Board members come from different parts of the world and from many different cultural, educational and career backgrounds. They give a tremendous amount of time to the organization and take their responsibilities seriously.

Ensuring the Organization's Financial Viability

When discussing the possibility of a dues increase, the Board carefully considered a number of factors. High on the list was the fact that the organization had projected a deficit budget for each of the last four years. Through careful management of expenses, we were able to avoid a loss the first two years, but realized a loss the last two years. A deficit budget is also in place for fiscal year 2005. No organization can continue to operate at a loss. Because we will have operated in the red for three years at the end of this year, we need to cover past expenses as well as current and short-term future expenses. It is not fiscally responsible to continue to operate in this manner and it has become necessary to raise dues.

The Board studied several sets of financial projections and analyzed five different possibilities for the amount of the increase. After detailed analysis and lengthy discussion, the Board agreed on the amount that is included in the proposal.

The Board has set a number of new short- and long-term organizational goals. We are introducing a new leadership manual this coming year that will be part of the new member kit and will be available to existing members. There will be a new edu-

cational award for those completing that manual. The leadership track will be expanded to include more levels. Additionally, the Board wants to improve our marketing efforts and materials to help existing clubs retain members, as well as build new clubs. There also will be an expanded focus on corporations and other large organizations to encourage their support of Toastmasters programs. If the dues increase does not pass, some or all of these organizational goals will have to be postponed or shelved. Other areas for consideration could include frequency of the magazine, staff cut (which would greatly impact member services), no new technology updates/no new internet services. Consideration would also have to be given to reducing or eliminating education awards, recognition programs, educational programs, administrative materials provided to clubs at no charge, no or very limited new programs, no or very little updating of existing programs, to name a few.

Reinforcing District Support of Clubs

Toastmasters International provides 25% of the dues revenue collected to districts to support district operations. The proposed dues increase would result in more funds to districts so they can continue to train officers, help clubs succeed, and build new clubs. As stated previously, the additional income retained by Toastmasters International will pay for past and current deficits and enable the organization to operate in the black and fund new short- and long-term programs that support members, clubs and districts.

The Value of Toastmasters to the Individual Member

We have received feedback that clubs are concerned about the dues amount that will be paid semiannually. In my view, clubs don't pay dues, individual members do. The value that each member receives from participation in the program far outweighs the investment of an additional \$1.50 a month for each member. Consider that it costs hundreds or even thousands of dollars for short term communication and leadership seminars or the cost of self-development books. At \$4.50 per month, Toastmasters is a bargain. Think in terms of what \$4.50 can buy today. I personally can't think of any other organization that provides so much and charges so little. You can't buy a paperback book or a cup of specialty coffee for less than the cost of monthly dues. Few, if any, companies have survived since 1992 without increasing the price of their product or service.

Effects of Growth on Revenue and Infrastructure

We were able to postpone the dues increase for several years because of a consistently positive growth rate in new members, new clubs and membership renewals. In 1992 there were 170,000 members, and now in 2005 there are more than 200,000. This increase has resulted in the organization reaching

a diseconomy of scale – the point at which a resource cannot increase its product or service output. The new computer system is a perfect example. While the old system was acceptable to manage the organization as it grew from 80,000 to 180,000 members, it could not be used efficiently to manage a 200,000 plus member organization and it was replaced. It has been suggested that the cost of one additional member could not justify the need for additional dues from that member. However, there are 80,000 new members per year and membership is 200,000 and growing. At some point that one additional member tipped the scales and surpassed the economy of scale.

Financial Reserves and Their Use

Toastmasters International has annual operating revenue and expense and also has financial reserves. Reserves, or “net assets,” are important in the operation of a business for the stability and flexibility they can provide. Adequate reserve levels will sustain the organization through any economic downturns as well as provide adequate funding for major capital expenditures.

In order to ensure its financial viability, Toastmasters International maintains reserves in the following designated funds:

Infrastructure Fund - This fund provides for major technology and facility needs.

Disaster Recovery Fund - This fund enables the organization to re-establish operations following a disaster, either natural or man-made. Specifically, Toastmasters International does not purchase earthquake insurance for the World Headquarters, which is located in Southern California, an area known to have periodic earthquake activity.

Sustaining Fund - This fund enables Toastmasters International to withstand the impact of economic downturns, both internally and/or externally generated. Reserves not designated in the above funds become part of the sustaining fund. At a minimum, Toastmasters International seeks to maintain, in the sustaining fund, an amount equal to six months, or 50%, of planned annual operating expenses.

Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund - The Smedley Fund provides restricted funds used solely for educational purposes.

Online Services to Better Meet Members' Expectations and Needs

We anticipate that efficiencies will increase as more and more people use the online services. Renewals that don't require research are the ones that come through the Web site. More complex renewals come by fax or mail and require extensive research, in some cases, and additional manual steps. The World Headquarters staff receives many thousands of e-mails, phone calls, and pieces of mail, so we see our human resources shifting more and more to customer care and less data entry. Until the members and clubs get used to using the online services, the staff is faced with calls for help and fixing errors that were made (including hitting the submit button several times causing multiple transactions, entering incorrect information or paying dues for the wrong people).

Timing of Proposal Announcement

An issue has been raised about the timing of the Board's decision and the process for other proposals. I want to be very clear that your Board of Directors did not and would not intentionally time the announcement of the dues proposal in such a way to limit the democratic process. The announcement was made following the February Board of Directors meeting which was the first opportunity for the Board to review the final financial statements and the auditor's report for 2004. Furthermore, the Bylaws, regardless of the timing aspect, do not allow for competing proposals.

Member and Market Expectations

While some may feel that existing programs and manuals are adequate, most of our members demand products and services that are up-to-date and meet the expectations of the marketplace. Stagnant products and programs will not attract prospective members' interest or encourage existing members to stay in Toastmasters, nor would they encourage product sales, another significant revenue component.

Because Toastmasters International has an in-house production facility, costs are low, easily controllable and production is efficient. The Toastmasters business cycles are predictable and, therefore, seasonal peaks and valleys are anticipated and production is adjusted accordingly.

We Need Your Support

The Board feels strongly that this increase should be passed now to ensure the financial health of the organization. We have heard very clearly from the membership a desire for smaller, incremental increases in the future. The Board will be discussing this in an upcoming meeting.

The decision to propose a dues increase was not taken lightly by your Board of Directors. I hope this additional information has given you the information you need to support your organization and vote “for” the proposed dues increase.

Sincerely,

Jon Greiner, DTM
2004-2005 International President
Toastmasters International



TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL
74th Annual Convention
August 24 - 27, 2005



HOUSTON & SOUTHEAST TEXAS

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Contact:

Chief Editor: Shirley Gilbuena, DTM

editor@toastmasters-d56.org

Phone: 281-491-6356

Cell: 832-465-3514

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www.toastmasters-d56.org

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"It's a Small World — a Beautiful World"



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

APRIL

Division Contests

International Speech and Evaluation

MAY

May 13-14—Spring 2005 Conference

District Speech Contests

International Speech and Evaluation

Election of Club Officers

JUNE

June 5—Area & Division Governor Training

June 11—TLI/Club Officer Training

June 24-25—Region III Conference

Regional Speech Contest

International Speech

June 30—Club Officers List to WHQ

JULY

July 16—TLI/Club Officer Training

July 31—District Executive Committee

Meeting

District Staff Meeting (TBD)



The Mission of the District

The Mission of the District is to enhance the performance and extend the networks of clubs, thereby offering greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from the Toastmasters educational program by:

- Focusing on the critical success factors as specified by the district educational goals and membership goals.
- Insuring that each club effectively fulfills its responsibilities to its members.
- Providing effective training and leadership development opportunities for club and district officers.

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