

# *The Advantage*

## **Division Contest**

The Northeast Division A Contest was held Friday, May 2nd at the Holiday Inn in Orange Park. Contestants representing Toastmasters from all Six Areas competed in Table Topics and International Speech. Contestmaster Greg Gaines (Speak Up America) did an excellent job serving as master of ceremony. The evening was filled with interesting and awe inspiring speeches.

The next level of competition for our winners is the District 47 International Speech and Table Topics contest to be held at the Spring Conference in Orlando, Florida May 16—18, 2003. Representing Division A in Table Topics is Barbara Sisbarro (Toastmasters on the Halifax) and in International Speech is Dave Hollingshead (Speak Up America). Coming in second place in Table Topics was Adrienne Tyson (JIA) and in International Speech was Al Gulamali (JIA). Congratulations to you all!

A wonderful speech was given by Ponte Vedra Beach Toastmasters club President Bill David about the development of this new club, its members and uniqueness.

As Division Governor, I take certain pride in the accomplishments of the various Toastmasters and clubs within Division A. To recognize these accomplishments two clubs and two individuals received “Division A—Taking Advantage” awards:

Barbara Kincade—Inspiration Award  
Johnny Ledford—Working It! Award  
Speak Up America—Team Force Award  
Toast of Jax—Next Generation Award

The Division Contest was a success with 65 Toastmasters and guests in attendance. The next Division contest will be Humorous Speech and Evaluation in the Fall. Hope to see you at the next contest.

### **Special points of interest:**

- F** May 1st—clubs begin Officer nominations and elections
- F** May 2, 2003—Division A International Speech and Table Topics Contest—Holiday Inn Orange Park
- F** May 16—18, 2003—District 47 Spring Conference—Orlando, Florida
- F** Continue submitting Regional and International proxies to District Governor Eileen Sarris



***Club Officer Nominations and Elections need to be held in the month of May.***

## RESCUING THE WEAK CLUB – TREATING PROBLEMS AS OPPORTUNITIES

Let's think of the curves of a graph for a moment. You know the law of diminishing returns. A "success" curve flattens out at the top – however much work you put in, you just can't expect to get the same proportionate result. But have you ever looked at the declining curve? When an undertaking begins to slip over the edge, you will find the curve tends to plunge. The further along you go, the steeper the slope and the harder the recovery. So, be warned! If your Club's membership remains at a low level, you may be on the beginning of such a curve. If it's declining, you're on the slippery slope. Don't shut your eyes, and don't delay. Act! Membership growth is not a longrange goal. It's an immediate need! Let's start with the basics. Everyone joins a Toastmasters Club because they have a keen interest in improving their communication skills. Consequently, they will leave the Club if they fail to achieve this purpose. Basically, the reconstruction process involves three simple factors: an analysis of the problems impeding your Club, the establishment of goals and improvement strategies, and sheer effort.

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### REBUILDING THE CLUB

To determine what factors are hindering your membership efforts, review again the Moments of Truth analysis given earlier in this manual. The most prevalent problem is weakness in Club Programming. Good programs aren't presented with the charter. They must be developed and maintained by dedicated Club officers. Here is an action drive that can get your Club back on the road to excellence:

*Focus* on the needs of the individual member by presenting the different learning opportunities the Toastmasters Club can offer to members. Guide and counsel each Toastmaster to renew the drive toward self-improvement in Toastmasters.

*Seek information.* What does the member want? What long and short range goals does he or she have? How can you and the Club best utilize the Toastmasters program to achieve these purposes?

*Seek aid.* Work with your Area Governor and District Officers in preparing a rescue plan for your Club. In some cases, your District Governor will appoint "Club Specialists" – experienced Toastmasters who will put their skills to work in helping your Club tap its full potential.

Every situation is different, of course, but here are some ideas you might consider:

1. Change the meeting day, time or location.
2. Have joint meetings with nearby Clubs.
3. Invite guest speakers from other Clubs or even from outside of Toastmasters.
4. Get the Club involved in Area and District activities such as officer training, contests, council meetings, etc.
5. Hold a special "how to" Toastmasters-oriented talk at each meeting; hold special program nights and theme meetings; and create program variety to hold members and attract new ones!

It is clearly wise to seek help before matters reach such a stage. If you have not done so before, *please* contact your Area or District Governor *immediately* when you find your Club unable to muster eight members in good standing. These officers are there to help you. Give them a chance to do it.

## Congratulations! April Educational Achievements

### Competent Toastmasters

Chandra Desikan (Orange Park)  
Ron P. Johnson (Toast of Jax)  
Lynn Ward (St. Augustine)  
Meike Smith (JIA)  
Linda Montgomery Allshouse (SE  
Volusia)  
Marilyn Fenton-Harmer (City of Jax)  
Ruby L. Duch (TM on the Halifax)  
Michelle Crawford (Speak Up America)

### Competent Leaders

James E. Akers (Toast of Jax)  
Barbara Kincade (Bethune-Cookman)

### Advanced Toastmaster

Linda Deshauteurs (Speak Up America)  
Holly J. Walker (Orange Park)

## Skill Building...

## Have Passion for Your Topic

by Terry Paulson, Ph.D., CSP, CPAE

"Forget all the conventional 'rules' but one. There is one golden rule: Stick to topics you deeply care about and do not keep your passion buttoned inside your vest. An audiences' biggest turn on is the speakers' obvious enthusiasm. If you are lukewarm about the issue, forget it!" -Tom Peters



There is a certain zest that shines through a presenter's face when he speaks of something he has authentic passion for. That speaker can be excited and whisper and it still get through. Don't just speak on any subject; speak on ones you live!

What do you believe in enough that no one can stop you from finding a place to share it? When you have the right speech, you will feel like saying, "Get over here now! You don't want to miss this!" In such a talk, your hour of speaking feels like minutes. Great speakers don't just love to speak; they love to make a difference for people.

Finish this sentence:

"I love this job, I get to . . . "

If you ever struggle to find the motivation and the enthusiasm to start your speech, take a moment to go back to your success history as a speaker to review images you have retained that affirm what your presentations have meant to past audiences. Relive that image before you take the platform. Feed your own enthusiasm for your message as you get ready to make a difference again. If you have no enthusiasm for your message, why should anyone else? Find the passion in your purpose or find another topic to speak on.