

April 20, 2007

**Weekly Newsletter for Renfrew & Pembroke Toastmasters Club
Members and Friends of Toastmasters**

If you want to improve your body, you have to exercise. If you want to improve your mind, you have to read. If you want to improve your communication skills, you have to practice. Joining Toastmasters is like getting a gym membership, it gets you in the door, but it doesn't make you a pro.

You can go to a gym, check out all the great equipment and think about how great it would be to look like some of the people who are exercising, but if you just sit and watch the others exercise, you won't benefit your body. It's the same way at Toastmasters. If you come to meetings and just sit and watch everyone else, you don't get the opportunity to exercise your own skills.

Many people attend a weight lifting contest and think, "wow, I'd like to do that." However, if you go to a gym and try to lift the 300 pound weights right away, you are going to 1) probably fail, and 2) injure your body. It takes time and effort to work your way up to that level. It's the same thing with Toastmasters, you go to a contest and you think, "WOW, I'd like to do that" and so you start speaking anywhere and everywhere you can, but for some reason, no one asks you back. That's because you haven't yet learned how to craft your speech effectively. You haven't learned how to gauge the length of your talk, or how to target it so that you don't bore your audience or finish much too soon. Just like it takes time to get physically fit, it takes time and effort to go through the Toastmasters Competent Communicator manual so that you can learn all the steps to become an effective and welcomed speaker.

Getting physically fit, or getting more exercise is usually on people's New Years' Resolution list. You sign up and head off to the gym. For the first few weeks you start off great. You are there every day working on your bodies and then something comes up, you miss a day, and then another, and before you know it, you no longer go the gym. Oh, there's always some legitimate reason why you haven't gone, but the end result is that you are no longer gaining the benefit of your gym membership. The same thing happens with Toastmasters. You get started, going great guns, you've completed speech number 5, you're halfway through the manual and then you miss a meeting or two, miss your speaking opportunity, and then it gets more difficult to get back on track. The longer you put it off, the harder it is to get started again.

For exercising and for Toastmasters, it is important to set yourself some goals, both short term and long term. Your long term goal may be to achieve your Distinguished Toastmaster (lifting the 300 pound weights), but you need to lift the 5 pound and 10 pound weights first (first 5 speeches,

then 5 more), moving up to the 20 and 25 pound weights (your first two advanced manuals and your Competent Leader Manual). By working slowly and achieving your short term goals, you will eventually arrive at your long term goal.

One of the things to remember in both going to the gym and going to Toastmasters is that it's very hard to do it alone, to keep on going day after day when there is no encouragement, no support. It helps to have a buddy, someone to lift you up and encourage you to continue on, to go with you through the tough times. In Toastmasters, this person is called a mentor and it doesn't matter if you are at the beginning, the middle, or the end of your goal, a mentor can help you. There is always someone who is at least one step ahead of you, who can tell you how he or she accomplished their goal and who will be there to help you reach yours. - Fran Watson

This week's meetings:

What happened? In Renfrew we got a chance to hear Chris' dry run on her speech. Lynne had some interesting Table Topics and also shared a story. Fran handled the Toast, Educational Tip and Word. The meeting ended early after some general small talk.

In Pembroke, John and Fran met and discussed plans for next week's special meeting - Tips on Toasting.

What else? Lynne prepared an article for the two papers and it was printed in both on Friday - The Renfrew Weekender (along with the pictures of Candice and Chris and Marg and George) and The Pembroke Observer. Fran got a call on Friday night from two potential new members for Pembroke!! (Way to go Lynne - keep up the good work.....keep those articles humming!)

Lynne Zander and Tony Smith will be coming to Renfrew on Monday night to help out. Hopefully Bob Brousseau will be coming to Pembroke on Tuesday.

Starting the week of the May 7th, we will be holding a 4 week Speechcraft. Please encourage anyone you know to come out and try it out. Let them know that there is no commitment to sign up for Toastmasters, that it will be a chance for them to learn some new things and gain skills in communication..

We also need to decide if we want to continue on a bi-weekly basis through the summer. Please think about this and let me know.

For the Speechcraft class of 4 weeks from May 8 to May 29th, we need volunteers for both clubs. I am looking for at least 3 or 4 Toastmasters to help get it started.