



TOASTMASTERS – “A DARING ADVENTURE”

By Lynne Kobus

I took part in a Toastmasters speech competition. I didn't have to participate. I wasn't forced. I didn't go kicking and screaming. I went because I wanted to go, and I wanted to go because I didn't want to go.

Speaking in front of a group is not easy for me. “What if I forget what I want to say? What if people laugh and I'm not trying to be funny? What if they don't laugh and I want them to be falling off their chairs laughing? What if...? What if...? What if...?”

Getting up there and speaking is a challenge. It's much easier for me to sit and watch.

In high school, a teacher wanted me to give a public speaking contest a whirl, and it took me about one quarter of a second to flatly refuse.

I was afraid and my mind told me, “You're not good enough.” Deciding I was no good before I even made an attempt sat me on the sidelines watching and that was an easy place to be.

While preparing for the Toastmasters competition, I made a good try at sidelining myself. I avoided starting to write a speech. I decided I would never remember what I had written. I thought the best thing would be to back out and threatened to do just that.

I didn't back out though. I experienced the quicksand of nerves and fears and not-good-enoughs. I waded around in the mire and was able to haul myself out with the help of my fellow club members whom I want to thank from the bottom of my heart.

They gave me gentle evaluations, valuable feedback, and constructive suggestions. And their presence at the competition boosted my confidence and allowed me to feel positive about what I was attempting.

If you feel that you may be sitting and watching from the sidelines, why not check out Renfrew Toastmasters? But don't worry. You never have to take part in a speech competition. Most people don't.

I'm giving competition a “whirl” because I created a missed opportunity for myself in high school. Helen Keller said, “Life is a daring adventure or nothing.” I'm giving myself “a daring adventure”. I don't want there to be “nothing”.

Come out to three free meetings. See if Renfrew Toastmasters could be part of your “daring adventure”. All you have to lose is “nothing”.

Renfrew Toastmasters meets on Monday evenings at 7p.m. at 236 Hall Avenue in the common room. For more information call 613-649-2950 or 613-432-7557.