



Southern Lights 2021

At this time last year, we had no idea how the 2020/21 season would shape up. We again had to adapt in a big way, and continue to find ingenious ways to connect. The Southern Lights Team stepped up to the plate and made the season a success. It's inspiring to be part of the professionalism and excitement generated by this club.

Toastmaster of the Year

Marlene Petruch, DTM, as our fabulous Vice President of Education, has exemplified the toastmasters promise and ideals this year. If you had a question, Marlene would either know, or find out.



- Who should I call? Marlene!
- What should we do? Marlene will know.
- Where do I look for this? I bet Marlene will remember.
- When is the right time to do...? Marlene has the TI yearly calendar memorized.
- How do we do this correctly? Marlene can explain the best practices.

Marlene's wealth of experience, the depth of her knowledge, her willingness

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New President's Message Bob Wang CC CL MS2

It is my great pleasure to be elected president of the fabulous Southern Lights Toastmaster Club for the 2021-2022 season. Even though we have not met in-person in the last 15 months, we continue to connect, to entertain, and to enjoy public speaking. Looking ahead, the "old toastmaster times" will soon be upon us in its full charm and splendor, and I cannot wait to meet and continue this journey with you.

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**Herb Ashley Spirit of Success Award
Neil Wilkinson DTM PIP**

The club mission, and its application and applicability to today, was brought to life this year by Neil Wilkinson, DTM, and Past International President. Opening the meeting is an important role, and sets the tone for the event. What was unique this year was the research and work Neil did to help us remember and capture the inspiring, and thought provoking, spirit of toastmasters. We all grew to anticipate his opening every week.

Neil has an abundance of experience, knowledge and skills, and he chose, as always, to share them with his Southern Lights members. This was Neil's first time on the executive in many years, since his role as PIP continues to involve him at the international level. He aced it and set an example of commitment to the role.

I have to add my personal thanks, as an inexperienced newcomer to the role of President, because Neil always

seemed to anticipate something coming around the bend that I hadn't the experience to know or expect. He helped from the start of the year with the international convention business meeting in August, and his ability to guide and lead helped me through to the District and area questions I had throughout the year.



Herb Ashley would have been happy to present this award to you. You exemplify organization, support, the club mission and the international pledge of Toastmasters International.

Congratulations Neil on receiving the Herb Ashley Spirit of Success Award.

New Designations & Achievements

Marlene Petruch DTM EC3—Toastmaster of the Year

Neil Wilkinson DTM PIP—Herb Ashley Spirit of Success

Michelle St. Louis ACB ALB IP1— The Extra Mile Award

Barb Turner VC1—Rookie of the Year

Rhonda Legacy CC CL MS3-President's Choice Award

**Patricia Cunnningham ACB ALB EC1 —Evaluation
Contest**

Lukasz Rozycki LD2—Humorous Speech Contest

Rhonda Lagace CC CL MS3—Table Topics Contest

**Michelle St. Louis ACB ALB IP2—International Speech
Contest**

High Performance Leadership Award-Juergen Abildt

PM1—Wayne Sager, Darryl Hauge, Diane Gunn

DL1 and DL2-Vishwadha Busawon

EC1-Pat Cunningham

EC3—Marlene Petruch

SR1 and SR2-Radikha Kalra

MS3 and MS4—Rhonda Lagace

PM2-Noel Blades

LD2—Lukasz Rozycki

EH1 and LD1-Juergen Abildt

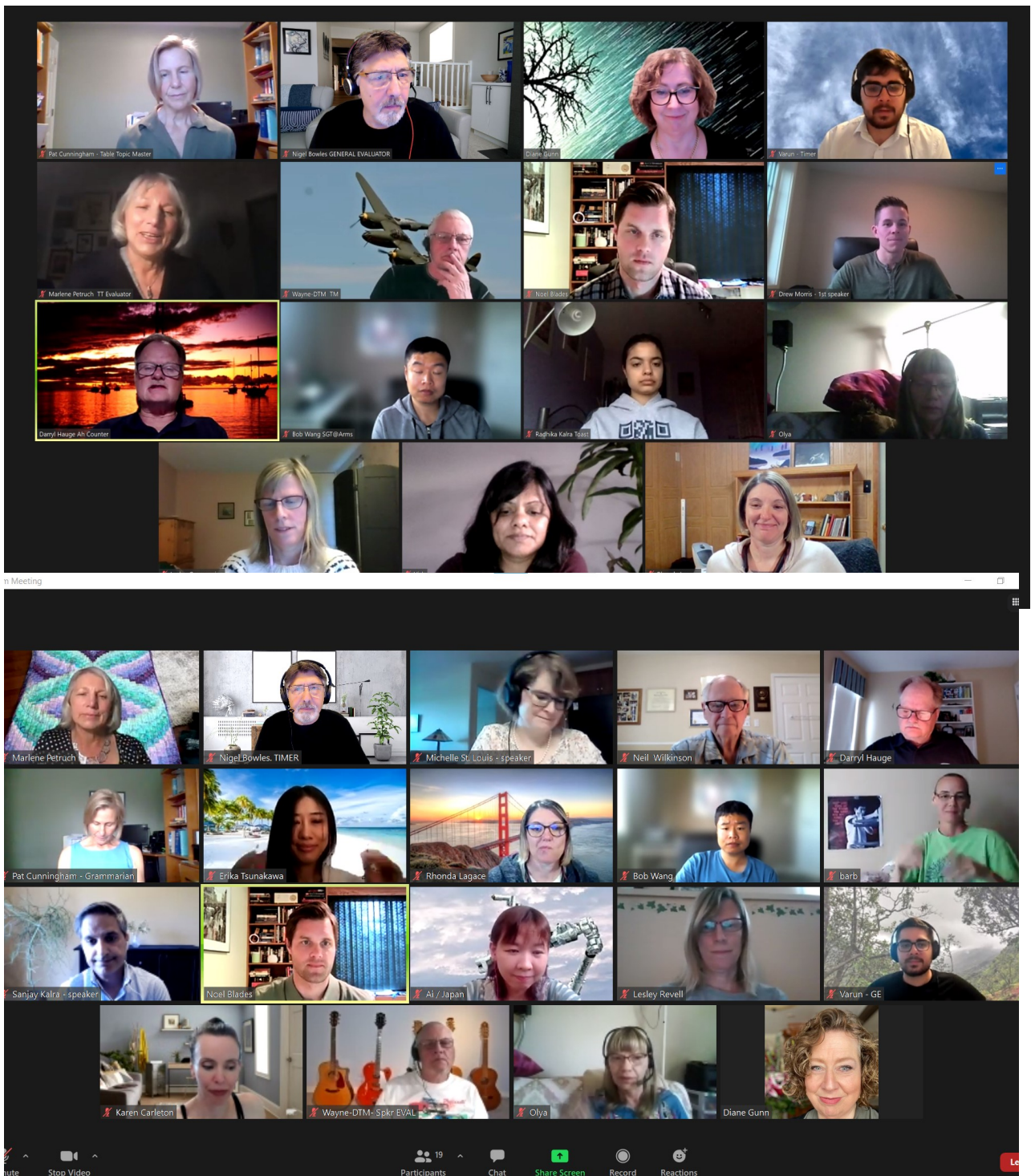
VC1-Barb turner

IP1 and IP2-Michelle St. Louis

The theme I envision for the new season is “embrace challenges”. I encourage everyone to go an extra mile. It is time to pick a new path, to reach out more to members and guests, or to take on additional leadership opportunities. After the gloomy period of social distancing, there is no better time than now to step out of the comfort zone and get socially active. Let it be a year of challenges and growth for every member and for our club.

My sincere appreciation goes to the outgoing executives. They navigated our club through a time of change and upheld its outstanding level of excellence. Thanks to every toastmaster's participation, we had many memorable moments, such as the successful trial of “the crime of the century” and the induction that brought two new international members. Thank you everyone. I look forward to meet, learn and laugh with you in the next chapter!

Bob Wang, President 2021/2022



New Member Message - Varun Pathak

I am very intrigued by public speeches. In my free time, I would open YouTube to listen to Ted Talks, and standup comedies for hours. While watching those speeches, only one thought always came into my mind: 'Someday I would like to give a speech like that.'

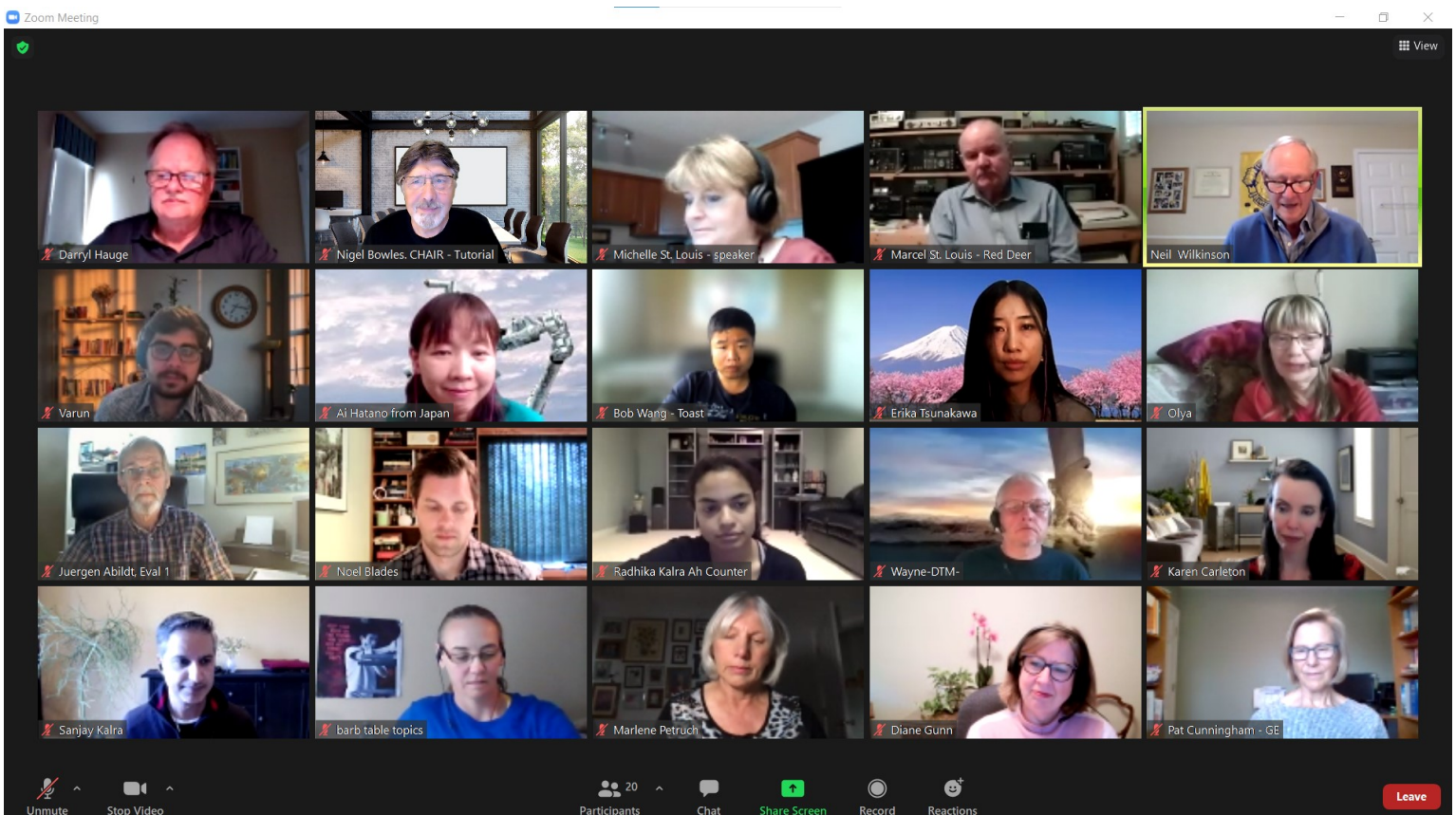
During my academic and professional life, I have had many chances to present papers and projects. Before every presentation, many thoughts came into my mind, such as how I should stand, what gestures I should use, and is my grammar correct? Is everyone able to understand me?

These questions would lower my confidence, leading to nervousness. I would look up videos and articles to improve my transferable skills, but those didn't help.

One day I was going through my LinkedIn feeds, one of my high school friends posted his certificate of being a competent communicator at Toastmaster. I quickly looked up about Toastmasters and came across the Southern Lights club. I learned more about the club and quickly dropped an email to the president to attend a meeting. In the meeting, everyone was very welcoming. And, on top of that, everyone in the meeting got a chance to speak. The 1 hour 30 minutes were so structured and systematic that I was 100% sure that I am joining this club by the end of the meeting.

Within three months after joining the club, I was able to see an improvement in my communication skills and a boost in my confidence. Everyone in the club is very encouraging and wants you to achieve your goals. The positive attitude in the club makes one feel very confident.

Every part of the meeting improves in their way. I love table topics sessions the most as it allows everyone to weave their own different story and present a short and funny speech that is exciting to listen and more thrilling to participate. Southern lights have helped me to boost my confidence while speaking. Now, I have little to no thoughts while giving a presentation. I enjoy every speech and am looking forward to having a great time in the future with the club.



Going the Extra Mile Award

Michelle St. Louis ACB ALB IP2

There were so many contenders for this award, because there were so many people that took charge and helped the club throughout the year, without a title, and without expectation. All of them made a difference, and in totally different ways. For some, just coming to meetings after a long day dealing with online work meetings was recognizably a sign that they were going that Extra Mile for Southern Lights. It was a rough year and I felt for those who had to sit at a screen for yet more time.



While so many shone through, Michelle St. Louis, came through with her innovative ideas, and putting them into action. She was an active member of committees, Immediate Past President on the Executive, initiator of Zoom ideas, visitor to international clubs, and helped with the Year-End Awards night. What stood out for me was the additional work she did for SLT, while working effectively towards her personal goals. Michelle's speech about Salt revolutionized my cooking, and it required extensive organization and planning, plus deliveries to make her "tasting" work exceptionally well in an online environment. She contributed to the club with her well-organized educational speech, and Michelle represented the club at the area International Speech Contest.

Thank you, Michelle, for going the Extra Mile, in everything you do for Southern Lights.

(Toastmaster of the Year Continued from page 1)

to help everyone, and her cheerful acceptance that all of us are still learning, made all of our lives better. She readily accepted that we are all on a quest for self development, and then helped us on our path, and on our pathway. At the same time, she was able to contribute to the club by working on her own Coaching Effectiveness pathway, thus helping us learn by her example. As an executive member she attended area, district, division and international meetings, providing the knowledge and backup to the president so our club didn't hesitate to grow during this exceptional year.



Southern Lights is better for having Marlene support and help us, and it is without a question that she be honoured by being named Southern Lights Toastmaster's Club Toastmaster of the Year. Thank you for all you have done for the executive and the members, and for Southern Lights. You are a valuable member and friend to all of us!



The Crime of the Century

How Do You Spruce Up an online Meeting?

Ask our members, and you will get a myriad of ideas to make the meetings interesting and fun!

Rhonda Lagace led a committee including Barb Turner, Michelle St. Louis, Radhika Kalra, Nigel Bowles, Lesley Revell, and Lukasz Rozyki.

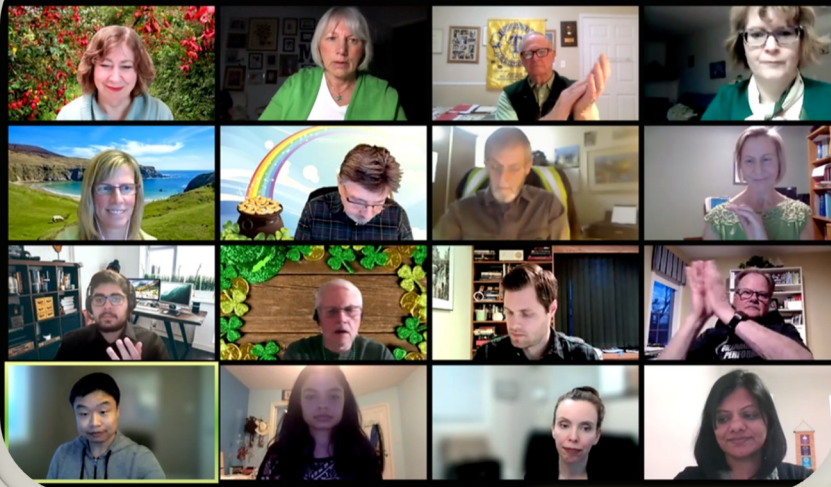
Among the ideas generated, "The Crime of the Century" theme was scheduled for the February 24th meeting. The regular format of our meeting was altered to accommodate, with one speaker in the first half of the meeting, and the second half dedicated to the trial. Attendees found that there had been a "theft" of the Southern Lights gavel at the Providence Centre.

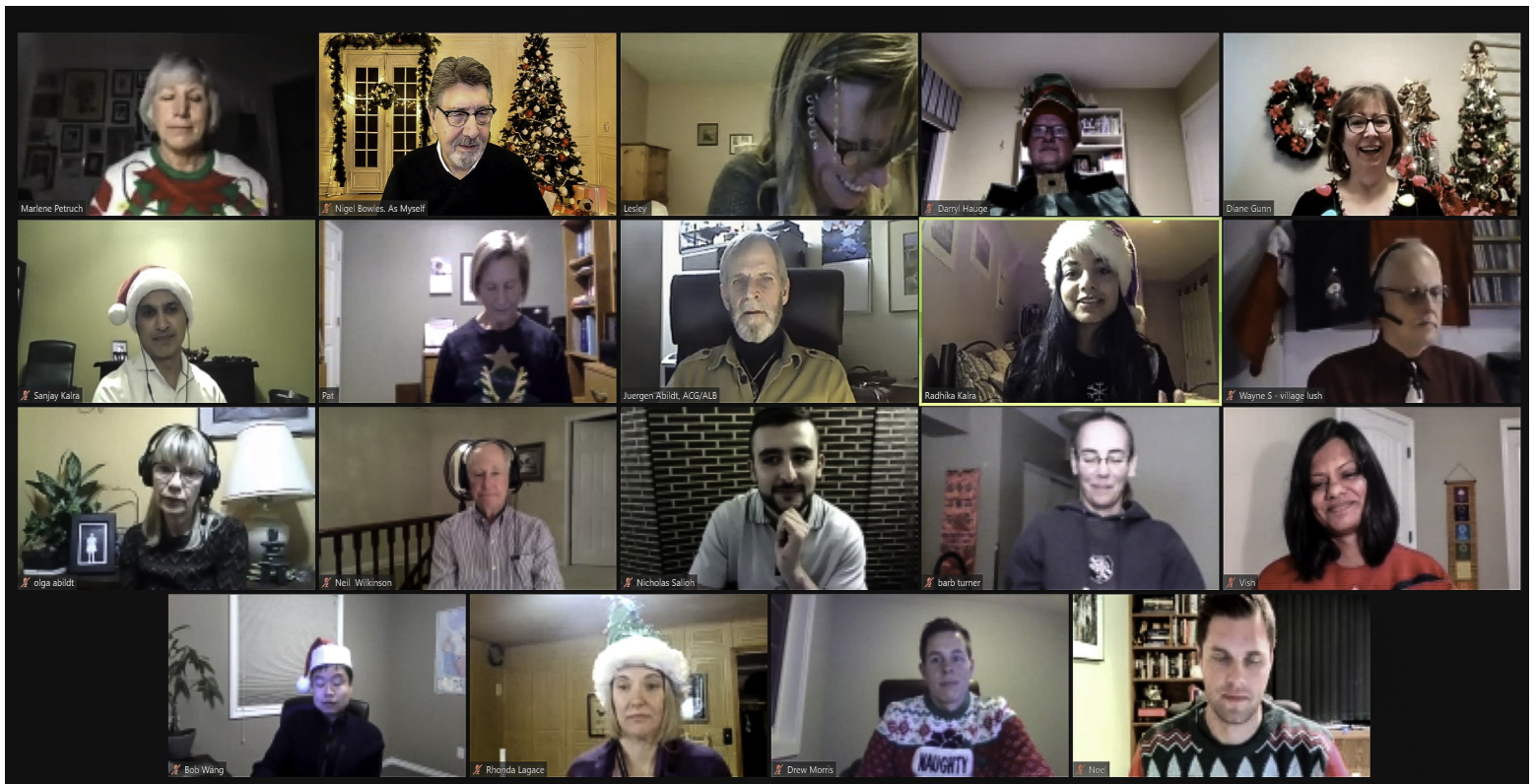
This format allowed for Table Topics for all of the attending members geared around the crime and the trial. Two people had been at the scene of the crime: Bob Wang and Neil Wilkinson. Either could have been guilty of the crime. A mounting body of evidence (presented by the Prosecutors, Eye Witness, Subject Matter Expert, and



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ST. PATRICK'S DAY





President's Choice Award

"I'll help", Rhonda said. Quietly, in the background, with efficiency and a smile, Rhonda will creatively help the club. Rhonda, like many, works all day long on her computer, and still found time to contribute to the overall improvement of Southern Lights. Her planning of the "Crime of the Century," and her leadership of the Integration and Engagement Team made a significant difference to the energy and focus that we were able to bring to online meetings. She achieved, along with Marlene, her Level 4 in her pathway, and will help start the 2022 season off with her Team Building session with the outgoing and incoming executive. She has a plan for her term as Vice President Membership for the 2021-22 season, and will continue to model how to work through your pathway to continue learning. She volunteered to be part of the Evaluation contest, and continues to present insightful, interesting, and different speeches that provide the spice and interest that make our meetings so much fun. Thank you for all you do for us, both in and out of the meetings, and congratulations on being an award winner both in 2020 and 2021.



Congratulations to this year's President's Choice Award Winner, Rhonda Lagace CC CL MS₃

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summed up by the Court Reporter) seemed to plant the blame firmly with the prime suspect, Bob Wang. A credible job was done by the Defense attorneys, and the Defendant himself. Now it was up to the Jurors to weigh the evidence, and to find the defendant innocent or guilty.

Rhonda was the presiding Judge, and everyone in attendance (20 members) had a chance to take on a table topic role.

This was a different approach to Table Topics with a central theme that we all had a lot of fun with. I'm sure that twists on the Table Topics challenge will continue even when we get back to in person meetings. Thank you to all the members that participated, and special thanks to Rhonda for spearheading an interesting meeting and for being our presiding Judge.

Zoom meetings are a reasonable facsimile to in person meetings, but they can get repetitious and stale. All members were chomping at the bit to get back to in person meetings.

By: Darryl Hauge ACS ALB PM1

New Member Message

Barb Turner VC1

When I started to look for ways to improve my communication skills with fellow health professionals, I attended workshops and hired coaches. It was my twin sister who actually encouraged me to look at toastmasters as a potential platform for improvement. After seeing the growth my sister achieved in her Toastmasters experience, I decided it was worth at minimum 'a good ole college try'. I attended several clubs. The 3 immediate qualities Southern Lights brought to the table that jumped out at me were the efficiency of the meetings, concise role execution and FUN!

My hats off to the executive for all they do to make the new members feel welcomed. This quality alone brought me back. Personalized phone calls, gifts, toastmaster mail all turn your head. It takes courage to step out of your comfort zone, and the welcome that is provided makes it a safe environment to do so.

I have been teaching and speaking in front of groups for well over 20 years, yet somehow, I was surprised to find myself nervous to get rolling. This format and type of communication was new to me. I am consistently encouraged to reach higher and 'go for it'. Now, with some time under my belt I watch as the speakers navigate and change all the while being open to applicable feedback. The support and encouragement to grow that Southern Lights provides to its members is only comparable to my professional sports career. I now realize the potential this club can help me reach. I will endeavor to do just that!





What Makes Southern Lights Special? We are Distinguished!

In this exceptional year, Southern Lights (SLT) will again achieve President's Distinguished status with Toastmasters International (TI). TI tracks each club, area, division and district in their accomplishments, so that each time you achieve a new level in your pathway, attend training, or meet specific goals, it counts towards our club, area, division and district goals. TI had attrition, as did so many clubs and groups, in this pandemic year. As of writing, SLT is one of seven Distinguished clubs in District 99, which stretches through all of Central and Northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. Our area—led by our Area Director, Carol Ashton, achieved the only double citation for having Distinguished clubs. We attract new members because of the advantages Toastmasters gives us—and we share our enthusiasm. Congratulations to Southern Lights for again achieving the President's Distinguished Level. Once a Southern Lights Toastmaster, always an SLT—as we celebrate many of our members with over 30 years of Toastmasters experience

Southern Lights DCP – President's Distinguished Award 2021

Toastmasters International

(9/10 Goals Achieved from July 1, 2020 to June 11, 2021)

Member Objectives for DCP Points:

Four members are awarded Level 1 ✓ (Nine Level 1 awards for SLT members)

Two members are awarded Level 2 ✓ (Four for us!)

Two members are awarded Level 3 ✓

One Level 4, 5 or DTM award ✓

One more Level 4, 5 or DTM award ✓

Club Goals for DCP: Four new members ✓ (another point for four more members)

Points are also given for program for timely submission of member names ✓, dues ✓, and completion of executive officer training twice per year ✓.

Treasures in the Toastmaster Net Sea

Is it not true that when Pathways launched, the Toastmasters International web site became a deep, dark blue sea?

Questions frequently heard at meetings included, “Where do I find that self-assessment form? Where do I find my future projects? I’m evaluating a speaker, and where is the fillable evaluation form? A bit of extra head scratching at meetings, and no, we did not all have lice.

I am excited that recently I have found some treasures. With the help of Pirate Captain Jack Sparrow, join us sailing though the TI web page ...

When you first log on, you currently see a page with large letters, COVID. Until the other day, I never paid attention to this page. I am weary of those letters because I have to pay them regard at work and in the news. So, in my fun time with Toastmasters, I scan and move on. But – look further. There are resources. I thought those people who had coloured Toastmaster zoom backgrounds and timer backgrounds were so brilliant. They’re not brilliant! Those backgrounds are accessible right here. Granted, those people are more observant.

Sail up to those menu bars on the top left. Fun trivia here under resources. You can find an article for April 2021, “Toastmasters Picks 5 Funniest Oscar Speeches.” Or, if you want to watch and listen to some real pro speakers, note the recording of our International President, DTM Richard Peck. Or under “Speech Contest,” choose International and enjoy last year’s International Speech Contest winner, Mike Carr, with “The Librarian and Mrs. Montgomery.”

Taking on a new speech type that challenges you? You will find tips for different types of speaking – award acceptance speech? Trying to sell or persuade? Tips right at your fingertips.

Now, up we go, over the wave and crashing down into the cave of Pathways. This cave is quiet, and you are in awe of many sparkling precious gems. This is where you will reflect and learn how to wear those precious stones in your next speeches. An update to Pathways allows you to now look at future projects in your path so that you can fine tune your antenna to be alert for great speech ideas. Keep a journal of your best ideas for each

project, and you’ll see how creative you can be.

I made a delightful discovery this spring. Last fall, a club member awarded me an “inspirational” badge on Pathways. Fun. I learned that if you select “Feedback” on the top menu bar once you are in Base Camp, there is a place to receive feedback and awards. Better yet, you can give feedback to others.

Treasure Activity: I am going to award each member a badge between the writing of this article and its publication. Can you find it? You do have to go look for it.

Another important feature is that you can select your “E Profile” on the top menu and save your evaluation forms. This is wise record keeping because VP Ed’s are new every year, and this way you have your path journey documented.

Mining to find the easiest way to evaluate speakers was a challenge for me – maybe it was Captain Sparrow who found it. *Looking for a fillable evaluation form!* When a speaker emails an evaluation form to their evaluator directly from the project page, that pdf is not fillable. *Ah ha – Follow these steps:* Start at the *Home page*, then choose *Education (do not choose Pathways here)*. Next, sail over and click on *Pathways Learning Experience*, then *Access Pathways*, and *Go to Base Camp*. Then you choose *Speeches and Evaluations* and – there at the bottom of the next page, you can find the specific evaluation form you need, and THIS FORM IS FILLABLE. You can save, and email to the speaker. Whew!

Treasures, and even more to be found on our Southern Lights page (www.southernlights.ca) and the friendly Facebook page for District 99.

For summer, go sail on some serene waters. Then return to some adventurous treasure hunting!

Michelle St. Louis, ACB, ALB



Diane Gunn CC ALB PMI, Past President

The Year in Review

What a year! Decisions, adjustments, accommodations, changes and corrections all helped us fine-tune our meetings. Thank you to the 2020-21 Executive for their commitment to making it work, and going with the flow when ideas came up, and suggestions came from the membership. The leadership from our overall membership shone through, from our newest members, through to our sagest long-time supporters. They all worked together on different committees and in different ways to meet their needs and help SLT at the same time. The culmination of the year was including

two international members who saw the value in the programming we do, and reinforced that even during a strange year, we were able to provide quality programming. My initial thought at the beginning of the year was to work on team work, since we would be able to do that in person before long. Instead, our collective membership/the SLT team showed their perseverance and resilience and made teamwork come alive online.



Thank you to everyone on the SLT team!

Rookie of the Year

Barb Turner VCI

The rookies who joined SLT in a pandemic year have yet to meet us in person, have not closed the night with a session at J.R.'s Bar, have not seen us in all our silliness at parties, and still found value and growth in

membership. They haven't enjoyed a late night bonfire at Darryl's for our summer BBQ, or dressed up for Halloween in person. They missed the warmth of their induction, the welcoming hugs, and the moments of getting to know us over coffee and snacks. Thank you to all of them for trusting us with your valued time.

One rookie stood out, because of the energy with which she embraced Toastmasters. Self-improvement is her middle name, and she has enough energy for two people—possibly because she is one of twins. Barb Turner hit the ground running, and has pivoted in all the corners to come out a winner.

She said, "Yes Coach!" to taking on roles, giving speeches, asking for help, exploring other clubs, inviting

guests, and entertaining us during club meetings. She stepped up to the plate and finished her Visionary Communication 1, and made a three-pointer at the closing buzzer and became a member of next year's executive.

Barb is encouraging and insightful as an evaluator, plans for each role, and takes on the challenges of table topics with a flare. In her first weeks as a member she participated in the club audit, and volunteered to help with committees throughout the 2020-21 season.

Rookies are the best part of the Toastmaster game, as they ask questions, challenge the status quo, and help us remember why we enjoy our club. **Congratulations Barb on being named "Rookie of the Year."**



The 2021-22 Southern Lights Toastmaster's Club Executive

President: Bob Wang CC CL MS2

Past President: Diane Gunn CC ALB PM1

Treasurer: Nigel Bowles ACB ALB DL1

Secretary: Michelle St. Louis ACB ALB IP1

VP Education: Diane Gunn CC ALB DL1

VP Public Relations: Barb Turner VC1

VP Membership: Rhonda Lagace CC CL MS3

Sergeant At Arms: Olya Abildt

Top 10 Ways Toastmasters has Benefited Me

By: Karen Carleton, CC, CL

In 2001 I walked into my first Toastmasters meeting in the basement of the strip mall of a quiet northern town (Hay River, Northwest Territories). I had seen an advertisement for the local club at a community activities fair in late August. When I entered the room, I was warmly greeted with sincere smiles. I loved the idea of practicing my communication and leadership skills, while meeting new people.

One highlight was attending the inspiring Toastmasters convention in Grande Prairie (GP) with a couple fellow members. Within six months I had moved to GP and found yet another terrific Toastmasters club to join. This year marks roughly 20 years of my being a member. Over the years I have belonged to seven different clubs from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories to Boise, Idaho.

The top ten ways Toastmasters has benefited me:

10. Improved my ability to network and meet people
9. Staying practiced for thinking on my feet in meetings and job interviews

8. Enhancing my public speaking, which allowed me to present confidently at many conferences and professional events in my field (including in Ireland, the US, and Toronto)

7. Served as a Board Chair for a large non-profit organization

6. Honed my story-telling skills

5. Provided better quality feedback for employees and contractors I supervised

4. Earned admiration from supervisors and co-workers for helping others learn about benefits of Toastmasters' membership

3. Received encouragement and guidance of skilled, experienced Toastmasters

2. Enjoyed ongoing learning opportunities (formal and informal)

1. Had opportunities to contribute to clubs (special projects, member surveys, event planning, inviting guests, bringing snacks to in-person meetings, executive roles)



Toastmasters has long been a mainstay in lives of many members. New and veteran members come for the learning and skill development yet stay for the friendships fostered through active membership.

Lessons Learned

Positives taken from the Pandemic

By: Diane Gunn CC ALB PM1

While this last fifteen months has sometimes felt like 15 months of February, just waiting for the snow to melt, there have been some glimmers of hope.

Last year Michelle St. Louis pivoted to on-line and we continued to grow and develop our skills. Sometimes I even enjoyed sitting at my warm desk with a cup of tea and my fuzzy slippers or reading socks hidden below the zoom camera. Those who might not be able to attend due to road conditions and weather, had continued attendance during the winter.

Many took advantage of zoom meetings throughout the world, staying up late, or getting up early to get another "Toastmasters fix." I personally learned so much from being a guest, learning how other clubs did things with their own quirks, and how every club is their own "...best club, ever!"

Having the international conference and speaking contest available to all via online feed was a true gift. It too had its

glitches but it worked with the patience and help of all. Having attended only one international convention in person, it didn't have the exciting vibe, or the fun after-meeting visits and sing-songs, but it did have brilliant speakers who challenged how we thought about the world and the role that Toastmasters plays in our life.

The highlight of this international year was interacting with our rookies and new members. They stepped into the realm of Toastmasters with eyes open, without having a chance to meet in person, and they shined. It is about choices, and they all made the choice to empower themselves and seek self-improvement and social interaction in a year that was exceptional.

In closing, one of my favorite series is the Narnia books, both as a child and an adult. It is a story of rebirth, of moving from a constant winter to the joy of Christmas, and from dreariness to light and happiness. The message is that there is hope, and this year, while sometimes appearing endless, we had joy and positives abounding if you just took a moment to look for them.