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THE ENLIGHTENER

EDITION: JUNE 2023

This year in the Southern lights Toastmasters club was filled with personal growth and skill development. Members engaged in themed meetings, delivered prepared speeches, honed impromptu speaking skills, and received constructive evaluations. Competitions, workshops, and networking events further enhanced their progress, creating a supportive and enriching environment for all.

Southern lights also experimented with the hybrid meeting approach. Bringing closer the people from around the world. Guests from different club joined to enjoy this amazing meeting approach.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BARB TURNER

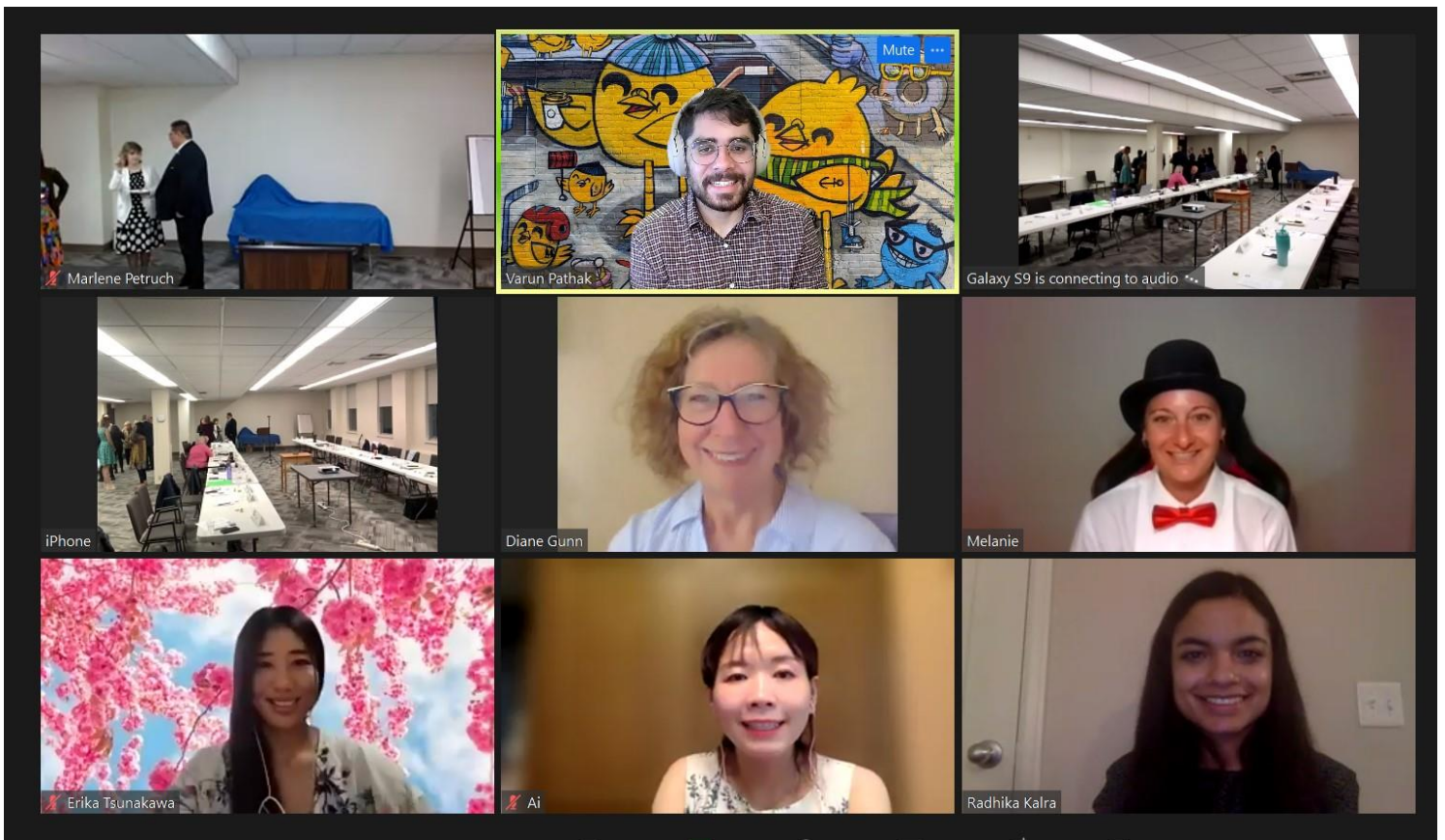
Despite the changing world of leadership, our club continues to set high standards attracting members striving to achieve the best of themselves at every meeting. Being the president of a club like Southern Lights is a privilege. In the president role, the skills to be learned are critical to keeping the Toastmasters' standards of excellence. Parliamentary skills are challenging due to the nature of Roberts Rules yet rewarding to challenge yourself to learn because of the safe learning environment and from a leadership perspective. Bringing new members into the club is thrilling and something I truly enjoyed. Working with the Area and Division Director to keep the club standards high taught me the importance of maintaining a standard of excellence. Each year brings a plethora of diverse people to the club. All the members work together to face growth challenges, which ultimately strengthens this club!



MESSAGE FROM UPCOMING PRESIDENT

NOEL BLADES

It was a great honor when I was approached to run for President of Southern Lights this year, it was not something I had considered, but anyone who knows me understands that I enjoy being challenged. I am excited for the upcoming year as the club is again gaining momentum, particularly with the new members we have gained this past year, who show great promise and full of interesting stories and backgrounds that I enjoy hearing in speeches. I feel Southernlights is the gold standard of Toastmasters clubs, particularly with its members, great organization and excellent meeting room at the Providence Center, which is a great venue for us to meet in. Southern lights is not only a great place to learn public speaking but a great way to make friendships as we host amazing parties with some very skilled event planners and of course, the fifth portion of the meetings at JR's, where we have some great conversations over food and drinks. I am very excited for the 2023/2024 year and will do my best to help the club thrive and continue to be one of the best clubs in Toastmasters.



Online members joining from around the world



HERB ASHLEY SPIRIT AWARD

AI HATANO

I joined the Southern Lights two years ago when meetings were held online only. Erika and I had been on a journey to visit many Toastmasters clubs virtually worldwide; yes, we were world travellers. Erika was already a Toastmaster, and I wanted to be one only if I f a friendly club to make myself more positive and better. Many other clubs were friendly, and the journey was fun, but I did not know if I would ever find my "home." But as you know, if we don't give up, that time indeed comes (this is true whatever we do). One day, I glanced at a Southern Lights meeting announcement through a web search and without

thinking much, I contacted the club simply because I had some extra off-hours. The response was very quick (thanks, Diane!), and we were in the club meeting a couple of hours later. The members were friendly, welcoming, and very professional in skills; bright lights were sparkling. Oh, yes, I fell in love. My request to be a member was accepted; it was too good to be true! I have always been grateful to be a member until now. Now my dream is to visit the club in person someday.

MY AMAZING EXPERIENCE

ERIKA TSUNAKAWA

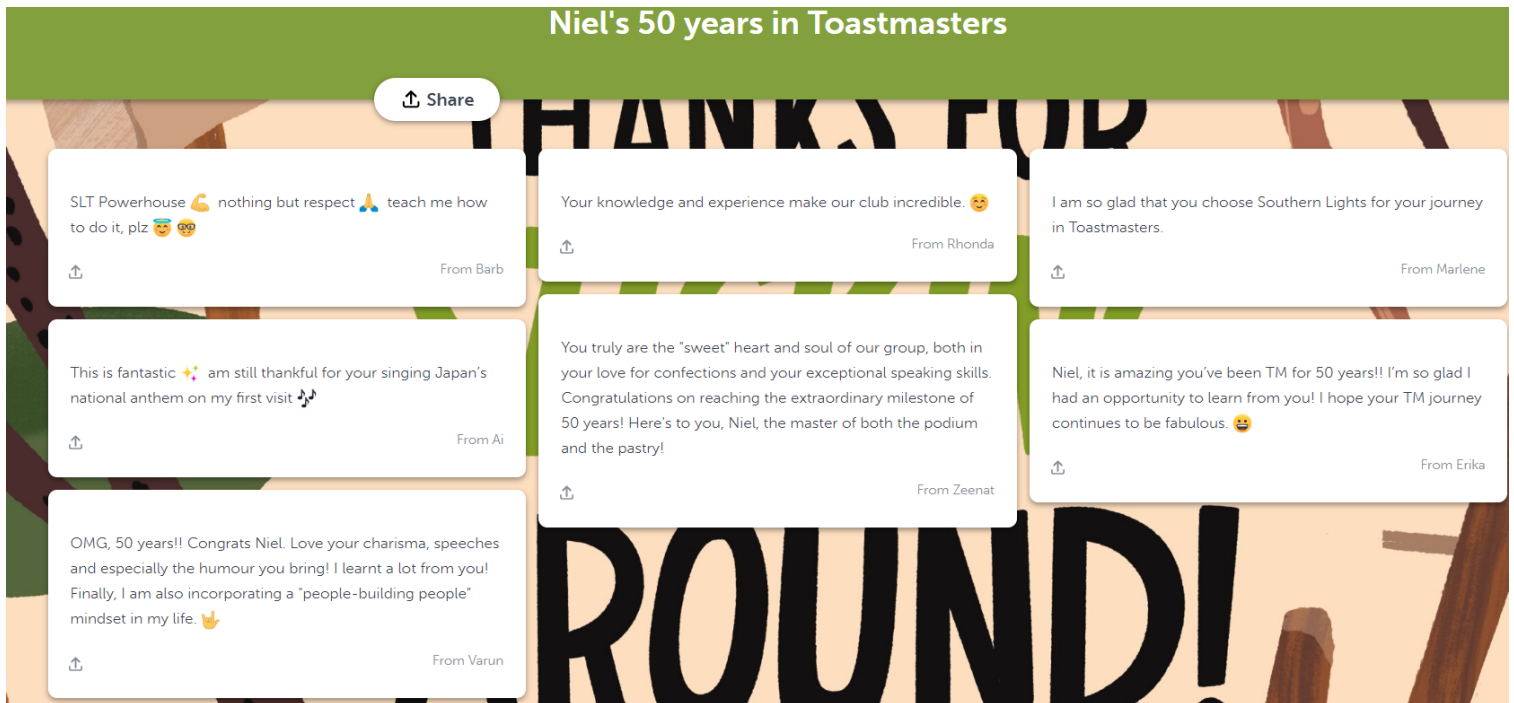
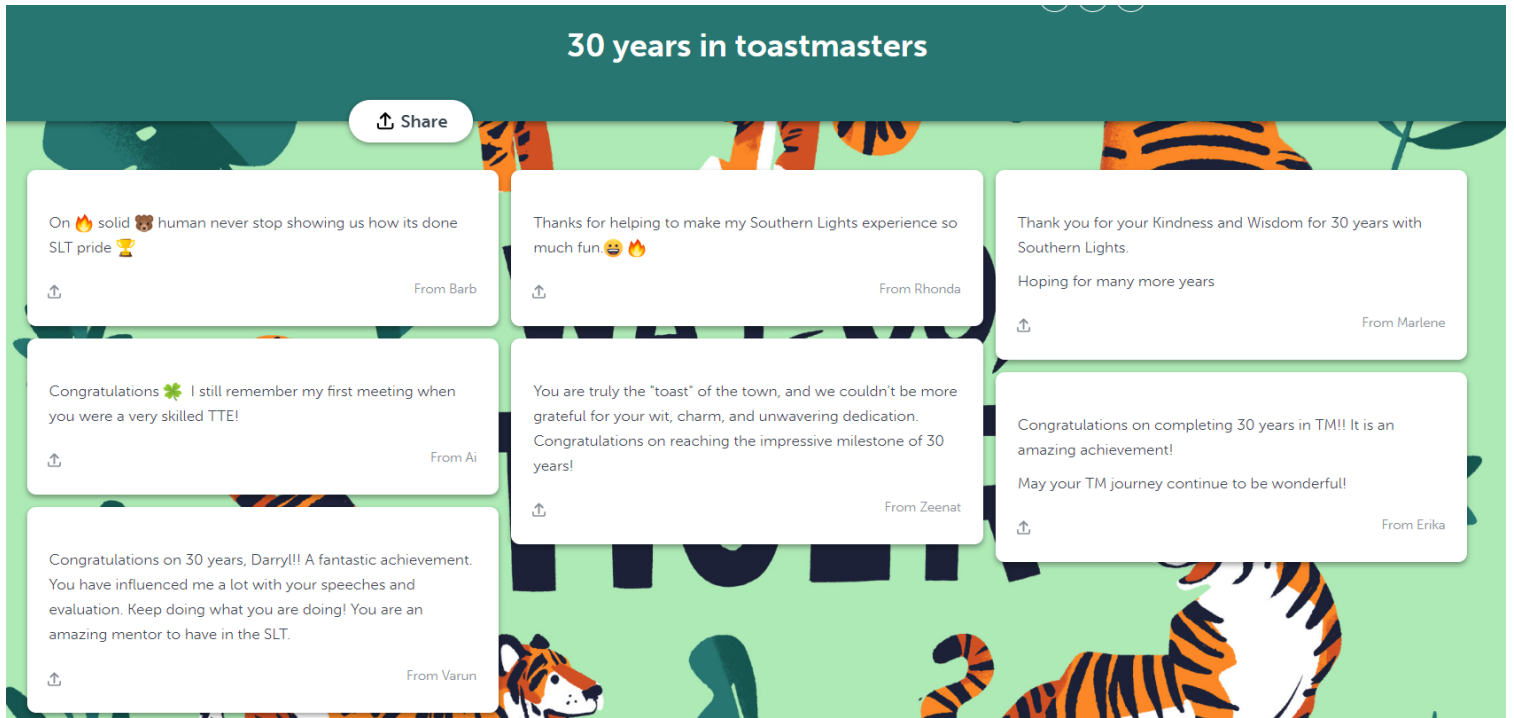
Southern Light Club has given me a very valuable experience which I would not be able to get in other places. The way they coordinate and conduct the meetings is very professional; everyone always has a positive attitude, and everyone has a spirit that nothing is impossible, so attending the meetings was stimulating, and I learned a lot. I also learned a lot from Barb. Despite the time difference and being online, she has been a beneficial mentor, not just giving me advice for speeches and meeting roles but making me realize that I need to look within myself deeply to discover what I want to achieve to become a better me. I could not participate in meetings for a certain period as work became very busy, but I could stay positive at work and be patient, which I learned from members of SL. It helped hugely in my relationship with my colleagues. Ai and I would never have been able to attend the meeting if it wasn't online, so I would like to thank everyone again for making it possible for us to learn from the Far East.



In person Meetings

30 AND 50

This year marked two significant anniversaries: 30 years of Darryl Hauge as a Toastmaster and 50 years of Neil Wilkinson's Toastmasters membership. Here are some comments from the southern light's toastmaster members.



ACHIEVEMENTS BY THE CLUB MEMBERS

Southern lights Toastmasters Club is never behind on appreciating the club members. The picture here showcases the enthusiasm of the members to work on the pathways of their choice. Southern Lights also hold annual contents, and every member actively participates in them. The competition becomes fierce sometimes due to so much talent and experience the club members have.

Some amazing achievers are Yeshu Desikan (International Speech Competition Winner), Juergen Abildt (Table Topics Contest Winner), Michelle St. Louis (Humorous speech contest winner) and Rhonda Lagace (Evaluation Contest Winner)



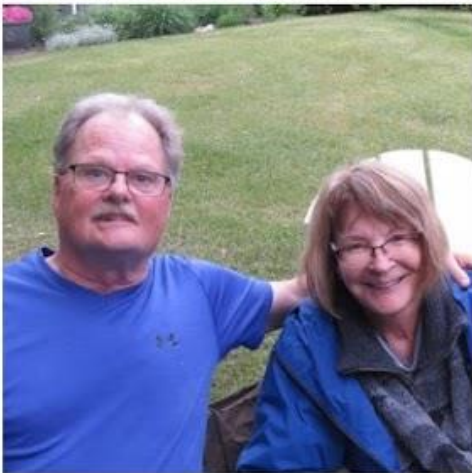
30 YEARS IN TOASTMASTERS

DARRYL HAUGE

Everyone in Toastmasters has a “first” meeting; I remember mine like it was yesterday. Nervous about going up to the door, almost not going into the meeting, turning around and going back to the elevator, but then thinking that this should help me with presentations at work. I remember being greeted by a member named Sue Cullen and finding everyone in the room friendly and supportive. When I was being asked to provide feedback at the end of the meeting, I was very uncomfortable with it. But, like everyone, over time, you realize that there is no better environment to improve communication and leadership skills. I had taken a Dale Carnegie course previously, and although it was helpful, in my opinion just too short. As Toastmasters has weekly meetings, the learning goes on as long as you need, and that in my opinion, is key. A lot of things were different with the club 30 years ago. The dress code was formal, with the men in suits and ties or, at the minimum, a sports jacket. The Ladies were in dresses, or at the least a pantsuit. There was the legacy educational program. No one had ever heard of the word hybrid in the context of meetings and would have thought it out of touch to speak to a computer. At one time, we were served meals during the meeting, and Table Topics could get animated when a member had beer or wine with the meal. The atmosphere was always lively, and no matter how tired I was after a long day at work, I would leave the meeting energized. There are a lot of things that haven’t changed. The member support, the friendship, the learning, the beautiful stories we hear, and the fifth portion of the meeting. Somehow, I was lucky enough to have joined one of the strongest clubs in the district. The club was strong 30 years ago and is still one of the clubs that set the high-water mark today. The experience of the long-term members has been passed down through the years to the younger members, and the cycle carries on. Without this passing of the torch, some of the important traditions could be lost. Although society and norms change, the way we successfully communicate and interact with others does not change. I can’t stress enough how much I have learned over the years and how grateful I was for that learning when I did a sales presentation, was asked to do a eulogy, or be a Master of Ceremony. The lessons do stick and helped to make those events a rewarding and memorable experience. The lessons that I learned were also transferred to my personal and professional life. Two of the most important lessons for me were the value of Preparation and the art of evaluation. Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. How many times did I hear that over 30 years? That jingle has been repeated and applied to my work, meetings, speeches, building projects, supervisory roles, and management roles. A thoughtful evaluation determines how effective it is to the intended target. Good evaluations are not only used at Toastmasters.



I used the “Hamburger” evaluation method as a manager for over 30 years in the workforce and found it one of the most effective feedback tools to improve performance. What a powerful tool to pass on suggestions for improvement and get thanked for providing it. I used it at work, on my kids, with friends, and now just the other day was passing it on to my youngest son, looking for advice to improve performance with employees on his crew. The confidence gained at Toastmasters is lifelong. The lessons learned at Toastmasters are lifelong. The friendships made at Toastmasters are lifelong. I believe that is why members keep coming back every Wednesday for decades. It’s been a wonderful ride that is not yet done.



Summer BBQ and Holiday celebrations



MELAN-IZED JOURNEY

MELANIE VOGELS

For the past two years, I have had the pleasure of being a member in the Southern Lights Toastmaster's group as an online member living in British Columbia. I have enjoyed my time over these two years and I have come away from this experience with a better appreciation of what goes into being an excellent public speaker and, more importantly, who I am as a speaker and what I can bring to the table. Some of my fondest memories were table topic answers, of

course! I still laugh at Tao comparing his wife to a piece of pizza or was it that he would choose pizza over his wife? My mind has now conflated the comment but I remember the two most important pieces of his comment, wife and pizza! I enjoyed Melanizing roles and/or reports to present a different way of looking at things. One thing I see clearly is that we all bring such different skills and such to the table that makes us stronger as a group. In terms of memorable speeches, I enjoyed finishing my communications one as it allowed me to see some of the traumas that my childhood experiences had created and how it has affected my communication patterns and interpersonal relationships as an adult. Being a good public speaker is more than just hitting the vocal variety and using the power of the pause, etc. For me, it's about addressing and tackling my own personal demons and roadblocks that present challenges to effective public speaking.

One area that has brought me much joy is the connections I have made with Toastmaster members outside of Toastmaster time. I have had the pleasure of making a trip to Edmonton twice and two fantastic members opened up their home to me. They were both the most gracious hosts anyone could ask for! Another unexpected enjoyable moment in my online participation as a Toastmaster was connecting with members in Japan! What an exquisite experience that has been! I was able to connect with one member to show her how her beautiful culture had materialized in my class through a student's painted t-shirt project of the most beautiful Japanese Cherry blossom.



(T-shirt photos provided with permission from student)

Perhaps the most important aspect of my involvement with Southern Lights Toastmaster as an online member is the one piece about me that I choose to keep to myself. I know that I present a certain way, energetic and athletic. While this is true of my disposition, what you don't see is the significant back injury I hide very well. I was able to hide it because I was in the comforts of my place with access to the things that help me manage and mitigate my pain. My involvement online was not only because of geography but also disability. Thanks to my 8th back operation in 2017, and for the first time since my accident 30 years ago, I was able to participate in something as Melanie, rather than Melanie, the disabled athlete. The online option for me was crucial as I did not have to spend time travelling and sitting in very uncomfortable chairs after a day of work. I do not have the words to adequately describe to you the empowerment this opportunity has given me and the growth that I have experienced over the last two years. For once, I did not have to choose between what I could physically handle and what I could not. The online option levelled the playing field for me and nullified the limitations my injury often presents. I am sure there is a speech or two there to unpack at some point! I have been experiencing a significant metamorphosis in the last two years as I shed my disabled athlete persona and that way of life and grow into a strong and capable teacher. Little did I know that my entire Toastmaster experience was about to come to ahead May, 31, 2023 as I was called to the office after work to find myself in an unknown, surprise and impromptu job interview! Table topic moment at its best! I had to draw on every Toastmaster experience and skill learned so far as I really wanted this job! Drum roll please.... I nailed the interview and an hour and a half later, 30 minutes before our meeting, I got the call and I got the job! You're looking at the new arts, drama, photography and French Immersion social studies teacher! I will be teaching a dream job I never knew existed or knew I even wanted! Bring it on!

YEAR IN REVIEW

RADHIKA KALRA – SECRATARY

I had a wonderful experience attending the Southern Lights meetings online this past year. Though the majority of members were in-person, they did an excellent job making the online members feel like we were there by giving us their full attention while one of us was speaking, and by setting up various cameras at different angles to ensure we can see everyone in the room. Doing speeches and presentations online was helpful to me as many of my presentations for my job still occur online, so I was able to translate the experience and skills gained from my Toastmaster speeches to the workplace. Much appreciation and gratitude goes to those who came early every week to set up all the technological devices, and for managing Zoom during the meetings to ensure everything was running smoothly for us. I will miss the camaraderie of Southern Lights Toastmasters Club and the genuine relationships made with the members of this club. Thanks so much for a memorable few years!



IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS PIP, DTM NEIL WILKINSON

DIANE GUN

Toastmasters don't say "no." They take on tasks that might appear daunting, scary, or difficult, and use their knowledge and skills to build their team, lead with ease, run meetings that follow parliamentary procedure, and keep their work and volunteer organizations strong. Neil can identify specific times when he stepped up to the lectern and took over meetings at community leagues and not-for-profit boards, and helped an organization grow and improve, just based on learning to take on a job and do it. The growth in confidence and assurance continues to be part of his life and helped him take on challenges he never would have considered without the training in parliamentary procedure and table topics he received through Toastmasters. Improving communication helps in all parts of our lives. Neil joined Toastmasters in January 1973 and has been working on improving his communication and leadership skills since then. What a winding path his career took him on, and at each juncture he reflected on how the strength he gained from Toastmasters helped him take that next step on a different path with confidence. A press scrum was just another table topic. The visceral fear of taking on a leadership task or a speaking assignment was trained through the Toastmaster careful steps taken at weekly meetings. Jean, his wife, also a DTM, was, and remains a constant support. Neil, Jean and their three children went to Toastmasters conventions as a whole family. One anecdote he tells was when his girls were only eight and six, and they were his campaign workers as he ran for International Vice President leading up to being International President. These adorable young girls were dressed in their Sunday best, handmade by Jean, and they would approach people, offer them a personalized fortune cookie, and then close the sale by saying, "Will you vote for my daddy?" Who wouldn't vote for Neil, especially when the fortune read, "Neil - One Smart Cookie!" (Thanks to Wings Food Products in Edmonton for the sponsorship!) Behind all the accolades, and board leadership positions, Neil makes it clear that life, and success, is about building relationships. When problems happen in life, you have your friends and family to support you and guide you. Rebuilding a toastmasters club takes the same skills as rebuilding a business, re-tuning a board of directors, or restructuring a major corporation. Change management and growth all come down to the people you work with, guide, inspire, and from whom you take inspiration. Neil respects those who brought him into Toastmasters, Ron Chapman and Peter Kossowan, and now shares the lessons he has garnered from them by helping newer toastmasters find the way they will grow and learn. Gwynn Alcorn wrote it best on Neil's Linked In

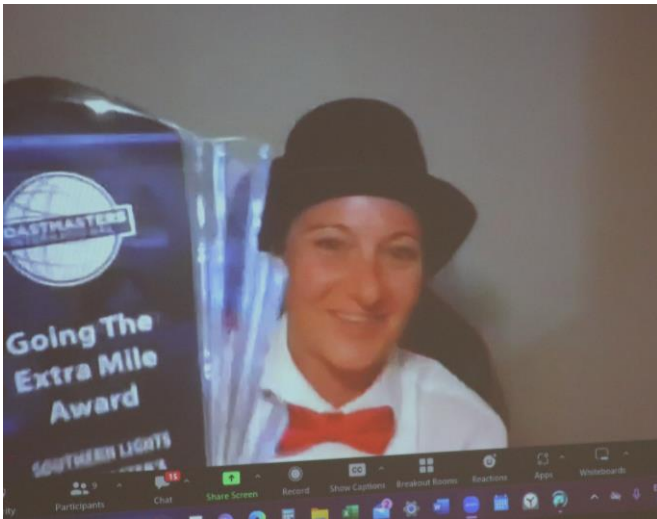


page as Ethics Commissioner. She said, "He is the most low-key, yet effective person in a public position. He never makes a verbal mistake, and does his work behind the scenes with great aplomb. Very accommodating if possible and unfailingly polite. One of the best World Presidents that Toastmasters International ever had. If we had a King of Canada, as politically correct and just plain nice as Queen Elizabeth of England, Neil would be the best ambassador Canada could ever have."

SOUTHERN LIGHTS END OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS



'Setting the Standard' Award - Michelle St. Louis and Diane Gunn



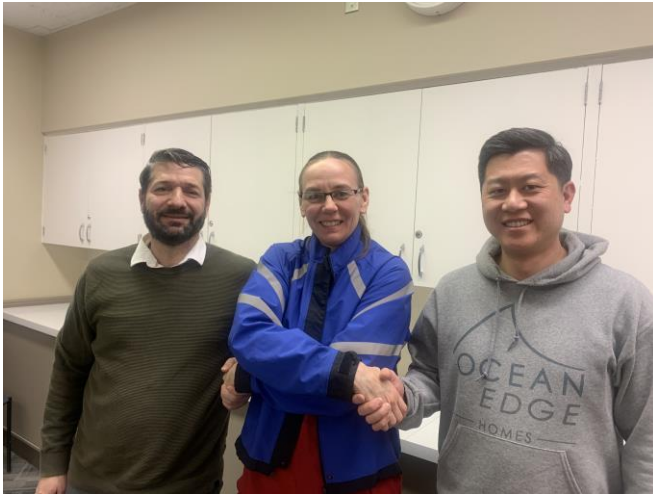
'Going the Extra Mile' Award- Darryl Hauge and Melanie Vogels



'Toastmaster of the Year' Award- Marlene Petruch



'Presidents Choice' Award- Rhonda Lagace



'Rookie of the year'- Ibrahim Ja'Far



'Herb Ashley Award of Excellence' - Ai Hatano



'Special Mention'- Wayne Sager

NEW EXECUTIVE FOR 2023 -24

Congratulations to the new SLT executive. All the best for the exciting journey and thank you for your vision, compromises, and caring for taking on this challenge

- PRESIDENT: NOEL BLADES
- VP EDUCATION: MICHELLE ST LOUIS
- VP MEMBERSHIP: WAYNE SAGER
- VP PUBLIC RELATIONS: NIGEL BOWLES
- SECRETARY: ZEENAT AFZAI
- TREASURER: YESHU DESIKAN
- SGT @ ARMS: IBRAHIM JA'FAR

