

# November 2002 Bulletin

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When we think of an organization's public relations program, specific things that organization does to promote goodwill between it and the community first come to mind. Some Toastmasters, for example, conduct Speechcraft and Youth Leadership programs to teach communication skills to the community. Other Toastmasters volunteer as guest speakers for various community events or organizations. One member of the Savvy Speakers, in fact, recently told me that she often attends meetings of other organizations specifically to look for such opportunities!

While extending ourselves to our communities in these ways is certainly a vital part of our public relations effort, equally important are the public relations skills we demonstrate daily. Prospective members, knowing that Toastmasters teaches communication and leadership skills, will look for evidence of these attributes in us before deciding to join Toastmasters themselves. Watching us use effective communication on a daily basis is far more convincing than speeches we may give from the lectern. Seeing us exercise excellent leadership skills in our everyday lives will persuade them more than hearing about officer positions we have held or impressive TI awards we have received.

Even the way we relate to those closest to us speaks volumes to our public. My mother once told me about a friend who had harbored ill feelings toward our organization after simply watching a former Toastmaster she had known treat her mother shabbily. As members of a world-recognized communications organization, we represent Toastmasters to our public every day. A warm smile, a genuine concern for others, and a friendly handshake are among the best public relations tools we have!

In addition to our personal examples, our clubs provide many people with their first close-up exposure to Toastmasters. Visitors will notice even subtle clues about a club's atmosphere. Do the members seem happy to be there? Is there an agenda in place with participants present and prepared to speak? Are members and guests treated with consideration and respect?

Guests will be looking not only at the friendliness extended to them but at the way we treat one another. A doctor I once knew told me he wanted no part of Toastmasters after witnessing scathing evaluations in a club he had visited in another state. I assured him that this wasn't the norm and invited him to visit my club. Unfortunately, he didn't take me up on my offer. Negative first impressions can have lasting effects. Positive experiences, however, will bring people back!

District-sponsored events, such as our Fall Conference in Canandaigua, provide further opportunities for publicizing Toastmasters. Besides guests we invite, those in charge of facilities, servers, and other helpers will be learning about Toastmasters first hand from

us. As we treat them with courtesy and show them what a great time people can have in a speech organization, we will leave them with a favorable impression of what Toastmasters is all about! I'm looking forward to seeing you all on Nov. 15 and 16 as we have fun together while publicizing Toastmasters in Canandaigua!