

MARCH 2026

# ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE MAGAZINE

**Carmen Smidt:**  
Leading Through  
Transformation

**Servant  
Leadership:**  
Why Putting  
Members First  
Strengthens  
Clubs

**The STAR  
Method Isn't  
Just for Jedi:**  
Nail Your  
Interview

**You Need  
Productive  
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**Thandi Thombeni**  
**From Process Engineer to Confident Communicator**

District 74 Southern Africa Toastmasters

## District 74

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**Toastmasters District 74 Mission**

We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.



## EDITOR'S NOTE



**G**reetings, everyone

Within Toastmasters, it is both membership renewal season and speech contest season. Membership renewals are not just a financial recommitment; they are an opportunity for continued growth in both communication and leadership. They also provide a chance to make an impact whether through your next speech, or by coaching and mentoring others.

Similarly, contests are more than an opportunity to watch great speakers; they are a source of inspiration, encouraging you to push yourself and reminding you that your voice deserves to be heard too.

I hope some of the articles in this issue will not only inspire you, but also reassure you that Toastmasters is a place for everyone including you. May this encouragement lead you to renew your membership, join a club, or prepare to compete in next year's contests.

*Khethiwe Malema*

ENJOY THE  
BENEFITS OF  
**MEMBERSHIP**

**TIME TO  
RENEW**



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## DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S NOTE

**M**arch arrives with a sense of movement across our District. The energy of the year is now firmly in motion, and in clubs throughout our community we see members stepping forward, growing in confidence, and strengthening the culture of excellence that defines Toastmasters.

This month also invites a simple but powerful action renewal. Renewing your membership is more than maintaining access to meetings; it is renewing your commitment to your voice, your growth, and the journey you began when you first joined Toastmasters. Each renewal strengthens not only the individual member, but the entire club community.

Strong clubs are built through support. When members encourage one another, when leaders guide with care, and when clubs collaborate, quality becomes the natural outcome. The Distinguished Club Program reminds us how we measure that quality not merely by numbers, but by the growth and development of every member. As we continue this journey, excitement also builds toward our upcoming conference, where



we will gather to celebrate progress and recognise excellence at the Hall of Fame. These moments remind us that behind every achievement is dedication, teamwork, and belief in the Toastmasters mission.

Let us continue supporting one another, strengthening our clubs, and moving forward together Achieving Excellence every step of the way.

**Bhekisisa Ngomane,DTM**

## FROM THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DESK

**I**n February, many clubs focused on promoting club meetings, member achievements, and educational milestones. Campaigns highlighting member progress, and recognition moments helped create positive visibility and reminded everyone of the growth opportunities within Toastmasters.

Social media engagement has also remained strong, with clubs consistently promoting educational milestones, sponsorship champions, and club progress toward Distinguished status.

In the coming weeks, clubs are encouraged to continue maximizing PR opportunities around speech contests, educational awards, and membership growth. Sharing contest highlights, welcoming new members publicly, and celebrating milestones helps maintain visibility and excitement within our communities.



Consistency remains key. Every post, story, and celebration shared strengthens our collective voice and reinforces the value of the Toastmasters journey.

Follow our pages here. [\[Link here\]](#)

**Leya Musunga**

Its renewal season!

# The Trio

## Proud to Renew our Membership!



Bryton Masiye,DTM  
**Program Quality Director**



Bhekisisa Nqomane,DTM  
**District Director**



Devin Pearson,DTM  
**Club Growth Director**

Have you renewed yet?

## RACE TO 20 MEMBERS!

**Club Treasurer Excellence**

**20 Members Paid by 20 March**

### CURRENT LEADERBOARD

1. Absalute Toastmasters Club - 19
2. Gaborone Toastmasters - 17
3. Table View Toastmasters Club - 16
4. Two Oceans - 15
5. Sasol Chemicals Ubuntu Toastmasters - 12
6. SpeechQuest - 10
7. Rhodes University Toastmasters - 10
8. Nedbank Club - 10
9. Pinnacle Toastmasters Club - 10

**Which club will reach 20 next?**

# Leading with a heart: Our Club's Journey to Excellence

By Vivian Mapadimeng

**W**hen I was given the opportunity to lead this club, I was both humbled and a little intimidated. I didn't initially see myself as a leader, but rather as someone willing to support and empower others. Even today, I still see myself in that same way as a servant to this incredible community.

Our club's success is a testament to the power of unity and shared purpose. We came together with a common goal: to find our voice and grow. That shared vision continues to drive us forward, and I'm honoured to be part of this journey.

Along the way, we've celebrated many wins. From using social media to increase our visibility, to creating a warm and welcoming environment where visitors immediately feel they belong. Our spirit of Ubuntu is real, and it is what truly sets us apart.

One of the most important lessons I've learned is that leadership is not about being in charge, but about empowering others to succeed. It means recognising the potential in every member and helping them grow. Our Ice Breakers and level recognition have played a significant role in keeping members motivated and excited about their progress..

Through this experience, I've come to realise that three key elements transform members' lives in a club: community, recognition, and follow-up.

**Community** creates a sense of belonging that fuels participation and growth.

**Recognition** builds confidence by celebrating achievements, both big and small.

**Follow-up** shows members that their journey matters and strengthens trust and accountability.



For me, the greatest victory is seeing members move from saying, "I can't speak," to confidently sharing their stories and representing us in contests.

This is the spirit of Morningside Toastmasters. Our success is rooted in continuous learning, where every voice matters. As the saying goes, motho ke motho ka batho – I am because we are.

# Servant Leadership: Why Putting Members First Strengthens Clubs

By Leya Musunga

**I**n the strongest Toastmasters clubs, leadership is not about authority or titles it is about service. This approach, known as servant leadership, places members at the centre of every decision. When leaders put members first, clubs become more engaged, resilient, and successful.

## What Is Servant Leadership?

Servant leadership focuses on serving others before leading them. Rather than asking, “How can members serve the club?” servant leaders ask, “How can the club serve its members?” In Toastmasters, this means creating an environment where members feel supported, respected, and encouraged to grow.

## Engagement Through Care

When leaders prioritise members’ needs such as skill development, confidence-building, and a welcoming atmosphere members are more likely to attend meetings, participate actively, and remain committed. People invest their time and energy where they feel valued. Listening, adapting, and responding to members’ goals strengthens engagement and builds loyalty.

## Empowering Future Leaders

Servant leaders understand that strong clubs depend on empowered members. By delegating meaningfully, mentoring new members, and offering opportunities to lead, they help others develop confidence and capability. This approach creates a steady pipeline of future leaders who are prepared and motivated to serve.

## Creating a Safe Learning Space

Toastmasters is a learning environment, and servant leadership helps keep it safe



and supportive. Leaders who put members first encourage experimentation, celebrate progress, and treat mistakes as opportunities to learn. This psychological safety allows members to stretch beyond their comfort zones and achieve personal growth.

## Building Sustainable Clubs

Clubs led with a servant leadership mindset develop positive, collaborative cultures. Meetings are purposeful, feedback is constructive, and achievements are shared. Over time, this leads to sustainable success, strong performance, consistent quality meetings, and members who are proud to belong.

Servant leadership reminds us that when leaders serve their members, everyone grows and so does the club.

# What To Do in the Belly of the Whale

— By Tumelo Maphalala

**T**here are seasons in leadership that feel like standing on a mountaintop; clarity is abundant, decisions come easily, and the path forward feels wide and bright. But there are other seasons, quieter and heavier ones, when it feels as though you have been swallowed by circumstances you did not expect. A season where progress slows, challenges pile up, and the usual answers seem distant.

## **This is what it can feel like to be in the belly of the whale.**

The image calls to mind the story of Jonah, who found himself in the most unlikely place of reflection, inside the belly of a great fish. Strangely, it was there, in confinement and uncertainty, that clarity eventually began to form. The belly of the whale was not the end of the story. It was the pause within it.

For leaders, these moments are not unfamiliar. Plans fall apart. Teams struggle. Expectations collide with reality. In such moments, the instinct is often to escape the discomfort as quickly as possible. But sometimes the belly of the whale is not meant to be escaped immediately. Sometimes it is meant to be endured, learned from, and used as a place of transformation.

When the chips are down, leaders must do quiet work. Reflect. Reassess. Listen more carefully than before. Strengthen their patience. Reconnect with their purpose. Growth does not only happen in visible victories; it also happens in hidden resilience.

Inspiration during difficult seasons rarely arrives as grand breakthroughs. It appears in smaller choices; choosing to remain steady, choosing to lead with integrity, choosing to keep showing up even when the outcome is unclear.



Eventually, every leader emerges from their whale. When they do, they often carry something new with them: perspective, humility, and a deeper understanding of the journey.

If you find yourself in such a season, take heart. The belly of the whale is not where the story ends. It is where leaders are quietly remade.

# Talk Up Toastmasters

Add 5 new, dual, or reinstated members between  
**1 February and 31 March.**

**REWARD: R300 VOUCHER + RIBBON FROM TI + UP  
TO R200 IN BOOSTED FACEBOOK ADS**

## Congratulations

 **District 74**  
SOUTHERN AFRICA TOASTMASTERS

**Talk up Toastmasters**  
Add 5 new, dual, or reinstated members between  
1 February and 31 March.

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**Gold Reef Toastmasters**  
Division A

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Division C

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**Talk up Toastmasters**  
Add 5 new, dual, or reinstated members between  
1 February and 31 March.

**Congratulations**

**Highway Club**  
Division D

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 **District 74**  
SOUTHERN AFRICA TOASTMASTERS

**Talk up Toastmasters**  
Add 5 new, dual, or reinstated members between  
1 February and 31 March.

**Congratulations**

**GABORONE Club**  
Division E

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# The STAR Method Isn't Just for Jedi: Nail Your Interview

By Leya Musunga

**J**ob interviews can feel intimidating especially when you're asked to explain how you handled a past challenge. It's easy to ramble, freeze, or forget your best examples. The good news? You don't need Jedi mind tricks to succeed. You just need the STAR Method.

The STAR Method is a simple storytelling framework used to answer behavioral interview questions clearly and confidently. STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result.

## Situation

Start with the Situation. Briefly describe the context or challenge you were facing. This sets the scene without overwhelming the interviewer with unnecessary detail.

## Task

Next comes the Task. Explain your role or responsibility in that situation. What were you expected to achieve? This helps the interviewer understand your level of ownership.

## Action

Then focus on the **Action**. This is the most important part. Describe what you did, the skills you used, and the decisions you made. Avoid saying "we" too often this is your moment to shine.

## Result

Finally, share the **Result**. Explain the outcome of your actions. Whenever possible, include measurable results, positive feedback, or lessons learned.

Using the STAR Method keeps your answers structured, relevant, and impactful. Instead of sounding unsure or unprepared, you come across as confident, capable, and professional.

Remember, interviews aren't about having perfect answers they're about telling your story effectively. With the STAR Method, anyone can do that. No lightsaber required.



# Gaborone Toastmasters Club Supporting Youth in Public Speaking!

By Leya Musunga

On Saturday, 14 February 2026, Gaborone Toastmasters Club had the honour of supporting Mebala Youth Studios during their Success Workshop Award Ceremony held at the Lady Masire Youth Centre (Gaborone, Botswana). This inspiring event marked the closing of a two-week workshop (24 & 31 January 2026) designed to equip young participants with essential public speaking, communication, and presentation skills.

The Club President, Leya Musunga, proudly represented the club as a guest speaker and delivered a 7 minute speech on: "Overcoming the Fear of Crowds (Nervousness)". Sharing practical tips and encouragement to help young speakers build confidence and speak with courage.

One of the highlights of the ceremony was witnessing three of the recipients present their speeches a true reflection of growth, confidence, and progress! Leya was supported at the event by the Club Treasurer, Lane Mthethwa, as part of the club's commitment to community engagement and youth empowerment.

Gaborone Toastmasters club applauds Mebala Youth Studios for creating a platform that develops confident communicators and future leaders.



# Beyond the Podium: Conversations That Continue After the Applause

By Kofi Simpson

One of the most interesting things I've observed in Toastmasters International is that some of the most meaningful conversations don't always happen during the meeting. They happen after the speeches, after the evaluations, and after the applause. That realization inspired the creation of the "Beyond the Podium Toastmasters Podcast." The idea was simple: what happens when we continue the conversation beyond the meeting room?

Beyond the Podium was created as a space where Toastmasters can share their journeys more openly — the struggles behind the speeches, the lessons learned from failed attempts, and the courage it takes to keep showing up. Behind every confident speaker at the podium was once someone who felt nervous, uncertain, and wondered if they were good enough.

The podcast explores themes such as the personal growth journey behind becoming a better speaker, the realities of leadership within Toastmasters clubs, and the lessons learned by members who decided to take that important first step. It also highlights an important truth: our development does not stop when the meeting ends.

In many ways, the podcast reflects what Toastmasters is truly about — transformation.

Along the way, I also recognized something many of us experience but rarely discuss: analysis paralysis. Sometimes we spend so much time thinking about starting that we delay the very action that will help us grow. Beyond the Podium began with that same uncertainty, but it reinforced an important lesson: progress comes from starting, not waiting for the perfect moment.

The podcast is a reminder that our voices matter, our stories matter, and our growth continues long after we step away from the podium.

If you would like to share your Toastmasters journey or support the podcast behind the scenes, you are warmly invited to join the Beyond the Podium initiative. Reach out in the comments section of any published Beyond the Podium podcast episode.

Listen to our previous episodes [HERE](#).





## Thandi Thombeni From Process Engineer to Confident Communicator

— By Modieng Ramekosi

**I**n 2018, I attended my first Toastmasters meeting as a guest. At the time, I was working as a Process Engineer, responsible for presenting proposed solutions to Heads of Departments. While I was confident in my technical expertise, I knew my communication skills needed refinement.

Like many professionals, I was drawn to Toastmasters International because of its global reputation for transforming speakers into confident communicators and leaders. What started as curiosity quickly became commitment and that single meeting marked the beginning of a life-changing journey.

## Remembering My “Why”

Growth within Toastmasters has been deeply rewarding – and equally demanding. Balancing a full-time career with personal development requires intentional effort. Yet, whenever the schedule became overwhelming, I reminded myself why I joined: to become a confident, impactful speaker.

When time constraints limited my involvement within my home club, I chose to stretch myself further. I visited other clubs after hours, connected with members across the district, and immersed myself in different meeting cultures. Those experiences accelerated my growth, strengthened my adaptability, and expanded my network within our Toastmasters community.

What began as skill development evolved into leadership development.

## Confidence Beyond the Club

The impact of Toastmasters soon became visible in my professional life. I no longer viewed presentations as obligations; they became opportunities.

My increased confidence led to invitations from other teams within my organization to present the Toastmasters program and share how it develops communication and leadership skills. I was able to present work findings with clarity and engage confidently with colleagues across all levels of seniority. Toastmasters did not just help me speak it helped me build credibility.

## From Fear to Framework

Before joining, unfamiliar audiences triggered intense anxiety: sweaty palms, heart palpitations, and self-doubt. Through the Toastmasters education program, I learned practical tools that continue to guide me today:

- Intentional preparation
- Repetitive practice
- Breath control
- Strategic pacing



Each project, each speech evaluation, and each meeting role reinforced a simple truth: confidence is built through consistent action.

Joining Toastmasters may be life-changing. With purpose, planning, persistence, and people, confidence grows, perspectives widen, leadership appears, and you ultimately discover a stronger, more self-aware version of yourself.

## Creating Opportunities for Others

In 2022, I was invited by a local Internship Academy to speak about Toastmasters and its value for young professionals. After the presentation, the Academy sponsored ten students to join our club a powerful reminder that when we showcase excellence, we open doors for others.

A year later, I returned as Master of Ceremonies for their graduation ceremony, proudly representing the Toastmasters brand in my community.

My journey began with just one meeting in 2018. Since then, Toastmasters has expanded my leadership, visibility, and ability to inspire others to start their own journey.

“Toastmasters did not just help me speak it helped me build credibility.”



**District 74**  
SOUTHERN AFRICA TOASTMASTERS

# Challenge

**ONE QUARTER**  
**ONE LEVEL**

January - March 2026

**Level 3**

**Level 2**

**Level 1**



Complete your **Pathways Levels** & share your success!

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# The Unexpected Gifts of Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone

— By Modieng Ramekosi

In my interview with Tjaka Segooa, she shared that while many see her as a natural-born speaker, she believes talent alone isn't enough without structure. Here's her journey.

I've often been told I'm a natural-born speaker. But I believe talent without structure can only go so far. At heart, I'm a writer reflective and deeply aware of the power of words. For years my thoughts lived on paper, until I realized some messages were meant to be heard, not just read.

I joined Toastmasters in 2021 because I respected the responsibility that comes with having a voice people listen to. I wanted refinement, precision, and intention. Toastmasters gave me the discipline to match instinct with structure and to use my voice with purpose.

The experience sharpened my awareness. I learned that timing can be as powerful as vocabulary, that pauses can move a room, and that delivery must be carefully constructed to carry meaning. Composure, I discovered, communicates just as loudly as words.

Personally, I've grown into a speaker who isn't rushed by nerves or pressured by expectation. I now understand that authority doesn't require volume it requires alignment.

Professionally, the impact has been significant. I can think quickly, respond thoughtfully, and communicate ideas with clarity in leadership spaces. Serving as Vice President Education also taught me that communication is stewardship, not spotlight. Growth in Toastmasters is cumulative, built one speech at a time.

What I sought was not confidence, but refinement.

I wanted to eliminate fillers, elevate clarity, and develop a tonal range that could carry emotion with control. Toastmasters taught me awareness and awareness transforms delivery. Now I don't search for words; I choose them.

There is a moment every speaker recognizes when a message no longer belongs only to them. During a recent Toastmasters competitive speaking platform, I experienced that shift. Hearing people repeat lines from my speech reminded me that placement is temporary, but impact lasts.

**Toastmasters hasn't changed who I am it has refined how I show up.**



Tjaka Segooa  
VP Membership

Carpe Diem Aspire Toastmasters Club

# Carmen Smidt: Leading Through Transformation

By Leya Musunga

For Carmen Schmidt of Anorol Toastmasters Club, the pursuit of multiple awards is not about recognition it is about transformation. Her Toastmasters journey is guided by a deeper purpose: becoming the kind of leader and communicator who inspires change in others.

Driven by her own personal growth journey, Carmen set clear goals within the Toastmasters Pathways program to strengthen her confidence, refine her communication skills, and develop as a leader. She believes that meaningful leadership starts from within. By committing to her educational goals and actively participating in club activities, she strives to lead by example while encouraging others to grow alongside her.

As a club leader, Carmen values the power of teamwork and community. She sees Toastmasters as more than a learning platform it is a space where members uplift one another, celebrate progress, and work together toward club success. Each project completed is not simply a step toward an award, but an opportunity to learn something new and improve.

What keeps her motivated is the continuous growth that comes from consistent participation. With every speech, meeting role, and project, Carmen sees her confidence and ability expand. For her, the journey is about stretching potential and discovering what is possible through commitment and practice.



Her advice to fellow members is simple yet powerful: set clear goals, stay committed to your projects, and actively participate in meetings. Life can bring distractions, but progress begins by starting where you are.

Carmen reminds members that personal growth benefits the entire club. When individuals develop their skills, the club becomes stronger. Most importantly, she encourages members to celebrate their progress and enjoy the journey.

“Each project is an opportunity to learn, grow, and realise your true potential.”

# You Need Productive Obsession

— By Kagelelo Mogotsi

I was recently in conversation with fellow Toastmasters, people whose excitement and passion could honestly power a city. Being around them always feels like a breath of fresh air. That evening, as we sat around the table, someone asked someone how they managed to stay so driven. Their answer wasn't the popular one.

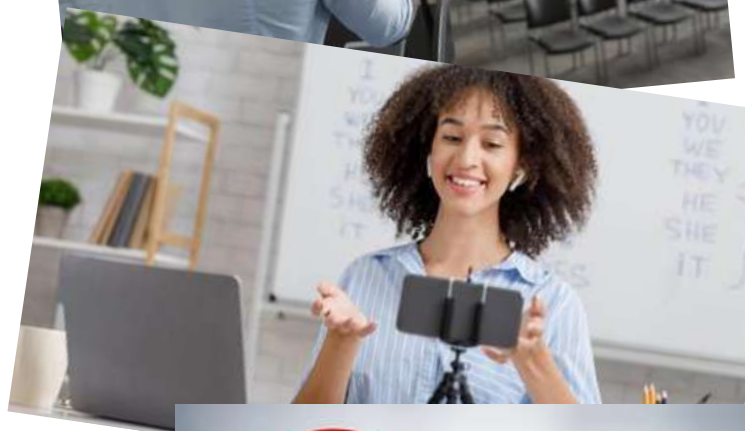
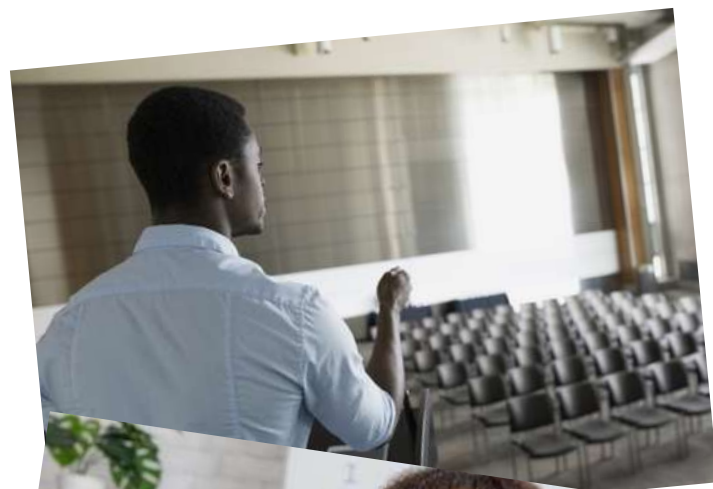
**"I get obsessed."**

It sounded unhealthy to many because obsession isn't exactly a word we're encouraged to embrace. But it intrigued me. So much so that I went straight to YouTube and typed, "How do I get obsessed with my goals?", hoping some YouTuber could explain it in a way that felt safer or different from what I already knew deep down. They weren't talking about the extreme, chaotic kind of obsession, the one that makes you lose yourself. They meant the quiet kind. The focused kind. The kind that pays attention and shows up as diligence.

Productive obsession looks like building habits that pull you closer to your goals. Perhaps you want to get better at impromptu speaking. Productive obsession would mean creating a set of questions from easy-to- hard and for 21 days, three times a day without fail, recording yourself answering them for at least two minutes. It's reviewing those recordings, noticing where you stumble, and deliberately improving. Over and over again. Until growth becomes inevitable.

That same energy applies to every goal we have. Every dream. Greatness often demands a small, stubborn dose of obsession. Michael Jordan didn't become the greatest NBA player of all time by accident, he was obsessed with perfecting his shots.

So don't fear the word. Obsession, when channeled well, is powerful. It directs intense focus and energy toward something meaningful.



It gives you purpose, clarity, and the resilience to keep going when things get hard. With that level of focus, deep thinking and creativity naturally follow.

Allow yourself to indulge, fully, in that one thing that matters to you. Give it your attention. Your effort. Your obsession. And see what happens.

# The Kindness of Constructive Criticism

— By Modieng Ramekosi

When I joined Toastmasters, I hoped to enhance my communication and leadership skills. Little did I know that I was also placing myself on a path toward developing additional abilities such as giving and receiving constructive feedback, facilitating discussions, coordinating tasks, and managing projects.

Toastmasters provides a powerful platform for developing self-awareness, encouraging deep reflection, and practicing meaningful conversations, mindfulness, and goal setting. It has proven to be far more than a public speaking platform — it is a holistic personal development journey.

Since joining, my level of self-awareness has improved significantly. This growth has strengthened my ability to persuade and influence effectively. I now think and speak more logically, structuring my thoughts in a way that makes them clear and easy for my audience to follow, whether in writing or verbally.

I have also become more intentional about highlighting key points and ensuring my message lands with clarity. In addition, Toastmasters has sharpened my listening skills. These improvements help me place my clients at the center of what I do, allowing me to better understand situations from the perspectives of those I interact with.

My greatest fear of public speaking stemmed from the fear of being judged. Toastmasters helped normalize evaluation and reframed judgment as an opportunity for growth. I learned that constructive speech evaluations provide powerful developmental feedback.

“Self-awareness is the foundation of effective communication.”

However, the true value of feedback lies in the attitude of the recipient — growth depends on how one receives it and what one chooses to do with it. Toastmasters taught me to embrace feedback as a gift rather than a threat.

Before joining, I amusingly associated the name Toastmasters with toasting bread. I later realized that much like bread transformed in a toaster, members who truly engage in the Toastmasters journey do not come out the same.

As a member of Honeydew Toastmasters Club, I value the vibrant, supportive, and often humorous atmosphere where every meeting offers inspiration, learning, and a truly member-centered experience.



Mabo Mashabela  
Honeydew Toastmasters Club, President

# District 74

SOUTHERN AFRICA TOASTMASTERS

## CLUB ANNIVERSARIES

### March 2025

#### Division

# A

Communicators For Good - 6 Years

#### Division

# B

Act Toastmasters Club - 41 Years

Atlantic Toastmasters Club - 5 Years

Anrol International Advanced - 1 Year

#### Division

# C

Old Mutual Namibia - 2 Years

Ninety One Cape Town - 1 Year

#### Division

# D

Durban Umgeni Toastmasters - 43 Years

Toast and Talk Toastmasters - 1 Year

#### Division

# E

MunSoft Toastmasters Club - 1 Year

MunSoft2 Toastmasters Club - 1 Year

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Missed our previous issues you can find them on

[Toastmasters74.org](https://Toastmasters74.org)

