

Orangeville Toastmasters achieve a ?monumental milestone?



By Mike Pickford

Ever since the Orangeville Toastmasters were established over 20 years ago, the club has been slowly working towards something ?big?. This past week, it was revealed they may have finally gotten where they want to be, named into the prestigious President's Distinguished Club.

Designed to push local Toastmasters groups from across the globe on to achieve their goals, the annual award acts as a symbol of excellence, recognizing hard work and dedication at the grassroots level.

Speaking to the Citizen this week, Dennis Sanford, the club's Vice President of Public Relations, said the club's path towards distinguished status has been a long and challenging one. It is estimated that only 20 percent of Toastmaster International's 16,400 clubs will achieve the President's Distinguished Club Award in 2017.

?This is a monumental milestone for Orangeville Toastmasters, we've been working towards this award for a long time,? Mr. Sanford said. ?The President's Distinguished Club Award is all about accomplishing a number of goals. It's all about us becoming the best Toastmasters club we can be.?

It's been a busy year so far for the local chapter. Providing a platform and, more importantly, a ?safe place? for local residents to improve their communication skills, the club has grown its membership base by more than 30 percent so far in 2017, now boasting 24 registered members.

The group meets twice, sometimes three times a month ? on every first, third and fifth Monday ? at the Orangeville Public Library on Mill Street. Mr. Sanford said that after recently moving back downtown following a stint at the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin facility on Centennial Road, the group has seen a marked increase in the number of people stopping by the see what Toastmasters is all about.

And so the question remains, what exactly is Toastmasters all about? Now a seven-year veteran of the organization, Mr. Sanford did his best to explain.

?Toastmasters is a non-profit organization dedicated towards the improvement of communication and leadership skills. We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop these types of skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth,? Mr. Sanford said.

The organization, both locally and globally, has helped to turn many a life around. On Monday (Sept. 11) the organization will be hosting a community open house at the library, providing locals with an in-depth look at the opportunities that exist within the world of Toastmasters International.

Headlining Monday's open house will be two guest speakers: Kersty Franklin, a recent recipient of the Distinguished Toastmasters Award with 34 years of Toastmaster experience under her belt, and Carol Hebert, a well-respected former Orangeville Toastmaster who helped pioneer the group in the community. The group will also show off its President's Distinguished Club Award.

?We try to do a couple of these public sessions every year to try and promote the educational program at Orangeville Toastmasters. We feel we sometimes have issues promoting ourselves and letting people know what it is that we do, so this is the perfect opportunity for us to do that and a perfect opportunity for the public to check us out and learn something new,? Mr. Sanford said. The club is open to the public, with Mr. Sanford stating absolutely anyone with an interest in bettering their communication skills is welcome at a Toastmasters session. They welcome people to come out to meetings and see if Toastmasters is for them before

committing to a full membership. Annual membership fees come in at \$198, with a one-time \$50 initiation cost for new members. Toastmasters is something you can use to improve your work life, your personal life, practically every aspect of your life," Mr. Sanford said. "It's done so much for me and countless others in the community. If you have problems communicating or properly expressing yourself in a public format, come and try us out. We just might be able to help." For more information, visit orangeville.toastmasters.com.