

Bolton Banter Toastmasters wants to help you feel confident

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Public speaking, whether at social events, work functions or simple communication exercises, can be difficult for some. That's where Toastmasters comes in to help.

Toastmasters is an international club with 358,000 members in over 16,800 clubs in 143 countries around the world. It is a non-profit organization dedicated on educating about public speaking and leadership skills, creating confident, driven and strong communication skills.

Bolton has their very own Toastmasters club, known as the Bolton Banter Toastmasters, run by local residents. The club was chartered on May 17, 2006 and has been educating and providing community involvement within the club for over 10 years. Members gather at the Albion Bolton Community Centre the first, third and fifth Thursday of each month.

Currently the club has 15 members, but each year holds approximately 20 to 30 members. Patricia Burness, current Club President and her husband Bart Burness, VP of Membership talk about the joys of Toastmaster and who it benefits.

"People who want to personally improve themselves, they don't want to settle with who they are. People who have a fear of public speaking and want assistance and channels to overcome that fear. Sometimes people get into job promotions that require to speak in front of people for the first time, and they didn't do much of that in their previous role but now that they've been promoted they're required to speak in front of a bunch of people. Some people have social situations like weddings, or social activities that they need to practice on," explains Mr. Burness.

Founded in 1924, Toastmasters has travelled all over the world with members of all diverse backgrounds.

Patricia Burness says that understanding Toastmasters and what the organization about is better seen than heard.

"Some people think that a meeting will be boring, because who wants to hear a bunch of speeches, but it isn't. It's very interesting and there's a large variety in what they see, and really a lot of fun," comments Mrs. Burness.

She added, "The whole idea is to educate yourself and to make improvements in your ways of presenting yourself. It's not really all about speaking, it's about communication. It's about speaking and listening.

Each meeting holds featured speakers. Members choose the topic they wish to speak about, and this brings interesting stories, and learning more about people.

"The first speech is an ice-breaker in which a person will tell a little about themselves, so that they're kind of introducing themselves to the group and the group itself is very supportive. You might think that that would be hard to do, but it isn't," says Mrs. Burness.

"The culture of toastmasters in general is that we're trying to provide a safe environment for people to participate, grow and take risks."

If learning and improving your public speaking is something that you've always wished to do, the Bolton Banter Toastmasters doors are always open for newcomers.

"You don't even know your developing the skill. Just by working together and doing what's right in front of you, you learn a lot of little things that go together for making a more successful life," says Mrs. Burness.

For more information about the Bolton Banter Toastmasters, please visit boltonbanter.org, or visit toastmasters.org to learn more

about Toastmasters International.