


Cheyne is Toastmaster champ

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Courtesy photo

Mary Cheyne won the Toastmaster's district championship on Nov. 8.

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Burlington —

Have you ever wanted to develop your public speaking skills? Mary Cheyne, a Somerville resident and member of The Last Word Toastmasters Club in Burlington, spent the past three years improving her public speaking skills, and on Nov. 8, took top honors competing for the district championship trophy at the Toastmasters District Humorous Speech Contest.

Cheyne competed against her fellow club members in Burlington initially, eventually taking her speech, "The Answer," through three tiers of competition to reach the fourth and final level, the district contest, held in Marlborough.

The district covers eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island and includes more than 100 clubs. Ironically, her speech was about people's fear of public speaking.

"I initially joined Toastmasters to practice being comfortable speaking in front of a group of people," said Cheyne. "It's not mandatory to speak in competitions. I do it because it's an environment that accelerates my growth. I also enjoy making people laugh, after all, laughter is the best medicine.

"What I have learned is that ultimately, you are not competing against anyone else but yourself," she continued. "The questions I ask myself are, 'Am I a better speaker today than I was yesterday? Can I convey my thoughts more effectively now than I could a year ago? And of course, is my audience laughing?' I am pleased to say that now they are."

Toastmasters International is a world-wide non-profit organization dedicated to helping people develop their public speaking and leadership skills. The Last Word Toastmasters, www.thelastwordtm.org, meets at 7:15 p.m. at the Burlington Public Library on the second and fourth Thursday of every month.

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