

## Cheyne has the last word, wins a trophy

By **Jennifer McAweeney**  
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Somerville — Mary Cheyne, of Somerville spent the past three years improving her public speaking skills, and on Nov. 8 she had the opportunity to put these skills to the test in front of more than 200 people.

Cheyne came in First Place among seven division-level contestants competing for the District Championship trophy at the Toastmasters District Humorous Speech Contest, and had a chance to make several hundred people laugh in the process.

Her journey began at The Last Word Toastmasters club in Burlington , where she competed against her fellow club members in the Club Humorous Speech Contest. She took her speech titled “The Answer” through 3 tiers of competition to reach the 4th 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. 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,” Cheyne said.

“What I have learned is that ultimately, you are not competing against anyone else but yourself,” she said. “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.”