

## Cheyne is winner in Toastmasters Contest

By Jennifer McAweeney

ple's fear of public speaking.

BURLINGTON - Have you ever wanted to develop your public speaking skills?

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. Cheyne took her speech titled "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 over 100 clubs. Ironically, her speech was about peo-

"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.

She continues, "What I have learned is that ultimately, you are not competing against anyone else but yourself. 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 worldwide non-profit organization dedicated to helping people develop their public speaking and leadership skills. The Last Word Toastmasters, [www.thelastwordtm.org](http://www.thelastwordtm.org), meets at the Burlington Public Library on the second and fourth Thursday of every month at 7:15 p.m.



MARY CHEYNE, who started with the Last Word Toastmasters in Burlington, recently came in first in the Toastmasters District Humorous Speech Contest. (Photo contributed)