***Rotary and Toastmasters Strategic Alliance-***

***By Collyer Smith***

As many of you are well aware, Rotary International, and Toastmasters International, have developed a strategic alliance that was announced this past winter. Here are some quotes highlighting this alliance:

*“Collaborating with Toastmasters will provide our members with even more opportunities to develop and improve their leadership and communication skills,” said John Hewko, general secretary and CEO of Rotary International. “In turn, members of Toastmasters can connect with more people, take advantage of new speaking and learning opportunities, and make a difference in their communities through Rotary.”*

*"The strategic alliance with Rotary is exciting and allows both organizations to leverage our unique and similar strengths," says Deepak Menon, Toastmasters' 2019-20 International President. "We look forward to providing our current and prospective members with ongoing additional offerings that meet their evolving needs."*

Here are some initiatives we are making at the local level:

* Steve Ahles, Treasurer of the Southgate Rotary, and Janet Haas, President of the Livonia Rotary, have been working with several Toastmaster’s District members (current District Director Kim Purohit, incoming District Director LaShon Bowers, and incoming Division F Director James Brown) to learn more about the benefits of Toastmasters through a Toastmaster Demonstration meeting. I was honored to share my giving back to the community presentation: Be The Difference That Makes A Difference, on the trials and tribulations of getting a 5th grader, to grade level math.

I encourage Rotarians interested in improving their communication and leadership skills, to attend a Toastmaster’s meeting. To learn more, here is the Toastmasters International website- and at the top, click Find A Club-for a club located near you: <https://www.toastmasters.org/>

I encourage Toastmasters interested in giving back, and providing leadership, to their community, to attend a Rotary meeting. To learn more, here is the Rotary International website, and click Club Finder at the top for a Rotary Club located near you: <https://www.rotary.org/en>

I have been involved in Toastmaster since losing my corporate job during the Great Recession. I have enjoyed the Toastmasters interactions immensely, and I will be the incoming President for Washtenaw Toastmasters starting July 1st. Both Rotary District 6380, and Toastmaster District 28, have a similar footprint- though Toastmaster District 28 also includes Detroit, Windsor, Downriver, and northern Ohio.

Finally, a special note: Both Toastmasters, and Rotary, have been a tremendous source of support for Annie and me after the death of our son, Cam. A Parent’s Journey Into Mental Health has been well supported by both Rotary, and Toastmasters. I have been fortunate to present to the Rotary Clubs of Ann Arbor, Livingston, Brighton, Birmingham, Ann Arbor North, Ann Arbor West, Chatham, West Bloomfield, Troy, Detroit and Livonia (June 29th). I have been fortunate to present to the Toastmasters Clubs of Washtenaw (my very first one), Michigan, Sweetwaters, Advanced Articulators, Optimistic Orators, Speakers Bureau, and Huron Valley. I will be presenting at a District Toastmasters event that is open to the public on June 16th.

I share because I would never have been able to present without the support from both organizations. I am your ambassador. And,,,Rotary International will be having a break-out session on their on-line conference:

Friday, 26 June

18:00 - Personal Growth Opportunities: Rotary’s Alliance with Toastmasters

Hear from Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Toastmasters who are actively involved in this relationship.

You just might find a passion you never knew you had…