

Toastmasters Treasures...Profiles in Performance

by Peggy Lynn, CTM/CL, PR Reporter

"Public speaking! When will I ever need or use THAT?!" **Diana Kovac** shuttered to herself when a friend asked her to be a charter member of **AgMasters** in July, 1997. "Just those words, PUBLIC SPEAKING, made my blood run cold!"

That was back in her "green" days at the USDA when she didn't know any better. Passing the opportunity didn't phase Diana until one day a couple months later. That day was going so bad it grew arms and began its slow strangle hold! Her friend, the same one encouraging charter membership, stopped by Diana's desk with another invitation on the way to the lunchtime Toastmasters meeting. Diana decided it was high time to get a breath of fresh air - "try something new" - and LEAPed at the invitation!

Impressed by the friendly atmosphere within the workplace, Diana enjoyed listening to several speakers. She vividly remembers each speech and thought the speakers did so well! Little did Diana know then that each was quite nervous, giving their initial ICEBREAKER! She was impressed that the nervousness didn't show. She was also impressed with Table Topics where she was tapped for HER opinion. Enveloped in the friendly environment, Diana thought it humorous to be asked and once again LEAPed into the fray. Not remembering specifics but just a question relating to the upcoming holiday, Diana says of her talk, "I do remember that I thought I had spoken for an extremely long time." When members gave the reports at the end of the meeting, she discovered that she had not even made minimum time and also had quite a few Ah's!

"Wow, I thought, I only spoke for such a short time and yet the audience must have just ooh'd & ah'd at my presentation, I did better than I thought!" Of course it didn't take Diana long to find out that Ah's weren't a good thing to Agmasters. "I had a good laugh. I also had a change of opinion and realized that this Toastmasters was for me. As soon as I learned that we all have but-

terflies, it's just our job to keep them flying in formation - I was hooked!" From that fateful Toastmasters meeting in 1997, Diana has indeed flown in formation! She has continued to say, "Yes!" as opportunities appear before her.

For instance, Diana has held almost every club office available, has been Assistant Division Governor, Area S4 Governor and is currently the Division S Governor. The sharpened communication skills have led to new heights in Diana's personal leadership development. This lady who, at one time, could not envision herself ever even NEEDING to learn ANYTHING about public speaking, has taken the helm in community-wide civic events as well.

Diana humorously recalls that when her "children were young, just planning a birthday party" sent her into a "frenzy!" However, the experience of organizing club meetings, open houses, contests and Division work led Diana to a volunteer position coordinating the Vitae Society's annual fundraising banquet. Diana discovered the day of the event that she was invited to speak to this group. "Without my Toastmasters training, I would never have been able to make a presentation to over 700 people! And, what was it I said, when or where would I ever need or use Public Speaking?!"

All who know Diana will undoubtedly relate "happy" in describing her. It is no surprise then of her claim last year that she "happily accepted the opportunity to be the coordinator for the Kick-Off rally for the CFC (Combined Federal Campaign) for the complex of approximately 1200 people at the USDA." The CFC is the Federal Government's equivalent to the United Way. Diana worked with a super team of about 30 people, coordinating the



final event - deemed "a great success!" Including contracted speakers, a lively band and an endless supply of ready to eat hot dogs, the event was a fulfilling experience for Diana! One opportunity, she adds that she "could never have accomplished without my Toastmaster's leadership training!"

Through leadership Diana has indeed used her good nature and public speaking abilities together in benefiting the masses. She says firmly, "I would never have believed that I would have been a President of a club or a Division Governor, but here I am. Thank you TOASTMASTERS! No, I'm not the same person that I was when I joined but I am still learning, building skills, growing, and looking forward to the future in Toastmasters!"

Diana finds ways to use humor as often as possible like when presenting Les Hall his DTM badge as "Diana-diana-danna" during Agmasters 5th Anniversary celebration! One of Diana's proudest Toastmasters moments came during that same meeting in 2002 when Agmasters presented Diana Kovac, ATM-S, CL, with the

TOASTMASTER of the YEAR AWARD! That special plaque now adorns her Farm Service Agency desk area for everyone's inspiration.

The fun, skills building and leadership that Diana has embraced with her home club, Agmasters, led to membership in two other clubs: **Toastmasters Unlimited** and the advanced, **Masters**. This effervescent lady, first born of eleven who undoubtedly used humor then as a survival mechanism, keeps smiling now at her newest family addition, grandson Dylan! With her seven sisters and three brothers, Diana's household growing up danced with a whirlwind of activity and ever-ready party atmosphere. After all, growing up when times were difficult, they found inexpensive ways to entertain themselves - singing and dancing was always free! We at District 22 TREASURE the fact that Diana Kovac has chosen to "dance" with us at Toastmasters, generously passing on her GEM of a spirit to any who may be near! Contact Diana at DJKOVAC@kcc.usda.gov to learn more!