

## Toastmasters Treasures...Profiles in Performance

by Peggy Lynn, CTM/CL, PR Reporter



"Attractive, Talented, Mellifluous - The New You!" beckoned the educational offering at May's District 22 Spring '03 Conference in Overland Park, KS. With a title like that and myself joining Toastmasters for whatever "new" me could possibly be, attendance at that break-out was a must!

Lawrence, Kansas' **Joanna Kuczera**, ATMB/CL, was there - leading the pack, drawing people to her, delightfully displaying "attractive" in action! "Talented" as Joanna defines it, is "having special qualities" and it took about a half second to see that she definitely fit that bill! Joanna is not satisfied with merely being "talented," she is **DRIVEN** - as anyone can tell when realizing she has MBA and PhD grasping her name.

"Mellifluous" (how many Toastmasters use THAT word regularly?!) Joanna relayed meaning "as sweet as honey" and there, again, she did not disappoint! Using her own European accented charming vernacular, a pleasant speaking voice was the **REAL** focus of Joanna's training.

Of course, as anyone who aspires to improve their public speaking skills knows, communicating your message effectively means transmitting confidence and trustworthiness in a relaxed manner is how we get the job done. Joanna implored that whether we are attempting a presentation, a job interview or a speech, we each need to be loud and **CLEAR** enough, with a **PITCH** that's easily heard and understood all the while using good, relaxed breathing techniques. In the session we proceeded to work on exercises that helped the group do that. Joanna incorporated vocal "ahhhhhh" (ones that needn't be counted!) exercises as a vibrational hum embodying the

Toastmasters experience. Keeping our feet planted, like grounded roots, the voice is the essential nutrient towards most of our communication. Then we add tools to improve and grow like a tree: our CTM in TI, of course!

If we choose to stand as tall as redwood trees, for instance, reaching for the sky, we grow with any of the 15 Advanced Manuals developing into our ATM branches. By then we are definitely "as sweet as honey" or **MELLIFLUOUS**! Such a creative analogy to our Toastmasters growth pattern clearly gives us insight into this District 22 **TREASURE, Joanna Wiorcikiewicz-Kuczera.**

Joining Topeka's **Heartland** Toastmasters in 2001, Joanna displayed her love of "seeing how things work" and set out to master the TI techniques. In fact, Joanna had only given her third speech from the basic manual focusing on "Organize Your Speech" when Heartland selected her to compete in their Area Humorous Speech contest! The speech was a spoof on self-help books called "The Seducer's Manual: How to Get Any Dish You Desire!" This was geared for men who might be in the game of seducing women - happily using food as bait! Joanna thinks food works well as a seduction tool by transference. Giving a woman (though it should work equally well, if not quicker, with men) desirable food in enjoyable surroundings may be all the woman needs to transfer her affection for the food to the man responsible. Joanna believes "the road from the kitchen to the bedroom is paved with success!" She took home the Second Place trophy with that humorous delivery! Joanna does "deliver" in every way. Since that contest time she's encouraged everyone to "participate in speech contests as a fantastic way to become a better speaker. They give you a chance to observe, do, learn **AND** have fun in the process."

Having the "chance to observe, do, learn **AND** have fun in the process" is tops according to Joanna which she takes into the realm of Area T2 as its current Governor. Ever the curious seeker, Jo-

anna is delighted with the availability to discover how other clubs operate. Of course, anyone can visit a club to do the same but we all know many times other commitments push visits onto the back burner. Now as Governor, she HAS to visit! Clearly Joanna is happy doing so as she's already visited each of her clubs TWICE since July 1st!

Joanna has seen "magic happen!" She describes Area T2 as a "group of diverse people with varied backgrounds coming together to help one another improve everyone's communication and leadership skills. No magic brew is served," she says, "but everyone comes out stronger, faster, and better!" Joanna knows "Toastmasters skills are contagious" and sees the epidemic at home with her own elementary-age children, Anna and Stefan. They've witnessed their mother organize, prepare and practice Toastmasters' speeches and follow suit with their own school projects much to the amazement and delight of their teachers. Joanna believes it's beneficial for them to observe Toastmasters in action by attending an occasional meeting. She's nurturing a new generation of Toastmasters! Ever "the curious seeker" may be the understatement of the millennium in describing Joanna!

This Warsaw, Poland, native, growing up there and in France, received her Ph.D. in biophysics from the Polish Academy in Sciences. As a post-

doctoral fellow at Harvard in Cambridge, MA, Joanna came to the USA. Her Harvard research involved the study and methodology of biological molecules changing shapes and properties as they interact. "This type of research is used to design new drugs that selectively target certain receptors in the body."

Joanna found that theoretical chemistry was a snap compared to the cultural adventure materializing upon moving to America. She chuckles in remembering those first days at Harvard and the miscommunications dealing with simple American versus British English phrases that don't quite mean the same in Europe! (Ask her about a few when you have a minute!)

When Joanna's husband took a position at the University of Kansas she worked in research for awhile there but then decided to seek the MBA. One of her Business professors suggested Toastmasters International as a means of sharpening her communication skills. Joanna LEAPed at the advice and we are ever grateful! This dynamic woman, Joanna Kuczera, plunged herself into the world of Toastmasters with all the brightness, fervor and humor of a lovable madcap scientist, a true TREASURE within our midst, and crystal-clearly much to the absolute delight and benefit of District 22!