



District Director Report

July District 54 DEC Meeting

Opening Statement:

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Toastmaster year! What a journey our district has been on in recent years. Before diving into our collective achievements and future goals, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Gary Vaughn. I joined Toastmasters in 2019 and have served in various district roles for the past three years, starting as an Area Director and now as your District Director. I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the opportunity to serve in this role this year. However, I don't see this as "my year" because it isn't. While I may be the District Director, I am not District 54. ***WE ARE DISTRICT 54!***

Our district is not just a collection of clubs and members; it is a thriving community of:

- Leaders like Tom Willison from Rock On! who led efforts up until the last day of the Toastmaster year to bring us our first Select Distinguished Division since the 2018-2019 Toastmaster year.
- Learners like Elias Hayes from Sunrise Speakers, who used his talents to help at the district level by performing financial audits and even reporting at our last council meeting.
- Dreamers like Jana Hergert from Quad Cities Easy Speakers Toastmasters, who always has a positive outlook and a testimonial to share about her aspirations despite the challenges life has dealt her.
- Enthusiasts like Garrett Gray from Yes And Toastmasters, who has merged his professional passions outside of District 54 with his club inside District 54.
- Professionals like Pierre Paul from Pimiteoui, who has excelled in entrepreneurship while achieving the top spot at the district contest level.
- Mentors like Heather Blase from Progressively Speaking, who has provided education, training, and support to directors at every level of this district.
- Committed members like Jon Greiner from Forging Leaders, who celebrated his 50th Toastmaster anniversary this year.

I could go on and on about all the amazing District 54 members I have met these past three years. ***WE ARE DISTRICT 54!***

This is why I cannot, in good faith, start this year with the idea of it being "my year." There has been too much effort put into this from district teams before me, too much growth, and positive momentum to claim it for myself. ***WE ARE DISTRICT 54!***

We will achieve our goals collectively by building on the efforts of those who came before us, contributing our own efforts to the same cause, and passing our successes to the district team after us. The journey doesn't begin and end with a single district team!

So, my challenge to all of us is this: Whether you are an Area Director, Division Director, or a district team member, don't think of your position as just a list of responsibilities. Don't tend to your clubs as just a report to give. Don't view this district as someone else's burden. Instead, engage with your clubs, areas, and divisions. Invest in the leaders, learners, dreamers, and others. Promote and celebrate them! Give them the sense that they are a vital part of this community we call District 54! Remember that ***WE ARE DISTRICT 54!***



District Vision and Mission:

At the beginning of the meeting, we read the District Vision and Mission statements. Let me take a moment to give some context to both. First the mission statement.

We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.

I used to think that building new clubs was the sole responsibility of our Club Growth Director and their team. That is NOT true. If we are all district 54 then the responsibility for this lies with us. Our Club Growth Director, Estelle Foster, is starting this year with 45 clubs. According to Toastmasters International the ideal District is one that has 60 clubs. In the past we have been as low as 43 and as high as 83 (in recent years). This tells me that there is room to grow in District 54 to grow. I believe 60 is an obtainable goal, but one that will take more than one year to achieve. We will contribute our efforts to this and will work towards what we feel can be achieved. We detailed that in our vision statement.

To help Estelle she may have some challenges for us. She may ask us to participate in some way. I will be the first to say yes! I challenge you to do the same.

Supporting all clubs in achieving excellence is a goal that is a constant state of flux. What does excellence at the club level look like? I will be honest; it depends on the club. What Yes And Toastmasters needs in 2024-2025 to achieve excellence is not what Quad Cities Easy Speakers needs. This is why we have tools to help us engage these clubs on an individual level. One important one is the DCP report. Learn how to analysis a club based upon the data provided in the DCP. Is it a club that needs to focus efforts on new members? That is how they achieve excellence. Maybe they are lacking educational awards, we can help with that. Our Program Quality Director Wendy Pesavento can help you with these tools. She may ask you to work with specific clubs in your area and division. I will be the first to say yes! I challenge you to do the same. Our success in these efforts is also detailed in our vision statement. Now for our vision statement.

To restore and maintain a dynamic community of 50 clubs, with at least 40% achieving Distinguished status or higher, empowering members in communication and leadership.

Let's break this down.

- To restore and maintain a dynamic community of 50 clubs - For us to look at the future of this District we need to get back to 60 clubs. How can we contribute to that goal? By showing growth of clubs. We are currently at 45 clubs, that means we are planning to strive to obtain 5 new clubs. However, we must focus on the clubs we do have and make sure they maintain their status, meaning no loss of any current clubs. To do this we **HAVE TO** invest into them, their clubs, and their members. Have a dynamic relationship with your clubs, areas, and divisions.
- With at least 40% achieving Distinguished status or better - to put an actual number to that percentage we are talking about 18 clubs reaching distinguished or better. We just achieved 19 clubs in 2023-2024. This is a goal we **CAN DO!** But why? Being distinguished is more than just a club status, a checkmark on a report, or even a number we want to hit. It means that clubs are investing in their members! This means that our area and division directors are investing in our clubs! This means our district is a community that believes we are **ALL** district 54!
- Empowering members in communication and leadership - we must focus our efforts on the



members. We are not District 54 without them, and they DESERVE a district team that is here for them!

Final Thoughts:

When I sat down at my orientation meeting after joining State Farm Talk of the South back in 2019, I was told “you get out from this club what you put into it” since then my journey has brought me here! My life has been filled with so many great friends, great opportunities, and great memories. I owe it all to District 54. I don’t take that lightly, and I hope that this year you see what I see in the members of this District. **WE ARE DISTRICT 54!**