Toastmasters International Partners with New River CTC to Host Local Club

[LEWISBURG, WV] Do you dread speaking in public? Are you looking for a new and exciting way to spend your lunch hour? Then New River Toastmasters may be just the thing you need.

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit organization that teaches its members how to improve their communication and leadership skills. New River Community and Technical College has partnered with Toastmasters to host meetings of this unique club in Lewisburg.

Started in 1924, Toastmasters began its mission of helping people become more competent and comfortable in front of an audience at the YMCA in Santa Ana, California. Today, it has 250,000 members in 106 countries around the world. Toastmasters strives to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every individual member has the opportunity to develop oral communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self-confidence and personal growth.

Each meeting is a learn-by-doing workshop. Participants hone their skills in a friendly environment with a proven curriculum.

“Everything you do, you’re aided in some way or another,” explains Mark Hudnall, a member of the New River Toastmasters who has been involved with the organization since 1986, when he attended his first meeting in Texas. Hudnall explains that each activity has instructions, from speaking to gesturing. Manuals are provided to lead you through various types of speeches, giving tips and ideas on topics. “Every speech you give is evaluated by another member,” he adds, pointing out that this mentoring is very important to the process. Working through the manuals, members can achieve levels of skill from competent communicator to advanced, silver and gold communicator.
The manuals are like textbooks, according to Hudnall, and Toastmasters is like college, only, instead of being in a classroom, you’re in the real world with people like yourself. “It’s a nice social outlet – everybody can use friends and friendship. It helps you stay sharp,” he says. “It is a great way to build confidence.”

In the mid-1990s, Toastmasters International added a leadership program, designed in part to keep members active in the organization, but also to give members the chance to try their hand at leadership in a real-world situation. The leadership manuals lead members through activities in planning a meeting, listening skills, motivation and team building. As they move through the manuals, members attain levels of competent, advanced, bronze and silver leader. Upon attaining both gold communicator and silver leader levels, members can become a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM).

The club meets twice a month in the Jefferson Office Park location of New River Community and Technical College Greenbrier Valley Campus in Lewisburg. For more information on the club, contact (304) 647-6570.

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