

# Speaking from the Heart

One day, while brainstorming potential new clubs for our district, Cassandra Cockrill and I hit on the idea of a club dedicated to nurturing and growing relationships. We envisioned it as helping members understand the opposite sex, learn about gender communication, explore the art of the apology, discover how to build and deepen trust, broach delicate issues and more.

This year, that club was chartered in Oakland, California. Its name: Heart2Heart Toastmasters. And for its members, it was love at first speech.

## Two for All

Heart2Heart Toastmasters is for singles, couples and those in between! It features a blend of guest speakers, veteran members and brand-new Toastmasters. The club aims to help with communication in relationships; that might mean courting a potential mate or deepening existing relationships – whether with partners, parents, children or siblings.

Speech topics range from the drama of blind dates to the lessons we learn about gender roles and communication as kids. Table Topics cover many aspects of relationships: breaking up, making up, getting to know the secrets to opening each other's hearts.

Guest presenters entice non-Toastmasters and veteran members alike to attend. Local authors, therapists and relationship coaches speak, read from their books, answer questions and also lead interactive segments to engage the group. Relationship coach Dr. Elayne Savage, author of *Don't Take It*

*Personally and Breathing Room – Creating Space to Be a Couple*, recently helped attendees deal better with rejection. And blogger Rachel Sarah, author of the book *Single Mom Seeking*, recently addressed the significance of one's "relationship status" and whether or when to disclose it to online services such as eHarmony, Match.com and Facebook. Another blogger and the author of 13 e-books, "The Dating Goddess," addressed the importance for all couples to keep romance, surprise and delight in their relationship repertoire.

The club meets on a Saturday night, once a month, at a plush high-rise. Members joke that now they have at least one date each month on "date night!" The club's use of a meetup.com Web site, [www.meetup.com/heart2heart-toastmasters](http://www.meetup.com/heart2heart-toastmasters), allows it to attract new members by promoting its geographic proximity. Meetup.com also sends reminders, provides handouts of guest presenters, contains a member roster and features feedback from attendees.

## Bachelors & Bachelorettes

Another specialty club is Bachelors & Bachelorettes Toastmasters of Las Vegas-Boca Park, Nevada. Founded in 1978, its educational goals are the same as your typical Toastmasters club – however, this club is exclusively for single people. Meeting weekly at a restaurant for dinner and drinks, Bachelors & Bachelorettes boasts 50 members, and has done so for years.

Terry Benson, DTM, a member since 1993, says one advantage to

having a singles-oriented club is that there's no big rush to end the meetings on time. "Nobody needs to hurry home for dinner with their family," he notes. Over the years, Benson adds, dozens of members have quit the club – because of marriage: "It's a rule of the club! In fact, one couple, Paul Sgobba and Rachel Earhardt, delayed marriage seven years so they wouldn't have to leave the club they loved so much." Now, that's loyalty!

## Las Vegas Weddings

Benson recounts the night one member, Ernie, brought his girlfriend to the club to hear his speech. It was the ultimate sales speech: At the end of it he dropped to one knee to propose to his intended. She said yes, and soon he left the club and married her. Terry recalls one year when 13 members left after tying the knot. Of these, six of the couples had met in the club and one person used Toastmasters skills to woo and wed someone from the larger community.

For more information about Heart2Heart, visit [www.meetup.com/heart2heart-toastmasters](http://www.meetup.com/heart2heart-toastmasters).

For more information about Bachelors & Bachelorettes, visit <http://bandb.freetoasthost.us>.

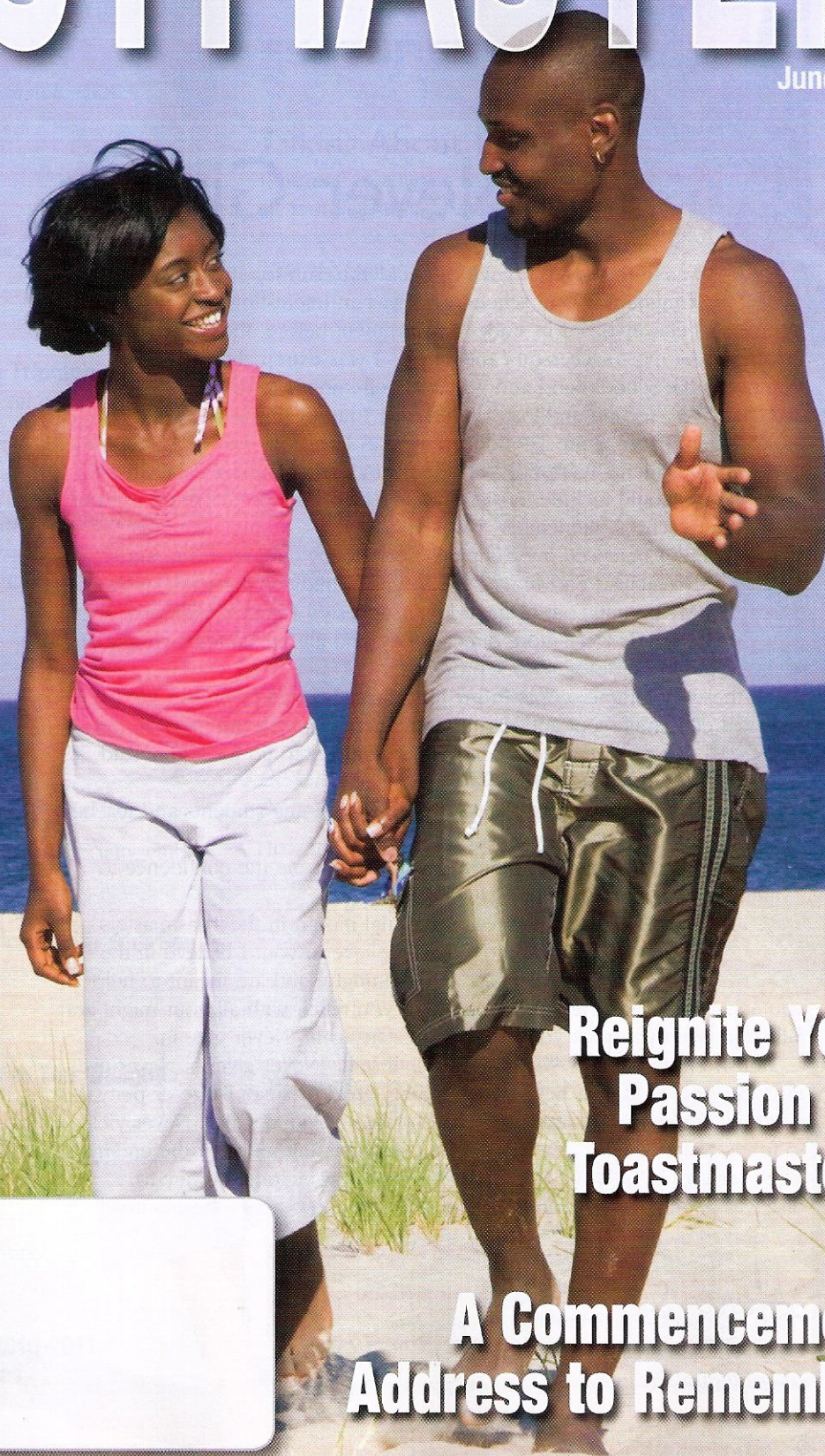
**Craig Harrison, DTM** – a bachelor – is a member of Heart2Heart Toastmasters. He is a professional speaker and the author. Reach him at [www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com](http://www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com).



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