

Toastmasters Treasures...Profiles in Performance

by Peggy Lynn, CTM/CL, PR Reporter

When I first heard **Tony Habashy** compete in the District 22 Spring Conference's International Speech Contest in Overland Park, I was fascinated. His simple but universally impactful subject and speech titled "Only Then..." wowed the judges and audience. Tony took home the First Place trophy. He spoke of always searching for something better with the "if only-s" of his life, where he was constantly seeking and stretching for that perfect path to happiness only to finally find it right under his nose when his daughter, Noel Marie, was born last year.

This native of Cairo, Egypt, has led a diverse and educated life from early days with Boy Scouts to community service in leper villages to high school theater to immigrating to the USA at age 18 with his family in 1993. He met lovely Monica, now his wife, at Wichita State University studying computer and electrical engineering. Together, their most significant production, Noel, has become the single most and simplest path to happiness Tony could've ever imagined! Though Tony's still studying - now towards a Masters in Engineering Management, he knows that sweet little Noel is his greatest teacher! This driven achiever now takes time for the little things, the butterflies and bugs and pieces of lint no doubt, that Noel wants to share with him. Tony Habashy, CTM/CL, is very big on mentoring but not so big-headed as to not be mentored by his own great little teacher!

Tony's personal mission statement is "to help individuals, teams and organizations discover and achieve their highest potential." He credits Toastmasters with helping him do just that every day as a speaker/communicator and leader. Tony believes "that inside each one of us there are treasures to be discovered." He feels that "so many times we are unable to see those treasures either due to prior failures or false negative messages about ourselves that we've heard AND believed along the journey of life." Toastmasters



has influenced Tony Habashy's life in numerous ways. His position as a software engineer at LSI Logic Storage Systems, working as a project lead in the testing organization, opened for him one year after joining the company's club. Tony joined it, **Jam'N Toastmasters**, three years ago. His TI leadership began as Club Treasurer, then Sergeant at Arms and now as Vice President Education AND the current **Area A3 Governor**. PLUS Tony is Club Mentor for the new City of Wichita's **Colleagues of Wisdom Club #9975** chartering in June 2003. So Tony's very busy - talking! In fact, he may be one of the Wichita "techie" world's most communicative members! That area of excellence is usually reserved for electronic communications rather than interpersonal interactions!

Tony credits LEAPing into his ATM manuals with the focused honing of his interpersonal communication skills. He feels able "to connect more effectively on a daily basis." His rising star within the Toastmasters organization has mirrored the same within LSI Logic. As word spread of his achievements culminating with the aforementioned Speech Contest, Tony met with division VIP's. They invited him to speak to over 50 Human Resources Managers at the company headquarters quarterly meeting in Milpitas, California! Humble Tony leading the pack! He credits blossomed self-confidence with Toastmasters providing that "safe environment to increase communication and leadership skills." Due to Table Topics especially, Tony asserts that his "self confidence has

TREMENDOUSLY increased" and he feels "very comfortable presenting at meetings, even when called on the spot!"

"Toastmasters has been the tool that God has provided me to live my mission statement in this phase of my life. Through it, and with the tools it provides me, I have been able to share my thoughts and knowledge and help others. It has also been helping with leadership skills that are required at home, church, community and work." Tony is more visible, more involved, gets invited to contribute to meetings more and KNOWS his networking skills are evolving finely-tuned. He no longer sees certain situations as any sort of bad experience since he is forever thinking, "This could be a good speech topic!" :-). Instead of going through the experience in any mechanical fashion, he becomes more "Noel-like." He "grasps the moment, pondering how to share the insights with fellow companions on the journey of life."

Tony says, "Life IS a journey and we are ALL companions on this journey, therefore we need to share with each other whatever light we have so that we can shed our paths with hope, wisdom and knowledge." As Tony indicated in that now famous, "Only Then..." speech, happiness was elusive. He feels that he is now "peeling the onion" of his own existence, where in the past he may have struggled, now he is finding the layers of happiness, slowing down a bit to take in a deeper understanding of his own life. Tony refused to slow down earlier in his life so as to avoid thoughts of "baggage" from the past. "Pride, material attachments, fear of rejection"

are common examples of baggage. Tony has been able to rid himself of that load delving deeply into personal and spiritual commitments. Faith and belief in protection and in "others that they are not competitors, but companions on the journey of life" sustains him. Tony Habashy believes he is "at the beginning of this turning point in life." He knows there is still a lot to learn and enjoy along the way.

As Toastmasters opened the door of opportunity like precious little Noel has, Tony basks in great joy that he is able to share and perhaps touch others with his personal insights. The opportunity to seize the day, LEAPing at the chance to share, has led Tony as a guest speaker for a vacationing minister, as an inspirational speaker for Wichita organization's special events, speaking to students about careers, at spiritual retreats and, oh yes, even at work in the HR meeting. Tony feels that once you put yourself out there "open for business" the opportunities abound accordingly.

Personally Tony always speaks about something close to his heart, and close to his audience. His speeches are "reflections on life" and, as such, can be accomplished with only an outline rather than fully written speeches which helps time-wise. No matter how Tony does it, the fact is clear: he DOES it! Tony epitomizes the Toastmasters "spirit" being ready, being available and being willing to do the job that just may touch another's life. Please join me in applauding the tireless efforts of this simply dynamic TREASURE in our midst, Tony Habashy, as he chooses to journey right under our noses on the path to his outstanding and unfolding life! If you'd like to hear more, contact Tony at thabashy@lsil.com - you'll be glad you did!