

## District Director Report 2021-2022

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7<sup>th</sup> May 2022

#Dream #Believe #Achieve

This is proving a very tough year Toastmasters International and for District 71 as it approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at midnight on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2022. The novel Coronavirus is slowly being restrained by vaccines leading to restriction and attitudes towards the virus easing. Slowly has added emphasis! We all miss the camaraderie and chemistry of social contact after two years of being constrained online. Our social networks, the glue that holds us all together as members, has been stretched thin...too thin. I am tremendously grateful to all our army of volunteer leaders who have stuck at it, supported our members, and proved our resilience. Worldwide we are currently 7<sup>th</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> in Europe) for net club growth! We have defended, counter-attacked, retreated tactically, and not surrendered!



The year always comes in very fast after election to the District Leadership Team. We set our sights high to return to District Recognition, after a long gap. Thus, taking our places on stage at the 2022 World Convention of Toastmasters International. We set ourselves some Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs): to get members interview on television, to have a Toastmasters program in every blue-chip company, and to have a club in every community big enough have a McDonalds. The adage is to reach for the stars, and you will land on the moon rather than aim low and miss.

The television show could be closer than most with Vinette Hoffman Jackson appearing on GB News Channel and getting the word out. More than that District 71 are currently in the vanguard of pioneering a Toastmasters internet television channel in Europe.

July and August are taken up with interviewing the International Officer and Director candidates prior to representing our Club proxy votes at the virtual International Convention. It is a very enlightening experience getting to know the candidates and probe them hard about their views on Pathways, the Rotary alliance, leadership development, leadership recognition, and many other subjects. It is fascinating to see how people think. We have made many useful connections with capable Toastmasters, many of whom we invite back to deliver webinars.

One of the other things you discover when interviewing international candidates is that many of them are working tirelessly on committees stemming from the main board. These committees address topical issues in the growth of the organisation, such as a European Toastmasters store, revamped speech contest judging criteria etc. Alas most of these projects stayed in committee at the time of the convention.

On the exciting side it was amazing that Kyle Murtagh progressed from the regional quarter final to the semi-finals of the World Championship of Public Speaking.

We have had the great fortune for Aine O'Neill to work alongside us this year as a Poet in residence as we approach 50. It has been an absolute joy to have had Aine's inputs and to explore poetry within the District's life. We have rich cultural traditions in Ireland and the British Isles that were on full show at the District's Christmas Party with International President elect Matt Kinsey as our distinguished guest. One of the most innovative contributions at the party was a multi-singer song recorded virtually and edited by Toastmaster, musician, and producer Dec Cluskey.

This year we decided to introduce quarterly awards nights to increase the recognition and praise we give our members. My colleagues on the District leadership team have led the way. I've taken the chance to recognise the people who support the District and are instrumental in our success but do so from the unrecognized shadows. I've taken great pleasure in recognising;

- 1) the Parliamentarian team led by Larry Lyons supported by credentials chair Pauline McCabe, and digital election manager Gearoid Murphy;
- 2) the Zoom Academy events team represented by Liz Welch;
- 3) the trainers bureau led by Danny Banks; and most recently
- 4) the audio-visual recording team led by Moira O'Brien and Gearoid Murphy.

Toastmasters International has a motto "Where leaders Are Made". If in the words of John C Maxwell "Adversity is prosperity to those who possess great attitude" then 2021-2022 has been a vintage year for our army of volunteer leaders. Exciting times are ahead! I wish my successors the very best of luck,

Thank You

It has been a great ride.

Daniel