

## Toastmasters turn experience into humor at East Hanover competition

BY VANESSA VERA ROMAN • STAFF WRITER • NOVEMBER 20, 2010

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EAST HANOVER — Kevin Moulton has performed plenty of comedic speeches in the past, but when it came time to write something for the Toastmasters International district humorous speech competition, he hit a creative wall.

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Then it occurred to him: "Why don't I just tell stories about growing up and my big family ... and the speech just wrote itself," said Moulton, 47, of Basking Ridge.

His speech is simple: It chronicles Moulton's life growing up in Madison as one of seven children in a traditional Irish-Catholic family.

On Saturday evening, Moulton set out to compete against six others with his speech — titled "Surviving a Big Family"— at the Toastmasters District 83 conference and humorous speech competition at the East Hanover Ramada.

More than 100 members of Toastmasters International District 83 gathered this weekend for two days of public-speaking related conferences and two evenings of competition.

Toastmasters International is an organization dedicated to building public-speaking skills. District 83 includes members from Central and Northern New Jersey, Staten Island and Rockland County, N.Y.

The two-day conference, which includes various workshops on public speaking, happens twice a year and features a humorous speech contest and a "Table Topics" contest, where competitors are asked an impromptu question and are judged on who can answer best.

Moulton, a sales manager for a computer software technology company, joined Toastmasters because he started working in sales and wanted to improve his communication

skills. Being a member of Toastmasters has made a significant difference in his job, he said.

"You have to keep practicing to be a good communicator and Toastmasters gives you that opportunity," he said.

Iselin resident Thomas Abraham, 36, who was also competing in the humorous speech competition, was a member of Toastmasters in the past, but rejoined recently after being unemployed.

His competition speech, titled "What's the Cooking Lesson," is about cooking, the many mishaps that happen while doing it and the lessons learned in the process.

In his speech, Abraham said he draws from personal experience with his own kitchen blunders and disasters.

Abraham, who previously worked as a scientist for consumer healthcare products, said he joined Toastmasters to make himself more marketable. "I felt Toastmasters was a great platform for me to prepare myself," he said.

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