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Toastmasters returning to Sterling

First meeting Tuesday at Chamber of Commerce

Forrest Hershberger, Journal-Advocate editor

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STERLING — Many people admit that public speaking is one of their biggest fears. Sweaty palms, fidgeting, stuttering with basic phrases and all-around nervousness are experienced by many people who are suddenly called upon to address a crowd.

Frequently, individuals feel passed over for personal and business opportunities because they haven't mastered speaking in public.

Toastmasters International is an organization that can help people be more comfortable speaking to a group, and confident on personal goals.

"Toastmasters is about leadership and communication," said Carl Worth of Haxtun.

Worth is trying to organize a Toastmasters organization for the Sterling community.

Toastmasters is a lunch meeting typically involving a couple of speeches by members. The speeches are evaluated by other members of the organization. Delivery is the most important issue of the critique, Worth said.

He said the president usually opens the meeting, and there are typically two speeches per meeting. Sometimes, there will be table topics with spontaneous speakers.

Toastmasters traces its roots to the YMCA in Santa Ana, Calif., in 1924. The organization has more than 250,000 members in 12,500 clubs in 106 countries.

Most Toastmasters clubs are comprised of about 20 members who meet weekly for about an hour or two, according to the Toastmasters Web site. Participants practice and learn skills by filling a meeting role, ranging from giving a prepared speech or an impromptu one to serving as time, evaluator or grammarian. There is no instructor. Instead, each speech and meeting is critiqued by a member in a positive manner, focusing on what was done right and what could be improved.

"When employees are confident communicators, everybody wins," Worth said.

Worth stressed that while improving communication skills is a large part of what the organization does, Toastmasters is not related to a high school speech class.

"This is not an extension of high school," he said. "This is real life."

He said in tough economic times, the better equipped a person is, the more likely he or she is of getting hired or advancing.

The idea of starting a Toastmasters, rather restarting the club, in Sterling began when Worth was visiting the Logan County Chamber of Commerce.

"About five months ago, I walked into Kim's (Sellers) office. I mentioned something about Toastmasters."

He said she thought it was a good idea, but they wanted to wait until after Christmas to begin a club.

Worth said Toastmasters is good for people with goals of moving forward, of changing themselves. A club typically has a wide variety of social and business backgrounds represented.

To be a member, see the Toastmasters Web site at www.toastmasters.org, or visit the first meeting in Sterling,

scheduled for noon Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2010, at the Logan County Chamber of Commerce.

Membership costs \$60 for six months.

For more information, contact Kim Sellers at the Logan County Chamber of Commerce, (970) 522-5070, or look on the Toastmasters Web site: toastmasters.org.



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