

District 77 Best Practices Guide

July 2026 Edition: R.I.S.E. in Action - Community Reach, Skill Building, and Resilient Club Growth

Recruit | Inspire | Speak | Encourage

INTRODUCTION

July's submissions highlighted two different but equally valuable models of club excellence. Redstone Toastmasters combined high-visibility community outreach, lead capture, guest engagement, digital reach, and practical communication training. Traveling Southern Style demonstrated the power of sustained resilience by rebuilding from declining membership, low attendance, and the possibility of closing to achieve Distinguished Club status. Together, these stories show that club impact can be created through both measurable monthly action and long-term transformation.

July 2026 submissions reviewed:

- **Redstone Toastmasters #1932** - Area 12, Division L - July 2026 Club of the Month winner for June activities
- **Traveling Southern Style #2806** - Area 31, Division C - 2025-2026 Club Transformation & Resilience Recognition

R - RECRUIT

Recruitment Works Best When Visibility Is Paired with Intentional Follow-Up

Best Practice 1: Turn a Community Event into a Lead-Generation Opportunity

Observed at: Redstone Toastmasters

What Worked

- Redstone hosted a community outreach table at a Rocket City Trash Pandas game attended by **more than 2,000 people**. Club members engaged with hundreds of community members and generated **10 prospective-member leads**.
- The club extended its visibility beyond the event, recording **2,595 Facebook views** and giving prospective members another way to discover the club.

Try This

- Choose one high-traffic community event where your club can reach people outside its usual network.
- Assign specific booth roles: greeter, conversation starter, lead-capture owner, photographer, and follow-up coordinator.
- Use a simple tracking funnel: Community Contacts -> Leads -> Invitations -> Guest Visits -> Applications.

District Insight: Community visibility becomes a recruiting strategy when every conversation has a clear next step.

Best Practice 2: Rebuild Membership through Consistent Outreach and a Welcoming Culture

Observed at: Traveling Southern Style

What Worked

- The club continued outreach while facing declining membership and low attendance rather than waiting for conditions to improve on their own.
- Members created a more welcoming atmosphere, re-engaged existing members, and welcomed new members with enthusiasm as the club rebuilt.

Try This

- Make club recovery a shared membership goal instead of assigning it only to the Vice President Membership.
- Create a consistent invitation and follow-up rhythm so prospective members hear from the club more than once.
- Celebrate each positive sign of recovery: a returning member, a guest visit, a completed application, or a renewed membership.

District Insight: A club recovery begins when members give prospective members a reason to return and one another a reason to believe.

I - INSPIRE

Inspiration Grows When Members See Progress, Purpose, and Possibility

Best Practice 3: Use Celebration Meetings to Reinforce Belonging and Visibility

Observed at: Redstone Toastmasters

What Worked

- Redstone welcomed **three guests** to its June 26 celebration meeting, allowing visitors to experience the club's energy and culture during a meaningful milestone.
- The special meeting connected recognition, fellowship, and prospective-member engagement in one experience.

Try This

- Invite guests to a year-end celebration, anniversary, open house, or member-recognition meeting.
- Assign each guest a club host who can explain the meeting and make introductions.
- Include short member testimonials that answer: What has Toastmasters helped you achieve?

District Insight: Recognition can strengthen retention and recruitment at the same time when guests are invited into the celebration.

Best Practice 4: Turn Adversity into a Shared Club Purpose

Observed at: Traveling Southern Style

What Worked

- When the club was at risk of folding, members chose to rebuild through determination, teamwork, and renewed commitment to the Toastmasters mission.
- Members stepped into leadership roles, encouraged one another, and remained focused on helping every member grow as a communicator and leader.

Try This

- Name the challenge honestly, then define what recovery would look like over the next 90 days.
- Give every member one practical way to contribute: invite a guest, fill a role, mentor a member, lead outreach, or support follow-up.
- Share progress regularly so members can see that their individual effort is moving the club forward.

District Insight: A turnaround begins when 'someone should fix this' becomes 'we will rebuild this together.'

S - SPEAK

Practical Speaking Development Builds Confidence and Meeting Value

Best Practice 5: Teach a Communication Skill Members Can Use Immediately

Observed at: Redstone Toastmasters

What Worked

- Redstone hosted a skill-building workshop on creating engaging speech hooks and memorable introductions.
- The topic was focused, practical, and directly connected to stronger speech preparation and audience engagement.

Try This

- Add a 10- to 15-minute skill lab to one meeting each month.
- Teach one narrow skill at a time, such as openings, conclusions, vocal variety, storytelling, or evaluation language.
- Let members apply the technique immediately through Table Topics, a short practice round, or feedback on an upcoming speech.

District Insight: Focused workshops make the educational value of Toastmasters visible, useful, and repeatable.

Best Practice 6: Use Meeting Quality as a Club-Turnaround Lever

Observed at: Traveling Southern Style

What Worked

- As participation and member engagement increased, the club reported that meeting quality improved month after month.
- Stronger meetings supported a more positive experience for existing members, guests, and new members.

Try This

- Use a brief monthly meeting-quality check: What should we continue, improve, or try next?
- Plan speakers, evaluators, themes, and key roles early enough for members to prepare well.
- Ask guests what they noticed and use that feedback to improve first impressions and meeting flow.

District Insight: Recruitment may open the door, but consistently strong meetings convince members and guests to stay.

E - ENCOURAGE

Encouragement Turns Participation into Leadership and Momentum

Best Practice 7: Create a Complete Guest Journey from First Contact to Return Visit

Observed at: Redstone Toastmasters

What Worked

- Redstone connected a major community-outreach event with an in-club experience, moving from 10 prospective-member leads to welcoming guests at a celebration meeting.
- The submission demonstrates that outreach, invitation, and the guest experience should be managed as one continuous process.

Try This

- Assign a guest host before each meeting and make sure visitors are greeted, introduced, and invited back.

- Send a personalized follow-up within 48 hours that includes the next meeting date and a clear invitation to return.
- Track the second visit, not only the first visit; returning guests are a stronger indicator of an effective member experience.

District Insight: Guest conversion is a team process, not a single email or one officer's responsibility.

Best Practice 8: Invite Members to Step into Leadership during Recovery

Observed at: Traveling Southern Style

What Worked

- Members accepted leadership responsibilities and supported one another as the club rebuilt.
- The club's Distinguished status reflected the cumulative effect of renewed participation, leadership development, membership effort, and improved club quality.

Try This

- Identify members' strengths and issue specific invitations: 'Would you lead this meeting?' or 'Would you mentor this new member?'
- Break large recovery goals into small assignments so more members can contribute without becoming overwhelmed.
- Recognize behind-the-scenes contributors whose consistency keeps meetings, outreach, and follow-up moving.

District Insight: Encouragement becomes transformational when it includes a specific opportunity and visible appreciation.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION SPOTLIGHT

From the Brink to Distinguished

The Challenge: Traveling Southern Style faced declining membership, low attendance, and the real possibility of closing.

The Response: Members recommitted to the Toastmasters mission, strengthened meetings, supported one another, welcomed new members, and shared leadership responsibility.

The Result: The club moved from uncertainty to Distinguished Club status.

Why It Matters: This recognition is separate from the monthly Club of the Month award. It honors a sustained transformation that developed over the year and offers a practical example for other clubs facing serious challenges.

District Insight: A struggling season does not have to become a club's final chapter. Recovery becomes possible when members combine honest assessment, shared ownership, consistent action, and recognition of progress.

BONUS IDEAS

Use these ideas to strengthen future COTM submissions and club impact:

- Track outreach as a funnel: contacts, leads, invitations, guest visits, return visits, applications, and new members.
- Follow up with prospective members within 48 hours and include a specific invitation to the next meeting.
- Document digital results such as views, reach, inquiries, event responses, and traffic to the club's meeting page.
- For turnaround stories, include verified before-and-after figures for membership, attendance, officer participation, and DCP progress.

- Capture one member or guest quote each month. A short testimonial can explain the human impact behind the numbers.
- Convert practical workshops into repeatable club resources by saving the agenda, handout, sample exercise, and lessons learned.

DCP-ALIGNED TAKEAWAYS FOR ALL CLUBS

Club Focus	What "Good" Looks Like
Membership Growth	Community outreach produces qualified leads, followed by timely invitations and a welcoming guest experience.
Club Quality	Meetings are organized, engaging, educational, and strong enough to support retention as well as recruitment.
Member Development	Practical workshops help members apply communication skills immediately and improve future speeches.
Leadership Growth	Members receive specific invitations to lead, mentor, organize, and take ownership of club recovery.
Recognition	Monthly accomplishments and long-term transformations are celebrated accurately and for their distinct contributions.

DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST FOR FUTURE NOMINATIONS

A strong submission should help judges see both the activity and its impact. Include:

- The specific activity date and the eligible month.
- Hard numbers: contacts, leads, guests, joins, attendees, speeches, awards, training, views, or participation rates.
- What the club did differently and why the approach worked.
- One supporting item such as a photo, flyer, agenda, screenshot, testimonial, or follow-up message.
- A repeatable lesson another District 77 club can apply.

FINAL THOUGHT

July's submissions show two powerful paths to club excellence. Redstone created measurable community impact by reaching hundreds of people, capturing prospective-member leads, welcoming guests, expanding digital visibility, and teaching a practical speaking skill. Traveling Southern Style demonstrated that long-term resilience, shared leadership, and steady improvement can move a club from the possibility of closing to Distinguished status.

The lesson is clear: clubs grow when they recruit intentionally, inspire through visible progress, speak with purpose, and encourage every member to contribute to the next step.

COTM Hall of Fame & Best Practices Page:

<https://toastmasters77.org/cotm-hall-of-fame-and-best-practices/>