



Overcoming Obstacles With The Help of Toastmasters

Leaha shares a glimpse into her road to recovery

Leaha MacDonald, current president of CTI TechTalkers Club, was walking across a pedestrian intersection with her bike when she was struck by an SVU going 50 km/hr. The accident left her in a coma for 2 months, and even though she was wearing a helmet that saved her life, she received a severe brain injury. The doctors explained to her that she was thrown at such velocity that her brain bounced off her skull, resulting in a severe diffuse axonal brain injury.

When she was in the coma, the doctors told her mom she'd never walk, talk, feed herself, or live alone again. They even wanted her mom to sign papers that would allow the doctors to shut the machines off that were keeping her alive. Luckily, her mom refused!

When she woke from the coma, it was clear that she was paralyzed on her right side. As a result, she had to learn to walk again, but more significantly she also had to learn to speak again. Leaha says that her memory is not very good - she continues to have difficulty with her short-term memory.

She was a Toastmaster in Toronto years ago, where she received her Competent Communicator (CC) designation. After the accident, she eventually rejoined Toastmasters because it is far **cheaper than the cost of speech therapy**. When she rejoined Toastmasters, she still couldn't speak very well. She attributes her current ability to speak to all the wonderful speeches she gave, and the valuable feedback from her fellow Toastmasters. Leaha has her ACS and CL.

Though working is not in her cards yet, she volunteers. At the hospital she works with and inspires people who are also brain injured. As she leads her monthly discussion group with fellow survivors, she feels that she can give back to the community that supported her. Leaha believes that part of being a Toastmaster is both a learning experience as well as a volunteer opportunity.

She is now very comfortable giving speeches again thanks to Toastmasters.

Photo: Carolyn Kaldy and Leaha MacDonald (October 2016)

For this article, Leaha commented that she spoke with her Mom, as she runs everything by her. She can be reached by email at leahajmac@hotmail.com.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., the organization's membership exceeds 345,000 in more than 15,900 clubs in 142 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people from diverse backgrounds become more confident speakers, communicators and leaders. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow [@Toastmasters](https://twitter.com/Toastmasters) on Twitter.