

## **MENTORING is a passion and my life purpose!**

By Mona Cooley

How did mentoring become a major part of my life? It began when I was struggling with all the areas in my life and I began to read books to find the answers. When I read the book “The Mentor’s Spirit” by Marsha Sinetar, it was a light bulb moment in my life.

I wanted to have a mentor’s spirit to learn what it took to encourage others as I was mystified by the word ‘encourage’. You see, my childhood years were not always encouraging. I was not always encouraged to do what I loved to do; instead the parent strings were tugging at me to stay at home and not venture. The more I was pulled back the more I fought to be in the excitement of doing things I loved – sports and socializing!! However, the mental blocks would creep in one by one and eventually started taking over my confidence and self esteem. This led me to search for answers.

On this search, Toastmasters came into my life. I was asked by Canadian Mental Health to speak on behalf of our family, how we were managing mental illness in the family. I knew I needed help and Toastmasters was my answer.

I made calls to Toastmaster clubs – one being Palliser. Elaine Moses was the most sincere, encouraging voice I heard when I called the Palliser line. I was drawn to go downtown (which is *not* my love) to a Toastmaster meeting. I was warmly welcomed and I was introduced to the world of Toastmasters. Then, Keith Miles arranged an orientation time with me, again downtown. This was the true beginning of my journey of discovering who I was.

Keith shared his story, wisdom and knowledge of Toastmasters. His encouraging words were what energized me to see the big picture of what Toastmasters could offer. I adopted him as my mentor, unbeknownst to him (there was no mentor program at this time). Then one day, in a meeting, we were asked to tell the club what Keith meant to us (he had done his 10<sup>th</sup> speech at this time). I announced **he is a mentor to me.**

Keith’s natural love of helping people is what attracted me to have him as my mentor. He was turning ordinary people into extraordinary people. His uplifting words would orbit you to believe you could do anything, you felt so good about yourself you wanted to do more. I was receiving what I needed in my life, feedback, to know what I needed to improve and validation of what I was doing right. He validated my inner thoughts and he encouraged the creative, playful part of me. When I needed to chat, he would spend hours with me!!

The other person who keeps impacting my life is Mark Ward. We have a relationship of strong will of honesty – we call a spade a spade. We bounce ideas off one another, challenge each other and support each other unconditionally. Mark aligns my off-the-wall thinking and expressions to a higher ground of acceptance.

I continue to have mentors surrounding me and I feel very fortunate to have so many talented people willing to guide me on my ventures. Mentoring is a passion; it keeps proving it works whether it is for myself or others. Mentoring helps to break the barriers blocking us, allows us to get to know who we are and do what we want with confidence.

So you see, the desire to learn can outwit the pet peeve of going downtown. Mentoring does **Fan the Flames of Success!**

Forming the Mentoring Team and developing the mentoring program was a dream. With the announcement of having the Mentoring Team part of District 42, the dream became a reality. We continue our journey with Darlene and Nandini presenting a segment of our program at the Regional Conference in Des Moines, Iowa June 3 – 5, 2004. Sharon, Anthony, Marvin and I will be supporting them whether in spirit or attending. We are one step closer to International, thanks to the dedication and commitment of the team.

Love conquers all – doing what you love to do will conquer all the blocks and fears you have. Mentoring is one of my loves in life and I treasure it like I treasure my husband, families and friends.

*(February 28, 2004)*

***Mona Cooley** is a professional career coach, business owner and mother of 4 who has worked in Marketing and Sales, Banking, and the Oil and Gas Industry. She helped found the Igniters Toastmasters club and been a great mentor to many people. Her company's website is <http://www.getalifenow.ca/>*