

Club Founder Shed Fear of Public Speaking with Humor

When asked why he joined Toastmasters (TM) despite his fear of public speaking, **Dale Kohler** first responds, “Duh, for the money.”

He then gets a little more serious and adds, “I was very afraid to speak up or speak in public. Now I can blather on and on in front of anybody.”

While Dale credits the organization for bringing him out of his shell and teaching him to think on his feet, he modestly adds that he has won several humorous speech contests. Before recognizing his own wit, Dale had never fully appreciated the power of humor. “It can make or break a speech,” he says.

A member since 1987, he has served in every club position including President. He first became a member of the Armadillo Toastmasters Club that met at the Stephen F. Austin building in downtown Austin when he worked for the Texas Water Commission (one of the predecessors to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality)

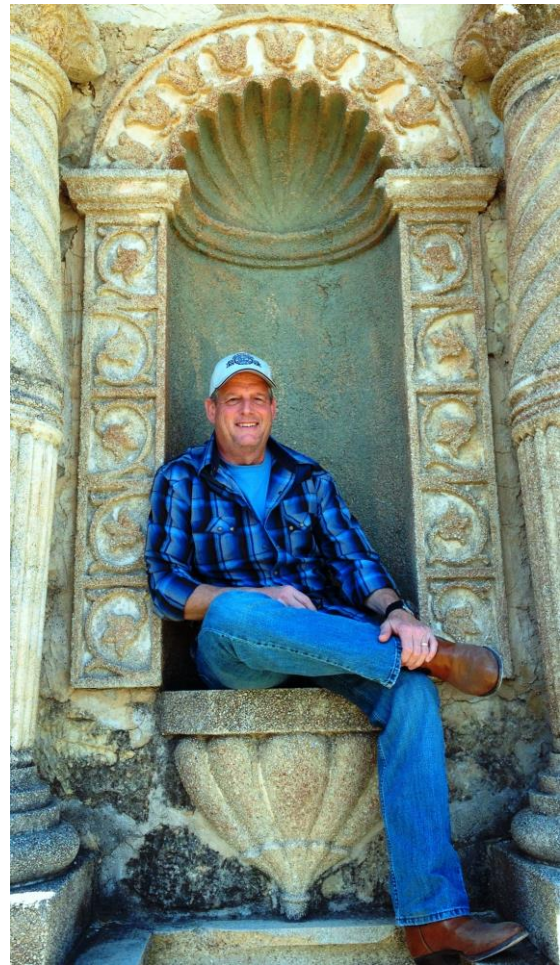
When the agency moved up north, Dale jokes, “I wanted to have a club here because at my core, I’m basically lazy and didn’t want to drive downtown every week.”

Dale and another club member and TCEQ employee, **Anton Rozsypal**, created the name Austintatious and carried on the Armadillo tradition at the TCEQ. He notes, “That’s why we meet on Thursdays – it’s what we were used to at Armadillo.”

Educated at the University of Texas in the field of geology, the fully converted Longhorn and Texan cites Texas history and the Alamo as two of his passions. Dale also enjoys occasional stints as an extra in movies and television. If you look quickly, you can see Dale in the movies *The Alamo* and *Bernie* and in the TV show *Friday Night Lights*. “Unfortunately,” he admits, “TM didn’t help me much there as they were non-speaking roles.”

Dale claims his birthplace as Indianapolis but quickly corrects that by joining the host of non-native Texans who say, “I wasn’t born in Texas, but I got here as soon as I could.”

As a native English speaker, who can occasionally interject the “Texan” dialect, Dale quips, “One of my early Toastmasters speeches was titled *I’m Glad I Didn’t Have to Learn English*. I still believe that English would be a bear to learn!”



Dale Kohler, who appeared as an extra in the 2004 version of *The Alamo* movie, is shown perched in one of the niches of Alamo Village near Brackettville, Texas, where the 1960 John Wayne version of the movie was filmed.

Responding to what Toastmasters has done for him, Dale explains that he has “met some of the most interesting people in my life in TM, and a very unexpected benefit was that I became a better listener, making me a better manager.”

Because of his current position at the agency as Executive Assistant in the Office of the Executive Director that consumes most of his time, Dale explains, “My only real TM goal is to go to the club meetings when I can and try not to get too rusty in my speaking skills. I would have to say that I truly don’t believe I would hold this position if it wasn’t for TM. Among other things, it taught me to be prepared. Okay, scouting helped there too.

“Toastmasters has allowed me to experience communication in a whole new light.”