District Leader

Biographical Information

Candidate's Name: Irene Valenzuela

Candidate's Office: Division Director

District Number: 26

Toastmasters member since: October 2019

Education:

B.S. Civil Engineering, University of Texas at El Paso

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:

See list from Toastmasters International, attached

Toastmasters honors and recognition:

Triple Crown Award
Level 5 - Leadership Development completion
Pathways Mentoring Program completion

Relevant work experience and how it relates to Toastmasters and your role as a District leader:

I left my civil engineering job after 20 years to be a stay-at-home mother. I joined Toastmasters in October 2019 and have since held every Officer role within my club. I also served as an Area Director for District 26 in 2021-22. My club was down to 3 people in February 2020. We went to work and were able to bring our club back to reach President's Distinguished in 2022-23. We are currently at 22 members and growing. As a District leader, I would share what we did to achieve this.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?

Civil engineering requires strategic planning as projects often take years from conception to construction. The jurisdiction I worked for selected projects that benefited the community based on value, equity, and need. Most projects required that I put together and manage a Project Management Plan (PMP). These PMPs were vital in the success of the project as they track the project, e.g. critical path items, milestones, costs, deadlines, etc.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?

As a civil engineer, there were times when forensic accounting was necessary. This often involved me validating large sums of dollars amongst multiple parties. I have also held the role of Treasurer for my club and handled the accounts accordingly.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

When I was a civil engineer, I was given the opportunity to research, coordinate, draft, and publish a jurisdiction's Rural Engineering Standards manual. When the new manual was adopted by the jurisdiction, the new standards resulted in an acceptable means to implement regulations that fit the agricultural setting of the area while addressing access, emergency access, property identification, right-of-way obstructions, drainage, and grading/erosion/sediment control challenges that rural communities face.

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

I have learned to be a better listener and not to take things personally. I also do my best not to gossip or criticize.

Why do you want to serve as a District leader?

I have been a Toastmaster since October 2019. In that time, Toastmasters saw me through the pandemic and into a season of my life that is full of enrichment and growth. Through Toastmasters, I have learned to improve my speaking and leadership skills, to better communicate with my husband, and to be a better mother to our son. I want to give back and share what I have learned. I especially want to help grow our District back to pre-pandemic numbers.

In your opinion, what are the District mission's major objectives and how would you work to achieve them?

In my opinion, the District's major objective should be to retain members by helping clubs flourish and to build new clubs. I would do this by collaborating with other leaders in the District, sharing what has worked for us, and helping to train Area Directors and club officers.

Additional information about yourself:

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