

District 36 2023-2024 Nominated Candidates



Table of Contents

District Director:	Gwendolyn (Gwen) Miller, DTM
Program Quality Director:	Ramu Garapati, ACB, CL, PM3, IP3, MS2
Club Growth Director:	Arvind Madabushi Venugopal, DTM
Division Director:	Ilya Polonchuk, ACB, CL, DL4, LD2
Division Director	Sadaf Shezhad, IP2

Candidates Appear in
Alphabetical Order
by Last Name by Position



District Director Candidate Gwendolyn (Gwen) Miller, DTM



District Leader Biographical Information

Candidate's Name: **Gwendolyn Miller**

Candidate's Office: **District Director** District Number: **36**

Toastmasters member since: **December 1, 2008**

Education:
Bachelor's in Education; American Bankers Association; Project Management; Office Specialist

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:
Sergeant At Arms - July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010; Vice Presiden of Education July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011, July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014, July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015, July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020,; President - July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012, July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018,; Club Extension Chair - Oct 1, 2020 - June 30, 202; Division Governor - July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014; July 1, 2014, - June 30, 2015; Area Director - July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013; July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015.; Treasurer - July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022.; Club Growth Director - July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

Toastmasters honors and recognition:
Area Governor, Division Director, Club Mentor, DTM, Under my leadership my club was President Distinguished 3 out of 4 years, Level 5 in two paths

Relevant work experience and how it relates to Toastmasters and your role as a District leader:
Provide a wide range of support to VP of Financial Security and Consumer Affairs, Responsible for corrdinating and submitting contractors for thousands of dollars on an ongoing bases. I am responsible for department budget ; forecasting, paying bills and updating company Smartsheet, I am responsible for making sure my team is in place and meeting dashboard objectives.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?
TLI Dean 2 consecutive years; TLI Educational Coordinator 2 consecetive years, Club Extension Chair, Leadership Excellence member.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?
Responsible for Program Quality Budget, Club Growth Budget, Forecasting department budget for 3 business units with assets over 3 million. Division Governor budget, Club Growth Director Budget; Assistant Branch Manager, Banking was my first profession.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

I am an educator and I am constantly developing procedures for my students. As VPE I developed and implemented our learning objects and made sure no one was left behind. As TLI Dean I had to develop procedures to get our District officers trained and verified as well as developed procedures for the instructors. As Club Growth Director along with the other two members of the Trio developed procedures to promote the Districts Success Plan. this process has carried over to my Program Quality Director's duties.

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

I learned that it truly takes a village to get the job done, I understand that I cannot do it by myself and that I have to empower others to assist in the completion of tasks and goals. I have learned that it's not just about getting the job done but about allowing others to develop and/or enhance their leadership goals at the sametime fulfilling the District's mission. I also learned that I should not expect people to do something I am not willing to do and be that role model for my Team. I have learned that it is ok if I don't have all the answers but it is impartive that I know where and who to go to to get the answers.

Why do you want to serve as a District leader?

I have served our District since 2008 and I have learned a lot and have excelled in my personal and professional life, I am excited about the skills and confidence that I have acquires since becoming a Toastmaster, I want to inspire and assist others in realizing their real possibilities and to introduce Toastmasters to everyone I come in contact with. Toastmasters is where leaders are made, I want to find those leaders who have yet to realize their true potential.

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

The District mission is to assist current and future members in achieving their highest communication and leadership potential. Our mission is to build future leaders who possess excellent communication and leadership skills that empower our members to lead with strength and confidence to achieve our mission of servant leadership. I will acheive this mission by implementing proving programs to support our mission.

Additional information about yourself:

I am committed to the mission, vision and values of Toastmasters. I have a teachers spirit and I am not afraid of hard work. I understand that to succeed in anything you have to put the needs of the people you are serving above your own needs for credit and accliam.



Program Quality Director Candidate Ramu Garapati, ACB, CL, PM3, IP3, MS2



District Leader Biographical Information

Candidate's Name: **Ramu Garapati**

Candidate's Office: **Program Quality Director** District Number: **36**

Toastmasters member since: **August, 2013**

Education:

Masters in Computer Science

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:

District 36 Club Growth Director (2022-2023)
District 36 TLI Chair (2021-2022)
District 36 Logistics Manager (2020-2021)
District 36 Division E Director
District 36 Area 55 Director
Multiple Club Officer Positions in multiple clubs

Toastmasters honors and recognition:

Chartered 4 new clubs as Club Growth Director by assembling a wonderful team to add to club count in District 36
Lead Speechcraft successfully 3 times for Montgomery Community College Students.
Achieved Select Distinguished Area as Area Director and Distinguished Division award as Division Director
Belong to multiple clubs and held multiple club officer roles. Belonged to multiple districts for 3 years.
Administered District 36 Logistics Manager and TLI Chair with Excellence.
Was TLI Chair along with acting District 36 Logistics Manager this year (2021-22)

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

This year as Club Growth Director has helped me become more confident in my leadership abilities and that was proved by chartering 4 new clubs. With the experience as a club growth director and working with the Program Quality Director and District Director, I plan to optimize a lot of processes in the new role to be relevant to the new generation needs.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?

With my prior experiences with Speechcraft and TLI, I gradually built up the confidence to build new strategies on getting the clubs chartered quickly, building a strong team and supporting them when needed especially in areas of member retention and growing clubs.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?

I am extremely financially disciplined with how the money of the clubs and district get spent. I understand the audit team findings and ask questions if I need further clarifications. Working as a treasurer in my previous years guide me in making sure the money is spent wisely in my role as Club Growth Director when organizing events.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

As CGD, I developed processes on how my team operates efficiently. Also I created a new platform (TikTok) guide that has all the processes on how this account and platform incorporates into District 36 marketing. In my previous roles as TLI chair, Logistics Manager and Speechcraft Coordinator, most of the processes I created are still being used.

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

Communication. Encouragement. More heart than head. It is good to be more strategic but there has to be a complementary push to achieve the results. It was a big learning experience as CGD. From my previous positions, I learned how important it is to be vulnerable, have a mentor, grow and return to be visible and support our members to the best of my ability.

Why do you want to serve as a District leader?

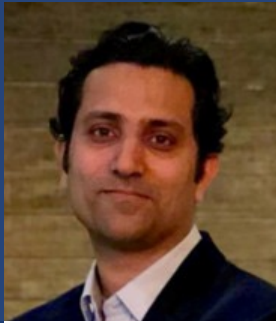
To provide a more quality experience to our members. We live in a high paced change society with a lot of people looking to Toastmasters platform for support and empowerment and I would like to act as an empowerer of their dreams through my service in Toastmasters. Also we are in a highly transitory time and I would love to continue providing support and guidance for strengthening clubs in our district.

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

In addition to the major goals of District 36 which is to grow clubs, retain members and achieve a distinguished district award, District 36 is also wanting to build the next generation of leaders. That has been the focus for the last year, but we are still starting. We want to get District 36 to a state where leadership positions/levels are competitive and coveted.

Additional information about yourself:

Toastmasters is a positive enhancer of my life quality. I can attest to all the changes in me to Toastmasters. I want the same with everyone that attends our club meetings in our District. Even though the pressure of work and demands of family are too high and I had a hard time to align myself with Toastmasters mission, I am fully dedicated to serve every member to empower and enrich their lives.



Club Growth Director Candidate Arvind Madabushi Venugopal, DTM



District Leader Biographical Information

Candidate's Name: **Arvind Madabushi Venugopal**

Candidate's Office: **Club Growth Director** District Number: **36**

Toastmasters member since: **01/10/2011**

Education:

DTM (currently working on Path 2 for second DTM).
Full list: Competent Communicator (CC), Competent Leader (CL), Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB), Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB), Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS), Advanced Leader Silver (ALS), Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG), Leadership Excellence (LDREXC), Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM), Presentation Mastery 1 (PM1), Presentation Mastery 2 (PM2), Presentation Mastery 3 (PM3), Presentation Mastery 4 (PM4), Presentation Mastery 5 (PM5), Visionary Communication 1 (VC1), Visionary Communication 2 (VC2), Visionary Communication 3 (VC4), Visionary Communication 1 (VC4)

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:

District officer positions held: Area Director (two terms), Division Director (two terms), District Public Relations Manager. For full list see attachment that includes all club officer roles held.

Toastmasters honors and recognition:

- * Recognized by District 36 for demonstrating strategic leadership and helping Division C achieve President's Distinguished status during term as Division Director in 2015/2016
- * Recognized by District 36 for demonstrating strategic leadership in modernizing District36 website and establishing/expanding social media presence, during term as District Public Relations Manager in 2017/2018

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

In the past two decades of being a working professional, I have worked as a individual contributor, as well as a team lead, mentoring and guiding multiple colleagues. I have worked in small as well as large teams, and have interacted across multi-functional groups of people seamlessly. In my Toastmasters sphere, I have applied leadership principles for tactical as well as strategic roles I have held in the past decade during my Toastmasters life so far.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?

I have spearheaded research, planning, and iterating through multiple projects in my professional experiences. In addition, during my years serving District 36 as Division Director (2022/23 in progress term, and 2015/16) and District Public Relations Manager (2017/18), I contributed to various strategic initiatives, that included membership building and energizing clubs.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?

Have a good understanding of personal finance, and a basic understanding of corporate/organizational financial principles. In Toastmasters - serving as Treasurer, supporting club level leadership at Toastmasters (in financial planning), organizing contests (budgeting for Area and Division contests back when they were in-person contests), understanding/approving budgets for District Executive Councils when I was part of of District 36 teams (during my AreaGov, DivDir, AreaDir years) have given some opportunities to learn about financial management to a basic level as well.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

Plenty of experience, through professional projects (at work) as well as personal projects (home owners association, etc.).

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

Leadership is about the Journey, not about the Title - the role of a leader is to empower members of a team; to step in and take responsibility during strategic planning and crisis/conflict management, step back and appreciate/acknowledge the team when winning.

Why do you want to serve as a District leader?

To support Toastmasters mission of empowering individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders, To support District mission of building new clubs and supporting all clubs in achieving excellence, To support my personal journey and grow further as a leader.

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

Contributing to the District's critical success factors through educational and membership goals, Helping ensure that clubs effectively fulfill their responsibilities to their members, Help sustain existing clubs, Help identify leads and establish new clubs, Providing effective training and leadership development opportunities for district members and officers.

Additional information about yourself:

Hello ! My name means 'Red Lotus' in Sanskrit. I was born 8000+ miles away (in India) from the place I have call Home (in the U.S.) since 2000. I have experienced life so far through living in 5 different time zones and two continents. I know 5 languages, and am currently learning an additional one. For much of my pre-adult life the world had not yet experienced 'Internet', and yet I often get mis-categorized as a Millenial. I believe and trust there is a central and universal theme in the human experience, and yet I bring a unique flavor in this world that only I can offer - Thanks to those in my life that have made all this possible. To learn about other interesting facts about my skills/experiences - email me at arvindv@gmail.com



Division Director Candidate Ilya Polonchuk, ACB, CL, DL4, LD2



District Leader Biographical Information

Candidate's Name: **Ilya V. Polonchuk**

Candidate's Office: **Division G Director** District Number: **36**

Toastmasters member since: **June 1, 2015**

Education:
B.S. Major in Accounting and Minor in Business Administration

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:
Name Position Start Date End Date
District 8036 Area Director Jul. 01, 2022 Jun. 30, 2023
Plant Industry Station Toastmasters Club-Club VP Education Jul. 01, 2022 Jun. 30, 2023
Agricultural Research Center Club-Club Sergeant at Arms Oct. 19, 2022 Jun. 30, 2023
District 8036 Area Director Jul. 01, 2021 Jun. 30, 2022
Plant Industry Station Toastmasters Club-Club VP Education Jul. 01, 2021 Jun. 30, 2022
Plant Industry Station Toastmasters Club-Club President Aug. 21, 2020 Jun. 30, 2021
Agricultural Research Center Club-Club President Jul. 01, 2020 Jun. 30, 2021
Plant Industry Station Toastmasters Club-Club President Jul. 01, 2019 Jun. 30, 2020
Plant Industry Station Toastmasters Club-Club VP PPR Jul. 01, 2019 Jun. 30, 2020
Plant Industry Station Toastmasters Club-Club VP Education Jul. 01, 2019 Jun. 30, 2019
Agricultural Research Center Club-Club Sergeant at Arms Aug. 01, 2018 Jun. 30, 2019
District 8036 Area Director Jul. 01, 2017 Jun. 30, 2018

Toastmasters honors and recognition:
Audit committee team member for two years
Pathways guide for Area 73 and 75
2021-2022 Area Director of the year
Volunteered at the Toastmasters International Convention in 2016 in Washington, D.C.

Relevant work experience and how it relates to Toastmasters and your role as a District leader:
I've been in the U.S. Army for nearly 15 years that involved extensive leadership scenarios to include being deployed to Afghanistan that incompased high straneous environment on daily basis. I've been an Area Director for three years(2016-2017, 2021-2022, 2022-2023) in Area 73 and Area 75.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?
For nearly 15 years in the military and over 12 years in the federal government, I've been exposed extensively in strategic planning. From plotting points on a map towards our objective point to proving a team building presentations I've excelled in planning various planning commitees.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?
I've been in the area of finance my whole life. Mathmatics has always been my strong suite. I have a B.S. Majoring in Accounting and minor in Business Administration. I have worked for the government in the accounting field since 2014 - present. I've been in part of the audit committee for two years under District 36. I am currently pursuing my Masters in Federal Financial Management.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

I've been involved in numerous procedure development settings. Under the federal sector, I've been involved in creating standard operating procedures(SOPs) for all of work functions. This involved presenting my internal controls with various departments. Additionally, I've been involved in military SOPs development. This involved various scenarios with different groups of soldiers. We implemented various strategies that allowed our unit to gain advantage in the battle space.

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

The biggest lessons that I learned from my leadership positions is to be patient and always strive to do better. Learn from your mistakes and keep on moving on.

Why do you want to serve as a District leader?

I want to provide my continued service to Toastmasters.

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

Over the course of several years especially during the pandemic outbreak there has been a membership decline. The District has provided numerous engaging activities that included pathway presentations, keynote speeches in Silver Spring, integrated the DEC meetings on a physical and hybrid format, had a year end picnic celebration and much more. I will continue to provide engaging opportunities to Toastmasters to make them feel welcome and be part of the experience.

Additional information about yourself:

I love helping people and seeing them grow.



Division Director Candidate Sadaf Shehzad, IP2



District Leader Biographical Information

Candidate's Name: *Sadaf Shehzad*

Candidate's Office: *Division Director* District Number: *District 36*

Toastmasters member since: *March 2019*

Education: *Masters (Computer and Information Systems)*
Bachelor (Computer Systems)
Post Graduate Certification in Data Science

Toastmasters offices held and terms of service:

Area Director	..... Aug 15, 2022	Jun 30, 2023
Club VP Membership	..... Jul 01, 2022	Jun 30, 2023
Area Director	..... Jul 01, 2021	Jun 30, 2022
Club VP Membership	..... Jul 01, 2021	Jun 30, 2022
Club President	..... Jul 01, 2020	Jun 30, 2021
Club Secretary	..... Jul 01, 2019	Jun 30, 2020

Toastmasters honors and recognition:
 -

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

I am actively volunteering in many organizations, leading team of people from different backgrounds, managing issues and conflicts of projects, using different strategies and solution oriented approach to to the (project) job done in an effective way.

What experience do you have in strategic planning?

This is my second consecutive year serving as an Area Director for District 36. This gave me ample opportunity to use strategic planning for clubs under my Area. Visiting clubs provided the opportunity to analyze the strength and the challenges of clubs. That helped me to prepare goals/plans for each club.

What experience do you have in the area of finance?

Appt from volunteering in different organizations, I run my own Jewelry business. Managing a successful business requires all key skills of strategic planning, starting from market research, making business plans, managing accounts, including all the financial details of material expenses, sales, profit and tax handling.

What experience do you have in developing procedures?

Running my jewelry business, organizing different exhibitions throughout the year, managing my jewelry website, gave me good opportunities to actually plan, develop, and implement strategic procedures.

What lessons did you learn from previous leadership positions?

TTO gave me multiple opportunities to serve for different positions. These roles helped to ~~develop~~ ^{develop} the quality of work on different leadership styles depending of different scenarios. These positions helped me to be a good listener, ^{to analyze the situation,} and make strategies that best fits for that particular club.

Why do you want to serve as a District leader?

As a member of a club since 2019, and taking different roles, I've found out that how important it is to have a strong, cooperative + inspirational district leader. The motivational and helpful approach of district leaders towards clubs, can help them grow and achieve excellence.

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

District mission's major objectives are to build more clubs, attract more members, facilitate the members, train them for the pathway programs, & ultimately help the clubs achieve excellence.

Additional information about yourself:

I love to travel and explore different places.
I love and enjoy cooking. Whenever I am stuck in some coding project, I prefer to go to kitchen and do some cooking experiments.

My creative side also led me to run a small jewelry business. It's always inspiring to indulge in designing different jewelry patterns, organizing exhibitions, maintaining website and managing wide variety of customers.

My analytical skills help me in my data science/analytcs projects. I have completed many projects under this domain. I had the honor too to work last year with John Kinsman for 'Realignment committee', with the successful adoption of our ^{recommendation}.