District Newsletter

District 109

Serving 18 Countries

(Issue 01/26-27)
September, 2026



Our District Motto (2026-2027):

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth.

PRM

Editor’s note

This first issue of the year carries more than a welcome. Laor Glukhovsky opens with the **district's two goals** for 2026-27: a fourth consecutive Smedley Distinguished award, and a stretch for the number one spot worldwide. Both targets recur through the pages that follow, in different forms.

Division D's report from the Lausanne Club Officer Training makes the case, in two parts, for **why training new officers early pays off later**. Matt Podgorski, writing for the Harmony Team, argues that **conflict inside a growing district is not a malfunction** but a sign of engagement, and explains what mediation can do about it.

Elsewhere: a **call for volunteers** to help organise Vienna Calling 2027, our May conference. Also a primer on **FreeToastHost, the free website platform** most clubs have not yet claimed, not to mention the photographs from Venice's District Officer Training and Sarajevo's welcome event.

The **district spans 18 countries and 16 languages**. This newsletter is one of the few things every member receives in common. We have tried to make it worth the five minutes it takes to read.

Yannis Kanlis, PRM

(Issue 01/26-27)
September, 2026

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Want to contribute to edition #2?
***Contact** prm@district109.org*

Our edition #02/2026
will be released on
23 December 2026

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

District 109

Sarajevo: Host city for the Toastmasters District 109 winter conference. New City. New Voice. Stronger District.





WINTER CONFERENCE

13-15 NOV 2026

















District 109 Core Team



Program Quality Director (PQD)
Deniz Senelt Kalelioglu, DTM



District Director (DD)
Laor Glukhovsky, DTM



Club Growth Director (CGD)
Sylvicley Figueira da Silva



PRM
Yannis Kanlis, DTM



FM
Stephanie Kable



AM
Olga Kutsche, DTM



IPDD
Katia Burdet, DTM

DD



DISTRICT DIRECTOR CORNER

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

DD

District 109 Director's Message

Dear District 109,

Welcome to the start of an extraordinary year together! Whether you are stepping into a Toastmasters room for the first time or returning to push your boundaries even further, you are part of a vibrant, diverse community spanning 18 countries. Across every region, our theme this year: **Peaks to Shores, United in Growth**, remains our guiding compass.
Two months into our term, momentum is already building on the energy of the International Convention. Our journey is just beginning, and this year, we are aiming high.

Our Strategic Horizon for 2026–2027

- **Four-in-a-Row Smedley Distinguished:** Continuing our legacy of peak performance across all aspects of club support, education, and leadership.
- **#1 District in the World (Stretch Goal):** Empowering the highest proportion of clubs globally to achieve their Distinguished status.

These milestones are about individual members stepping up, taking on new roles, mastering communication skills, and discovering their leadership potential.

Where You Can Step Up This Year

- **Challenge Your Comfort Zone:** Take on an unfamiliar meeting role at your next club session, deliver that project speech you've been putting off, or mentor a new member.
- **Lead Beyond the Club:** Consider spearheading a community initiative, organizing a contest, or taking the lead on chartering a new club in your area.
- **Connect Across the District:** Join us in person for our signature events this year:
  - Winter Event: Sarajevo (November 2026)
  - District Conference: Vienna (May 2027)

DD

District 109 Director

This newsletter is designed to be your primary resource for insights, opportunities, and recognition. It reflects the dedication of our Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Public Relations Manager, Division and Area Directors, and many other outstanding members who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep our community informed and inspired.

Let's make this our most impactful year yet.

Yours in Leadership and Communication,



Laor Glukhovsky, DTM
District 109

Strategic Roadmap and Pillars



For the more visual types among you (like myself), I've added a small overview of how I see the roadmap for this year

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

DD -Ex

Your Harmony Team

Feel Heard, Respected, and Supported



Your Harmony Team 2026-27

OUR VISION

A District where all members feel heard, respected, and supported – regardless of their role or experience.

Our Mission

To Support

- A confidential space to talk
- Help preparing for difficult conversations
- Guidance when you're unsure how to move forward

To Empower

- Communication tools and workshops
- Build skills for respectful dialogue
- Strengthen leadership communication

To Resolve

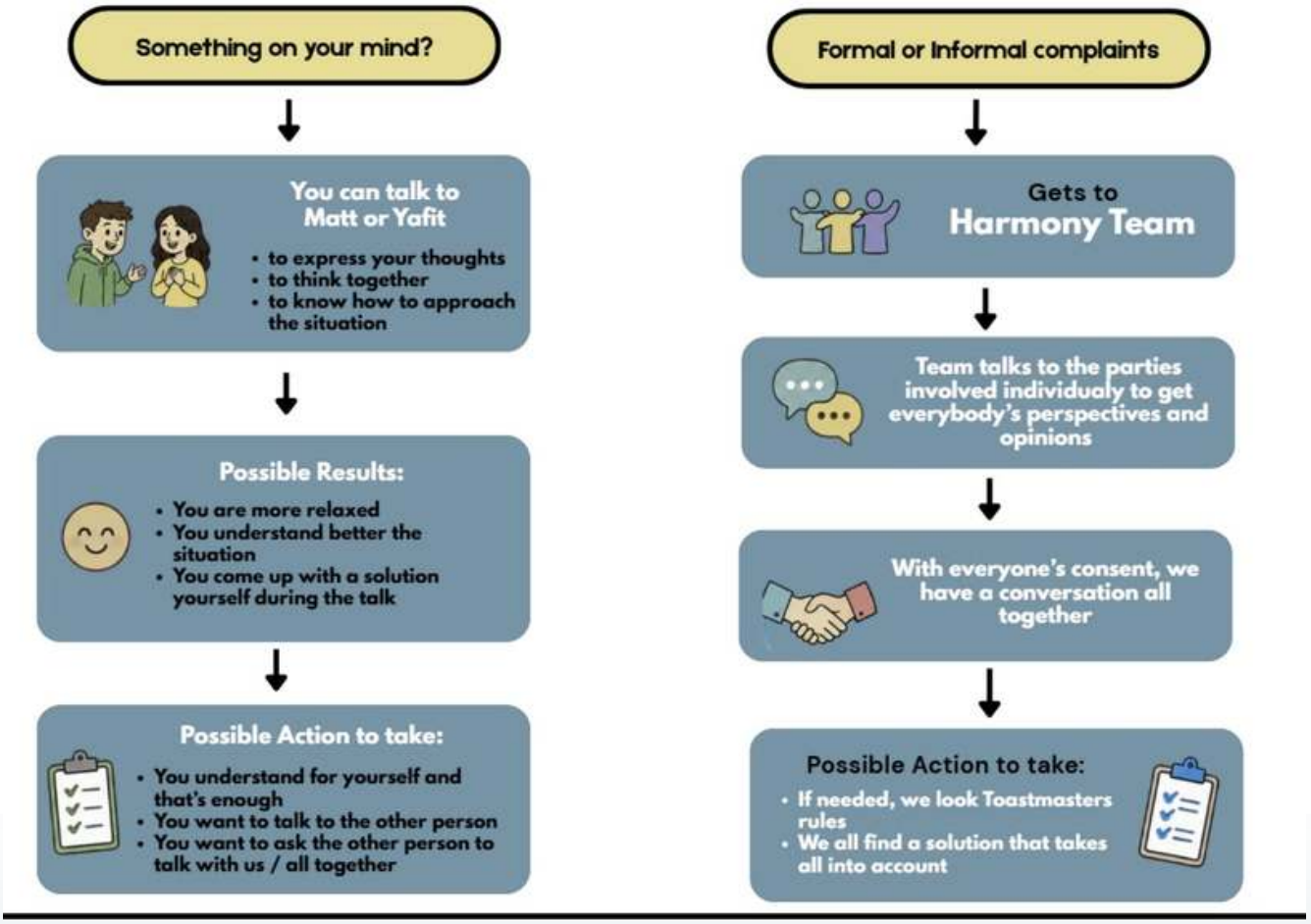
- Facilitate mediation when needed
- Assist with collaborative solutions

DD -Ex

Your Harmony Team

Feel Heard, Respected, and Supported

What we do



We are here to support you, the member. It doesn't have to be a big conflict. It can be an uncomfortable feeling, a difficult message you need to deliver or you received unpleasant news and you want to process it.

Your Harmony Team

Feel heard, respected, and supported

DD -Ex

When Voices Clash: Why Mediation Belongs in Every Leader's Toolkit

By *Matt Podgorski, D109 Harmony Team*

In the last newsletter, you got to know a bit about who I am and what I do.

Having recently joined the Harmony Team, I've been reflecting on what **mediation** can offer in our District and why it matters for leaders at every level.

Clubs, Areas, Divisions, and the District itself are wonderful places, full of energy, ambition, and people who genuinely care. But put passionate people together around shared goals, and something else inevitably shows up too: **friction**. A disagreement over how to run an event. A clash between a long-standing tradition and a fresh idea. A misunderstanding that quietly grows into a wall.

This is not a sign that something is broken. It is a sign that something is alive. At every level of our organisation, we bring together people from very different backgrounds, languages, generations, and leadership styles. We have members who joined last month sitting next to members who joined twenty years ago. We have introverts and extroverts, planners and improvisers, idealists and pragmatists. Each one arrives with their own needs, expectations, and ways of being heard. That diversity is our greatest strength, and the very reason conflict will, sooner or later, appear.

The question is not whether tension will arise. The question is **whether we, as leaders, are equipped to hold it.**

For me, **mediation is about creating a space where people feel safe enough to be honest, curious enough to listen, and respected enough to stay at the table**. It is not about deciding who is right, but about helping different perspectives meet. These are learnable skills, and among the most underrated in leadership. A leader who can mediate keeps teams together, protects volunteer energy, and turns potential breaking points into moments of growth.

This is where the D109 Harmony Team comes in. We are here to support you confidentially, without judgment, and at no cost. Whether you are facing a difficult dynamic or simply want to strengthen your own conflict skills, reach out. Sometimes a neutral third voice is all it takes to turn a stuck conversation into a moving one.

Leadership grows in difficult moments.
You do not have to face them alone.

As a leader, take the next step. Reach out and create space for understanding.

CGD



CLUB GROWTH DIRECTOR CORNER

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

CGD

Meet the Team



Sylvicley Figueira da Silva

The first time I discovered Toastmasters, I immediately fell in love with the concept.

The opportunity to grow personally while helping others do the same is incredibly inspiring.

Eight years later, that passion burns stronger than ever, especially in my role as Club Growth Director.

I envision a District where every country is represented by at least one Division and every club offers a supportive environment that empowers members to achieve their goals and become the best version of themselves.

Together, **our mission is to grow the District while developing leaders at every level.** Join us and be part of this exciting journey!

Contact:
cgd@district109.org
https://www.linkedin.com/in/sylvicley-figueira-da-silva/



Harshita Mistry, DTM

Since 2019, Toastmasters has been an incredible journey of growth, leadership, and service. I have served in several Club Officer roles, as Area Director (2024-2025), as Division C Director (2025-2026), Club Coach (2023-2025), District 109 Club Growth Extension Chair (2024-2025) and as a Mentor.

This term, I am excited to serve as Extension Chair for D109 (2026-2027), supporting the Club Growth Director in building 16 new Toastmasters clubs across our District.

Have you ever thought, "My workplace or community could benefit from Toastmasters?" If so, I'd love to hear from you!
Our team will provide end-to-end guidance to help turn your idea into a successful and sustainable club.

Let's grow together, one new club at a time.

Contact:
harshita.mistrytm@gmail.com
https://www.linkedin.com/in/harshitamistrybhatia/



Brigita Thomas, DTM

I joined Toastmasters more than 10 years ago to improve my public speaking skills.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to serve in many different roles, from Club Officer roles to Area and Division Director, each one giving me a different perspective on leadership, teamwork, and what makes a Toastmasters club successful. This year, I am excited to serve as District 109 Club Retention Chair, supporting clubs in staying strong, engaged, and successful.

Because at the end of the day, it all comes down to the clubs.
My goal this year is to support clubs in overcoming challenges, strengthening their communities, and creating an environment where members want to stay, participate, and grow.

Let's keep our clubs strong - and help our members thrive!

Contact:
brigita.tomas@toastmasters.si
https://www.linkedin.com/in/brigitatomas/

CGD

CLUB GROWTH CORNER

2026-2027 Club Extension Chair Vision

As your District 109 Extension Chair (2026-2027), I am responsible for growing District 109 by supporting the creation of 16 new clubs, until they become sustainable.

My job is support and provide support. That means finding communities who would benefit from Toastmasters, recruiting the sponsors and mentors who carry each club through its first steps, and staying close from that first Demo meeting through charter and beyond.

The **pipeline runs from lead to first anniversary**: identify, discuss, demo, campaign, sponsor, charter, mentor, support. Every stage gets a celebration, because building a club that lasts is worth marking.

Want to accelerate your leadership? Let's talk about starting a club near you.

Help build something that lasts. As a new Club Lead you will develop leadership, project management, networking, coaching and communication skills while creating a safe space where others can grow in confidence.

Every successful Toastmasters club **begins with ONE person** willing to take the first step and that person could be you.



When you are ready, I would love to hear from you.
Contact me on:
harshita.mistrytm@gmail.com

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

Divisions Links

Click your **division link** for news and connections.



- Division A
- Division B
- Division C
- Division D
- Division E
- Division F

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PQD



PROGRAM QUALITY DIRECTOR CORNER

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PQD

What happened here?



PQD

DISTRICT OFFICER TRAINING

Venice, 5-6 Sep 26











Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

SAVE THE DATES

TOASTMASTERS 2027

VIENNA

21–23 MAY 2027

DISTRICT 109 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE & CONTESTS



PARIS

18–21 AUGUST 2027

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF PUBLIC SPEAKING



Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PQD

Vienna Calling 2027
A Symphony of Voices
District 109 · Annual Conference
| 21–23 May 2027 |
Vienna, Austria



FIND OUT MORE >

swipe

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PQD

Vienna Calling 2027

Connect. Inspire. Lead.

✨ See you at **Vienna Calling 2027 – A Symphony of Voices,** our next **Annual Conference of District 109, 21-23 May 2027**. The organising team is growing, and we are looking for passionate Toastmasters who would like to help create an unforgettable conference experience in Vienna, Austria.

💜 Join the VIP List

Not on our VIP List yet?
Join here: 👉 https://vc2027.zite.so/
The VIP List includes updates about the conference, planning milestones, special announcements and an introduction video.

🌟 Join the Organising Team

Many key positions are already filled, but we are still looking for volunteers to take ownership of the following roles:

✅ Registration Manager
✅ Public Relations & Marketing Manager
✅ Assistant Managers

Serving on the conference team is a unique opportunity to develop leadership skills, collaborate with Toastmasters from across District 109, and contribute to one of our flagship annual events.

We have assembled a fantastic team covering web design, venue management, education, technology, sponsorship, volunteers and social activities. *Complete list of the current team on the next page.*

PQD

Vienna Calling 2027

Connect. Inspire. Lead.

🚀 The Current Team

District Director: Laor Glukhovsky
Program Quality Director: Deniz Senelt Kalelioglu
Division F Director: Sabine Holzer

Conference Chair: Petra Salmutter
Assistant Conference Chair: Nigel Thew
Venue Manager: Luis Aguilar
Education Chair: Pascal Dricot
Social Program Manager: Zhanna Fulga
Sponsorship Manager & MC: Danja Bauer
Assistant Sponsorship Manager: Francesca Gammicchia
Technical Manager: Pietro Ferrario
Assistant Technical Manager: Rodolfo Parlati
Volunteers Manager: Godela Bittcher
Web Designer & Photographer: Diane Richardson
Website Manager: Shamil Khaibullov
T**eam Support Manager:** Bettina Horvath

PQD

🎼 Vienna Calling 2027

Connect. Inspire. Lead.

🤝 Do You Know a Potential Sponsor?



We are also looking for companies, organisations and individuals who would like to **partner with us**.
Sponsors gain visibility among an international audience of leaders, entrepreneurs, trainers, consultants and professionals while supporting personal growth, communication and leadership development.

If you know a potential sponsor or would like to make an introduction, please contact **Danja Bauer**, info@danjabauer.com.

🎤 Would You Like to Lead a Workshop?



The educational programme is starting to take shape, and we are looking for fresh ideas from across our District for 50-minute workshops.
Do you have an idea that connects to the Toastmasters experience and creates real value for our members?
Participant value comes first.

We invite you to express your interest by contacting **Pascal Dricot**, pascal@pascal-dricot.com.

📞 Interested?



Whether you would like to:

- join the organising team
- or simply stay informed

please contact **Petra Salmutter**
📧 info@petrasalmutter.com
📱 +43 650 4155514

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PQD

Track Your Progress. Build Your Legacy. Achieve Your DTM.

Introducing Harshita Mistry, DTM, PQD's DTM Support Chair for 2026-2027, has launched the **District 109 DTM Progress Tracker**. It maps what you have already completed toward your Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) designation and what remains.

Many members are closer than they realize. Club roles, Area or Division service, and District leadership all count toward the **six DTM requirements**:

1. Complete two learning paths.
2. Serve as club officer for two six-month terms or one full year.
3. Serve a full year as a District leader (Area Director, Division Director, or District Director).
4. Successfully Mentor or Coach a club.
5. Sponsor a club, or run a Speechcraft or Youth Leadership Program.
6. Complete a DTM project.

Fill in the tracker with your current progress. Your Division DTM Support Representative reviews it, flags what is missing, and connects you with real opportunities such as mentoring or sponsorship. **We offer a 20-minute DTM Mapping Session call.**

Take action:

👉 Complete your tracker: https://forms.gle/mZ2xYLPR9svpToMu5
👉 Review your progress with your Division representative
👉 Identify your next leadership step.

Tracking progress is the easy part. **Turning that awareness into the next completed requirement is what builds leaders.**

Questions go to Harshita Mistry at harshita.mistrytm@gmail.com.

PQD

D109 Educational Material

Workshops and Webinars



zoom

CLICK HERE



CLICK HERE

MC



MEMBERS CORNER

Announcements
Division news
Club award
and more...

MC

Congratulations



Amber Katrina, Div A, from Crescita Pro Toastmasters Club, Milano

Karl Steinke, Div C, from TM International Club Zug, Zug

Yannis Kanlis, Div B, from Athens Global Voices Toastmasters Club, Athens



New club chartered on 17th July 2026, **Spotlight Toastmasters Club**, Baar, Division E

MC

In Their Own Words

Finding our compass (1/2)

Division D Club Summer COT

Division D Club Summer COT (Club Officer Training) charts the course for the year ahead. A new Toastmasters year is a bit like setting sail. Every club begins with a destination in mind: **stronger meetings, engaged members, confident speakers and thriving leaders**. But even the most enthusiastic crew needs a compass, a map and good preparation for the journey ahead.



This is what the recent Division D in-person Summer COT in Lausanne offered us. Organised in detail by the Division D Leadership Team, the event brought Club Officers from across the division together to learn, share experiences and chart the course for the year ahead.
The COT programme, given by experienced District and Club Officers from the Leadership Team, included presentations about the value of serving as a club officer, the importance of club quality, the Distinguished Club Program and the Club Success Plan. Other presentations talked about BaseCamp Manager, Club Central, the Club Calendar and EasySpeak, describing the tools and resources necessary for the effective running of club meetings, looking after members and how to plan ahead.

Employing short, well-illustrated presentations with Q & A's to keep everyone fully engaged, the time just flew by. We were shown how to build strong, vibrant clubs, with well-informed, confident club leaders, equipped with the tools and support network needed to help their clubs and members thrive.

MC

In Their Own Words

Finding our compass (2/2)

Just as important, the event gave us something that cannot be captured in a presentation slide: **connections**. Conversations and informal discussions flourished over coffee and during lunch. Experienced leaders shared experiences, while newer officers brought fresh perspectives, energy and ideas.
Some of the most valuable moments came when everyone moved into breakout groups organised by club officer roles. Everyone discussed challenges, and shared ideas and strategies that had worked in their clubs.
During the course of the day, a room full of participants was transformed into a motivated crew working together towards common goals.

And that is why Club Officer Training matters.
A great club year never happens by accident. It begins when leaders invest time in learning their roles, understanding the resources available to them and connecting with others who can support them. COTs set the tone for the months ahead. They help leaders to anticipate challenges, build stronger member experiences, and create the foundations for long-term success.

By the end of the COT, the officers who arrived that morning did not necessarily leave with all the answers, but they left with something far more precious: shared direction, greater confidence, trusted connections and the reassurance of reliable and informed support.

As the day drew to a close, one simple message stood out: reach out.

Keep the conversations going. Connect with fellow officers. Share ideas. Ask questions. Offer support. Because when we learn together, we grow together.
And when we grow together, our clubs, our members and our community flourish. With a strong team, even the most turbulent waters can feel like smooth sailing.

Priyanka Dasgupta & Nigel Thew

PRM



PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER CORNER

Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PR

D109 PhotoBooth

Trivia, Photos, and Happy Faces

BizzThess Toastmasters Club







Adana Toastmasters Club







Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PR

WELCOME **SARAJEVO !!!**

Trivia, Photos, and Happy Faces





CONGRATULTIONS

TMC Sarajevo revels in its reputation for having the most unpredictable Table Topics and the most imaginative answers to match. Founded with the support of the Zuriberg TM club in 2017, TMC Sarajevo has had its share of ups and downs but they're proud of maintaining a strong base of members, being featured speakers at Bosnia and Herzegovina's first TEDx Youth event, of having held regular meetings over Zoom all through lockdown, and being the host city for a Club Officer Training.

The club's relaxed and jocular nature is a reflection of its hometown and this has rubbed off on all its members and attendees – even those who don't originally come from Sarajevo. Whoever attends a meeting quickly realizes that they are among friends – highly entertaining friends who are also chill and challenge but don't pressure them.

PR

WELCOME **SARAJEVO !!!**

Trivia, Photos, and Happy Faces





Find them on social media:

1. Instagram: **toastmasterssarajevo**
2. Facebook: **TMSarajevo**
3. LinkedIn: **Toastmasters Club Sarajevo**
4. Meetup: **Toastmasters Club Sarajevo**

If you find yourself in Sarajevo, contact our club.

Even if your visit does not coincide with a meeting, our members are always happy to build community with other TMs, show off this historic city, and grab a traditional (if you know, you know 😉) drink.

Sarajevo TM Club Team

PR TIPS & HINTS

PR

Free Website for your Club !

Did you know that Toastmasters International **provides a free and brand-compliant website for every club** through the freetoasthost platform?

What it is

- Address format: YourClubName.toastmastersclubs.org . For example, the domain chiostmc.toastmastersclubs.org
- Fully customizable: text, photos, logo, meeting schedule, contact form.
- No cost, no hosting to manage.

How to request it

1. Go to toastmastersclubs.org/welcome
2. Follow the registration steps for your club.
3. Once approved (1 business day), you or your VPPR can log in and customize the site.

The process takes about 15 minutes.

FreeToastHost has a modern mobile-first interface, a streamlined meeting agenda system, and an easy member management suite.

It also has Pathways-aware speech tracking, and a brand-compliant public website for every club and district.
It is built and maintained by Toastmasters volunteers, with the cooperation of Toastmasters International.
Provided your club is listed on Toastmasters.org, there is no cost for this service.

Every website includes

- A public club or district site at your own web address, in your choice of TI brand colours.
- Meeting agendas with role sign-ups, printing, email, reports and role forecasting.
- Member directory, club email addresses and mailing lists.
- Pathways progress, speech history and club member recognition. (Clubs only)
- Club or district calendar and dues tracking. (Dues tracking is clubs only)
- Custom pages, file library and photo storage.

PRM

We are building something

Join the PR Executive Team



District 109 is raising the bar on how it **communicates**.

Starting now, we are **building a Public Relation team** that operates like a real media operation.

Consistent content, sharp visuals, active social channels, and a newsletter that members actually look forward to reading.

That takes people who want to develop real skills in writing, design, digital communication, and strategy.

If that sounds like you, read on.

We are looking for:

Newsletter Proofreaders
You read carefully, catch what others miss, and care about getting it right. No experience required.

Graphic Designers
You work in Canva or similar tools and have an instinct for brand-compliant layouts.

Social Media Manager
You will manage posting schedules and help grow D109's presence online.

PR Consulting Team
You will advise on strategy, review our direction, and help us think bigger

These roles are open to any member across D109. Just send a message, tell us what you want to do, and we will find the right place for you.

prm@district109.org or find me directly on any messaging app: +306972920554



Peaks to Shores, United in Growth

PRM

The people behind this issue

These are the people who made this issue possible.

A newsletter is only as good as the people who trust it with their stories.

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Special Thanks
Every member who shared their story, tagged us on social media, or showed up and let us photograph it.

Want to contribute to edition #2?
Contact us at: *prm@district109.org*

Our 02/26-27 edition will be released on 23 December 2026



Please don't forget to follow us



Peaks to Shores, United in Growth