

The Italian Toaster

By Michelle Markwart Deveaux

When I was 12 years old, I would walk around the corner to have breakfast with my neighbor Nikki. After breakfast, we'd walk the half-mile to school together.

We ate the same thing every day: toast, fruit, and protein.

Every day, she cooked the protein, I plopped the bread in the toaster and cut up the fruit.

I remember their toaster so vividly. It was heavy, and silver, and rounded. It was Italian. And it was expensive. And her parents made sure we knew it.

The toast it made was PERFECT, unlike our family's Woolworth's hand-me-down toaster. Their Italian toaster evenly browned the bread, never charred an edge, and when it popped up, nary a finger would be burned from grabbing the toast out of the slot.

It was a far cry from the disfigured icons of Jesus or Mickey Mouse (depending on how long the bread was in for) that my family's toaster produced.

One day, I arrived a bit late, and Nikki was frantically getting breakfast together, rushing to and fro in her galley kitchen — yelling at me, "The toaster is broken! The toaster is BROKEN!"

We did everything. We clicked it around, tried the lever, and emptied out the crumbs into the sink.

Shook it. Prayed over it. As panic set in, I thought of how much trouble we would be in for ruining this toaster.

Her parents were yellors (I mean, which parents weren't in 1989?) and they were gonna blame us FOR SURE.

How could we destroy this thing of beauty? How did we break it? This was the PERFECT toaster... the most expensive. The best



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polished. The cleanest. The warmest. The SEXIEST. WHY WAS IT NOT TOASTING?

I slumped onto the floor, sliding down the wall, tears in my eyes.

Then I saw it.

The plug, dangling, right next to the outlet.

The toaster wasn't broken. It simply wasn't plugged in.

I think of this story often whenever something looks broken in my life, my parenting, my business.

It's so tempting to jump to the conclusion that everything is broken. That we've ruined something beautiful, or have to invest in something completely new

because our current thing no longer works, even after we've invested so much already.

Believing we are broken is easy — it's dramatic and full of flair — and gives us some sense that we have some huge accomplishment in front of us when we figure out how to fix it. Most of the time, however, we just aren't plugged in.

We have no power going into a perfectly working marketing plan, or a carefully crafted offer.

There's no current running through our work — no movement.

And so it all looks for naught.

Next time you think something is broken, do me a favor, and check to see if you're plugged in.

Maybe being plugged in looks like daily naps, or going to bed later and getting up later.

Perhaps it's putting your phone down and closing your eyes.

Maybe it's planning a family date, or calling an old friend, or going out for drinks with a bestie and the squad.



Before you burn it all down and toss the toaster, check to see if it's plugged in.

If you're not plugged in, take care of that.

Maybe all you need is a little juice.

Michelle Markwart Deveau
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NATS member Michelle Markwart Deveau is the CEO of FaithCultureKiss Studios, LLC and Founder of The Speakeasy Cooperative. When she's not teaching singers, actors, podcasters, and influencers to use their voice to change the world, Markwart Deveau revels in the nitty-gritty of entrepreneurship, business shenanigans, and personal development. She's been featured on numerous podcasts and is a frequent speaker and workshop leader. Markwart Deveau has led seminars internationally on topics ranging from business development to pricing to operational management. She's had the joy of working with universities, independent businesses, and NATS chapters. She has been a featured presenter for NATS conferences and was an invited master teacher for the 2021 NATS Intern Program. Based in Rancho Cordova, California, Markwart Deveau and her husband are raising their two amazing kiddos to be deep thinkers and strong leaders through careful study of The Fugees, Star Trek, and the MCU.



2021 Fiscal Year Audit Summary

The 2020 audit of the National Association of Teachers of Singing has been completed and published copies of the report were furnished to members of the Board of Directors by the independent auditing firm of Magers & Associates, LLC, Certified Public Accountants, Jacksonville, Florida. The entire unqualified report and opinion letter of the auditor is available for members to review in the Executive Office of NATS in Jacksonville, Florida, as well as from members of the Board of Directors. The following summary of the details of the audit are extracted and summarized below. The auditor's report and the notes that accompanied the report are an integral part of the audit statements.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION Years Ended December 31, 2021 and December 31, 2020

ASSETS		
	December 31	
Current Funds—Unrestricted	2021	2020
Account Receivable	3,200.00	32,736.00
Cash in Banks	1,467,885.00	839,543.00
Cash Restricted	25,000.00	25,000.00
Investments	1,082,620.00	270,234.00
Publication Inventory	15,000.00	15,000.00
Prepaid Expense	43,078.00	23,232.00
Other Assets	761.00	378.00
Total Current Assets	2,637,543.00	1,206,122.00
FIXED ASSETS – NET	218,129.00	227,853.00
TOTAL ASSETS – UNRESTRICTED	\$2,855,672.00	\$1,433,975.00
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE		
Liabilities	2021	2020
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	100,975.00	64,863.00
Deferred Revenue	41,881.00	32,726.00
Prepayment of Dues	368,120.00	424,773.00
Current Portion of long-term Debt	25,187.00	25,163.00
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	536,163.00	547,525.00
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		
PPP Loan	73,312.00	71,494.00
EIDL Loan	102,164.00	100,100.00
Notes Payable less Current Portion	0.00	21,785.00
TOTAL LONG-TERM LIABILITIES	175,476.00	193,379.00
NET ASSETS		
Net assets with donor restrictions	814,646.00	25,000.00
Net assets without donor restrictions	1,329,387.00	668,071.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$2,855,672.00	\$1,433,975.00