

Toastmasters' legacy of learning flourishes for 88 years

The organization's communications model remains as relevant in 2012 as when it began in 1924

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Oct. 22, 2012 [PRNewswire/](#) -- "We learn in moments of enjoyment," are the words of Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, who founded the first [Toastmasters](#) club at the YMCA in Santa Ana, Calif., 88 years ago today. Dr. Smedley, then-YMCA director, created the club in October 1924 for young men to practice their after-dinner speeches in a social environment. Today, nearly 300,000 men and women are improving their communication and leadership skills using the values and model that Dr. Smedley developed. In fact, there are more than 13,500 clubs in 116 countries throughout the world. Since the organization's inception, more than four million people have found their voice and gained confidence through the proven Toastmasters program.

"Dr. Smedley laid the framework for the Toastmasters 'learn-by-doing' model," says Daniel Rex, Executive Director of Toastmasters International. "The organization's expansion in recent years is a tribute to the need for the timeless skills of effective communication and leadership. With 19 consecutive years of membership growth, our clubs continue to thrive globally."

Longtime Toastmaster Don Ensich, 86, who as a young man heard Dr. Smedley give many speeches, says, "Toastmasters has withstood the test of time because its programs are vital to an individual's personal growth. Better speaking skills are the most well-known results of Toastmasters membership, but anyone can benefit from becoming a more confident listener, thinker and leader. My Toastmasters experience has opened many doors that otherwise would not have been opened. It's been a wonderful journey," says Ensich, who has earned the organization's [Accredited Speaker designation](#) and is a member of Sandpipers Toastmasters in Ventura, Calif.

In Toastmasters, members meet weekly to learn and practice public speaking and leadership techniques. There is no instructor; instead, members evaluate each other's presentations.

Toastmasters clubs around the world will celebrate the anniversary with special meetings and events. To learn more about the Toastmasters club experience, view this [video](#). You can join the ranks of [famous Toastmasters](#) who have benefited from the program, including **Tom Monaghan**, founder of Domino's Pizza, **Chris Matthews**, host of *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, and **Nancy Brinker**, founder of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary.

View the [Toastmasters timeline](#) for a look at the organization's history. Visit www.toastmasters.org to find a club near you.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. Founded in October 1924, the organization currently has more than 280,000 members in 13,500-plus clubs in 116 countries. Each week, Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million people of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their competence in communication so they can gain the confidence to lead others. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow Toastmasters International on Twitter [@Toastmasters](#).

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