Tips for heartfelt Thanksgiving toasts

How to raise a glass and express gratitude with class

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Nov. 26, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- We all want to express appreciation for family, friends and blessings at Thanksgiving, but the challenge is finding the right words and the best way to say them.Toastmasters International, the global leader in communication and leadership skills development, offers tips on how to deliver a toast of gratitude this season.

(Logo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20130222/MM64912LOGO)

As William Arthur Ward famously said, *"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."*

George Yen, Toastmasters' 2013-2014 International President, says the best way to deliver a message of gratitude is to speak from the heart. "Thank people you care about, share personal examples of what you're grateful for, perhaps offer a quote if the words seem relevant."

Toastmasters' How to Give a Toast video offers the basics to get you started. In addition, the following pointers can help you to gracefully give thanks for loved ones, good health and well-being:

1. **Reflect and remember.** A toast should be original, heartfelt and fitting for the event. AtThanksgiving time, thank family members, guests –even the chef, and offer specific examples of what you are grateful for.
2. **Be brief.** A toast should last no longer than three minutes. If it's longer than that, you'll lose the audience's attention. Begin by saying something along the lines of: "*Let me express gratitude…,*" "*I take this opportunity to thank…*," and "*May I take a moment to salute…*"
3. **Use humor** if it feels right, but make it tasteful and appropriate. Don't say anything that could possibly offend or embarrass anyone present.
4. **Gestures count.** Use expressions such as smiling, nodding and eye contact to denote warmth and appreciation.
5. **Add a quote,** such as the one by President John F. Kennedy, who proclaimed Nov. 28, 1963, as a day of national thanksgiving with these words: *"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."*
6. **Polish it with practice.** Rehearse your message in advance in front of a friend or group.

Check out Toastmasters' tips for special speaking occasions and articles about toasting. To practice your toasts and speeches in a Toastmasters meeting, use www.toastmasters.org/findaclub.

Suggested tweets:

- Cheers this #holiday season! View #Toastmasters tips for #toasting with taste. http://ow.ly/rb7DK
- A toast to confident #publicspeaking during the holidays! #Toastmasters #whereleadersaremade http://ow.ly/rb7GT
- #Toastmasters offers toasting tips for special occasions. Cheers to a great holiday! http://ow.ly/rb7DK

About Toastmasters International
Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of meeting locations. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, the organization's membership exceeds 292,000 in more than 14,350 clubs in 122 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people of all backgrounds become more confident in front of an audience. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow @Toastmasters on Twitter.

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