

# Sri Lankan wins Toastmasters' 2014 World Championship of Public Speaking

Dananjaya Hettiarachchi rises above 30,000 participants to win world's largest speech contest

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Aug. 26, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- With a humorous speech titled "I See Something," a human resource development (HRD) specialist from Colombo, Sri Lanka, won the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking on Saturday, Aug. 23. [Hettiarachchi](#), along with eight other final contestants, reached the championship level after several eliminating rounds that began six months ago with 30,000 participants from 126 countries. Watch Hettiarachchi compete [here](#).

"You always think this moment will never come," said the happy winner, who had entered the contest every year for 10 years, reaching the semifinals four times until finally bringing home the World Championship trophy. His speech was an immediate favorite with the capacity crowd of nearly 3,000 people from around the world who attended the contest in the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His winning speech was a personal tale about being a rebellious teenager whose life was changed because mentors took an interest in him, saying "I see something in you... but I don't know what it is."

"Sometimes you have to be lost to be found," said Hettiarachchi, who now is a successful trainer, speech coach and HR consultant for organizations throughout South East Asia.

Hettiarachchi joined Toastmasters 10 years ago and competed in hundreds of speech contests before reaching his goal of earning the title of World Champion of Public Speaking. In his acceptance speech, he said, "Toastmasters saved my life 10 years ago. When I failed my first speech, someone in the back said, 'I see something in you.' Now it's my turn to give back and be a role model for youth in South East Asia."

Contestants delivered five-to seven-minute speeches on wide-ranging topics and were judged on content, organization and delivery.

Hettiarachchi claimed the title of Toastmasters' 2014 World Champion of Public Speaking during the organization's annual convention held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Aug. 20-23.

Second- and third-place winners were KwongYue Yang from Guangzhou, China, with his speech titled "Four Words" and Kelly Sargeant from Missouri City, Texas, with her speech, "Goodbye Wi-Fi."

## 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 313,000 in more than 14,650 clubs in 126 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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