

Toastmasters Kicks Off World's Largest Speech Contest

30,000 participants compete to become the 2016 World Champion of Public Speaking

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Feb. 4, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- The world's largest speech competition recently launched with more than 30,000 contestants in 135 countries vying for the title of World Champion of Public Speaking. The Toastmasters International Speech Contest begins with participants giving presentations in local clubs as they polish their oratory skills while advancing to area, division and district levels. The competition culminates with the World Championship of Public Speaking on Aug. 20 in Washington, D.C.

"The speech contest is a highpoint of the convention and Toastmasters experience," says Toastmasters International President Jim Kokocki. "The contestants come from all over the world to deliver their speech with the hope of becoming the next World Champion."

Ninety-eight semifinalists will compete during the Toastmasters 2016 International Convention held Aug. 17 – 20, in Washington, D.C., at the Marriott Marquis Washington, D.C. Finalists will make it to the final round on Aug. 20, where the winner is crowned the Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking.

To be eligible for the competition, participants must be age 18 or older, and present a five-to-seven-minute speech in English on any topic. Judging criteria include speech content, originality, organization, gestures, style and timing.

"Becoming the World Champion of Public Speaking was the culmination of a dream I didn't think was possible," says [Mohammed Qahtani](#) from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who is Toastmasters' 2015 World Champion of Public Speaking. "When the competition began at the club level, it was hard to imagine that, at the end of the journey, I would be crowned the winner. The reality was much more satisfying than a dream."

Click [here](#) to watch Qahtani's winning speech from the 2015 World Championship of Public Speaking. For more information about the World Championship of Public Speaking, visit <http://www.toastmasters.org/About/World-Championship-of-Public-Speaking>. To visit a club contest, contact pr@toastmasters.org.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., the organization's membership exceeds 332,000 in more than 15,400 clubs in 135 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people from diverse backgrounds become more confident speakers, communicators and leaders. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow [@Toastmasters](#) on Twitter.

Video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P045KcKYvDM>

Logo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20130222/MM64912LOGO>

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