Toastmasters Announces Speakers and Competitors for 2018 Convention in Chicago

ENGLEWOOD, Colo., Aug. 9, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Toastmasters International announced an exceptional lineup of speakers for its 2018 International Convention, to be held at the Marriott Marquis Chicago,Aug. 22-25. With nine inspiring speaking sessions taking place on the main-stage as well as more than 100 Toastmasters members from all over the world competing in the International Speech Contest, the 2018 International Convention is the place for speakers to be heard. Attendance at this annual event is expected to exceed 1,700 members from around the world.

"We have an impressive group of speech contestants and education session presenters taking the stage at this year's International Convention," says Balraj Arunasalam, Toastmasters 2017-18 International President. "These speakers will educate and entertain our audience with their unique experiences and remarkable storytelling ability."

More than 100 semifinal contestants will compete to become the2018 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking. Nine speakers will also attempt to earn the Accredited Speaker designation, which recognizes professional speakers who combine expert knowledge in a particular subject and mastery of the spoken word.

The nine main-stage presenters include **Steve Gilliland**, who will deliver the keynote presentation during the Opening Ceremonies on Wednesday, Aug. 22. Gilliland is one of the most in-demand, top-rated speakers in the world. Recognized as a master storyteller and brilliant comedian, he can be heard daily on SiriusXM Radio's Laugh USA and Blue Collar Radio.

World-renowned author and entrepreneur **Keith Ferrazzi** is the recipient of Toastmasters' 2018 Golden Gavel award. As chairman and founder of Ferrazzi Greenlight, a Los Angeles-based research institute focusing on behavioral science and its effects on business, Ferrazzi works to determine how companies can eliminate behaviors that hinder progress and instead adopt those behaviors that foster growth. His research on relationships, along with decades of experience as an entrepreneur and chief marketing officer for multinational corporations, helped him develop his influential leadership techniques for "leading without authority." In addition, his two books, *Never Eat Alone* and *Who's Got Your Back*, were both *New York Times* best-sellers. Ferrazzi joins an illustrious list of past Golden Gavel honorees that includes Stephen Covey, Walter Cronkite, Anthony Robbins, Muhammad Yunus and Zig Ziglar.

Other expert presenters:

- **Johnny Campbell**, keynote speaker, author and founder of Rise-Up and Win International, helps people turn their personal challenges into breakthroughs, and their products and services into profit.
- **Pat Johnson,** a Toastmasters past international president, founded Pat Johnson & Associates, to offer coaching to leaders looking to overcome self-limitations and aspire to more in life. She also is an affiliate and mentor coach at Accomplishment Coaching.
- **Sarah Khan** is a professional speaker, trainer and advocate. She conducts regular presentations and workshops on such platforms as: The Science of Communication through Connection, The Art of Mindful Living, and Diversity and Inclusion.
- **Eldonna Lewis Fernandez**, president of Dynamic Vision International Inc., delivers negotiation, leadership and communication keynotes as well as training to international organizations, corporations and small businesses. Her business is built on a 23-year career as a U.S. Air Force contracts manager, where she negotiated hundreds of millions of dollars in domestic and international contracts
- **Mohammed Murad**, a Toastmasters' past international president, is an entrepreneur who owns and manages four companies. After a 20-year career with the Dubai Police Force, he retired as a Lt. Colonel in 2003. Mohammed has more than 27 years of experience in director and CEO roles in the fields of emergency medical services management, human resources development and strategic planning.
- **Lars Sudmann** is an advisor, keynote speaker and executive coach on leadership, strategy and innovation, and communication for global corporations and leaders. He is the owner of Sudmann & Company, a consulting and management training network.
- **Michelle Tillis Lederman**, one of *Forbes* Top 25 Networking Experts, is an author, speaker, corporate trainer and executive coach. She is the author of three books, including internationally recognized *The 11 Laws of Likability*.

To learn more about Toastmasters' 2018 International Convention, Aug. 22-25, and obtain a complete schedule of events, including the Opening Ceremonies, Education Sessions and the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking, visit https://www.toastmasters.org/events/2018-international-convention. The public is welcome to attend.

About Toastmasters International
Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Englewood, Colo., the organization's membership exceeds 352,000 in more than 16,400 clubs in 141 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.

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