Toastmasters International Media Center

San Juan, Texas resident wins Toastmasters' 2024 World Championship of Public Speaking

Luisa Montalvo rises above 30,000 participants to win world's largest speech contest

ENGLEWOOD, Colo., Aug. 19, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- With an inspirational speech titled "37 Strangers,"Luisa Montalvo, a 65-year-old retiree and dog rescue volunteer from San Juan, Texas, won the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking on Saturday, Aug. 17 at the Anaheim Marriott. Montalvo, along with seven other final contestants, reached the championship level after several eliminating rounds that began more than six months ago with 30,000 participants from 150 countries. [Watch Montalvo's winning speech here.]

"This feels beyond amazing," said Montalvo. Her speech resonated with the capacity crowd of approximately 1,500 people from around the world who attended in person and more than 800 virtual attendees. Her winning speech was about the lessons she learned from the nearly fatal car accident she was involved in two years ago, which left her bound to a wheelchair. Montalvo's heart stopped beating for six minutes after the accident until she was revived by a team of 37 emergency and medical professionals who saved her life. Those "strangers" left her forever grateful and gave her a fresh outlook on life.

"If 37 people can come together and put all this energy into me, can you imagine what all of us could accomplish? All it takes is treating each other with dignity and worth."

Montalvo joined Toastmasters 13 years ago because she loves to compete and wanted to test her oratory skills against the best in the world. Now that she has reached her goal of becoming the World Champion of Public Speaking, she has an even bigger goal in mind. "You don't know what this means to me. I'll be back next year, and I'll be walking!"

Montalvo began writing her winning speech eight months ago and was even more inspired to give it her all in the speech contest after the recent passing of her mother. "I did this for my mom. I always wanted her to be proud of me and I take a lot of pride in this achievement."

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

Montalvo claimed the title of Toastmasters' 2024 World Champion of Public Speaking during the organization's annual convention held in Anaheim, Calif., Aug. 14-17. She is the first Hispanic to win the coveted title.

Second- and third-place winners were Hannah Cheng from Taiwan, with her speech titled "Are You Ready." and Angeli Raven Fitch from San Bruno, Calif., with her speech, "Replaced by Sophia."

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that builds confidence and teaches public speaking skills through a worldwide network of clubs that meet online and in person. In a supportive community or corporate environment, members prepare and deliver speeches, respond to impromptu questions, and give and receive constructive feedback. It is through this regular practice that members are empowered to meet personal and professional communication goals. Founded in 1924, the organization is headquartered in Englewood, Colorado with over 270,000 members in more than 14,000 clubs in 150 countries. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit toastmasters.org. Follow @Toastmasters on X (formerly Twitter).

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