81 Toastmasters Vie for World Champion of Public Speaking Title

Winner to emerge during August International Convention

The Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking is the Olympics of oratory, the World Cup of public speaking, and it is happening soon! Nine semifinal rounds on Aug. 12 will lead to the main event on Saturday, Aug. 14. Eighty-one contestants have qualified and are feverishly practicing to become the world's best public speaker.

The speech contest takes place at the Toastmasters International Convention in Palm Desert, Calif. This year, for the first time in the competition's 72-year history, the nine semifinal rounds take place at the Convention, with 81 presenters from around the world trying to dazzle the judges with a poignant message and powerful delivery. The nine emerging finalists will face off two days later.

Contestants advance to the championship round after a year-long process of elimination through club, area and district speech competitions. The five-to-seven-minute speeches are judged on content, organization, gestures and style.

As always, this year's contest will display top-flight talent. Consider the last two winners: Mark Hunter of Queensland, Australia, and LaShunda Rundles of Dallas, Texas. Their performances were riveting, their stories inspirational. (Watch this video of the last three winners competing.)

In 2009, Hunter's winning speech focused on his hard-earned insights about life following a water-skiing accident that left him in a wheelchair. How did he feel when he won? "How does anyone feel when they hear they are a World Champion?" says Hunter. "Awesome!"

Rundles, a lupus survivor, mixed humor, poignant observations and even some show-stopping gospel singing into her speech about overcoming fear. "I gave my all on the stage and left feeling confident that I'd done my part," she says.

On Aug. 14, a new Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking will be crowned. Who will be this year's Mark Hunter or LaShunda Rundles?

The Toastmasters International Convention takes place Aug. 11-14 at the JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa in Palm Desert, Calif. To learn more, please visit http://www.toastmasters.org/2010Convention.

About Toastmasters

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. The organization currently has 250,000 members in 12,500 clubs in 106 countries. Since its founding in October 1924, the organization has helped more than four million men and women give presentations with poise and confidence. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org.

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