

Toastmasters Elect 5th Woman as International President in 85-Year History

Top officer of the 260,000-plus member organization hails from Victoria, British Columbia

Pat Johnson of Victoria, BC, Canada, has been elected President of Toastmasters International, the world's leading nonprofit organization devoted to teaching international communication and leadership skills. Johnson was elected for a one-year volunteer term at the organization's 79th annual International Convention, held Aug. 11 - Aug. 14 in Palm Desert, Calif. Johnson is only the fifth woman - and the first Canadian woman - to lead the 260,000-plus member organization.

A seasoned business executive, Johnson is assistant director for business education at the British Columbia Pension Corporation, in Victoria. She has a background in adult education and has spent many years as a leader in the corporate, government and not-for-profit worlds, specializing in executive coaching and strategic planning.

A Toastmaster for nearly 28 years, Johnson cites herself as a prime example of someone transformed by Toastmasters. "Professionally, I really discovered who I was in Toastmasters," she says. "Fellow members could see things in me that I couldn't see in myself. I eventually got enough confidence to get an education and build a career as a trainer."

Later in the Convention, David Henderson, a Toastmaster from San Antonio, Texas, rose above 30,000 contestants from 113 countries to win the final round of what is possibly the world's largest speech contest: Toastmasters' World Championship of Public Speaking. Henderson's winning speech, "The Aviators," dealt with learning to cope with the loss of a cherished childhood friend. In his acceptance speech, Henderson shared with the audience his winning strategy. When it comes to connecting with an audience, he said, "Don't tell people, just show them." A total of nine finalists delivered five- to seven-minute presentations on wide-ranging topics and were judged on content, organization and delivery.

In addition, new international officers and seven new Board members were elected. Board members represent 14 regions around the world. The new international officers are: Michael Notaro, of Alameda, Calif., as the organization's President-Elect; John Lau, of Kuching, Malaysia, as First Vice President; and George Yen, of Taipei, Taiwan, as Second Vice President.

The new Board members are: Kevin Doyle of Honolulu, Hawaii; Jacquie Schnider from Calgary, AB, Canada; Gina Cook from Kanata, ON, Canada; David Hollingshead from Jacksonville, Fla.; Roberta Perry from Los Angeles, Calif.; Mike Storkey from Airlie Beach, QLD, Australia; and Gea Ban Peng from Singapore. Toastmasters elect new members of the Board of Directors for a two-year term. They join the 2009-2011 Board members: Emmy Hager of Stockton, Wash.; Ken Cawley from San Jose, Calif.; Pamela McCown, from Pasadena, Texas; Ron Kirchgessner of Greenwood, Ind.; Heath Suddleson of Potomac, Md.; Pamela Christopher from Union Grove, N.C.; Susan Dalati of Manotick, ON, Canada; Theo Black from Wayzata, Minn.; Keith Ostergard from Beijing, China.

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 more than 262,000 members in 12,500-plus clubs in 113 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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SOURCE: Toastmasters International

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