Toastmasters salutes women worldwide on Women's International Day March 8

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., March 7, 2012 – Toastmasters International salutes women around the world, particularly its female members, in honor of Women's International Day on Thursday, March 8, 2012. More than half of Toastmasters' 270,000 plus members globally are women, who join the organization to improve their leadership and communication skills.

Women seeking to improve their communication skills can benefit from advice offered by the organization's two top female officers:

"Women are embracing who they are and their own styles in the workplace," says Pat Johnson, International President of Toastmasters International from 2010-11. "It's exciting to see that now more than ever young women are stepping up to lead, communicate and participate." She offers the following tips:

- **Be confident and direct about your message and beliefs.** Avoid phrases that downplay your thoughts, such as "I don't want to take up too much time, but…"
- **Avoid apologizing and using words such as "just" or "actually."** They undermine your authority and detract from your message.
- **Pause for effect.** Making brief pauses helps you collect your thoughts and helps the listener absorb your ideas.

During her tenure as Toastmasters' first female International President from 1985-86, Helen Blanchard encouraged women to "commit to excellence." The trailblazer, who broke barriers in Toastmasters and in the workplace at a time when few women led corporations, says she lived by that motto. "Committing to excellence is not about something you put *on*. It's about something you bring *out.* By doing the very best I could do in any situation, it always led to better opportunities," says Blanchard, a former civilian Navy manager.

Toastmasters' self-paced program and accessible network of clubs have helped countless women find their voices by helping them become more confident and competent communicators and leaders. As a result, they have assumed more leadership roles in their careers and communities, and have improved their quality of life.

Some of the skills women acquire in the program include public speaking, critical thinking, analytical ability, listening, leading and mentoring. By developing these essential skills, which can be applied to every aspect of their lives, women can become better communicators and evolve into leaders, better equipped to accomplish their goals or champion women's causes.

To find a Toastmasters meeting near you, visit www.toastmasters.org.

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About Toastmasters International
Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. Founded in October 1924, the organization currently has more than 270,000 members in 13,000 clubs in 116 countries. Each week, Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million people of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their competence in communication so they can gain the confidence to lead others. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow Toastmasters International on Twitter @Toastmasters.

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