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CONTACT: Suzanne Frey
(949) 858-8255 or sfrey@toastmasters.org

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TEXAS MAN WINS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF PUBLIC SPEAKING—FINALLY!



MISSION VIEJO, CA – It was the World Series of public speaking, the Olympics of oratory, the final bout for the heavyweight title of “World Champion of Public Speaking.” Who would win? Recently, a crowd of 1,300 Toastmasters from around the world gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, to cheer for their favorite speaker at the Toastmasters International Speech Contest.

Jim Key, a 4-year veteran of Toastmasters from Rowlett, Texas, emerged victorious and claimed the title of 2003 World Champion of Public Speaking. His speech, “Never Too Late,” described how it’s never too late to follow our dreams, regardless of the difficulty, heartache and disappointment we face in life. He spoke from experience: this was Key’s third attempt at winning the World Championship. He’s been one of the nine finalists for the last three years, coming in second in 2001 and 2002. During his emotional acceptance speech, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house.

Key, the father of three, is a computer systems analyst with Lennox International, Inc. Winning the speech contest was the step he needed to reach his goal of becoming a full-time professional public speaker.

The speech contest culminated Toastmasters International’s four-day annual convention, held August 20-23, 2003, at the Marriot Marquis in Atlanta, Georgia. A panel of 18 Toastmasters judges evaluated the nine contestants, who had advanced to the finals following a year-long process of elimination, using club, area and regional speech competitions. Criteria used in judging included speech content, organization, voice quality and gestures.

Second- and third-place winners in the World Championship of Public Speaking were Dave Sanfacon of Worcester, Massachusetts, and Kyle Scott Hall of Eastsound, Washington.

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking skills through a worldwide network of clubs. The organization currently has nearly 195,000 members in 9,300 clubs in 80 countries. Since its founding nearly 80 years ago 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 call 1-800-9WE-SPEAK or visit www.toastmasters.org.

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