



For Immediate Release

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Reno Chaplain Advances to International Speech Competition

RENO, Nev., May 29, 2015 – Donny Crandell of Reno, Nev. is one step closer to the title of World Champion of Public Speaking. Crandell took first place at the Toastmasters District 39 Speech Contest earlier this month in Sacramento, earning him the privilege to compete on Aug. 13 with 90 other semi-finalists at the Toastmasters International Convention in Las Vegas.

Crandell said he joined Toastmasters in 2010, while working as a pastor at Parkside Church in Auburn, Calif. “I wanted to sharpen my communication skills, and it worked,” he said. “I turned my 30-minute sermons into 15-minute sermons, eliminated some bad speaking habits and communicated my messages more clearly.”

Over time, however, Crandell said he realized he couldn’t touch people’s lives unless he focused on his listening skills as well.

“It’s that saying, ‘People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care,’” he said. “I could do all the talking from the pulpit, teach classes and lead Bible studies, but I didn’t get to know someone until I took the time to let them speak into my life, share their own views and opinions.”

Crandell said this perspective was strengthened when he transitioned from a pastor to a chaplain. In 2012, he was deployed to Kyrgyzstan for six months as a military chaplain.

“I was the last spiritual leader a soldier would talk to before he went into harm’s way. My own knowledge was not nearly as important as my support,” Crandell said.

After returning to the United States, he continued his work as a chaplain at the Nevada Air National Guard base in Reno. Crandell said he now helps soldiers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, marriage counseling, and building morale.

Crandell’s message – developing your listening skills to touch other people’s lives – forms the basis for his award-winning speech, titled, “Two Sides to Every Story.”

“If you read between the lines, it’s really the story of my life in the last four years: how I’ve progressed professionally, matured as a person, become less self-centered and more others-centered – given through a seven-minute speech,” he said.

Crandell described his recent win at the District Contest as an adrenaline rush. “It was such a fun night, and great to have my friends and family there. I felt like a celebrity.”

His speech was filled with humorous anecdotes, such as the story of how his parents were able to afford to send him to college.

“They were passing through Reno, bet \$1 on an 8-spot Keno ticket, and won \$17,000.” It was enough money to send Crandell to Bible college, he said. “I guarantee I was the only one at that school whose tuition was paid for with gambling winnings...The Lord works in mysterious ways,” Crandell added.

This year’s Toastmasters International Speech Contest began in February with over 30,000 contestants in 126 countries. In the semi-final round, Crandell will compete against speakers from across the United States, as well as India and China. He said he plans to work with previous District contest winners to perfect his speech.

According to Crandell, he is also constructing a completely new speech, which he will need if he advances past the semi-finals to the championship on Aug. 15.

Throughout the whole experience, Crandell said he keeps coming back to his core message.

“I know how important and valued I feel when someone takes the time to ask me questions, show they care about me. I want other people to feel that, too. We all must do more listening.”

Crandell is a member of the Washoe Express Toastmasters club in Reno.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of meeting locations. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, CA, the organization’s membership exceeds 313,000 in more than 14,650 clubs in 126 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people of all backgrounds become more confident in front of an audience. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org.

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