

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Sherwood Jones

The applause dies down and the Toastmaster asks for two minutes of silence. The timers set their clocks. The next contestant strides up to the stage. A volunteer attaches a small microphone to his lapel. The silence is broken as the Toastmaster announces, "Sherwood Jones. **Ignore the Suit.**" "Ignore the Suit." Sherwood Jones." And the magic begins! That funny and touching 5 to 7 minutes speech brought Sherwood the title of 2016 District One International Speech Contest Winner.



If you're a Toastmaster in this district, you surely know the name Sherwood Jones. A Toastmaster since 1994, he is a member of 4 clubs: Sundays by the Sea, Breakfast at Toastmasters, Funny Bones, and Grand Communicators, the club he represented at the district contest. He consistently competes, only having taken a break during his year as Area Governor.

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His commitment to perfecting his public speaking skills shows in his history: Sherwood has twice won the District International Speech Contest and gone on to the regionals. This year is particularly sweet for Sherwood, though. In the past, district winners would compete next in regional contests, and only the regional winners would go on to compete at the international conference. But now with a change in the rules, all district winners will go directly to the international convention to compete in the semi-finals. Sherwood is excited; he is practiced; and his speech is ready.

Often, international speeches tell tales of adversity, of overcoming monumental challenges. Alternately, speeches may be inspirational, cheering the listener on to achieve cherished dreams. "Ignore the Suit" brings a more universal message to its audience, offering encouragement to look beyond the exterior "suit" and discover the person inside.

Since his district win, Sherwood has been fine-tuning his speech, rehearsing at different clubs within our district, but also venturing out into District 52, as his winning speech can be heard there from a fresh perspective. He listens to evaluations and incorporates only the feedback that resonates. While some competitors work with a coach, Sherwood prefers not to, because often it then "becomes their speech." Since the district contest, he says, he has only made minor tweaks to what was initially a strong speech.

Sherwood's additional preparation involves research and YouTube. "You want to find out who your competition is. I found a Google document of all the district winners." So before TI released their names, Sherwood had already looked up his competition, watched their videos, and gauged their strengths and weaknesses.

Working in the film industry as an editor and post production supervisor, Sherwood's talent for drama and storytelling shine in his speaking. He says, however, that his goal is to make his speech the best that he can. He won't be mad at himself if he loses, only if he doesn't do his best. If he wins, he says, he'll go to the parties and enjoy his win, but his favorite part of the contest is "doing it, the anticipation, the preparation, and the adrenaline."

Sherwood flies out for the contest on August 16th. He'll be briefed on the 17th, and compete in the semi-finals on the 18th, delivering "Ignore the Suit." For the finals, he's prepared a speech entitled "The Greatest Super Power."

District 1 congratulates Sherwood on his district win, and wishes him all the luck at the International Convention. We hope Sherwood shows his superpowers and brings back the title of World Champion of Public Speaking.

Article by:

Anna Ziss-Patton, DTM

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