

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Toastmasters to celebrate 85th anniversary

Rancho Santa Margarita-based nonprofit started Oct. 22, 1924.

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RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA – It's been 85 years since the first meeting and Toastmasters International is still going strong.

Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, the nonprofit group that teaches people to improve skills in communication, public speaking and leadership celebrates its anniversary Thursday.

A number of clubs will be celebrating the anniversary and hold a private celebration in Tustin Thursday night.

Illinois born Dr. Ralph C. Smedley held the first official Toastmasters meeting in the basement of a YMCA in Santa Ana Oct. 22, 1924. Since then Toastmasters' has grown to more than 250,000 plus active members, 12,500 clubs in 106 countries, according to a release.

"Toastmasters' long-term success and growth is a tribute to Dr. Smedley's vision," said Toastmasters International President Gary A. Schmidt in release.

"He understood that communication isn't optional and leadership isn't always innate, but both can be learned through doing."

Smedley Chapter 1, the original club founded by Dr. Smedley in 1924, remains active. The group meets at Cranbrook Senior Living, 1262 Bryan Ave., in Tustin, on the first and third Tuesday of each month from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The Rancho Santa Margarita Toastmasters club, Rancho Speech Masters, meets from 7 to 8:30 a.m. on Tuesdays at 22232 El Paseo in the Bell Tower Regional Community Center.

For more information on the local club, visit <http://ranchospeechmasters.org>.

For more information on the entire organization visit www.toastmasters.org.

A number of clubs will be celebrating the anniversary and hold a private celebration in Tustin Thursday night.

Check back Friday for coverage of the Tustin celebration.

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