WUSTL Speaks Welcomes Two New Club Members!
By Cecily Stewart Hawksworth, CL

COURTNEY BREWSTER has been working at the university for the last four years, and she is the assistant director of the College Prep Program and the coordinator of Student Success for TRiO Programs. For the College Prep Program, she directs, manages, and supervises graduate fellows, program assistants, and scholars of the program, while facilitating and managing programming for both the Summer Academy and academic year. For the Student Success Programs, she coordinates and manages the logistical details of intra- and inter-institutional programming developed for the university’s TRiO-eligible students.

Her favorite book since age 11: *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. This book propelled her into the dystopian/utopian sci-fi/fantasy realm, and as she put it: “mind ...BLOWN!”

Her favorite movie to watch, when feeling blue: *Love and Basketball*, written and directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood

Why Courtney decided to join Toastmasters, in her own words: “Pictured on my 2016 vision board is a microphone with the words ‘power’ and ‘dominate’ surrounding it. I love presentations and teaching classes, however, I have an overwhelming urge to pass out because of how nervous I can become when I have to speak in front of large groups. This is my year to conquer and master my goals! Hence, I am now a ToastMASTER!”

Gautam Kumar is a postdoctoral researcher in the department of Electrical & Systems Engineering. His area of research is brain dynamics and control, and he supervises graduate students in Dr. Shinung Ching’s lab. His contract ends at the end of May, so we have to enjoy his company while we have it!

Favorite books: *Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman! (Adventures of a Curious Character)* by Richard Feynman as well as any Sherlock Holmes novel

Favorite movie genres: Romantic, comedy, and musicals. He also loves to watch operas.

Why he decided to join Toastmasters, in his own words: “I have always found myself becoming nervous when it comes to speaking in a crowd. I found Toastmasters a friendly environment where I can learn to control my nervousness and use it in a positive direction. I hope to improve my ability to speak in public and my capability to think quickly when talking about unfamiliar topics. I also hope to make new friends.”

Gautam’s hobbies: He plays piano, watches operas and symphonies, bikes, and kayaks.

Fun fact: He is not a very serious person, even though many people think he is.
Area 12 Contest featuring John Richards

By Rebecca Linz O’Laughlin

On March 9, WUSTL Speaks member John Richards, CC, competed in the Area 12 Evaluation and International Speech contest. First-place winners from the area contest move onto the division contest (after which winners can continue on to compete at the district level and beyond). John had previously won the club-level contest, and he gave a well-received rendition of his talk entitled “The Friendliest Serial Killer.” John was awarded second place. Washington University had great representation at the contest: a large group of WUSTL Speaks members came to cheer on John; immediate past president Jackie Lorraine, CL, was present as a ballot counter; and a group of Toast of WU members came to support Rebecca Jordan, who participated in the evaluation contest and won second place. Before the contest, the WUSTL Speaks group gathered at nearby restaurant Mai Lee to enjoy dinner together. About his first contest experience, John said, “I am happy I participated even if I didn’t make first. Just getting to practice in a contest environment is very helpful. I practiced a lot but found I wasn’t quite prepared for the nerves of being on the spot. I definitely hope to compete in the future and build upon the accumulated knowledge. I would have been a huge mess if it wasn’t for the incredible number of people who came out to support me. Their encouragement before and after the contest really helped my mental state so much. I was thinking about how wonderful Toastmasters is in that I feel I have such a safe place to fail and still know that everyone will encourage and help me learn from it. I really feel that WUSTL Speaks is unique among Toastmasters clubs where it is not only professional development but also a family-like atmosphere of personal encouragement.” - John Richards

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Left: At dinner before the contest (clockwise from lower left): John Richards, CC; Marcia Mannen; Rebecca O’Laughlin; Matt Carlson; Cecily Hawksworth, CL; Mary Clemens, CC; Josh Lawrence; Charmaine Scott; Troy DeArmit.

To the right, second-place winner John Richards, holding both his trophy and his speech prop.
Connections to Success — Two Perspectives
By Josh Lawrence and Rosalind Early, CC, CL

The Connections to Success program has been an exciting opportunity for me as a leader in Toastmasters to mentor a group that has a very different membership than I normally interact with. Connections to Success is a program designed to assist formerly incarcerated individuals in their return to the workplace. Some of these individuals have limited education and few professional skills, which makes entering the workplace a challenge. Toastmasters provides an opportunity to build professional skills and to network with people that may be able to help them.

Toastmasters gives them the opportunity to express themselves while developing professional skills that can improve their effectiveness in a work environment. Public speaking, running a meeting with an agenda, the importance of listening, and respect for all are skills that Toastmasters builds.

Mentoring the St. Charles chapter of Connections to Success has given me the opportunity to continue to practice and hone my Toastmasters skills in front of a different audience. It has emphasized the need to consider the audience and change the content of my speeches to better reflect topics that are of more universal interest. For example, I did a speech from the Better Speaker Series on body language, entitled "Your Body Speaks," which was well received by the Connections participants. Body language, and the impact it can have is something that everyone can appreciate.

My experience mentoring this club has given me additional perspective into how Toastmasters can help people of all walks of life and at different places in their professional careers.

— Josh Lawrence

When John Barry, new club development director for District 8, asked me to help him put on a demo meeting, I readily volunteered. That Saturday in summer 2015, I visited Connections to Success in North St. Louis and my life was changed.

As Josh said, Connections to Success helps the long-term unemployed find jobs. This Toastmasters group was an extension of their Professional Women’s Group, so it was all female.

At first, the meeting ran like any other with John explaining the different roles. Then we got to Table Topics. John Barry asked the group, “What makes you smile?” I assumed we wouldn’t get too many volunteers, but we did, each with their own inspirational story.

“I just got a job,” one of the women said. “I applied to be a sales associate at Wal-Mart, but I was actually hired on as a manager.”

Another volunteer told us about how she struggles with lupus, but she knows her life is full of blessing. Another woman said that her granddaughter’s laughter was her greatest joy. I had never been in a room full of so much hope, optimism, and courage.

When John asked me to be a club mentor, I agreed, though I wasn’t sure what all it would entail. Since then, I’ve attended almost every monthly meeting and heard stories and speeches that inspire me, give me courage, or teach me. I know that I’ve helped the club grow, but the greatest gift is what the ladies of Speakers of Success gavel club have given me.

— Rosalind Early

Toastmasters Head up Staff Council
By Rosalind Early, CC, CL

In November 2015, Hank Webber, executive vice chancellor for administration, announced the creation of a staff advisory council, and invited the university community to apply. More than 70 staffers competed for a coveted spot.

Of the council’s 25 members there are two Toastmasters: Jackie Lorrainne, CL, and Amy Gassel, who were both part of the inaugural working group that came up with the idea for the council and created the bylaws last year.

Amy and Jackie are able to practice the leadership skills that they’ve learned over the past two years in Toastmasters (both are charter members), and have even suggested talking about Toastmasters and its benefits in the council. “I like being on the council because it affords me another opportunity to learn, grow, and develop as a leader and part of a team,” says Lorrainne.
WUSTL Speaks Hosts a Successful Open House

On February 3, WUSTL Speaks hosted its first open house of 2016. More than 10 guests showed up, thanks to the efforts of VP Membership Rosalind Early, CC, CL, who created flyers for the event, mailed out more than 100 invitations, spread the word to different graduate student and staff groups, and invited co-workers and friends.

In addition to organizing the event and providing treats, Rosalind also presented her humorous speech, “How to Throw a Party: Lessons Learned the Hard Way.” In it, Rosalind encouraged the audience to get over their fear of throwing bad parties, by recounting stories about her own shindigs.

Chris Sherman presented his speech, “My Three Sons,” about how he and his wife came to adopt four children from Latin America. Ida Early, a guest who joined after attending the meeting, said that the speech was “fascinating.”

Many club members pitched in to help out, including Chris Presley, who served as Toastmaster and kept the meeting running on time (appreciated by all the guests); Rebecca O’Laughlin, whose excellent Table Topic prompts even got one of the guests to present; and Troy DeArmitt, whose memorable critique of the meeting as General Evaluator pointed out what is special about Toastmasters, which is that by sharing our stories, we build real friendships.

In addition to Ida Early, Courtney Brewster also joined the club after attending the successful Open House.

The Structure of Toastmasters

DID YOU KNOW THAT LEONARD NIMOY WAS ALSO A TOASTMASTER?