



Katrina Shawver, ACB, ALB

In Ahwatukee Toastmasters • Phoenix, Arizona



How Toastmasters Helped Me Launch My Book

I joined Toastmasters four years ago with two clear purposes in mind. First, I knew I needed to improve my impromptu speaking. Second, I was finishing a book and knew I would need to promote it through speaking engagements. My book, *HENRY: A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America*, is a nonfiction biography that was 15 years in the making. It was published in November 2017 to outstanding praise.

At my book launch, I faced a standing-room-only crowd of 85 people, including members of my In Ahwatukee Toastmasters club. As I was introduced, I knew that without my Toastmasters training I would not have had the confidence or skill that I did at that moment. I truly enjoyed giving the presentation and answering questions from the audience. Based on my talk, I was referred to seven other organizations and book clubs as a good speaker. As the presentation drew to a close, the applause was resounding, genuine and incredibly validating. Many people bought multiple copies for their holiday gift-giving.

As I reflected the next day, I realized the leadership roles for completing the *Competent Leadership* manual had contributed to building my confidence and speaking skills as much as all my prepared speeches had. Every role, from Ah-Counter to Evaluator, is regular

practice for developing critical listening and speaking skills. Every speech evaluation is an impromptu three-minute speech. I look forward to our club meetings at 7 a.m. every Tuesday. There is a powerful energy in that room of goal-oriented, supportive friends; it carries me through the day.

I know Henry Zguda, the subject of my biography, is smiling down on me. Count me as a Toastmaster for life!