

Jack Petchey's "SPEAK OUT" Challenge!

Public Speaking Competition inspires the BBC to invest millions to find Britain's best young speaker.

Jack Petchey's "Speak Out" Challenge, the UK's largest public speaking competition has been the inspiration behind The Speaker, a new landmark series for BBC2.

Over the past three years over 45,000 teenagers have learnt to be better speakers and communicators through Jack Petchey's "Speak Out" Challenge! The project has inspired teenagers to speak out on subjects that matter and gain the confidence to stand up and speak out. The training has been carried out by SpeakersBank, the UK's largest public speaking training company.

The project first gained national prominence when it featured on BBC2's The Culture Show in March 2007 before BBC Manchester developed this national competition to find Britain's best young speaker. SpeakersBank personnel have been retained as advisors and trainers to the series.

The Speaker airs on Tuesday 7th April at 8pm on BBC2. Judges include Jo Brand and John Amaechi together with mentors like Kate Silverton, Alistair Campbell and Earl Spencer.

This year alone over 130,000 people across London and Essex will attend "Speak Out" Challenge! finals and events and the BBC2 series will further encourage young people to get involved and *Speak Out*.

Each student receives six hours intensive training in the skill of effective public speaking before taking part in the Challenge. There are no restrictions on what they talk about; no use of notes, no podiums and no barriers - only their voices, their words and their passion.

The top 5 topics teenagers talk about are:

- Stereotyping of young people
- Parents
- Achievements
- Knife and gun crime
- Size zero

Sponsored by the Jack Petchey Foundation and run by SpeakersBank, (the training arm of the Speakers Trust charity), 20,000 young people compete this year for over £25,000 worth of prizes.

Over the past three years, both teachers and students report a huge increase in confidence and self esteem:

"I have to admit that before if I was given a chance to speak I completely hated it. I would try and not come into school, or on the day I would sweat, stutter, shake even if it was in

front of my class. This day was great, I was nervous at the beginning but I did myself and my teacher proud”

Rehana, student, East London

Sean Kennedy, “Speak Out” Challenge! project director and series consultant to The Speaker says:

“It is simple, the same equation for all – “Confidence leads to inclusion and inclusion leads to achievement”

Regional Finals continue through to June with the Gala Grand Final on the 10th July 2009 at the Mermaid Events and Conference Centre in London where the champion will receive a prize valued at £5,000. Judges include Andy Parfitt, controller of Radio 1 and Peter Barron, director of communications at Google.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

- Please go to www.speakoutchallenge.com for more information on Jack Petchey’s “Speak Out” Challenge!
- For further information on events contact 0845 838 8948 or <http://www.speakoutchallenge.com/pages/events>
- SpeakersBank is the training arm of the Speakers Trust charity. Its network of professional trainers, speakers and facilitators provide dynamic training to all sectors of the population, particularly to those in the education, voluntary and public arenas that have little access to such opportunity. For further details visit the website www.speakersbank.co.uk
- According to the Sunday Times Rich List, Jack Petchey OBE is amongst the country’s top ten most generous givers to education and youth. Established in 1999, The Jack Petchey Foundation gives grants to programmes and projects that benefit young people aged 11-25. The Foundation is eager to help young people take advantage of opportunities and play a full part in society. The major focus of our work is the Achievement Award Scheme. The Foundation focuses on London and Essex. Since it has been established the Foundation has awarded grants totalling over £50 million For further details visit the website www.jackpetcheyfoundation.org.uk

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