

CSDA offering classes in speaking, debating

By Robert Belardi

The Canadian Speech and Debate Academy will finally be launching their classes virtually since the business was founded a year ago. King City native and 2016 World Debating and Public Speaking Champion Natalie Ganzhorn co-founded the business with British Columbia's Top Speak in 2016, Jay McCauley. McCauley and Ganzhorn have known each other since meeting through public speaking. Having been friends for eight years since the Junior National Championships, McCauley is a senior coach and Ganzhorn is the head coach at the academy. 'I've had so many incredible opportunities come out of speech and debate,' Ganzhorn said. 'I started this academy to be able to teach that skill to the next generation of young speakers and to really help young people recognize what a valuable life skill public speaking really is.' Ganzhorn, who is also two-time Junior National Champion and two-time International Champion, says the academy will be offering both private and public lessons to those interested. These lessons will range all the way from the fundamentals of public speaking to the advanced private lessons needed for competitive speakers. Classes will be offered on a monthly basis every Saturday. Everything is going to be virtual right now until both her and McCauley can open up in-person learning in Toronto and across the GTA. 'It can be a fantastic stepping stool into getting into top tier universities or private high schools. These are a group of kids that seek out the coaching that we give,' Ganzhorn said. 'The other group of kids that need to be more persuaded to understand how valuable of a skill it is, we pitch it by saying our slogan, 'Discover Your Voice, Achieve Your Dreams.' That's the crux of our teaching philosophy. When you are able to express yourself eloquently, thinking on your feet, interacting with people in both a professional and casual setting and not being afraid to speak up and voice your opinion, it's really invaluable.' Ganzhorn has experienced multiple levels of speaking throughout her competitions. She has gone through persuasive speaking, impromptu speaking, dramatic reading and parliamentary style debate. While pursuing a competitive speaking career, the 23-year-old has also been a well-known actress, most notably for her role in Scary Stories To Tell In the Dark, produced by Guillermo Del Toro. Although the filming of the movie's sequel has been put on hold due to COVID, she currently balances life between Toronto and Los Angeles to continue her acting career. She has worked with the likes of Eugene Levy, Andrea Martin, Jason Priestley and Dean Norris. For anyone who is interested in signing up their children, they may head to www.csdacademy.ca and will receive a 20 per cent discount on pricing should you mention you saw this in the newspaper.