

# Communication skills highlight workshop

Lee Ashton  
Capital Times Staff

Body language and attitude play a bigger role in getting messages across than speaking and listening skills, students learned at a communication workshop Feb 18.

Steve Backels, director of personal counseling at Penn State Harrisburg, said empathy or caring is important when listening to someone else. This quality can be shown, he said, by mentally following a message and then communicating what was heard.

"Good listeners show they value and care about the other person," Backels said.

Offered as a segment of the PSH leadership development series, the workshop covered speaking, listening and nonverbal behavior.

Backels emphasized that actions send a stronger message than words, and said speakers and listeners must be conscious of their body language.

"Maintaining eye contact is important, but don't stare because that is intimidating," Backels said. He said posture is also important and said people should avoid slouching when sitting.

When speaking, he recommended that

both people be open, honest, specific and spontaneous.

"I messages are most effective," he said. An example: "I feel put upon when you ask me to do this," rather than saying, "You make me angry when you do this."

"I messages aren't accusatory, and the other person doesn't feel a need to become defensive, he said.

Participants got a chance to try out their skills. Backels paired each with a stranger and told them to casually converse with one another. He then asked the partners to evaluate criteria like eye contact and posture.

Comments like "he seemed nervous," or "she didn't have good eye contact" underscored the point that acquiring good communication skills takes a bit of practice.

All things considered, Backels said he was satisfied with the hour-long workshop. Students learned by "watching each other and participating," he said.

"I found it to be very interesting," Mike Hershey, a behavioral science junior said.

What most impressed him, Hershey said, was that "body language actually means more than spoken language."



Photo by Mike Starkey

An exuberant Harvey Edwards tells the audience about his first discovery of the Harlem Renaissance, during the "Rediscovering the Harlem Renaissance" seminar on Feb. 18. The seminar was part of Penn State Harrisburg's month-long celebration of Black History Month.

# Grant money aids PSH community

Karen Kean  
Special to the Capital Times

For those of you unfamiliar with the Campus Compact program, it is part of a statewide effort promoting volunteerism in Pennsylvania's colleges and universities.

Through this program, grant money is awarded to clubs and organizations planning to participate in community service-related activities or projects.

Among the clubs and organizations that applied for mini-grants this year were Penn State Professional Engineers and Contractors (PSPEC), Chi Gamma Iota (XGI), Kappa Delta Pi and a project headed by Deborah Salem, behavioral science professor.

PSPEC applied for a grant to help with their activity book project. Over the past several years the club has applied for mini-grants to help defray the cost of printing these books. The activity book the club designed consists of cut-out buildings and various games.

The club members distribute these activity books to area third graders and give presentations to the children.

This year, the XGI club plans to use its grant money to visit two local area organizations.

They are in the process of planning a trip to both a local area children's hospital and to the veteran's hospital in Lebanon. The club members will visit and bring gifts to the patients.

Kappa Delta Pi is involved in an

Adopt-A-School project. Assisting Kappa Delta Pi members with their project is their advisor, Karen Nicholson, assistant professor of education.

The club members will buy materials, such as pens, pencils and math aids, for elementary school classes. This project will benefit the Penn State Students by teaching them about lesson plans and selection of classroom materials, as well as showing them the needs of urban classrooms.

Deborah Salem's project consists of a community anti-drug and alcohol program targeted at elementary school children.

The main purpose of this project is to teach children the dangers of substance abuse. This program is currently in the planning stages, giving Penn State Harrisburg students a chance to participate in the initial development of this program.

In addition to the mini-grant projects, Campus Compact also has two other projects.

The Spring Clothing Drive, which began in January, will continue throughout the semester. The clothing donations are taken to a Middletown thrift shop run by Interfaith Senior Services. Helping out with the clothing drive is the Capital Christian Fellowship club.

On March 28, over 40 Penn State Harrisburg students, staff and faculty will participate in the Buddy Bowl to benefit the South Central Pennsylvania Big Brother/Big Sister organization.

# Seminar focuses on Harlem Renaissance

Matt Hunt  
Capital Times Staff

On Feb. 18, the Harlem Renaissance was rediscovered at Penn State Harrisburg.

A display in the Olmsted Building lobby offered information on the principle figures of the Harlem Renaissance. A fact sheet in the lobby described the Harlem Renaissance as a burst of creativity of black artists in the 1920s.

A film festival in the Black Student Union presented more information about the art and artists of the period.

"Rediscovering the Harlem Renaissance," a seminar held in the Gallery Lounge, was presented by Harvey Edwards. Edwards, a graduate student, is studying some of the artists from the period.

Edwards began the program by explaining how he rediscovered the Harlem Renaissance. Edwards, born in Brooklyn, said he thought he knew everything he needed to about Harlem. However, he was proven wrong, after he graduated from college and saw a museum exhibit on the Harlem Renaissance, he said.

"I was riveted," Edwards said. "I could not believe everything I had missed growing up in Brooklyn. It was as if I lived in Brooklyn all my life and had never

seen the Brooklyn Bridge."

Edwards shared some background on the Harlem Renaissance, with information on such black leaders as W.E.B. Dubois and Marcus Garvey.

It is important to study the Harlem Renaissance not only for black history, but also for art history, Edwards said. Several museums and magazines are now recognizing the importance of these artists, he added.

Later, Edwards asked the audience to list the events from the early 1900s through the 1950s they thought influenced America. Some answers included World War I, the Great Depression and racial riots.

The audience was then shown a brief timeline of events of the period that directly influenced the Harlem Renaissance. The events included the opening of black theaters, and the first black musical.

Edwards ended the program by reading some poems from the period. He noted that his overview was by no means complete.

Edwards said any presentation of the Harlem Renaissance "needs to be multifaceted--and for me to just talk to you, it's just not enough."