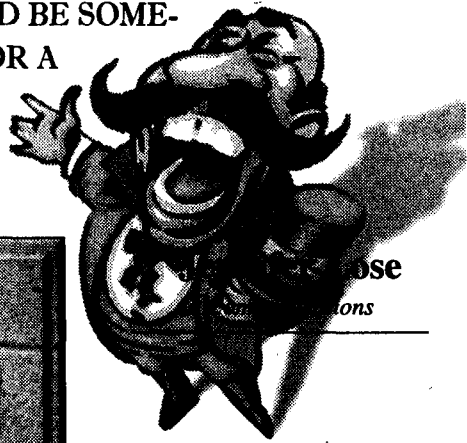
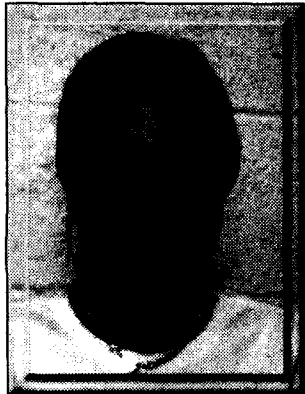




IF YOU COULD BE SOME-
ONE ELSE FOR A
DAY, WHO
WOULD IT BE?

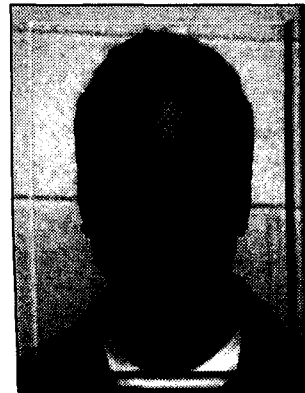


"Grace Kelly"



Wes Griffith

Information Systems Technology

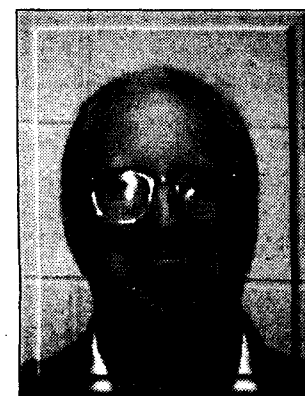


"Marty McFly"



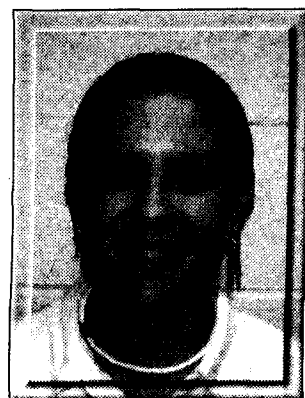
Megan Svec

Communications



Rob Trishman

Communications



Julia Danner

Communications

"Julia Roberts"

Speak Slowly and Look

Speakers inform PSH on how to interact with the hearing disabled

By **RACHEL SHEPHERD**

Capital Times Staff Reporter

Ever stop and look at two people communicating with sign language? The way they move their hands and lips while talking is different to us - a lot of us probably find it kind of neat. But, to the deaf community, our glaring makes them feel like their conversation has eavesdroppers. Our stares, unbeknownst to us, are very rude and they create just one of the many barriers between the deaf and the hearing.

However, these barriers can be overcome and were addressed by Paul Owens and Denise Brown as they increased awareness of deaf and hard of hearing to the Penn State Campus last Thursday. The 90 minute presentation gave rise to a new form of communication - a communication not many are familiar with - as a deaf Brown did the majority of the speaking, or rather, communicating. Because many in the room were hard of hearing or deaf, there was an interpreter present as well as a "Type Well" overhead projector.

Brown opened the presentation with the story of President Bush's visit to Australia. As he was getting off the plane, Australians asked how he was and he replied with the hand motion "okay." An alarmed Australian culture got extremely upset. Why? Because he really motioned "a**hole" to them (at least that is what that means in their culture). Welcome to a culture clash! And it happens between the deaf and hearing community as well.

Owens said a big misperception that people have of the deaf is that they are deaf and dumb. "Because they have some voice, when they speak people think they are retarded," he said. "But they are way off base. They are simply trying to audiment their communication." Owens says almost all people who are deaf have full use of their vocal cords and use their voice along with mouthing words when communicating.

You may have also had a deaf or hard of hearing person say, "I need you to look at me when you are talking." And Owens said this is not just to lip read but for the deaf person to look at *how* you are talking to them. Someone who is deaf may use exaggerated facial expressions and exaggerated body language while a hearing person may not. A deaf person is highly sensitive to the use of facial expressions and body language when used by the people who are hearing. Owens noted, however, that lip-reading is not the primary way for the deaf community to understand the hearing. Using lip reading in normal conversation is very challenging because similar formations of the lips have quite different meanings, such as "I love you" and "Olive Juice."

Brown and Owens explained that there are several behaviors that have a negative impact on deaf people, such as staring and pointing at them. "People are fascinated with deaf people in common," explained Owen. "But how would you like it if you were having a conversation with someone and people were gathered around you, staring and pointing."

Because the hearing culture is uncomfortable with or uninformed about the deaf community, many people avoid and/or ignore them. "Oh no, hear comes that deaf person," said Owen. "Come on people, if you just ask them how it is best to communicate with them it will make everyone feel at ease." He suggests approaching them directly, not the interpreter. Also, ask them what you can do to make communication easier.

Another behavior with a negative impact is the hearing person talking louder and slower. "Perhaps only to the hard of hearing will this work," said Owens. "The key is to know who you are talking to." He said talking louder and slower will not help a deaf person to understand you any better. He explained that a big difference in the "knowing who your talking to rationale" is usually what environment the deaf person grew up in. If they grew up in a deaf community they will

have different ways of communicating than someone who grew up in a hearing community. It is essential to find out how to communicate with the deaf person. "Someone must break that barrier," said Owens. "You have to ask and get it out of the way rather than spend your time assuming."

Finally, Owens emphasized that those who are hard of hearing or deaf are simply different, not genetically malfunctioning as some assume. "People go up to a deaf person and say or think 'Wow! Is that a hearing aid? You look normal,'" said Owens. "Stupidity is stupidity. Of course they are normal." Owens said we must learn without bias. "It's not wrong, it's different."



An interpreter and Paul Owens inform students about various ways of communicating with the hearing impaired.

Photo by Rachel Sheperd