

Youth Leadership
By Wendy Mewhort

What do you think is the most important thing we learned in this Youth Leadership Class?

I hope, above all else, that you learned that everyone, everyone is a diamond in the rough.

I'd like to briefly review what we learned:

In our first session, we elected our officers. Larry Mewhort spoke to us about Chairmanship and how to have good meetings. A Chairman needs to keep control of meetings and to allow everyone to speak who wishes to speak by 1) Having an agenda; 2) Starting and ending on time; 3) Keeping the discussion on track; 4) Encouraging everyone to participate--not allowing any one person to dominate the discussion; and 5) Making certain the meeting's purpose is accomplished.

Session Two introduced us to public speaking. We reviewed how to write a speech with an opening, body and conclusion. We learned how to talk about ourselves--choosing one or two

interesting aspects of our lives and describing how they helped to shape us. We also learned how to write a speech about something we feel strongly about--having a viewpoint and following an outline such as: 1) Something is wrong; 2) Explain why it is wrong; 3) Explain how this wrong can be corrected; 4) Tell us what we should do.

In Session Three, Palmo Carpino gave us some effective strategies for impromptu speaking. First, take a second or two to decide on a point of view then state it; Second, justify your point of view with two or three specific reasons; Third, illustrate your point of view in terms of your own experience; and Fourth, finish with a summary or closing statement tied to the opening.

We also learned about conferences--a group coming together to solve a specific problem; and panel discussions--a group of individuals providing their own viewpoints on a certain subject.

In Session Four, John Snelson presented us with strategies for organizing our speeches. 1) Choose a purpose; 2) Open with an attention-getting question, demonstration or quotation based on this purpose; 3) Provide support--facts, proof, stories to illustrate your purpose; 4) Conclude with a summary of your points; an

appeal to action; and/or a story, quotation, or illustration that emphasises the point you are making. Memorizing your opening and closing makes your speech much more effective than if they are read.

Session Five was about listening. Marcia Nerbas gave us some effective listening strategies. 1) Look the speaker in the eye; 2) Sit attentively; 3) Look as if you are enjoying listening; 4) Ask questions; 5) Make comments like "I see," or "That's interesting." Summarizing what you are hearing from the speaker allows the speaker to agree that you are understanding what they are saying or allows them to rephrase something to clarify their point.

We also learned more about Parliamentary Procedure to help us to chair meetings more effectively. We learned about making motions and amendments.

Gestures in Speaking, was presented to us in Session Six by Joan Miller. She showed us how to use our hands and body movements to illustrate size, shape, direction; to punch the air or hit the lectern to accent a point; and to move hands together to show similarities or apart to show differences. She spoke about the importance of rehearsing gestures to make our movements look and feel natural.

She also suggested that we videotape ourselves or watch ourselves in front of a mirror.

In Session Seven, Tracey Horsley spoke to us about the use of voice and vocabulary strategies to make our speeches more effective. She suggested that we start with a deep breath to help us to relax and focus on our message, not our nervousness. She talked about balancing our voice between extremes of volume, pitch, rate and a pleasant sound quality. She suggested that we rehearse our talk and present with enthusiasm. Tracey also presented us with ideas such as using a Thesaurus and dictionary, and understanding the roots of words to help us in developing a wider vocabulary.

It is our hope that you have absorbed some of these strategies and will make use of them in your lives. My September Toastmaster magazine had an article by Victor Parachin titled "Laws for Positive Leadership." In it he lists 10 laws to make you a more positive leader.

1) Good leaders give more than they expect others to give. Ask yourself, how can I give a little more to the people around me? What can I do to lighten their load? How can I provide the best effort?

- 2) The only antidotes to failures and setbacks are optimism combined with perseverance. A setback is a sign that there is another, probably better, opportunity elsewhere.
- 3) See everyone as a diamond in the rough. There are no poor performers, only poor leaders who fail to find ways of helping others to succeed.
- 4) Express appreciation, accept responsibility. The best leaders credit subordinates both privately and publicly. They also accept responsibility when a project fails.
- 5) Remain balanced. Operate with a sense of humility no matter how important you become.
- 6) Show respect for people around you.
- 7) Treat everyone as family.
- 8) Be a source of inspiration. When appropriate, share your wisdom. Nurture those around you so they expand and grow.
- 9) Stress cooperation not competition. People can accomplish more together than individually.
- 10) Maintain a sense of humour.

Follow these rules and others will follow you.

I hope you will review all of the material and handouts you have been given. Now that you have completed this course they may be more understandable and more useful to you.

Those of us who took part in presenting this Youth Leadership program have a tremendous feeling of optimism to know that with young people like you becoming leaders, our future is in good hands.

Presented to Youth Leadership Class at Thornhill branch of Calgary Public Library on December 6, 2006