

A special boost in confidence

By Patti Magee
Daily Californian staff writer

Larry Hudson, a Franklin Delano Roosevelt buff and client at the Association of Retarded Citizens East County Training Facility, was terrified of speaking before a group of people, but not any longer.

Doreen Peabody, another client, said public speaking skills she's learned recently boosted her confidence and made her less shy.

The pair are among about a dozen at the ARC training facility in El Cajon who are members of a special Toastmasters public speaking program for people with developmental disabilities.

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The local program is about to gain statewide recognition. This week, a crew was at the facility to film program participants for use in a training video on public speaking for the developmentally disabled.

Area ARG Director Mike Wasyliw, a member of local Toastmasters chapter, organized

the ARC club in October. The purpose of Toastmasters is to develop public speaking skills and help people overcome their fear of getting up before a group of people.

He said he got the idea from Michael Long, a member of the state Department of Developmental Services Agency.

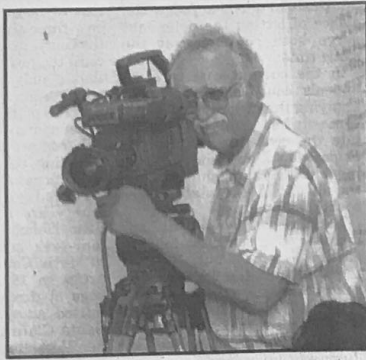
Wasyliw also said he thought such a program would boost the confidence and self-esteem of ARC clients.

"Public speaking is like anything else; it takes practice to become good at it and improve one's skills," Wasyliw said. "When I started this group, it had 12 participants. Now we have more than 20."

He said the transformation has been great to see.

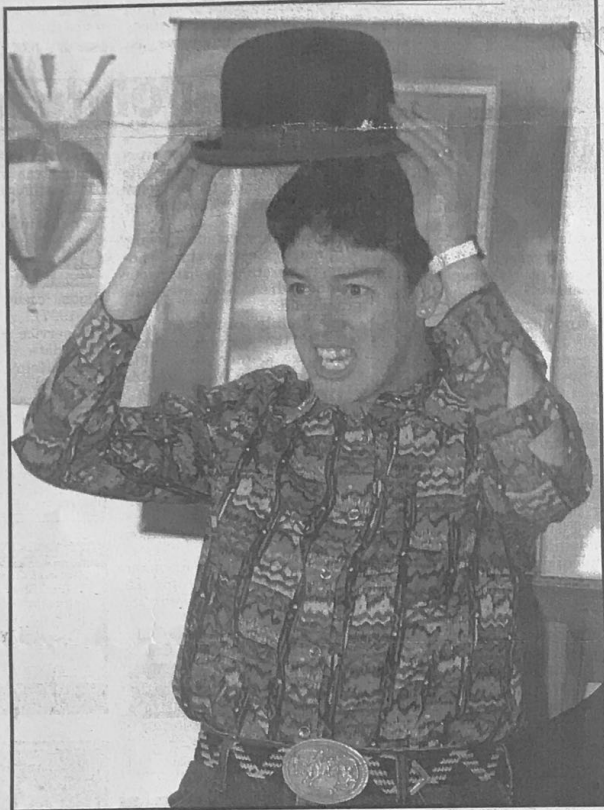
"We had people who were afraid to get up before a group and speak, and now they go the podium willingly," he said.

The ARC group meets twice a month for about two hours. The meetings follow the traditional Toastmasters format: opening with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by spontaneous speeches, prepared speeches and evalu-



Left, cameraman Bob Gardner from the state Department of Developmental Disabilities videotapes the speakers group. Footage of the speakers will be edited into a training video on the public speaking that will be distributed throughout the state.

Ron Dipping/The Daily Californian



Crystal Simmons demonstrates her English riding derby during a public speech at the East County Training Center in El Cajon. The speakers' group follows the format developed for public speaking by The Toastmasters.

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Larry Hudson speaks on the life of President Franklin Roosevelt at the speakers' meeting at the East County Training Center on Wednesday.

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ations. Members research and prepare speeches on different subjects for each meeting.

On Wednesday, participants' speeches ran the gamut from FDR to golfing, favorite vacations, music and Arabian horses.

Long, who was in town from Sacramento to help oversee the filming project, said the skills the ARC clients learn will help them when they go job hunting. They also will be able to speak before service organizations about what ARC does and show they can lead meaningful lives and communicate better with one another.

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Michael Long

can be trained," he said. "Some studies also show that they listen to one another better than they listen to (ARC) staff or case managers. I'd like to see the program that started here go statewide and be used at other ARC facilities and supported employment workshops. These people can also tell their

stories to service organizations. I think it's more interesting if they can hear someone's life story. Usually these groups just hear someone giving boring statistics."

Hudson said speaking before a group took some getting used to, but now that he's gotten some pointers, it's a task he enjoys.

"After two or three speeches, I found I liked it," he said. "I learned that you have to look around the room at different people and not just at one person."

Irene Holquin said being in Toastmasters has been fun.

"I learned to speak loudly and clearly," she said. "It's helped me because I want to be able to speak for myself."