

Come on in: Campus open houses promote communication

By Jennifer Whitham Johnson

Everyone knows communication is one of the keys to success in any relationship.

Why should it be any different between co-workers? Simpson College employs 234 individuals. Each with their own work space, their own skills, their own talents and their own duties.

That being said, it is hard to argue that the campus community couldn't benefit from a committee designed to help these individuals gain a better understanding of their co-workers' responsibilities as well as a clearer recognition of how those responsibilities affect and relate to each person's job.

Enter the communications committee. Formed for the above-mentioned purposes, among others, this committee is made up of 11 Simpson employees including Shelly Priebe, Susan Nady, Brenda Wickett, Karen Duncan, Sue Bowlin, Jeni Mertes, Betty Dyer, Lynette Anderson, Sandy Condon, Sarah Hobart and Julie Miller.

With the lofty goal of opening the often-closed streets of correspondence between offices and departments, the group set out to make Simpson a more efficient and open working environment.

Priebe, who is adult learning accounts receivable clerk and cashier, was instrumental in initially forming the committee, partly in response to a distressing phone call she received. Several months ago Priebe took a phone call in the business

office from a student and was preparing to transfer him when she learned that he had already been transferred seven times.

"I did not transfer him and proceeded to track down the information he needed on my own. It was somewhat difficult and ultimately it was evident that a lack of communication increased the problem and certainly his frustration," says Priebe.

Thus, Priebe contacted the individuals on campus to which she transfers the most phone calls to and from which she receives

number of times a caller is transferred, the communications committee developed a lexicon to be kept near the phone. This sheet is based on a "Where can I find..." format and is designed to assist persons in transferring callers to the proper place. They also created a "Tips and Tricks" sheet to educate employees about some of the phone system features.

On a somewhat larger scale, the group also developed the open house series on campus. The original idea came from

Bowlin, who is mailroom supervisor. Bowlin expressed during a committee meeting that although she had worked at Simpson for 10 years, she felt as though she didn't know everybody. Adding that perhaps a better understanding of what the other offices on campus do would lead to a stronger appreciation among co-workers. Priebe

and fellow committee members agreed.

"Communication between offices could always be enhanced and emphasized to help us all do our jobs better," Priebe says. Adding, "If we think outside our own spaces, if we know people outside our own spaces, we'll be more likely to communicate outside our own spaces."

This effort to get employees out and about began last fall with the first open house in Brenton Student Center. It has continued with a number of other campus buildings following suit.

"Communication between offices could always be enhanced and emphasized to help us all do our jobs better."

Shelly Priebe, adult learning accounts receivable clerk and cashier

the most transferred calls and began to pursue the idea of a collaborative network to address the issue of directing phone calls. Upon doing so she discovered a great deal of frustration existed regarding communication between offices.

"We've become kind of a support group. When we have a question or we want to let the others know about a new policy, etc., we have formed an address list so that all members see the same question by e-mail. Our intent is that we will be able to do our jobs better and give better service," shares Priebe.

In an effort to cut down on the

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Harrigan

What do feminism and equality mean?

by CoryAnne Harrigan, assistant professor of English

I've been thinking about feminism lately; it's been kind of unavoidable.

Simpson's production of *The Vagina Monologues* (which, if you hadn't heard, raised even more than the goal amount of \$6,000 for the Warren County Domestic Violence Coalition), Women's History Month, a summer institute devoted to the work of women writers: these are all activities or projects that have filled my days recently, in the form of rehearsals, forum events, meetings, and applications—and every one of them has the interests of women at its heart.

Such events don't invoke the concept of feminism for everyone, or even for every woman. In fact, many women attempt to distance feminism from their daily lives, because they consider feminism to be contrary to their interests—a threat to their lifestyle.

They believe that their relationships (especially those with men), their fertility, their outward appearance, their personal safety, and their civic involvement are more imperiled by the interference of feminist dogma than by the existence of misogynist structures.

I imagine what goes through the heads of these women when they witness a "Take Back the Night" rally or read op-ed pieces about salary equity: "Can't these women just shut up? They're making it harder for all of us."

While I don't think I've ever felt quite so threatened by feminism, it made me very uncomfortable at one time. In my sophomore year of college, I took a women's studies course. The professor asked the students on the first

day of class to respond to the following in-class writing prompt: "Do you consider yourself a feminist?" I remember providing a rather backhanded response to this question, saying that I preferred to think of myself as a "humanist" (by which I meant to signal my interest in the welfare of all humans, regardless of sex—I wasn't thinking of Renaissance humanism in those days).

Why was I so reluctant to call myself a feminist? Well, for one thing, I probably didn't have a working definition for that word, except that I loosely associated it with late 1960s counter-culture and bra burnings and well-worn copies of *Our Bodies, Our Selves*.

But my failure to identify with feminism was not reactionary; it was more complex. In fact, I was probably more open-minded than many of my peers. I was raised in a fairly liberal household, and I never thought of my options as being limited because of my sex. My impulse to call myself a "humanist" rather than a "feminist" stemmed from my belief that neither women nor men should be constrained by their sex. First and foremost, I was an idealist.

Many of my students reject feminism for this very reason. They think Americans have moved beyond gender wars, so feminism, as a political movement, must be backward and morally suspect. But I changed my mind about feminism in college and came to identify myself as a feminist for a reason that remains relevant: the premise that the playing field is level—that men and women are now full equals—is wrong.

Do men share full responsibility with women for conception and child rearing? Is rape—a crime that robs women of their

lives by forever altering their identities—held on par in the judicial system with murder? Can a female politician (Hilary Rodham Clinton comes to mind) conduct business without having members of the media speculate on the current stage of her menstrual cycle?

Discrimination against women has certainly declined in the last thirty years (thanks largely to feminists like Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan), but it has not disappeared. Actually, I think it is subtler now than ever, and therefore more dangerous.

Feminism—the idea that women collectively must strive to assure their rights, safety, and self-respect—cannot be discarded until all humans (yes, not just "men") have achieved true equality.

I'm much more cynical now than I was in college. Equality is evasive, in part because it is relative.

As my students might say in response to any number of controversial issues, "Where do you draw the line?" Is the right to vote a sufficient gauge by which to measure the status of women worldwide? Or the right to prosecute domestic abuse and workplace sexual harassment? Or the right to obtain adequate health care and birth control?

Many American women take these privileges for granted. Those of us who don't—and who recognize that more women here and around the world suffer from the lack of such rights than benefit from the existence of them—embrace feminism as a right in itself.

So far all but three buildings either have held their open house or have one scheduled in the near future. The remaining three have expressed an interest, however time and other issues have presented themselves as obstacles. Despite these challenges, the open houses that have been held thus far have been well-received campus wide.

"I was very pleased with the number of people from the Simpson community as well as the Indianola community who came," says Marvin Van Wyk, professor of mathematics and computer science, who was involved in organizing the Carver Science Open House earlier this month.

"We had people of all ages from kids in the elementary grades to seniors from the community that enjoyed the many demonstrations we had on hand," adds Van Wyk.

Although Carver Science is the only open house that has been publicized to the Indianola community, anyone wishing to

tour a building during an open house is welcome.

If an excuse to get out of one's work space for a while to meet fellow employees over snacks and punch isn't enough to get people to attend, an incentive has been added.

"The board of trustees has given us the ability to offer two \$100 gift certificates to the restaurant of [the winner's] choice," says Bowlin. "There is one for faculty and one for staff. At each open house we have two boxes where they can sign up, so the more open houses they go to the better their chance of winning."

Whatever one's reasons for attending though, the communications committee's goals remain the same.

Priebe says, "It is valuable for us to build a unified culture rather than a fragmented culture. We felt that the open house series would be a helpful venue to promote this kind of unity."

Upcoming open houses: Mary Berry and Art Center, Thursday, March 27 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Athletic department, Tuesday, April 15 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

LIFE AFTER FIVE



Bratz

A look at life with Carmen Bratz

Title: coordinator of institutional grant support

Started at Simpson: March 2002

Family: husband of six-and-a-half years, Jeff and two cats, Flash and Dexter.

Lives: West Des Moines

Likes most about job: "I love the variety. There's so much more to grant work than just writing, so everyday is different and interesting. Also, I get to work with a number of different people across campus."

Recent vacation: Las Vegas with her mom and sister.

Outside of Simpson: enjoys traveling, reading and is enrolled in two summer classes at Simpson.

CALENDAR

APRIL

April 1

Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow Robert Peck, president of the Center for Constitutional Litigation and senior director of Legal Affairs and Policy Research for the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, will deliver a lecture in Camp Lounge at 7 p.m.

April 3

Simpson graduate Christine Willmsen, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize while with the *Dayton Daily News* and now an investigative reporter with the *Seattle Times*, will deliver a lecture in Camp Lounge at 7 p.m.

April 7

Award-winning poet, playwright and creative non-fiction writer Diane Gregory will read from her works in Camp Lounge at 7 p.m.

April 8

Contributors to the Simpson literary journal *Sequel* will read from their works in Dirlam Lounge of Smith Chapel at 12:30 p.m.

The Simpson College Jazz Ensemble in its spring concert under the direction of Michael Duke in Lekberg Hall at 8 p.m.

April 10

Venise Berry will lecture on "Weight and Wellness," in Camp Lounge at 7:30 p.m.

April 11, 12 and 13

Theatre Simpson presents "The Pot Boiler" and "The Game," student directed one-act plays in Barnum Studio Theatre at 7:30 p.m. on the 11th and 12th and 1 p.m. on the 13th.

April 13

Simpson College Choir and Chorale in concert under the direction of James Kim in Smith Chapel at 7:30 p.m.

April 15

Simpson College Wind Ensemble in its spring concert under the direction of Andy McMahan in Pote Theatre at 7 p.m.

NEW FACE

Marlys Rizzi has joined the adult learning staff as assistant director/academic advisor, Ankeny campus.



Rizzi

Prior to her hire at Simpson, Rizzi worked at Prevention Concepts, a drug prevention agency in Indianola. Rizzi takes over her new position April 1.

THE CORNERSTONE

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FOOTNOTES

Assistant professors of biology, **Jackie Brittingham** and **Amy Doling** attended the annual conference on the First-Year Experience Feb. 22-25 in Atlanta, Ga. They attended presentations on such topics as teaching, curricular and co-curricular strategies and assessment of first-year programs.

Bob Gieber, professor of French, attended the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Minneapolis, Minn., March 6, 7 and 8.

CoryAnne Harrigan, assistant professor of English attended the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting in Toronto, March 27-29, at which she presented her paper, "Mars in Drag: Romanticizing Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida." The panel, "Violent Unions: Love and War in the Romance Tradition," examined the works of Italian and English poets of the Renaissance.

James Kim, instructor of music, attended ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) National Convention in New York City from Feb. 11-15. He also did a choral workshop at First United Methodist Church in Indianola on March 12.

Werner Kolln, professor of chemistry and physics, attended the Third Annual Water Monitoring Conference on the assessment of Iowa's water resources on Feb. 20 in Ames.

Scott LaGraff, instructor of music, gave a recital of German song at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., on Jan. 10 and at McLennan Community

College in Waco, Tex., on Jan. 27. While at McLennan Community College, he also gave a master class in vocal technique.

Eduardo Magalhaes, associate professor of political science, finished his three-year term as faculty advisor representative on the Midwest Model United Nations Board of Directors at the 43rd MMUN Conference in St. Louis from Feb. 12-15. As the senior FA board member, he served as chair of the faculty advisor meetings and chair of the Scholarship Committee. He also presented information on Simpson's Model UN program at a workshop for faculty advisors during the conference.

Bob Nutgrass, associate professor of physical education, recently attended the Central District Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. The nine-state district held the convention from Thursday to Saturday, Feb. 6-8 in Fargo, N.D. As past president of Iowa AHPERD, he was a voting delegate to the CD Representative Assembly. He was also elected as the Leisure Recreation Chair for Central District and began those duties at the end of the convention to run through the next year, when Central District will be held in Duluth, Minn.

Tom Schmidt, assistant professor of management, attended the Collegiate Entrepreneurs Iowa Conference in Iowa City on Feb. 21. He has also been elected co-chair of the Indianola Downtown Coalition.

Ron Warnet, professor of chemistry gave a research seminar titled, "Mapping Virulence in Agrobacterium," on Feb. 21 at Des Moines University.