

The Fayetteville Observer

Effective leaders learn to listen

Willis M. Watt

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In a Cheers & Jeers letter the writer wrote, "Jeers to a pain center. Since I have been going, they are listening, but they are not hearing me."

Recognizing the frustration expressed, it is worth pointing out that hearing and listening are not synonymous words. Hearing is the initial physiological phase of the listening process. According to listening experts Andrew Wolvin and Carolyn Coakley, listening actually involves receiving (i.e., hearing) the message, categorizing the information, interpreting the message received, and ultimately responding appropriately. Obviously the writer's health care personnel need to learn to be more effective listeners, not just hearers.

Judi Brownell in her book "Listening: Attitudes, Principles, and Skills," suggests that "as technology increases the number of messages and speed with which they are delivered, listeners must confront a constantly changing and increasingly complex listening environment." In such an environment we need leaders capable of effective listening.

Hearing

Leading is listening. It has been estimated that 70percent of an adult's waking time involves communicating with others. Listening researcher Carl Weaver reported that 45percent is spent listening, 30 percent talking, 16 percent reading, and 9 percent writing.

What about you and me? Are we really all that good at listening? You have an opportunity to develop not only your listening skills, but to prepare to take a leadership role in our community.

The **Institute for Community Leadership** will host training sessions focusing on leadership enhancement activities and discussions with some of Fayetteville's and Cumberland County's most effective and dynamic leaders. Topics covered include communication skills such as effective listening, leadership training, community issues, and service opportunities on a variety of commissions and voluntary boards. Each session focuses on one area for community involvement including such aspects as arts and culture, city and county government, education, and not-for-profit human services.

The schedule includes seven monthly training sessions beginning in September and ending in April (excluding December). Each session is conducted at the location of the sponsor providing the training. This feature allows you to experience places and facilities where you may not have been before, thus broadening your exposure to the community.

As a participant you receive many benefits including: (a) opportunities to participate in key community decisions, (b) interaction with community leaders, (c) opportunities to volunteer for

leadership positions fitting your skills, talents, and interests, (d) building relationships with others who are committed to self- and community-betterment, and (e) a chance to polish leadership skills and abilities.

Registration

The Institute for Community Leadership is seeking applications for the 2015-2016 Class XII. If you or someone you know is interested in being a participant, then go to ICL's website www.leadership4us.org to download, complete, and submit the application form. The ICL leadership development program is free for all participants. Applications are due not later than July 13.

For more information, you can contact me at 630-7191 or by email at wmwatt@methodist.edu.

As a potential community leader, heed Dr. Anil Kr Sinha's advice: "Communication skills are essential to share and convey our ideas and knowledge. If your skills are lacking, begin first by focusing on your listening skills."

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http://www.fayobserver.com/opinion/local_columns/willis-m-watt-effective-leaders-learn-to-listen/article_e3592eaf-59d4-5bd0-abf9-46bb37224359.html