

# Students bring life to speeches

BY ZOE MARTIN  
Assistant Features Editor

King Leonidas adjusted his toga, V donned his mask, Hillary Clinton smoothed her pantsuit and all three began to address the crowd in the Hub of the Student Union Building on Nov. 20.

Professor of communication Barry Poyner planned this "Night at the Museum" event as a component of his COMM 270 and 385 public speaking classes. He assigned speeches from historical figures and movie characters, which students were to present in character and in costume at the event. Poyner said he wanted the students to experience a speaking environment outside the classroom.

"To have some fun was one of the main objectives and to allow them to also perform in a different way," he said. "I've allowed them to experiment with their deliveries, and there are a couple students I was really pleased to see that they were more dramatic — more dynamic — than they had previously been."

Poyner said the students were skeptical at first about the assignment.

"Initial reaction was, 'Oh no, what is this?'" he said. "Initially they had some wonderment about it, and then I

think they grew more fond to the idea, and then when they asked to do the movie speeches they continued to get more excited about it."

Poyner said the idea for the event came to him from several sources.

"When my kids were in elementary school they had an event where they had to dress up like a famous Missourian," he said. "They had to go around, and they had a little spiel that they gave and I thought that was neat. Then I saw

the movie "Night at the Museum" and I thought, 'Oh, how fun,' and so I was looking for a way to get the students more into the speeches."

In the movie "Night at the Museum," statues of historical figures in a museum, like Teddy Roosevelt and Sacagawea, come to life for late-night shenanigans and wisdom-sharing with Ben Stiller's security guard character.

Poyner hosted a similar event last year, but not on the same scale. He said that this year, the presentations attracted about 100 students, who were invited to vote for their favorite historical speech and favorite movie speech from among the 35 speakers. Freshman Rachel Strull received the top historical speech vote for her commencement speech given by J. K. Rowling, and freshmen Paul Bischoff

"I tried to pick a speech that had a lot of personality, something that you could easily get into."

Dani Dell'Orco  
Freshman



Krista Goodman/Index

Students at the "Night at the Museum" speech event in the SUB Hub Nov. 20 listen to freshman Sara Arnold's portrayal of Queen Gorgo from the movie "300."

and Dani Dell'Orco tied for the top movie speech vote, portraying Tyler Durden in "Fight Club" and Homer Stokes in "O, Brother, Where Art Thou?" respectively.

Dell'Orco said she chose Stokes because she wanted a speech with lots of character.

"I tried to pick a speech that had a lot of personality, something that you could easily get into, so I opted to go for the opposite gender," she said.

Dell'Orco stuffed her white button-down shirt with a towel to create a pot belly for her character and added suspenders and a hat, all to add to the authenticity of her speech. Another important trick to achieve this was in her accent.

"I was a little worried about putting on a Southern accent," she said.

"But it just flows as soon as you get into it, so it's not that bad."

Junior Marvin Bemby also worried about achieving the right vocal quality. He portrayed V from the film "V for Vendetta" and described his speech as one of the most challenging for the class because it mostly consists of words beginning with the v sound.

"I knew I kind of wanted to do it, but I didn't know if I could pull it off," he said. "Later he asked me, and I didn't have any other speech in mind, so I decided to go all in."

To practice his speech, Bemby took cues from another movie.

"I saw the movie 'The Great Debaters,' and so I put pens and wallets and other objects in my mouth [like they did in the movie] so I could practice enunciating," he said.

In putting together his costume, Bemby borrowed a cape, rose and even V's signature mask from friends. He said he was slightly worried about getting the speech just right, but two factors calmed his nerves.

"I figure, I play football in front of hundreds of people, so if I mess up, it's OK," Bemby said. "Plus I'll have the mask on, so if I mess up, nobody will know who I am."

Freshmen Eian Zellner attended the event to support a friend, but said he enjoyed seeing all the other students' speeches as well.

"It's interesting to see what people choose — I've been curious about Braveheart over here," he said, indicating a student decked out as William Wallace in blue and white face paint and a kilt.

# Program pairs families, international students

BY PAUL BISCHOFF  
Staff Reporter

Junior Nilesh Amatya of Kathmandu, Nepal, took a vacation to Colorado with the people he calls his second mother and father.

Amatya joined a program at the University called International Friends, an organization that pairs international students with local families to promote sharing of cultures and a family environment for international students. A trip to Colorado is just one of the experiences Amatya shared with his American family — he also celebrated birthdays, anniversaries and Thanksgiving.

"We are coming to a different country, far away from my home," Amatya said. "We won't be having any parents over here, any relatives. ... International Friends, it's giving us a family."

Amatya works for the International Friends program. He said many volunteer families are couples whose own children have moved out.

"When I went to the house, they were so very

warm, welcoming," Amatya said. "They have helped me so much for everything. Right now, I don't feel awkward visiting them. I just feel like [I'm] visiting my own parents."

Amatya said about 80 percent of international students are looking to be paired but that there are not enough families in the program. The program sends out fliers, and representatives attend college fairs and open houses at local high schools, but the number of student applications still greatly outweighs the number of volunteers.

"International students, we are here alone and we need someone so that we can share our culture or we can rely upon when we have any problems," he said. "If our community is involved, then we can foster our program. We can bring new ideas, but if you don't have the families and you don't have anyone to pair the international student with, how can we make the program bigger?"

Junior Adam Conway, co-chair of International Friends, has been working to find new ways to recruit families for the program. Besides the other

tactics, area churches promise to bring in more participants, he said.

"Families and students can do it at whatever pace they want," Conway said. "We have some [who are] very, very active. They bring all their friends over to the family's house and do this regularly. Some students just meet up a few times a semester."

Conway said there are no real criteria or expectations set by the program. International Friends plans events such as trivia nights, film festivals and dinners throughout the semester, in addition to the families meeting on their own time.

"A lot of the future depends on how many families we can get," he said.

People who volunteer to be paired with an international student can choose to stay with that student until he or she graduates and even be host to more than one student. Kay Cowan, Center for Student Involvement secretary, has been paired with Luu Duong from Vietnam for more than three years.

"My husband had passed away, and I was

looking for another outlet to keep my mind occupied on something else," Cowan said. "I grew up during the Vietnam War and there was a lot of animosity toward the Vietnamese, but that was a long time ago."

Duong is Cowan's second international friend since she joined the program. Cowan said she hopes to stay with her until Duong graduates and stay in touch afterward.

"During the first year, Luu came out to the house quite a bit because she lived in the dorms and she liked to cook," Cowan said. "She didn't like the food. ... It's interesting to watch her cook because they use so many different things than what we use here in the United States."

Cowan said she had been working at Truman for more than five years before she found out about International Friends. She said she was thrilled when she found the program.

"I just love being with those kids," Cowan said. "They're so much fun. You can learn so much just by listening to them talk."



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