

TRU *Life*



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STORIES COME
ALIVE**

Disney's
"Bedtime
Stories" cute
but not award
worthy

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Thursday, January 15, 2009

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Sign here

A sign language course gives students the opportunity to learn a non-traditional foreign language

BY SHANNON WALTER
Staff Reporter

A sign language class offers a bilingual option to students on Truman's campus.

Clinical supervisor Sheila Garlock started teaching sign language at the University seven years ago because of a high demand for the subject in the communication disorders department.

Garlock said the course offers sign language at an introductory level to all students lucky enough to get into the one section offered. The communication disorders department is understaffed, preventing the hiring

of more staff for extra sign language courses, she said. If two levels were offered, sign language would be a foreign language option for Truman students over more traditional foreign language choices.

"I took sign language in college, and I had always had interest in it," Garlock said. "So when I got an opportunity to teach this class, I did some self study in order to be proficient enough to teach the course."

Proficiency in sign language is not required for communication disorders majors, but it is important for students wanting to work with the deaf population, Garlock said. Students within the communication disorders major

practice as speech pathologists in the clinic located in Barnett Hall. Garlock said she practiced speech pathology in public schools, private practice and with the department of mental health before she was drawn to teaching other students how to help clients.

"If you have had one hour of a sign language class, your sensitivity to the challenges of being a deaf person in a hearing society is greater," said Kittilu Maxson, a certified sign language interpreter.

Maxson attended Wabunsee Community College in Sugar Grove, Ill., to become a certified interpreter.

"I have done a couple things that have been in an all-deaf environment, and it's so fascinating to be the one that is on the outside," Maxson said.

Maxson is a first grade teacher in Springfield, Mo., and uses

sign language in her class to aid in the learning process by helping kinesthetic learners pair movement with memorization.

"My students know that if they're not watching me, they miss something in class," Maxson said. "It's a way to control, it's a way to get their interest and hopefully it's a way to help them."

Maxson used sign language with her own infant children in order to help them develop gross motor skills with their hands when their voices and mouths were not ready to begin speech.

"Your brain is ready for language at about four months old, allow-

ing infants to communicate with their parents," Maxson said.

She taught her children 30 to 50 signs as infants, which relieved their frustrations by allowing them to show her their needs.

Sophomore Kevin Regan said he was drawn to the subject of sign language because communication is such an important part of society.

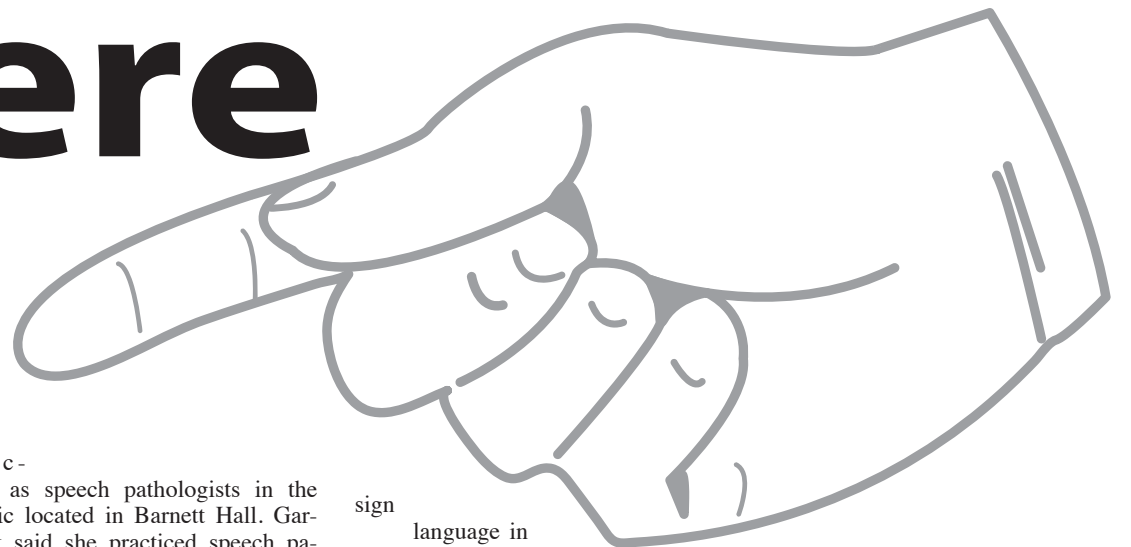
"I am very passionate about disabled studies because it is so ambiguous in American society," Regan said.

Regan is a Spanish major and Italian studies minor who became interested in sign language in high school through a senior project.

"Seventy-five percent of parents who have deaf children do not know sign," Regan said. "So they don't know what their child is thinking or feeling or who their child is. It's atrocious."

He said he wants to be an interpreter in order to help the deaf communicate with others who do not know sign language.

Truman offers the introductory sign language class during the summer for students who are unable to take the class during the year.



Maxson is a first grade teacher in Springfield, Mo., and uses



Photos by Brian O'Shaughnessy

Students watch as clinical supervisor Sheila Garlock starts off the semester by signing for her sign language class.



Around the 'Ville

Jan. 16

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Game Night

Old School Game Night

SUB Down Under
Free

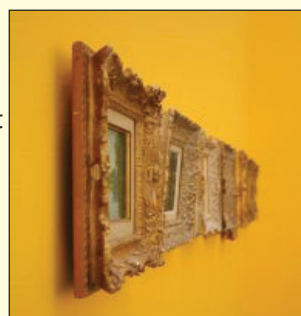


Jan. 20

Art Exhibit

Lineweight- Exhibit of Contemporary Drawing

University Art Gallery Free



Jan. 21

12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Luncheon

Unity: The Future from the Mountaintop

Georgian Room A
\$8.00

