

Moon woman speaks for success

By Joanne Braun

Staff writer

Gum bands, "red" up, nebbly and "yunz."

Most people who live in western Pennsylvania recognize these words and phrases as "Pittsburghese."

Gum bands are rubber bands. "Red" up is clean up and nebbly is nosey.

SPOTLIGHT

It's all pretty familiar to those who live in the area. However, those who aren't accustomed to the native tongue will scratch their heads in confusion if a Pittsburgher tells them they are going "dun tun" for lunch.

That is where Lynda Stucky of Moon Township can help. Her unique business, Clearly Speaking, helps people break speaking habits that can be detrimental to their progress in the business world.

As for Pittsburgh natives, she says, not only do they use "Pittsburghese" that might not be understood by out of towners, they also have a habit of tightly clenching their mouths and crunching their teeth resulting in a muffled, tense sound.

She teaches them to open their mouths more and relax their muscles, making for a better, more traveled sound.

There are times when she will get calls from business owners explaining that they have hired bright and up and coming employees, but that their communication skills are holding them back.

Stucky says not only might non-natives not understand them, but they also might cast a negative image with the Pittsburgh'ese kind of speech.

She explains that some people who hear a Pittsburgher speak might get the impression that the person is uneducated, which would impede the employee's progress on the job.

"I've heard some people say 'an nat' after every single sentence. Their speech can interfere with the content of the message, and it sounds completely different with people who aren't familiar with



Lynda Stucky

it."

Stucky also helps those from foreign countries speak better English. However, she says, the business is not like an English as a Second Language course. Those who come to her for help are well versed in the language but might need help pronouncing vowel and consonant sounds.

For example a native from India might know the English language very well, but the way he speaks it might confuse his business associates or patients if he practices medicine.

Stucky explains that India natives speak in a sort of staccato voice in which they give the same amount of time to every syllable.

"We lengthen our vowels for emphasis, and that staccato is very different for our ears. We have a hard time understanding it."

She says she is trying to get more doctors involved in her program because if there is anyone who people shouldn't have a hard time understanding, it is their doctor.

"It's already highly emotional at the doctor's office, and that just adds to the tension."

Stucky recommends that those who enroll in the program meet with her at least once an hour once a week to stay on track, but most people are so busy, they prefer once every two weeks for two hours.

It usually takes 16 hours of

training to complete the program especially for those with foreign accents.

She also gives her clients a CD to listen to and asks that they practice 30 minutes a day. "They are learning new sounds for consonant and vowels and are training their mouth muscles to do new things they haven't done before."

Stucky, a speech pathologist at Washington Hospital, says as far as she knows, her's is the only business of its kind in the Pittsburgh area. She has a bachelor's degree in general science from University of Kansas, where she also worked as a speech pathologist.

While in Kansas, she had helped a doctor with his speech and she has helped others in the medical field who must talk about and explain their research and development projects to others.

She moved to the Pittsburgh area in 1994, staying home for several years to raise her children. In 2000 she attended a speech pathology conference and learned how to start her own business.

She began Clearly Speaking, which she runs from her home, in 2001.

She says she hopes to be able to make her business her only full time income in the future. "That's my dream."

For more information, call Clearly Speaking at 412-264-1532.