

# The Huntsville Times

## Train brain to recall names

Local officials like author's Memory Matters seminar

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Huntsville City Councilman Bill Kling is known for his door-to-door campaigning style in his district.

When it comes to remembering a voter's name, he's occasionally at a loss. But he never forgets where they live.

"I remember people by their houses," said Kling, who recently attended a



Bill Kling

Memory Matters seminar at the Von Braun Center. "My biggest problem is when they move."

The seminar, in conjunction with the League of Municipalities meeting in late April, was led by motivational speaker and author Paul Mellor, who never used a note during his hour-long presentation. He gave tips for remembering things such as people's names by using word association: Think of a gym when you are introduced to a man named Jim or a janitor when you meet a woman named Jan.

"Memory is something that affects everyone," Mellor said before the meeting. "There is no such thing as a bad memory ... only an untrained one."

Mellor, a former insurance agent who founded Success Links 15 years ago, is now a highly sought-after speaker throughout the United States. In addition to his stop in Huntsville, he had recently been coast to coast, speaking in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Oregon.

"I didn't have a great memory, but when I was in Toastmasters, I found a book on memory and started reading it," said Mellor, who lives in Richmond, Va., and is the father of 6-year-old twin boys. "Once I read the information, I realized it was techniques we can all use."

So he set about learning how to improve his own memory. He discovered one important fact: "You can't remember more than two things at a time."

He became so proficient in his memorization skills he began sharing his tips with others. Then he wrote his first book, "Memory Matters," in which he gives answers to 100 common memory lapses, such as how to find misplaced glasses, lost keys, etc., in a lighthearted manner.

Mellor, 47, asks rhetorical questions in the book, such as: "I can't recall if I owe Larry \$10 or \$20. How should I go about paying him back?"

His answer: Give Larry a \$20 bill and ask for change.

"The best medicine to improve one's memory is to lend money. The worst medicine is to be on the receiving end of a cash advance."

Mellor has written 12 books on how to improve your memory, such as recalling names, numbers, historical facts, Bible verses and even all the U.S. presidents, from George Washington to George W. Bush.

He touts this easy technique for remembering the name of a new person you meet: Repeat it as soon as you hear it. Upon being introduced to someone named John Smith, say, "John, it's nice to meet you" rather than "It's nice to meet you, John."

Mellor said, when meeting a person, it is critical to pay attention to their name when you are in the "red" area, which is five feet or less from the person.

"You have to focus and concentrate on getting the name," Mellor said. "If we treat that person as the most important person in the world, you will remember them. Dale Carnegie said a person's name is the sweetest name in the world. If you misspell it or mispronounce it, it will put you in a bad light."

Hartselle Mayor Dwight Tankersley and Hartselle City Clerk Rita Lee were in the audience because both said they had trouble remembering things, especially names. They hoped Mellor could help their forgetfulness.

"I wanted to learn some tips on remembering people's names and some techniques to be able to recall what speakers say at meetings," Tankersley said.

Lee agreed.

"I will meet people and I need

to introduce someone to them and it's very embarrassing to forget their name," Lee said.

Six weeks later, Tankersley, Lee and Kling all said they have tried some of the tips they learned on their constituents, and the training has helped.

"I can remember people's names better so it was definitely worth going to," Lee said of the seminar.

"I've tried some of the methods (Mellor) gave by repeating the name first and by association," said Tankersley, who became mayor of Hartselle in October 2004. "It has helped and it was one of the better seminars I went to."

Kling, who was first elected to the City Council in 1988, said he is also trying to use more name association because it's just "good manners" to remember a person's name.

"We're in the people business, and everyone likes to hear their name," Kling said. "I didn't come out of the seminar expecting to have a great memory, but it was a good introduction to whet people's appetite. People are very surprised when I knock on their door and even more surprised when I remember their names."

For more information or to order Mellor's books, which range in price from \$7 to \$10, write to Paul Mellor, 1405 Saint Joan Court, Richmond, VA 23236; e-mail greatmemory@comcast.net, or call 804-276-4139.



Dwight Tankersley



Rita Lee