

# Roma likes to give lip

BOEL ERIKSSON

IF talking is not your problem but hearing is, there is help at Pennant Hills.

Better Hearing Australia offers classes at the Community Health Centre to help people experiencing hearing loss master lip-reading.

The weekly classes are held by volunteer Roma Wood, who has been teaching lip-reading for 35 years.

"I find it very satisfying to be able to teach such an important communication skill," she said.

She also teaches people how to manage hearing loss and gives advice on equipment such as hearing aids.

Ms Wood first experienced hearing loss at the age of five.

She said her hearing deteriorated "fairly quickly" during her teenage years and her ability to read lips proved invaluable at school.

Despite receiving a cochlear implant 15 years ago and a second one this year, Ms Wood said lip-reading was still a tool she used every day.

"I don't think people realise how important it is," she said. "I have my cochlear implants but I still need my lip-reading skills."

She said mastering the skill could take anything from months to several years depending on the person's ability to implement it into their lifestyle.

"We teach them how to see and read speech movements and make it into a communication skill, but



Roma Wood with lip-reading students Ian Williams, Don Evans, Doreen Standard and Ursula Goessling.

it is then up to the person to adjust what they have learned to their life. Some people adapt quickly, other people find it hard," she said.

Ms Wood believes being able to lip-read could prevent situations of people with a hearing loss feeling left out of conversations.

"It can be quite hurtful to ask people to repeat something and them saying, 'Oh, it doesn't mat-

ter'," she said. "But we can't blame other people. Hearing loss is your problem and it is up to you to learn how to cope with it."

She said attending the classes was also a good way of meeting people in the same situation.

The weekly classes are held at Pennant Hills Community Health Centre every Tuesday.

Inquiries: Roma Wood on 9744 0167.