

**October 2012 Issue**

## IEP Educators Study Civility and Leadership at the VRSII Fall Symposium



**Carolyn Ball,**  
VRSII Executive Director

The cost of civility is small – a small amount of additional effort and time, but the cost of incivility is high and diminishes a student’s learning experience and a professional

interpreter’s job satisfaction, according to Carol Patrie, Ph.D.,

one of the four presenters at the VRS Interpreting Institute’s (VRSII) fall symposium titled “Civility and Leadership in Interpreter Education.”

“Civility is a critical issue in our profession,” said Carolyn Ball, VRSII Executive Director. “Often, the stress of this profession can lead to a loss of civility and compassion. The VRSII is offering this symposium to help educators develop new methods of implementing principles of leadership and civility in their curriculum to impact the performance and attitude of future interpreters.”

The VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) offered the symposium in Salt Lake City from Sept. 28 to 30, to create a forum in which interpreting educators could receive training from top-rated national interpreter trainers. Participants collaborated with other interpreter educators to develop methods of incorporating civility and leadership in their programs. These programs produce the interpreters entering the field each year.

Symposium presentations were based on the book “The Twenty-Five Rules of Civility,” by P.M. Forni. Presenters included Carolyn Ball, Ph.D., Carol Patrie, Ph.D., Sharon Neumann Solow and Marty Taylor, Ph.D.

“Civility is a very important issue in our training,” Christa Gunderson, an educator at Augustana College, in South Dakota, said. “This was a hot topic two years ago when I was finishing my master’s degree and it is still a prevalent issue. We can help interpreting students develop skills, but they also need to have the necessary attitude.”

Vicki Brashear of Eastern Kentucky University said, “Deaf people frequently tell us that an interpreter had good interpreting skills, but his or her attitude was terrible. We need to see a civil attitude in students before we can send them out of the university.”

Of the 25 principles covered in Forni’s book, symposium participants focused on the seven they felt most important:

- Acknowledge Others
- Don’t Shift Responsibility and Blame
- Give and Receive Constructive Feedback
- Listen
- Pay Attention
- Think the Best
- Respect

Sally Ann Zwicker, from Eastern Kentucky University, said that as a deaf person she sees a lot of incivility among interpreters. “Being at this symposium has allowed me to understand this behavior from the interpreter’s perspective. We need to figure out how deaf people and interpreters can work together to make civility happen.”

The VRSII provides ongoing training for interpreters and interpreter educators and is the only organization of its kind in the United States and Canada. To learn more about the VRSII, visit [www.vrsii.com](http://www.vrsii.com).

## Congratulations School-to-Work Graduates!

The VRSII is pleased to announce the graduation of its June 2012 School-to-Work Program class.

The School-to-Work Program is an intensive, 12-week program design to bridge the gap between IEP graduation and entry into the professional interpreting field.



To be accepted into the prestigious program, students must undergo a rigorous screening process. Once accepted, students begin an immersion program of additional interpreting education, mentoring and working internships in the deaf community. All costs, including travel and housing, are compensated by the VRSII.

Graduation speakers included Chris Wakeland, Sorenson Communications Vice President of Interpreting, Carolyn Ball and Cheryl Moose, former President of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

Both Wakeland and Ball urged the graduating class to be civil with others throughout their career. "Keep an open mind and remember your place. You are a guest in deaf peoples' homes and lives. That's a humble role to be in," said Wakeland. "The most important quality you can have is not skill, but attitude."

Ball related a story that happened during her early days of interpreting, when she was present at a court hearing for a deaf person who was accused of a serious crime. She related how the interpreter at the hearing was dressed in flowery fabric and wearing nail polish. Ball and many of the other interpreters thought this inappropriate and wrote a

letter of complaint to the judge and lawyers in the case.

Years later, Ball was interviewed for a job by the very interpreter about whom she had issued a complaint. The interpreter asked Ball if she was one of the people who had written the complaint and said that she had always wanted to explain what happened that day. The interpreter explained that she had been told she would not have an assignment, which was why she was not dressed more somberly. She was called in at the last minute because no one else was available. The interpreter didn't want the deaf person to go without fair representation so she accepted the job.

Ball cited this situation as a lesson in civility. She regretted not "thinking the best" and giving the interpreter the benefit of the doubt. She was grateful that many years later the interpreter showed civility to her.



Moose emphasized the importance of developing trust, which goes hand-in-hand with civility, and which she called a "performance multiplier." Moose said, "If a deaf person trusts you, when you walk in the room, the deaf person will breathe a sigh of relief. Without deaf communication, we don't have a job."

Holly, one of the School-to-Work graduates from Tucson, Ariz. said, "The teachers here love the work they do. They create a supportive environment with students' best interests at heart. The people who work here are top notch."

Congratulations Class of 2012 School-to-Work graduates!