

**Date: Sept. 2, 2014**

## **VRSII Eighth School-to-Work Program Cohort Graduates**

**SALT LAKE CITY** - On Aug. 28, 2014, the eight cohort of School-to-Work (STW) Program interns graduated from the VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII). Members of the 2014 summer cohort and the colleges' and universities' interpreting education programs from which they graduated prior to coming to the VRSII are:

Elizabeth	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Parker	Austin Community College
Ana	California State University Northridge
Dionne	Gallaudet University
Katie	Douglas College
Kristy	Utah Valley University
Klaryne	Salt Lake Community College
Rebekah	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Juliana	Community College of Baltimore
Jennifer	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Kelly	Portland Community College
Cheryl	Western Oregon University

STW graduates have been at work for the past 14 weeks meeting with mentors, receiving additional instruction, living with deaf host families and working at professional internships in the deaf community.

At graduation, Chris Wakeland, vice president of interpreting for Sorenson Communications, congratulated graduates on the skills they have learned during the program that they may not have been able to learn in a regular interpreter education program. Wakeland said faculties' and mentors' high expectations may cause anxiety for graduates, but he anticipates these graduates may soon start their own interpreting companies, work in school programs or in Video Relay Service. Wakeland said, "We look to you to provide our next generation of interpreters. There is a job for you out there." Wakeland also said the most important concepts learned during the program may not be the job of interpreting but the skill of building relationships with the deaf community and with other interpreters. Wakeland said, "Bridge the gap between deaf and hearing worlds. Make sure you know how to partner with deaf people. Make sure deaf and hearing peoples' messages are clearly communicated. Learn to forgive yourself for mistakes you make. Know you're where you are for the right reasons." Wakeland also encouraged graduates to quickly get to work after returning home and to challenge themselves in their new undertakings. Wakeland said Sorenson Communications has made a commitment to support the interpreting world and thanked the interns for being part of that program.

Graduation speaker, Laura Jones Hartness, Sorenson Communications region director for interpreters, counseled graduates to be sensitive of "privileges" that the majority enjoy, but that the minority may not. She gave the example of her father, who is deaf, and who worked at General Motors. One day he noticed

other workers listening to Walkman® audio systems and dancing to the music while they were working on the line. He complained to upper management and the union that this behavior would cause work quality to suffer. He received no action because his coworkers enjoyed listening to music while working. He decided that as a deaf man who couldn't listen to music, he would do something he enjoyed while working and would read the newspaper while waiting for parts to come to him for inspection. Ironically, one of his hearing coworkers pushed the red "stop" button on the assembly line, claiming that Hartness's father was not focusing on his work. The issue went back to management, and, eventually, Hartness's father won the debate.

Hartness played a video of her now 72-year-old deaf father who addressed the graduates. He encouraged them to never stop learning, create bonds with the deaf community and reach out for help when they lack understanding. "Like an Olympian, you need to constantly practice your talents to improve them," he said.

Dr. Carolyn Ball, VRSII executive director, told graduates to be respectful toward others and the deaf community. "You have to like yourselves and the things you do," she said. She thanked the deaf host families who invited the graduates to share their homes. One graduate said, "I have never had a deaf family before. Now I feel like I will have a deaf family for the rest of my life."

Jennifer, a STW graduate from North Carolina, said, "We have learned so much about the interpreting world. It's been a wonderful experience and we now have a solid foundation from which to start our careers. I never would have had the opportunity anywhere else to learn what I've learned here."

Congratulations to the summer class of 2014 graduates.

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