



April 2014 Issue



Director's Message

What Makes a Good Interpreter

Recently, I came upon an article from the "American Annals of the Deaf" [1948, (pp. 545-546).] The article is titled, "What Makes a Good Interpreter," and was written by L.A. Elmer.

It is amazing that many of the skills that Elmer wrote about in 1948 are the same skills that interpreters need today. Some of the skills Elmer listed include:

1. Interpreters need to practice in order to become an accomplished interpreter.
2. Interpreters need to have a relief person with them when the interpretation is long or there are several speakers on the program.
3. Interpreters must have a three-track mind – to remember what has been said, to interpret that part into the sign language while they are listening to what is going on and at the same time be able to slow up when the speaker slows their speech.
4. The interpreter should not use too much fingerspelling and should have an excellent vocabulary of signs and be able to use them clearly while interpreting.

These skills are still vital to those who wish to become an interpreter today. It is important to remember that even though many years have passed since Elmer wrote this article, interpreters continue to need to practice and work hard to become a skilled interpreter.

The skills listed by Elmer are the same skills the VRSII desires each School-to-Work Program (STW) graduate to remember as he or she continues the journey into the interpreting profession.

On April 3, 2014, the VRSII held its seventh graduation ceremony for STW interns. My wish for these graduates, and for the graduates who came before, is to remember what Elmer wrote in 1947: "Remember that practice is what makes us a good interpreter."

This reminder is beneficial for all, whether a recent ITP graduate, a seasoned interpreter or an interpreter educator. As a profession, interpreters learn from the past. It is important that we carry these words of wisdom into the future: Don't forget that we need to practice.

Educators Gain Ideas, Insight at VRSII Symposium: "Improved Practicum Design for Improved Student Outcomes"

The VRSII's seventh symposium took place March 14 through 16, in Salt Lake City. Symposium content, presented by Dr. Marty Taylor and Sharon Neumann Solow, focused on an in-depth study of practicum in Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs).



L to R: Sharon Neumann Solow, Dr. Marty Taylor

Because there are no standardized requirements among different states for IEP practicum, requirements for each program and student outcomes can vary dramatically. A

participant poll revealed that various practicum required anywhere from 40 to 500 hours for graduation. Some programs required a pre-practicum while others did not. Some institutions had no practicum at all.



Monique Revader, from Tulane University and a first-time symposium participant, said because Tulane did not have a practicum, much of the symposium information was unfamiliar to her. She said the information she had collected at the symposium would be helpful in her research to create a practicum in the future. "I have learned about a lot of websites that I can study to get more ideas for practicum programs," she said.



Dr. Carolyn Ball, VRSII executive director

The VRSII Interpreter Educator Symposiums offer a rare opportunity for interpreter educators to interact and share ideas and information. Cari Carter from Yuba Community College, also a first-time attendee, said, "I didn't know what to expect with regard to the number of people, but it's nice to have a large crowd. It's been great meeting people and sharing information." Alicia McClurkan, from Austin Community College, echoed those sentiments. "This is my first time coming to the

symposium and it has been outstanding! I've enjoyed meeting people, meeting interpreters and talking with them to develop tools. I hope I can come to the next symposium."



Leslie Greer, president of the Conference for Interpreter Trainers, acknowledged the importance of training offered, such as the VRSII Interpreter Educator Symposium, which allows

more detailed exploration of educational topics. "The CIT works with a broad base of interpreters and many different issues," she said. "VRSII symposiums are valuable because presenters can approach subjects in depth. To have a standardized practicum would be a dream, but we all have to follow individual state standards. I wish we could do more to change that."

Symposium attendees encompass diverse levels of experience. At the 2014 symposium, more than 75 percent of the 37 symposium participants teach interpreting and ASL. A significant number of attendees hold a master's degree and/or Ph.D. Approximately 30 percent have six to 10 years' teaching experience and 20 percent have less than two years' teaching experience. For 50 percent of attendees, this was their first VRSII symposium experience, but of those educators who have

attended a VRSII symposium in the past, all say they have changed their curriculum based on what they learned at a previous symposium.



Participants learn concepts during the symposium that can immediately be implemented into

their own IEP programs. While at the symposium, many participants create lasting professional relationships with other educators and stay in touch via email and online professional groups.



To learn more about VRSII educator classes, including symposia, visit www.vrsii.com.

Congratulations to the Seventh Cohort of School-to-Work Graduates!

On April 3, after a 14-week immersion program experience, School-to-Work Program (STW) interns said good-bye to the VRSII. When asked in what ways the STW Program training has helped her, graduating intern Sarah Kosel said, "The combination of hands-on experience, one-on-one mentoring and self-analysis has helped me to evaluate my current skills and develop goals for improvement. Being involved in this program has helped me to build my skills as well as increase my confidence as an interpreter."

Jes Julander, regional manager for Sorenson Communications, was the guest speaker at graduation.



Jes Julander, Sorenson Communications regional director

Julander described how years ago a friend gave her a stone with the word "hope" inscribed on it and how she has carried that stone in her pocket for more than 20 years. She stated how that one word helped her through difficult situations in her life, and she encouraged the graduating interns to discover what their word should be and then let that word direct their lives. She counseled the graduates to "look in, look up and look out," to help find their word and then share with others the word's resulting inspiration and good works produced.

Chris Wakeland, vice president of interpreting services also addressed the interns. "What I've found is that interpreting is not just about interpreting. It's about building relationships with people, understanding their lives and my needs as an interpreter so we have a partnership," Wakeland said.



Chris Wakeland, Sorenson vice president of interpreting services

Wakeland told interns that sometimes they will make mistakes and that is acceptable. He assured interns that as they built relationships with the deaf and hearing communities they will have the opportunity to learn about those groups

and include those learnings in their work. Wakeland said, "It's easy to tell which schools have good programs because those programs produce students who are open-minded, humble and teachable. Those students know that they are not done when they are done with school. Learning the profession of interpreting and working with the deaf community is a life-long process." Wakeland admonished the interns to stay in the field of interpreting and never stop learning. "Good interpreters are desperately needed both in the deaf and hearing worlds," he said.

Next class of School-to-Work Interns Now Being Chosen

Faculty at the VRSII have been reviewing and analyzing submissions from potential interns for the next class of STW.

"It is exciting to see the level of interest in this program and the quality of students who are applying to be interns," says Dr. Carolyn Ball, VRSII executive director.

The program admits only 12 students nationally for each cohort and provides one-on-one mentoring and training. Interns also benefit, while in the program, from interaction and working internships within the local deaf community.

The next STW Program cohort begins June 10, 2014. Applications for the 2015 cohort will be accepted in the fall. Encourage your students to apply by visiting the VRSII website at www.vrsii.com.

Past interns praise STW for the wealth of experiences provided to them during their time in the program saying it would take years in a normal interpreting environment for them to have the range of interpreting experience they were provided during STW.

In Memoriam



Dianne Nemitz

It is with profound sadness that we say a final good-bye to Dianne Nemitz, one of the interns from our first STW Program cohort. Diane passed away March 24, from pancreatic cancer.

Dianne came to us from Charlotte, N.C., after graduating from Central Piedmont Community College. We work closely with our interns during the 14-week STW

Program and watch them grow and blossom, which makes losing one of these remarkable people that much more difficult. From all of us at the VRSII, our heartfelt sympathies to Dianne's family and friends.

- Dr. Carolyn Ball

Comments from 2010 STW classmates

"Dianne was a very classy lady. She had a beautiful courageous spirit. Interpreting and being involved in the STW program was a dream come true for Dianne. After the program she became a freelance interpreter in her community. She continued to interpret after her diagnoses. In the last years of her life Dianne became involved in spreading awareness about pancreatic cancer. Nov. 1, which is the last day of the CIT conference in Portland, the 2010 cohort plans to walk/run the Purple Stride 5k for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network in memory of Dianne. I will always remember her great love for family and friends, her sharp wit and her passion for interpreting. She will be loved and missed by many."

-Ann Pattenaude

"She was a pillar of strength. Always to be remembered as a phenomenal woman. She was a wonderful mother who knew the benefits of sacrifice. She was not afraid to step into the unknown and venture into new territories. She understood that today's sacrifices would become tomorrow's triumphs. She will forever be in our hearts."

-Contessa Ogletree

"For me, [during the STW Program] she was my go-to person for Momma hugs when I was homesick. :)"

She also taught us that it's never too late to pursue our dreams. I think she stepped out of her comfort zone when she came to Utah to live and work with a bunch of crazy strangers, not to mention leaving her kids behind and missing out on family events. I definitely respect her for that."

-Cassandra Raymond

"She was the best mom away from home any of us could have asked for, on top of being a great peer, supporter, and friend. I think she brought great balance to our group and helped each of us find balance in our lives personally. Miss her too!"

-Missy Briery

[In response to the comments above.] "Yes to all of that. And HER KIDS. She loved them and was so proud-- talked about them any chance she could. She was also

OUR mama bear during those SLC weeks and beyond. Miss her."

-Elizabeth Donovan

"Also, humor and wit stand out to me. And board game prowess. She killed me in Bananagrams at the VRSII and in Blockus just two weeks ago!

She also talked a lot about dancing in recent years. Her "new body" may have presented some challenges, but it was not afraid to boogie! ;)

And generosity. We all know that she budgeted like nobody's business, yet she somehow shared so much. I miss her."

-Emily Haynes McGee

"The things that stand out to me about Dianne:

- Her faith was her absolute anchor, through both good times and unspeakably hard times.

- Time with family and friends was her first priority. She structured her life around that.

- Incredible, supportive and loving husband who never hesitated to sacrifice for her and show do anything for her (in the age of emails and text messages, they literally mailed each other love letters during STW) and he was her primary caregiver all through her illness.

- Youthful sense of adventure (leaving her home for 13 weeks to bunk up with a group of mostly 20-somethings for what would turn out to be an experience none would forget, and continuing to join us whenever possible on adventures around the country)

- Beautiful courage in the face of adversity. I picture this coupled with a countenance of peace and cheer.

I could go on, but these are the first few things I thought of. Impossible to sum someone up with a bulleted list.

From her CaringBridge journal she wrote: "I have claimed *Proverbs 31:25* as a verse that I want to be descriptive of my life: *"She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future."*

Mark also added a verse he said they both relied on for strength: "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)"

-Andrea Pond

VRS Interpreting Institute

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