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Dr. Carolyn Ball
VRSII executive director

Director's Message

Tennis is one of my favorite sports. When I was 12 years old, I took a class at a recreation center and have loved the game ever since. Tennis is an amazing sport because during most tournaments when the players are on the court, they cannot talk to their coaches. The players have to rely on their own mental and physical well-being to

carry them through the match. Observing the mental

and physical struggle that each player endures alone on the court is truly remarkable. Tennis players and interpreters have many skills in common.

According to *Optimum Tennis*, a well-known tennis online tutorial (www.optimumtennis.net), the following skills are necessary to be a successful professional tennis player:

1. Physical tennis skills
2. Aerobic fitness skills
3. Mental tennis skills
4. Visualization in tennis psychology
5. Breathing exercises
6. Emotional tennis skills
7. Emotions on the tennis court

Many of these same skills, such as mental fitness, visualization, breathing and emotional control, are also necessary skills for professional interpreters to perform well. Many of these skills are noted in the *1984 Conference of Interpreter Trainers Fifth National Convention Proceedings*.

And, just as practice helps tennis players improve, the more practice an interpreter has in language and interpreting skills, the better they will become.

Interpreters must have physical skills, such as aerobic fitness, in order to interpret one language to another. Interpreters may not run 25 miles per day, but their aerobic fitness is represented in cognitive processing – a “must-have skill” for interpreters.

Strong mental skills are a necessity in interpreting. An interpreter's mental flexibility to adapt to the specific environment required by each interpreting assignment is critical to success. The mental skills of an interpreter may not be observable, but nevertheless are necessary for success.

It has been suggested that visualization skills in interpreting can help improve the interpreter's ability. Visualization of the assignment, the language that the interpreter will be using and visualizing how wonderful successful interpreting will feel to the interpreter are vital.

Learning to pace the process of simultaneous interpreting can be very difficult. An interpreter will listen to a source language, process the language in their mind and then determine how to interpret the meaning of the source language. Then, the interpreter will begin the process of interpreting into the target language. Breathing skills are a vital part of this process. If an interpreter does not breathe regularly, they will become overwhelmed and be unable to function between the two languages equivalently.

Emotional interpreting and emotion management in an interpreting assignment are critical to the success of the interpretation. If the interpreter is not able to cope with emotional situations while interpreting, the process will not be successful. Emotional interpreting and emotion management during an interpreting assignment are areas that need further investigation and research. It is

vital for interpreters to have healthy emotions and emotional reactions while interpreting.

Perhaps the skill categories in our profession above can become areas for interpreters to practice and improve. Whether on the court, or interpreting an assignment, practicing the above skills will surely help us improve.

The VRSII is always seeking ways to help interpreters and interpreter educators improve their interpreting skills. The VRSII is proud to offer innovative and creative classes that improve the skills of interpreters. To learn more, please contact us at the VRSII. www.vrsii.com.

VRSII – Ahead of the Curve

In 2010, the VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) kicked off the School-to-Work Program (STW). STW was created to address a need, recognized specifically during the 1990s, that affected the ASL interpreting industry, i.e. bridging the gap from IEP graduation to work readiness. Seven years later, the VRSII has sent 122 STW graduates from the 12-week immersion program into all disciplines in the interpreting industry.

The unforeseen benefits of the program continue to unfold. First, rather than going their separate ways after leaving the program, STW graduates continue networking throughout the interpreting community, providing support to each other, and to other interpreters, and working in teams across the country.



Graduation to Certification

Second, the STW model provided an example for the Graduation to Certification Project under the direction of St.

Catherine University and the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration. St. Catherine University received a multi-year federal grant for this purpose and is working toward the goal of bridging the gap between students graduating from IEPs and obtaining national certification. In the spring of 2017, the VRSII assembled most of the STW graduates from 2010 - 2016 in order to collect feedback about STW, which has been shared with the administrators of the Graduation to Certification Project.

Due to the unique nature of the VRSII as an academic entity within a business organization, the VRSII has the resources and agility to recognize and quickly respond to industry trends and needs with innovative programs

and solutions. VRSII faculty continually engage with educators and stakeholders as well as attend interpreting conferences like RID, CIT, Street Leverage and ASLTA to stay informed and recognize needs and themes within the interpreting industry. From information obtained through these sources, we are able to create innovative, new programs that offer value to interpreter educators and students.

COMPASS: Giving Coda's a New Direction

Nearly two years ago, Sorenson Communications and the VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) created the COMPASS program. COMPASS is designed for Deaf-parented heritage language users of ASL, and assists those Coda's who are interested in becoming a professional interpreter, a means to reach that goal. COMPASS offers tailored classes, individualized mentoring support and group and peer support. All COMPASS courses are supported by Deaf-parented interpreters.

Two interpreters who have graduated from the COMPASS program share their stories here. Micah works as an educational interpreter in Phoenix, Ariz., and Leah works as a VRS interpreter in Sorenson's Smokey Pointe, Wash. interpreting center.



Leah - fourth from left. Micah - far right.

How did you learn about the COMPASS program?

Leah: I connected with Sorenson around two years ago through a mutual friend who is also a Coda. I screened to become an SVRS interpreter twice. The second time, I was very close to qualifying, but didn't quite make it. The center director suggested I apply to COMPASS. It was the perfect connection I needed since I didn't have an IEP education but already knew the language. I was told

about all the different programs I could take and wanted all of them! These courses were exactly what I needed.

Micah: I saw an email for an open house at a Starbucks, which I couldn't attend, but I contacted the interpreter center director and had a Facetime interview. I talked with her about the new program for Codas, and she suggested it would be a good place for me to start since I wasn't understanding some of the signing between us.

Was the program what you thought it would be?

Micah: I started in immersion, which was similar to what I grew up with. The feeling of identity that the program gives was one of the most eye-opening experiences. I had never met many other Codas until COMPASS. Finally, I had people I could relate to. To have a group, build a relationship and share experiences growing up – I needed that. When I got involved in COMPASS, I didn't feel alone. That helped open my eyes and got me more into interpreting. It's also driven me to do more for the Deaf community. What they taught me in COMPASS was very inspiring.

Leah: I grew up with 20 Codas with whom I'm still friends. I was very immersed in the Deaf community, so it wasn't until I came to the program that I realized my situation was a rarity. In addition to being a Coda, it's a rarity to know other people who are. I found friendships and created relationships during COMPASS, but it was emotionally challenging. I was the oldest child and the primary interpreter for my parents while I was growing up. COMPASS made me reevaluate my parents' hardships and oppression. It was very humbling. The knowledge I gained from the heritage part of the program wasn't part of me before I came here. It caused me to have a lot more respect for my parents.

How has COMPASS helped you in your career?

Micah: I'm currently interpreting in the school system, and I like that I'm able to help an 18-year-old student who is also an athlete. I help with communication on the field so he's able to understand the defensive plays. I've gotten more into interpreting, because I realize that without me, it would be hard for him to know what's going on during the play. I'm happy and grateful to help him. It's a blessing. Eventually, I want to be an SVRS interpreter. I think that's more in my comfort zone. I don't think I could have had the school job without all the training I received in COMPASS.

Leah: In COMPASS, I finally accomplished the goal I had so long desired. Doing intensive work in class really pushed my confidence forward to complete the goal. I used to think, "Ok, I have the skills, but I don't know how to use them." Now, I get to use my language every day. I love it when the caller knows I'm a Coda.

Micah: The best is when a Deaf person thinks you're Deaf.

Leah: I learn something new every day – new styles, new regional signs – I'm always learning.

Micah: I find the same thing – especially with the student I interpret for. There are signs I don't know. I ask him what the sign is, and I just pick it up and learn and use it from then on. I'm still learning.

ASLTA Conference in Salt Lake City

In late June, ASLTA kicked off its national conference in Salt Lake City. The 2017 conference drew the largest crowd in the organization's history – more than 500 people. The VRSII took a large part in the conference, with nearly every faculty member involved. VRSII faculty member Christina Multra-Kraft received ASLTA's bi-annual Isabel Calvacca award which is given to board members who have demonstrated exemplary service. Multra-Kraft says the award was an honor and a nice surprise.

"The conference couldn't have been as successful without the skill, time and funds contributed by the VRSII and Sorenson Communications," she says. "The Utah team was great to work with, and due in part to their efforts, the conference was incredible." Multra-Kraft says Sorenson's support has not been evident just during this conference, but from the beginning of ASLTA. "It really all relates to who is grooming and polishing interpreters. Sorenson accepts that task as part of its future."

The VRSII Language Mentor team presented "Language Mentoring: More than just giving feedback! Strategies form a Language Mentoring team." Multra-Kraft also presented "Mastering the ASL Conversation: Teaching and Discussing ASL Conversation Regulators."



VRSII Language Mentoring Team presenting at ASLTA.

New board members, announced at the conference, are:

President	Keri Brooks
Vice President	Jenny Gough
Treasurer	Daniel Heinze
Secretary	Raychelle Harris
Professional Development	Janice Warshaw
World Languages	Jason Zinza
Heritage Languages	Petra Horn-Marsh and
Raymond Boland	
Chapters	Beatrice Pfaff
Advocacy	Tim Riker & Daniel
Gough	
Communication	David Martin

The next ASLTA conference will be held during 2019 in southern California.

CODA International Conference

Sorenson Communications and the VRSII were diamond-level sponsors for the CODA International conference, July 13 – 16, 2017, in Vancouver, Canada. More than 50 Sorenson employees attended the conference including Bonnie Marsh COMPASS faculty at the VRSII and corporate interpreter at Sorenson headquarters.



Bonnie Marsh

Marsh says although Codas live in both the Deaf and hearing worlds, often many feel they don't completely belong in either. The conference offers an intermediary place where Codas can discuss shared experiences. "Many think of it as a 'safe space' where we don't have to worry about perceptions," she says. "It's a coming together."

Marsh says that for herself and many Codas who attend the conference, there is a feeling of pride about their heritage and that the conference is a place they can talk with others who understand that heritage, which is inspiring and validating. She says one of the most valuable aspects of the conference is meeting other people, both nationally and internationally. "Everyone is so wonderful," she says. "There is a real sense of family."

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