



## September 2014 Issue



Dr. Carolyn Ball  
VRSII Executive Director

### Director's Message

#### **Mistakes Make Us Strong**

It is hard to admit that we make mistakes. Mistakes can be large or small. Mistakes can hurt other people or hurt us. Mistakes can make us feel weak and inadequate. These feelings of weakness or inadequacy can lead us to an emotional downward spiral and may affect how others perceive us.

For example, the fear of making mistakes and others noticing those mistakes may cause us to become defensive. Other people may perceive this defensive attitude as insensitivity or a general lack of kindness or consideration. The person on the defensive may seem impolite to others. Often, those afraid to make mistakes believe that being polite to others and being open to input from others, when they correct our mistakes, demonstrates weakness. But, according to the Honorable Sonia Sotomayor, we should not "mistake politeness for lack of strength."

Being afraid of making a mistake and living on the defensive will not only make it more difficult for others to be around us, but will also weaken us in many areas of our lives. With a defensive, closed or inconsiderate attitude, we will not experience the personal and professional growth that we could gain if we were open to input from others.

Making mistakes can be a way to learn life lessons. One of the greatest gifts we can be given is for a role model, mentor or friend to tell us when we make a mistake. This gift can change our lives forever if we are willing to listen and understand how we might be hurting someone else

or our profession. Only then do we have the opportunity to change. Accepting input and displaying open behavior does not make us weak – it makes us strong. Becoming stronger people and professionals, through input from others, will in turn enable us to become role models for others who think being open to input is a weakness.

Alternately, we must show kindness and consideration when we alert others to their mistakes. It is easy to see the mistakes of others and believe we are better than "those" people. Yet, if we are a strong person, we realize that we all make mistakes, and, in order to be strong, we must be also be kind, polite and considerate.

Being strong means we can show kindness and consideration to those for whom we are interpreting, teaching, working or with whom we are living. If we can become more considerate, we will gain strength in every area of our lives and help others do the same.

### **Come see us at the CIT Conference in October!**

The VRS Interpreting Institute is pleased to be the top sponsor of the 2014 CIT conference. Visit our booth to meet faculty and learn about VRSII programs.

We'll see you there!

## Congratulations School-to-Work Program Graduates!

Congratulations to the eighth cohort of School-to-Work (STW) Program interns who graduated Aug. 28, 2014. Members of the 2014 summer cohort are:

Elizabeth Curtis	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Parker Dorrity	Austin Community College
Ana Galvez	California State University Northridge
Dionne Hart	Gallaudet University
Katie Langford	Douglas College
Kristy Mathisen	Utah Valley University
Klaryne Quirarte	Salt Lake Community College
Rebekah Spring	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Juliana Vadala	Community College of Baltimore
Jennifer Vega	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Kelly Watchel	Portland Community College
Cheryl Witters	Western Oregon University

STW graduates have been hard 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.



Chris Wakeland  
Vice President, Interpreting

Chris Wakeland, vice president of interpreting for Sorenson Communications, congratulated the 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.



Laura Jones Hartness  
Region Director, Interpreting

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. For example: Her father, who is deaf, 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. She cautioned graduates to be sensitive to these discrepancies.

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."



Dr. Ball

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. We look forward to seeing you do great things!



Summer 2014 STW Interns

### **The VRSII Welcomes New Faculty Member Teddi von Pingel**

Teddi von Pingel officially joined the VRSII faculty Sept. 1, 2014. She has worked for the VRSII for the past two years as a core mentor in the School-to-Work Program.

von Pingel says she has enjoyed being a mentor to help people discover their own strengths and weaknesses, not by teaching, but by leading them on "their journey" and seeing them improve.



Teddi von Pingel  
VRSII faculty

An interpreter for the past 25 years, von Pingel first became familiar with interpreting through a course she took at Brigham Young University. At that time, American Sign Language (ASL) did not fulfill language requirements at the university, so she stopped taking the courses. She later became fluent in ASL while serving a religious mission.

von Pingel holds a bachelor's degree in deaf studies with interpreting emphasis from Utah Valley University (UVU) and is currently working toward her master's degree in ASL/English interpreting with a concentration in interpreting pedagogy. The master's degree program is offered through a partnership between the VRSII and the University of North Florida

<http://www.unf.edu/coehs/edie/vrsii/>. von Pingel says

she is looking forward to exploring research-based learning through the master's program. "My passion is the soft skills of interpreting: inter- and intra-personal skills," says von Pingel. "I'm excited to infuse that learning into interpreting programs."

After moving to Utah from Arizona eight years ago, von Pingel served with interpreters on the board of the Utah chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, on long-term projects and in community interpreting. These interpreters would later become faculty members at the VRSII. It was through these affiliations that von Pingel learned about the opportunities at the VRSII.

"I'm a believer of the adage, 'You never know who you're going to meet or why that person will be important to you,'" says von Pingel. She says becoming involved with the VRSII seemed a good way to explore new opportunities and meet new people.

von Pingel still works for UVU part time, but says she enjoys the speed with which new directions and ideas can be incorporated into curriculum in a corporate setting. "Being partnered with a corporation, there are fewer 'hoops' to jump through," she says. "We're immediately able to creatively design and implement programs. I have a strong feeling of accomplishment here because I can execute changes quickly."

The strength of the VRSII, von Pingel believes, is the faculty. "Our expertise, experience, diversity and creativity make us strong," she says. "I think we're a great team."



VRSII faculty members at School-to-Work Program graduation

## VRS Interpreting Institute

Empowering Interpreters and Educators®

### VRSII/UNF Master's Students Study at the VRSII

In 2013, the VRSII and the University of North Florida (UNF) formed a partnership to offer a distance-learning master's degree in ASL/English interpreting with an emphasis in education pedagogy.

The distance-learning program also contains an "on campus" component.

From July 13 through 23, the current cohort of the master's program visited the VRSII campus in Salt Lake City to interact with classmates, instructors and most beneficially, to implement program learning.

One of the current cohort students, Tiffany, said, "I have loved analyzing how student learning is actually achieved. I know when I have a good teacher, but since starting this program, now I know why he/she is a good teacher."

While at the VRSII, master's students planned and presented training to the VRSII's School-to-Work Program (STW) interns. Master's students were able to receive immediate feedback for their work, not only from their instructors, but also from the STW interns to whom they presented. "This hands-on experience is invaluable for students," says Carolyn Ball, VRSII executive director. "To get immediate feedback from students and teachers is hugely beneficial. I believe it's also beneficial for the master's program students to be immersed in an environment, here at the VRSII, where there are no distractions and they can focus solely on learning."

Ball says it is also beneficial for master's program students, who will one day become ASL and interpreting educators, to visit the VRSII to see how their teaching will affect corporations that will, in the future, hire interpreters who have learned from educators like those students currently in the master's program.

"Ultimately, we want the deaf community to have good interpreters," Ball says. "In order for that to happen, we have to have good educators."



Sandra, an interpreter and master's program student says the program has exceeded her expectations. "The teachers are very supportive, easily accessible and provide thorough feedback. The program is challenging. My favorite part of the program was our time together in Salt Lake City where we were able to work with our peers. Our time there was very unique and helped us apply our learning and become stronger interpreters and educators," she says.