

Pasadena: Local woman graduates from prestigious sign language institute



Courtesy Photo

Laura Anthony ASL Interpreter

Laura Anthony, 25, of Pasadena was one of 12 students chosen nationwide to attend Video Relay Service Interpreting Institute American Sign Language interpreter school in Salt Lake City. She graduated Sept. 6.

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By KELLEY LEMONS Correspondent

Laura Anthony was first introduced to American sign language when she was 10 years old. Her family began attending Magothy United Methodist Church, which shares its building with Magothy United Methodist Church of the Deaf.

“I saw sign language during a combined service and was fascinated. I asked my Mom if I could learn it and she discovered that the deaf church held classes and I rarely missed a class,” Anthony said. “When my friends were going to dance class, I was going to American Sign Language class. The people at Magothy Deaf church became more to me than just friends; they were like my second family.”

That passion is still with her 15 years later — the 25-year-old Pasadena resident was chosen as one of only 12 students nationwide to participate in the 2013 summer session of the School-to-Work program at the Video Relay Service Interpreting Institute. She graduated on Sept. 6.

The institute is a world-class training facility in Salt Lake City dedicated to lifelong mentoring and training for American Sign Language interpreters and interpreter educators. Each year, the institute chooses 12 or fewer top-level interpreter education program graduates to enter its semi-annual School-to-Work Program. Applicants must qualify for the program by passing a rigorous screening process. Accepted interns live on-site and receive additional interpreting training, one-on-one mentoring and professional internships in the deaf community.

Learning sign language opened her up to the deaf world and she will forever be grateful for getting to know them. Since her first sign language days until now she has had the honor of being involved in fundraisers, conferences, workshops and organizations like Deaf Shalom Zone as well as DeafBlind Camp of Maryland where she assisted as a support service provider and interpreter. “American Sign Language has given me these opportunities to have such humbling experiences and meet people who have changed my life,” Anthony said.

The 2006 graduate of Northeast High School earned her associate’s degree from the Community College of Baltimore County in ASL interpreter preparation and her bachelor’s degree in deaf studies from Towson University.

Anthony said the program provided numerous opportunities for safe, supported interpreting practice, which is something that many new interpreters can struggle to find. “One aspect about the program that had the biggest impact on me was the community involvement activities. We learned about the importance of giving back to the deaf community and knowing about their values. We had the privilege of getting to know several Ddeaf members of the Salt Lake City community and built relationships that I’ll treasure forever.” Anthony said. “All of the people I met on my journey there were positive and encouraging. “It was truly an honor being chosen 1 out of the 12 in the whole United States.”

She plans to be an interpreter in the deaf community here in Maryland. “The knowledge and experience I gained at the VRSII has surely boosted my confidence in my job search, however they do not directly assist in finding us work,” Anthony said. She is on staff with Arundel Christian Church in Glen Burnie and soon will do both educational and community interpreting.