



NYC Metro RID Newsletter

Winter 2010-2011

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Upcoming NYC Metro Meetings

Saturday, March 19

- 10:00 – 12:00 general meeting
- 12:30 - 4:30 workshop

Thursday, May 12

- 6:00 – 7:30 general meeting
- 7:30 – 9:00 workshop

Thursday, June 9

- 6:00 – 7:30 general meeting
- 7:30 – 9:00 workshop

go to www.nycmetrorid.org for more info

President's Greetings

Hello Everyone!

I hope you have been having a great winter and the holiday season. It has been a pleasure serving you for the last six months, and I still have the next six months to continue to strengthen the NYC Metro RID, Inc.

I just wanted to announce that for our next board nominations, we will be able to vote electronically! The motion was passed on November 17, 2010. I am excited as we continue to modernize our organization. More information and details will be forthcoming.

If you have any issues or concerns or a hot topic for discussion, please feel free to send your ideas to any board member and we will add it to our agenda for the Board Meetings or for the General Membership Meetings. I strongly encourage you to come to our future meetings in 2011 to ensure that your voice is heard. I hope to see you all soon.

At your service,
Christopher Tester, President



Region I Conference Review

By Katherine Walley and Janice Quiles

This year's Region 1 conference in Albany, NY was themed *Together Empower And Motivate* and T.E.A.M. it did! We walked away from the conference bubbling with new ideas and re-energized to be catalysts in building our community while also revisiting the meaning of what "community" means to us.

It was comforting to find other interpreters welcoming us to share lunch at huge banquet hall dining tables, many of them talking about the myriad ways the workshops they'd just come from had inspired them.

Lewis Merkin's keynote speech lit the flame. He spoke of how together we can keep the heart of the Deaf community and the interpreting field, that we've helped to create, alive and beating strong.

We began to think about what "serving the community" really means. We asked ourselves how we can better serve this community that has served us over the years. Talk about motivation! Workshops ran over a bit with participants stationed at their seats with their hands raised, eager to have their questions answered. We broke out into groups and had discussions about the definition of "certified" versus "qualified" and where we saw ourselves within that continuum. We listened to information about RID's newly established Government Affairs Program which advocates on behalf of interpreters at the state and national levels and became interested in seeing how this type of advocacy work could develop at the local level.

The various dialogues throughout the conference forced us to start thinking about the factors that shape and guide our work in this field from the systemic to the individual. These dialogues sparked a desire not to be passive players but rather active participants in shaping these factors. We can do this by supporting both new and experienced interpreters who are looking to develop themselves professionally; by continuing to participate and volunteer for RID and NAD at the local, regional and national levels; and by encouraging students, new and experienced interpreters alike, to take part in various events that will aid in strengthening our membership and community. We can be active participants by continuing to attend workshops and conferences and sharing and discussing the information we've learned from these events. We can also commit ourselves to expanding our skills and knowledge base in our daily lives, and by questioning our previously held assumptions and keeping our minds open to growth and change.

What a privilege it is to be part of a field where colleagues seek to support and work together to find common solutions, and with that thread of understanding, empower one another.



National Association of the Deaf 2010 Accomplishments

The National Association of the Deaf recently distributed a list of their 'wins' this past year. They continue to do a fantastic job of advocacy and leadership within the Deaf Community.

Key 2010 NAD accomplishments:

* NAD advocated for passage of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, also through Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology efforts.

This new federal law makes possible participation in the Internet age through captioned television programs on the Internet. The result of three years of advocacy by NAD and other groups, this law also provides for closed caption buttons on television remote controls, hearing aid-compatible Internet telephones, communications equipment for individuals who are deaf-blind, and more.

* NAD called for the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) to reject resolutions passed at its 2nd Congress (also known as the 1880 Milan Congress). Last summer, ICED made a formal announcement to this effect, with its New Era Accord which expressed deep regret for the detrimental effects of the Milan resolutions, and promoted the acceptance of and respect for all languages and forms of communication in educational programs.

* NAD pushed for U.S.A. ratification of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), an important human rights treaty which states that sign language is a human right and that education includes full acquisition of language, academic, practical and social knowledge. NAD will also represent U.S.A. at the XVI World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) in South Africa next summer. The WFD is a global human rights organization with 130 country affiliates.

* NAD celebrated the 20th anniversary of the ADA with U.S. President Obama at the White House, with national disability advocacy organizations, and at events held throughout Washington, DC. NAD had a pivotal role in passage of this landmark civil rights law, including the ADA Amendments Act that was reauthorized last year.

* NAD vigorously defended the rights of deaf and hard of hearing professionals and consumers in several court cases, such as: pharmacists can now conduct work-related relay calls in Alabama (patient orders by phone), spectators can now access information during university sporting events in Ohio (captioned public address systems), and attorneys can now access the Kentucky court system (interpreting services and other forms of effective communication).

Finding the Joy

By Ruth Aleskovsky

Ongoing gig blahs? Seasonal doldrums? This time of year makes us all susceptible. Try some of the tips below to refresh not only your spirits but to ensure that your interpreting doesn't fall into the "wet rag" category.

1. Find the zone! Athletes talk about finding the 'zone'. The Zone is a place where nothing exists but your art, craft, perfectly executed action, etc. Just you and the ball. Almost every movie about golf shows at least one scene where all distraction disappears and leaves only the man and the ball. For us, you see it most often in theatrical interpreting where the interpreters become the action, character, etc. Suddenly, the interpreter "floats" "flies" and "breathes" the character. For everyday interpreting, I suggest you set the 'scene' that includes consumer and speaker and let the content, expression and you exist in harmony and ever changing dimensions. Try it -- you might like it!

2. Leave 'it' outside the door. We all have life stuff that makes us tired, angry sad happy etc. Try stopping outside the door of your gig. Take a deep breath. Leave the outside world and enter the new one. Pretend you are there for the first time. Look at the walls, ceiling, flooring, and participants. Textures, colors, and new lines abound. And if all else fails, try matching cartoon characters to speakers. Suddenly, they take on new dimensions!

3. Try color! We need to look professional yet many grab the first black or tan T-shirt we can find. And yes, we look professional just rather dull professional. Solid colors are great but you have a whole spectrum from which to choose. A colored scarf, ribbon, vest or jacket will relieve and boost not only you energy level and mood but will diminish the eye fatigue of your consumer. And last but certainly not least –

**Try stopping outside
the door of your gig.
Take a deep breath.
Leave the outside
world and enter the
new one.**

4. Rediscover your team. We work with each other so much we often forget to 'see' our partners. Try asking your ongoing partner "what's new" or telling him/her that you liked how they interpreted a segment. Find something new to ask them. Refresh the dynamics.

Just being aware that this time of year can cause fatigue, uncertainty or lower expectations (like the seasonal change that is readying for sleep/winter) may help us smooth the jagged edges, make our interpreting better and infuse ourselves and our work with the energy and creativity it deserves. Good luck, good hunting and happy days.



Resources: Post Secondary Educational Settings

Website Recommendation for College Professors

As we all know, hearing people who have never worked with Deaf people are often full of questions about how to conduct themselves. When a teacher encounters a Deaf student in their classroom, they may turn to the interpreter for guidance, but all too often they still have trepidations about how to best meet the needs of a Deaf student.

PEPNet is a phenomenal online resource you can recommend to instructors in the postsecondary educational field who want a quick and easy tutorial about working with Deaf students. The Federal Department of Education has funded this program out of the Office of Special Education since 1996 to provide technical assistance and personnel development about education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.

Teachers can take an online training module to learn about Deafness, communication and even teaching strategies. Everything that an interpreter might wish they had time to discuss with the teacher is included. Go to www.pepnet.org, choose 'Online Trainings'; scroll down to the third option: 'Orientation to Serving College Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Online Training for Education Professionals'. There you'll find the module that even provides a certificate of completion at the end.

Other pages on the website provide information about testing equity, accommodations for Deaf students who have learning disabilities or other co-occurring disabilities and even information about student absences as it relates to provision of services. Spend some time exploring this website and it'll become your new favorite resource! There's a wealth of information that can make your educational interpreting job much easier.

Committee Update: Bylaws Committee to be Appointed

This winter five NYC Metro members met over the course of two nights to review our Bylaws to determine what updates or changes need to be made. JoAnn Kranis, Pat Dash and Michael Anthony met with two Board members, Kathy Walley and Jana Owen and came up with a series of recommendations to the Board.

The Board has now moved to create a new Standing Committee who will be charged with the work of updating our Bylaws and advising the Board on governance matters.



Editorials & Opinions: Letters to the Editor

What power should agencies have over the quality of interpreting service?

By Stephanie Feyne, CI, CT

Dennis Cokely at Region 1 raised this issue. It had been percolating in my mind for a while, but it was definitely worth having it brought more forward. I believe that RID and Deaf leaders can and should establish standards for referral agencies to ensure the best possible service is given to the Deaf community.

When I began interpreting in the '70s, referral agencies were housed in Deaf service organizations (such as NYSD in NYC, GLAD in LA, DCARA in San Francisco) and in religious organizations (e.g.; Catholic Charities in Brooklyn and St. Benedict's in San Francisco). They provided community interpreters for medical, legal and social service needs. Referral specialists were mostly CODAs and/or Deaf supervisors who ensured we were only placed in assignments that we were qualified for. That was true for both certified and non-certified interpreters. Agencies understood that certification signified only entry-level skills and agencies needed discretion to assign interpreters.

With the advent of federal laws that mandated interpreting services the demand grew greater. This occurred simultaneously with sign language classes being offered, with new interpreters joining the fold. Interpreter education programs were in their infancy. The RID test was in an early iteration that allowed for "partial certificates" – meaning that these interpreters demonstrated some, but not all of the necessary entry level skills.

With the increased demand for services some agencies began seeing interpreting as a way to pay for the other services to the Deaf community. Some of them sent lesser skilled interpreters (who were paid at a lower rate) to appointments. In Northern California certified interpreters gathered together, refusing to work for the main agency until it reformed its policies and agreed to contact only the most skilled interpreters first before looking for partial or non-certified interpreters.

We created an ongoing committee to work on the issues that interpreters and the Deaf community objected to and kept our integrity and continued to serve the community. This was possible because the interpreting community was cohesive and adamant. Not all interpreting communities were able to collectively confront such business practices.

Sending lesser skilled workers is a common practice in business, but it has serious repercussions on the lives of Deaf people. A Deaf person who doesn't understand his doctor could have life-or-death implications. A Deaf person with a poor interpreter could have her children removed by ACS because of a bad interpretation. (continued next page)



Letter to the Editor from Stephanie Feyne (continued)

Eventually, referral agencies began competing for contracts. Across the country, interpreters opened referral agencies, many of them based on the premise that they could provide quality interpreters in contrast to agencies that provided “warm body” interpreters.

Over the last several years, however, we have seen the entrance of “language service” agencies into the arena of Sign Language interpreting. While some have a commitment to providing quality services, many have no idea how to evaluate the skills of sign language interpreters or the needs of Deaf consumers. Their knowledge base is in bidding for and maintaining contracts. I now see many agencies with no background in our field, no knowledge of the Deaf world, no ability to evaluate the quality of the services of the interpreters they send to work, and seemingly little interest in developing their knowledge base. For all appearances, it seems that profit, rather than services, is the overweening motive.

Here in New York City we have a plethora of referral agencies, many with contracts for City and County work. I have witnessed certified interpreters being sent to meetings without proper information, resulting in good interpreters working in settings they admit they were not appropriate for. I have seen uncertified interpreters sent to court, threatening the legal status of Deaf claimants, defendants, and the integrity of the court itself. I have seen Deaf people respond that they feel helpless and angry and have no recourse to complain.

The decisions these agencies are making have an impact on all parties present: Deaf, hearing and interpreters. Interpreters who are not appropriate misrepresent themselves and the Deaf parties. Deaf people do not necessarily get their message across and neither do the hearing interlocutors. Hearing people are making assessments of both Deaf parties and sign language interpreters based on who these agencies send. The only ones guaranteed to succeed in attaining their goals are the agencies. Agencies get paid regardless of the caliber of the interpreting work. This is not just happening in New York City, but around the country.

So this leads us to wonder what steps can we take? Clearly, the Deaf communities have been left out of the decision-making process. Of course, working in tandem with Deaf individuals and associations is a good approach, but we can also press our national association to take this on.

I believe RID can begin by making membership requirements of referral agencies: that they have to behave in an ethical manner – that would include sending the most highly qualified person, not a warm body; utilizing a valid evaluation mechanism for non-certified interpreters; ensuring interpreters received relevant information prior to the assignment; and that there must be recourse if an agency sends an inappropriate person for a job. (continued next page)



Letter to the Editor from Stephanie Feyne (continued)

RID certifies interpreters, why not agencies? That would imply an ethical practices mandate for agencies, one that would report and de-certify agencies that are not ethical.

Let us begin now to discuss the standards and the consequences. Let us engage both locally and nationally. Let us not allow agencies in their pursuit of profits to harm Deaf people.

Just say NO

By Judith Rackovitch

I'm a long time interpreter on Long Island and have been venturing in to the Big Bad City on occasion. The word that I am hearing is not very encouraging. I understand smaller agencies are hiring inexperienced interpreters at a very low rate, i.e.: 40 something an hour. In addition, they are negotiating contracts to reflect such numbers. We have all worked so hard to get the respect, recognition and compensation for what we do. How can we as an organization stop this? Or at least educate entities through our National and local professional organizations about what it truly means to be a qualified interpreter? For example, the court system in both Nassau and Suffolk counties still hires interpreters who are not qualified. How do we keep these jobs away from the unqualified interpreters, and how do we convince the entities hiring them the damage they are doing?

We need to join forces and "Just say NO"; it is enough. All these little spoken language agencies need to be "told: by us what our rate is, not them telling us what they will pay us. And for those other agencies that may be a tad larger and have served the Deaf community for a "few years" need to also be told what our going rate is, not what they will pay us.

As for those signers out there accepting the lower rates, you should be ashamed of yourselves. We and those before us who built these bridges, worked tenuous hours on end just to be accepted in with the elite so that we could learn from them. They build unions, created theories, enforced policies, for what???? So some kid graduating a 2 year program can go work in the court system, or interpret a physiological for a child in elementary school? I don't think so, we need to set standards and stick with them. Those of you out there with the qualifications need to insist on being paid an equitable hourly wage. If you need guidance about rates, seek it out from previous professors, workshop presenters or other mentors who may be able to guide and direct you. Remember if you don't work, they don't have the account.



Updates: Voting on NYC Metro RID Issues

At the membership meeting in November, NYC members voted to adopt an electronic voting system for Board elections and changes to Bylaws. This means we will no longer mail ballots and require members to return them via US mail. Instead, we'll utilize one of the secured electronic voting systems that are available online. More information will be available in the coming weeks about how this system will function. It will be used for the first time in June for our upcoming Board elections.

At regular meetings, we will use the same voting system we've had in place. At each meeting we ensure a quorum and use Roberts Rules of Order. As you likely know, we do have a proxy system. This means if you are unable to attend the meeting, and would like to assign your vote to another member who will serve as your proxy you may do so.

In order to assign your vote you must fill out this proxy form and it must be submitted at the meeting where you wish your proxy to be represented.

<u>NYC Metro RID, INC</u>	
I, _____ a voting member in good standing of NYC	
METRO RID, INC. hereby designate _____ my proxy, a member	
in good standing, to cast my vote at the meeting held on _____ or at the adjournment of that meeting. My Proxy names above will take action I might take. This proxy is void if I am at the meeting.	
Membership status: _____ certified _____ associate	
_____	_____
NAME	DATE

NYC Metro RID members are encouraged to submit articles, letters to the editor and announcements related to the interests of our members. Submission is not a guarantee of publication. Letters to the Editor will be printed with limited editing. Submissions may be condensed or rejected because of length or style; if changes are made, nothing will be published unless approved by the author. In some cases, a portion of an article may be published with a link to the full article on our website. Recent back issues may be found at www.nycmetrorid.org



Events

Met Signs Series: Tours in ASL (without voice interpretation)

Friday, February 4, 6:15 pm
Depiction of Women in 19th Century French Art
Led by Emmanuel von Schack

Friday, February 11, 6:15 pm
Mother Nature as Muse: Visions of Natural Forces
Led by Guthrie Nutter

Professional Development

The Sign Language Resources, Inc. Mentorship Program (SLR-MP)
The SLR-MP is currently accepting applications for the Feb-March-April 2011 cycle. Applications are due by 1/15/11 (extended deadline).

Upcoming Cycles:

June-July-August 2011. Applications are not yet being accepted.

October-November-December 2011. Applications are not yet being accepted.

Contact the SLR-MP Coordinator, Keily Carr, at
Keily@SignLanguageResourcesInc.com.

Deaf-Blind Interpreting, Training & Professional Development
Webinar Series with Susanne Morgan Morrow
For more information, contact: Morrow.Susie@gmail.com

Conferences

World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)
Durban, South Africa
July 14-17, 2011
www.wasli.org

RID Biennial Conference
Atlanta, GA
July 17-22, 2011
www.rid.org

World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)
Durban, South Africa
July 18-24, 2011
www.wfdnews.org