

# The Sign Post

Newsletter for the Central California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf



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## Another Victory for American Sign Language

*Kristen Akina, EIPA*

American Sign Language (ASL) has won another small victory of recognition in the academic world. The English department at California State University, Fresno (CSUF) has approved ASL as my foreign language for my master's degree.

Initially this may not seem not like a significant step – after all, CSUF as a whole does acknowledge ASL as a foreign language. But the graduate program in literature works a little differently. By a certain point in the program, they require their students to pass a written proficiency test in a foreign language. First of all, the written part is a bit of a hurdle with ASL. Secondly, the program's rationale is that the students should be able to read literature in an original language other than English.

I recognized these barriers, but I still felt that ASL deserved a chance. There may not be a tradition of ASL literature stretching throughout the centuries, but in the twentieth century, after the language was freed from many of the shackles hearing people imposed on it, a literature did begin to develop. So I asked my advisor if ASL would be accepted as a foreign language. He expressed doubt, but told me to write a letter of petition and to see what would happen. It seemed to me that if the program did not accept ASL, there would still be another shackle clinging to the language. Not to mention that it would also be extremely inconvenient for me to learn another language, after having spent so much time learning ASL and working as an interpreter.

So I went straight to Paul Ogden.

I knew that Paul, as a Deaf Studies professor and a leader in the Deaf community, would be able to help. He promised to support me if my request turned into a battle. He gave me some ideas and arguments for my

letter, and looked over it when it was finished. I worked on the letter meticulously, determined to make my arguments as strong as possible.

I argued for the validity of ASL as a language, and for the relevance of the literature currently developing. I also talked about how my knowledge of ASL had already helped me in my other literature classes. For example, whenever I read material that had been translated, I was ready to consider that there might be several ways of figuring out the meaning from the original language, and I was only getting one translator's version of that meaning. I only had to relate this to my experience as an interpreter for this conclusion to become truly evident. After a final approval from Paul, I sent my proposal to the English department with crossed fingers.

I had braced myself for resistance, but the expected battle never came. The letter turned out to be enough. A week after I had submitted it, the department told me my request had been approved – ASL would satisfy my foreign language requirement.

Needless to say, I was elated. I scheduled my language exam with Paul, passed it, and am now taking the next steps toward my degree. I do not know if the department's consent was a policy change or just an exception for me, but either way, it represents a victory for ASL and the Deaf Community.

I know there is still ground to be gained as ASL marches toward greater recognition. But it was a privilege to watch yet another shackle fall.



**Honoring Tradition  
Embracing Change  
Celebrating Growth**

PO Box 588  
Clovis, CA 93613-0588

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### CCRID Executive Board

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Leadership Meetings are open to all CCRID members. See the calendar at our website for date, time and place. Contact [ccrid@ccrid.org](mailto:ccrid@ccrid.org) with any questions regarding meetings.

The Sign Post is prepared quarterly, in January, April, July, and October. Please send ideas, items or information for announcements to newsletter editor Shannon M. Simonelli at [simoshanny@gmail.com](mailto:simoshanny@gmail.com) one month prior to publication date.

# Positive Changes Seen Throughout the Field

Nicole Wolfe, CCRID President  
MA, CI & CT, NAD IV



This year Central California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf has adopted the theme “Honoring Tradition, Embracing Change, Celebrating Growth.” With each issue I will be exploring these

concepts more.

Embracing change – although intimidating and scary at times – provides the potential for great success. “Change” can take on many forms: challenging, scary, difficult...exciting, rewarding, precisely what is needed, and not an end but a continuation (with improvements).

In spite of fears that may arise amid change, we must always strive for better!

“The best motivation for change is a heartfelt desire to live your best life, not only for yourself but also to make the world a better place” (Borysenko, 2006).

As interpreters, in improving ourselves and our work, we affect change in the profession, in the organization, and in the Deaf community. With unending goals for integrity, high-quality work, and respect, our world is surely to become a better place.

We would stagnate without change. Can anyone now imagine our work being that of the ‘robot model’ as it once was? To think of where this profession has come since that time is truly amazing and it would not have happened

without change!

To fully embrace change, we must enlist allies. That is you! That is us!! With changes in certifications, certification maintenance, and requirements within our profession, we can lean on one another to succeed.

One might say the trick is to maintain stability amid change. We will maintain high standards and integrity in our work; we will maintain adherence to the Code of Professional Conduct; we will maintain the desire to always improve. CCRID will continue our commitment to professional development opportunities and growth as individuals. Let’s continue “Honoring Tradition, Embracing Change, and Celebrating Growth!!”



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Stepping Up

CCRID Members who have passed an interpreting assessment or certification test:

- Becky Hirschorn, EIPA, RID Ed: K-12
- Brittany King, EIPA
- Erin Uribe, EIPA
- Katie Carlson, NIC
- Maja Freund, EIPA
- Laurie Rhoads, EIPA
- Ruth Smith, CI
- Shannon M Simonelli, NIC
- Suzanne Conway, EIPA

### Cherished Tidings

CCRID members who have had life-changing events:

- Christine Gough & Jeff Bise are expecting their second child, sibling to their son, Cole Bise.
- Kaye & Jerry Osborn welcomed their first grandchild, Glen Calvin Tucker, on March 22 at 10:53 pm, 6lbs, 13 oz, 19 inches long.
- Sabine & Michael John Wecker are expecting their first child in May.
- Stephanie Grant passed the LCSW and is now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

All names included with expressed permission.

## CHALLENGE

### What would you do in each of the situations below?

Discuss the conflicts, decisions you would make, and the possible long and short term outcomes. Scenarios are from “Encounters with Reality” by Brenda E. Cartwright.

- While interpreting in a high school history class, the teacher gives the students some erroneous information. You were a history major in college, and it’s all you can do to just sit there and interpret his misinformation.
- You’re interpreting for a Deaf couple and their hearing pre-teen son at a counseling session. The son is being grilled about his rebellious ways by the therapist and his parents, so he keeps trying to turn the focus onto you. He tells everyone present that you’re misrepresenting what he says to his parents. He cites specific examples of wrong words and signs you used, and the session becomes a mess.
- While waiting to see a doctor in the emergency room, your Deaf client asks you if you’re gay. Rather than lie you say, “Yes, but I’m not open about it and I hope you can respect that.” Weeks later you hear from interpreters and Deaf people alike that this person is telling people you “came on to” them. This is as far from the truth as possible, and you would like to find and confront them.



## EVENTS

### April

17, 6pm—9pm *Making Ethical Decisions Part II* with Chantel Cox, DHHSC, Fresno

19, 2pm—4pm, Leadership Meeting: Suzanne Conway’s residence, Fresno  
email [ccrid@ccrid.org](mailto:ccrid@ccrid.org) for directions

25, 9am—11am, Professional Development: Voicing signed slang & idioms, DHHSC, Fresno

### May

3, 2pm—4pm, Leadership Meeting: Suzanne Conway’s residence, Fresno  
email [ccrid@ccrid.org](mailto:ccrid@ccrid.org) for directions

16, 9am—5pm, *The Magic of Fingerspelling* with Debbie Peterson, DHHSC, Fresno

### June– July

CCRID will be on hiatus.

For details and event fliers go to the calendar listed at [www.ccrd.org](http://www.ccrd.org)