

The Sign Post

Newsletter for the Central California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

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Interpreting Leads to Unexpected Experiences

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Many of the age-old beliefs have been reinforced for me as an interpreter. This past summer was no exception. When I started the summer my calendar consisted of a little more than two conferences and I was looking forward to some down time. I quickly discovered that would not be the case.

Always Expect the Unexpected

I arrived home one afternoon to discover an email requesting my interpreting services for a one-week class at Gallaudet University. It was a joint project with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and Texas Tech University (TTU). The Deaf-Blind Young Adults in Action project was the first of its kind incorporating public policy and advocacy for six post-secondary students from throughout the U.S. Two days would be in the classroom learning public policy and its effects on the deaf-blind population, another two days would be on Capitol Hill meeting with senators and representatives, and the final day would be a private tour of the White House. A team of six interpreters were needed because each student has a variation of deaf-blindness.

The first unexpected challenge: it was Wednesday when I received the call to interpret and I needed to arrive in Washington DC by Sunday. I spent the next three days finding coverage for my assignments and preparing for the trip. The day before my departure I learned a few more unexpected things: the group would be meeting with Kareem Dale, President Obama's advisor on disability, the week would be video taped for research purposes, and there was potential for a meeting with the President.

What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger

The students and the interpreting team from HKNC and TTU all stayed in the dorms. Having the whole team in the dorms allowed for maximum bonding time with each other. As I became acquainted with them I was continuously humbled and amazed by their life stories. I listened to these six students discuss the challenges they experienced while never completely losing their humor. "Can YOU read in the dark?" waxed one



Interpreter Michelle Montelongo (far right) in the Oval Office with President Barack Obama (center), White House staff, and the Deaf-Blind Young Adults in Action Team.

student. I sat back in awe as I watched each of them tell their "war stories" in the most magnanimous fashion.

The adage "always expect the unexpected" reached maximum impact during this trip. On Tuesday evening I was summoned to the room of the two leaders of the project to be informed that I was now the lead interpreter. Because of my background, I was going to be in charge of the major meetings on Capitol Hill from Wednesday forward. (Gulp). On my first day as lead interpreter the team learned President Obama had requested a meeting with us! It was a slow realization that being the lead interpreter meant interpreting the meeting at the White House for President Obama. My adrenaline was through the roof! However, there was little time to dwell on this; Wednesday and Thursday were filled with meetings with various senators and representatives. At the end of each day, the whole team, guide dogs included, were spent.

Even a Cat May Look at a King

Friday's agenda listed two appointments; a private tour of the White House with Kareem Dale in the morning and an afternoon meeting with President Obama in the Oval Office. Once the private tour was complete we had a couple of hours of

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**Honoring Tradition
Embracing Change
Celebrating Growth**

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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 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 one month prior to publication date.

Continued from page 1: Interpreting for Obama and Deaf-Blind Leaders

down time, which was spent at a café across the street. While everyone was still on their “White House high,” I noticed one student looking rather pensive. “What gives?” I asked, “Why aren’t you as excited as the rest of the group? In less than an hour you are going to meet the President.” His response: “It’s not that, I’m excited about that part, it’s just that today is our last day and there is still so much we can do. There is so much more we need to tell the law makers that can help make a change for others.”

I looked at the student as he spoke and remembered the words of a favorite childhood author, L.M. Montgomery; “It’s not what the world holds for you that’s important, it’s what you bring to it.” I have always admired these words, but now I was sitting across the table from six people who truly live this way. We shall all experience our clouds of melancholia in our life, and when we do we should not

ignore it. Challenging times are meant to be processed but not to be embraced.

Within minutes after this talk we were led into the White House. There is something surreal about being approached by someone who says, “Miss Montelongo? I’m one of the President’s staffers, what can I do for you?” After that brief introduction everything happened so quickly, fortunately there was no time to digest the idea of bungling; I was in interpreter mode 100%. The team entered the Oval Office to individually greet the President, and then the meeting started. Within the blink of an eye it was over and we were back on the White House lawn even more pumped than before.

As an interpreter, I have been entrusted with the wonderful gift of being a window into other people’s lives. This has led to extraordinary experiences, yet nothing has trumped meeting, interpreting for, and getting to know these six intrepid

warriors, not even a trip to the Oval Office.

Less than a month later I received yet another unexpected call from the team requesting my interpreting services for the International Deaf-Blind Conference in Kampala, Uganda in October. I never would have imagined that accepting a last minute call for interpreting would lead me to the opportunity to interpret for an International conference half way around the world!



Interpreter Michelle Montelongo shakes hands with President Barack Obama during a meeting at the Oval Office.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

From CCRID President Suzanne Conway:

As I sit down at my computer this cool fall morning, I am thinking about the second phrase in CCRID’s motto: *Embracing Change*. I strive to embrace change, not only for CCRID, but also personally. Change is sometimes scary, exciting, and almost always necessary.

One of the ways that CCRID will be experiencing and embracing change is the way in which information is shared. Beginning in October, I will be sending out emails to the membership two times every month. These will be a sharing of what is going on in Region V and at the national level of RID.

I hope you will embrace this new communication style and that we will continue to Celebrate Growth together!



Stepping Up

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

- Kaitlin Rickerd, NIC

Cherished Tidings

CCRID members who have had life-changing events:

- Christine Gough, Jeff Bise and their son Cole welcomed daughter Kai Grace Raelene on August 28, 2009.

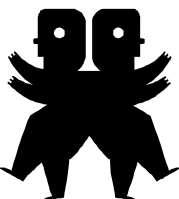
All names included with expressed permission.

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.*

- A local performing arts group for the Deaf approaches you about interpreting an upcoming play. You have never done any theatrical interpreting and so you suggest they hire another interpreter with more experience. They assure you that you’re their first choice and that they’ll work closely with you every step of the way.
- You were once a victim of child abuse, and you still have nightmares about it. You get a call to interpret for a Deaf child involved in a child abuse case who will be attending counseling sessions. Although you’re aware that this probably isn’t a good assignment for you since you never resolved your own abuse, you think you can resolve some of these issues by interpreting in this situation.
- You’re interpreting in a high school special education classroom. One day, the Deaf student is amusing himself and all his classmates by signing his conversations using only his middle fingers. The special education teacher asks you to please talk to the student about his inappropriate behavior.



EVENTS

October

2, 7 pm – 9 pm, *Review of Demand Control Schema Principles*, DHHSC-Fresno

3, 9:30 am – 4:30 pm, *Real World Application of the Demand-Control Schema*, DHHSC-Fresno

4, 2 pm – 4 pm, *Leadership Meeting*; Suzanne Conway’s residence, Fresno
email ccrid@ccrid.org for directions

November

8, 2 pm – 4 pm, *Leadership Meeting*; Suzanne Conway’s residence, Fresno
email ccrid@ccrid.org for directions

13, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm, *Deaf-Blind Interpreting Workshop*, DHHSC-Fresno

December

No Leadership Meeting this month
5, 9am – 11am, *Terp Time*, Professional Development: *Signs of the Season*

For details and event fliers go to the calendar listed at www.ccrd.org