

CAPTIONS

Official Newsletter Publication of the Colorado Association of Professional Interpreters
P.O. Box 40664, Denver, CO 80204, www.coloradointerpreters.org

First Quarter 2004

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UPCOMING INTERPRETER EVENTS

Upcoming *medical interpreting conference*: CyraCom International is a healthcare language services company that assists organizations with medical interpretation, testing and training, and translation services. In conjunction with the University of Colorado Hospital they are co-sponsoring a Medical Interpretation Conference at the University of Colorado Hospital in Denver in the Glaser Auditorium on **January 23 & 24, 2004**. Registration Information can be found at: www.cyracom.com or at 800-713-4950 x223.

Court Interpreter Skills Building Course to be offered again through the Extension Program at the University of Colorado at Denver. The class will be given on Saturdays from 9:00am to 4:00pm beginning **January 31, 2004** and continuing through March 6, 2004 (no class held February 14). The cost of the 5-week course is \$350 plus the required text. To register, go on-line at <http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/continuingeducation/interpreter.htm>.

“How to Tame the English Pronunciation Monsters”, 3-hour CAPI workshop to be presented in **March 2004** - exact time and place TBA - by Maya León Meis.

This workshop will be presented in English, is geared toward all non-native English speakers, and is open to interpreters of all professional levels. Clear pronunciation in English is an essential skill for professional interpreters. However, it is difficult to master because English spelling is complex and confusing. The vowel system in American English is particularly challenging for foreign language speakers since there are 15 vowel sounds! It's not surprising they are perceived as “pronunciation monsters” when there are only 5 vowel sounds in many other languages. The purpose of this seminar is to show interpreters how to tame such “monsters” with clearly explained guidelines. This work-shop promises to be entertaining and educational. A more detailed announcement will be sent out when registration opens.

CAPI will play host to the *National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT)* annual conference next year in Denver, at the Denver Marriott City Center at 1701 California Street. The dates of the conference are **May 21-23, 2004**. If you would like to be a presenter, for more information, and to register for the conference, go to www.najit.org or call (206) 367-8704.

NOTABLE MENTIONS...

Federal Exam...

Congratulations go out to members *Julia Davis* and *Erin Gaston* for passing the Federal Court Interpreter Examination!

CAPTIONS Editor...

As of January 2004, *Ron Olson* will take over the publication of Captions. All submissions may be sent to him at: olsonr@ci.denver.co.us

Transitions...

Erin Gaston has left her position as Interpreter Coordinator for Denver District Court. She has moved to Washington, D.C. with her new husband and we wish her all the best.

The job opening left by Erin has been filled by Emy López, who may be contacted at emy.lopez@judicial.state.co.us.

NEXT CAPI MEETING

Mark your calendar! The next CAPI general meeting will be the **Annual Meeting** and will be held on March 13, 2004 from 10:00am to 12:30pm (the exact location will be announced in a separate mailing). Elections will be held at this meeting to fill positions on the CAPI Board of Directors that are up for re-election. The terms of one Co-Chair (Julia Davis), Treasurer (David Fletcher), and one Member of the Board (Cathy Bahr) expire in March 2004. If you are interested in running or nominating somebody for one of these positions, please contact Lee Ann Trujillo, Chairperson of the Nominations and Elections Committee at lctrujillobravo@qwest.net or (303) 617-9048. All CAPI members in good standing with the association are eligible to vote.

Visit CAPI's website!

You can find more information about upcoming events of interest to interpreters and translators, as well as resources for interpreters and those who are looking for an interpreter at

www.coloradointerpreters.org

NEW COMMITTEE

In anticipation of the upcoming elections for CAPI Board positions, we are announcing the formation of a new CAPI committee: The **Nominations and Elections Committee**. Lee Ann Trujillo-López is the current contact person for this committee, whose responsibilities include handling the process of nominating candidates, disseminating information to the membership provided by the candidates, voting and ballot counting of members voting in absentia or in person at the March 6, 2004 CAPI Annual Meeting.

If you are interested in joining or learning more about this committee, please contact CAPI at jdavis@coloradointerpreters.org.

Spanish Court Interpreter Certification

The CAPI Court Interpreter Certification Task Force announces the following dates:

- **Spanish Court Interpreter Certification Exam** to be given April 17-18, 2004
- **Spanish Court Interpreter Orientation** will be offered September 11-12, 2004
- **Spanish Court Interpreter Certification Exam** given again January 22-23, 2005

To register for these events, go to www.coloradointerpreters.org.

Source Language Solutions will be offering **workshops for court interpreters** here in Denver from January 30 through February 1, 2004. The cost is \$375. These workshops are especially designed for those who will be taking the state certification exam. Please visit their website for additional dates and other details...

www.sourcelanguagesolutions.com.

CAPI Members...

Don't forget to renew your membership! You can download your membership form at **www.coloradointerpreters.org**.

CAPI SURVEY

The CAPI Board of Directors would like input from our membership on the proposition that it would be beneficial for CAPI to join other organizations. The goal is to find new ways to promote professional development and/or enter new venues for marketing our members' services.

For example, two organizations that have been suggested are Chamber of the Americas and NCIHC (National Council for Interpreting in Health Care).

This idea is just at the inception stage and quite a bit of research needs to be done to pinpoint organizations that could be beneficial to CAPI members before any action would be taken.

We ask you, our members, to give us your reactions to the idea in general, suggest organizations that you think would be strategically advantageous, and any other comments you want to share with the Board.

Responses to this survey should be sent to Cathy Bahr at: cathy@spanishtran.com.

CAPI MEDICAL INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION TASK FORCE

A new Medical Interpreter Certification Task Force has been formed by the CAPI Board of Directors. This new group has been established with the goal of bringing medical interpreter certification to Colorado, thus promoting certain minimum standards and reasonable compensation for the profession in our state. If you would like to volunteer to work on this Task Force, please contact CAPI Secretary Tonya Johnson at tonyaj@ecentral.com.

If you have any news or reviews to share with the readers of Captions, please send it to cathy@spanishtran.com so it can be included in the next issue.

MEETING IN "THE SPRINGS"

At the request of several enthusiastic interpreters from Colorado Springs, CAPI had a general meeting on their home turf in September. General presentations were made on who and what CAPI is, and general judiciary and medical interpreter ethics. Time was allowed before and after the meeting for socializing and networking. If there is strong interest from interpreters in other areas of the state, CAPI is happy to hold a meeting in your town.

CAPI PRESENTATION

In the pursuit of CAPI's mission to educate the users of interpreter services, Emy López and Cathy Bahr made a presentation in October to the Colorado State Public Defenders. They clearly explained to them the functions court interpreters provide, how we do what we do, and gave them tips on how to make best use of our services.

Interest has also been expressed for similar presentations to be made to attorneys in Arapahoe County, Colorado Springs, Brighton, Jefferson County and Ft. Collins.

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Essential Dictionaries For Court Interpreters – a list compiled by:
Language Services Section, Special Programs Unit, Programs and Procedures Division, Office of Trial Court Services, Administrative Office of the Courts
Available at:
www.judiciary.state.nj.us/interpreters/index.htm

To Tell or Not To Tell

by Ron Olson

"What did he say?" "What will she do?" Anyone who has worked as a court interpreter will need to find a response when judges and attorneys ask these kinds of questions. Perhaps the answers should be easy because we are governed by a code of confidentiality. But just like most things in life, that which should be simple is complicated. It is especially difficult to keep to a code of confidentiality when the request to break it comes from someone in authority or from the person who is paying for our services. What an interpreter overheard during the course of the interpreting process can be the reason for a subpoena. How should we respond?

Two canons govern the issues of confidentiality in the Colorado Judicial Department Code of Professional Responsibility for Court Interpreters. Canon # 5 states: "Interpreters shall keep confidential all matters interpreted and all conversations overheard between counsel and client. Interpreters shall not discuss a case pending before the court." Canon # 6 reads: "Interpreters shall not publicly discuss, report, or offer an opinion concerning a matter in which they are engaged, even when that information is not privileged or required by law to be confidential."

When we are asked to step out of our interpreting role and tell what someone has said or what someone will do, we can be prepared to answer, "I can interpret your question to them," or, "You will need to ask their attorney." We may be tempted to facilitate things because it is easier to answer without recognizing that "all matters interpreted" are confidential. But each time an interpreter does so, the profession suffers. The code of ethics which defines our role is diminished. And one more person goes on thinking that interpreters are assistants rather than a communication tool.

What can an interpreter do if he or she is called to be a witness? This is where things get murky. If you are subpoenaed you must respond. But the code of ethics governs your reply. Study the code carefully. Take copies of the code of ethics with you to pass out to anyone involved. Be ready to say something like, "Canon # 5 tells me that an interpreter shall 'keep confidential all matters interpreted,' and I have sworn to

interpret using this code of ethics". Or when asked for an opinion: "The interpreters' code tells me that "an interpreter must limit herself to interpreting and translating and refrain from giving any advice or opinion." Different questions will demand unique responses, but having the code firmly in mind gives your answer authority.

Of course, if you are called as a witness a judge might say, "Now you are a witness, take off the interpreter's hat." There are times when we must leave the role of interpreter and act in a different role. We should never do this, however, if someone is asking us to repeat information that is confidential. Perhaps the best response is one of the following: "I was just interpreting. I cannot trust my memory to be able to tell you whether something happened in one case or another." "When I interpret, I am very busy focusing on the meaning of the words used, transferring them into another language; I use short term memory and processing skills." "I work with 10 to 30 people per day and I cannot trust my memory of what I overheard while interpreting."

A more proactive approach is to avoid these questions or being subpoenaed in the first place. Obviously, we should stay out of situations where we have insider information because we have spent too much time conversing independently with a defendant or witness. We are privy to information heard while interpreting, however. If one hears an attorney talking about wanting an interpreter to testify, an immediate comment about our code of ethics is an important preventative measure. I have found myself saying, "Interpreters make bad witnesses. We just talk about our ethics and how certain things are privileged and other things are confidential due to the nature of our task." The dilemma becomes an opportunity to educate others about our role.

If interpreters repeat on demand what they interpreted, they can never be trusted to interpret anything that is sensitive. We can expect to be asked. When asked, we can have an answer that upholds confidentiality. We can reply in a way that educates others as to the role we play. Maintaining confidentiality is to our benefit, and will ensure that our profession is one marked by ethical standards.