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Chesapeake College hosts Interpreter's Training

By KAYLA RIVAS krivas@stardem.com 2 hrs ago



Lorelly Solano, Ph.D., (bottom left) poses alongside 30 additional Community Interpreter College after completing the 40-hour training. The certified participants include Alexis C Anderson Watson, Beverlie Pierville, Brenda Horrocks, Brenda Morales-Velazquez, Far Jacqueline Escobar, Janine Puma, Jose Rodriguez, Katie Sevon, Linda Persaud, Lisau Quezada, Mayra Torres, Meliza Escalante, Michely Valentin, Mollie Patrick, Paula Ram Valerie Murphy, Vanessa Gomez, Vanessa L. Malave, Vanessa Reyes, and Victoria Go

WYE MILLS — 31 bilingual participants completed a 40-hour The Community Interpreter® International program from June 11-15 at Chesapeake College, which was organized by the Talbot Language and Cultural Competence Committee.

The five day course was held from 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. each day in the Health Professions and Athletics Center in Room 141.

Several participants shared their thoughts regarding the program.

Mayra Torres, a bilingual victims advocate at For All Season's Rape Crisis Center, explained how this center is the only rape crisis center on the Eastern Shore, and how the current interpreter is completely overloaded with cases.

"It's important to have someone there to interpret," Torres said. "I am so proud of this extra step and what I have chosen to do as a career."

The agency serves the five counties and just gained two more interpreters, Torres and Michely Valentin.

The Talbot Language and Cultural Competence Committee is a multi-agency collaborative endeavor integrated by agencies such as the Talbot County Department of Social Services, Talbot County Health Department, Talbot County Public Schools, Talbot County Sheriff's Office, Talbot County Department of Emergency Services, Choptank Community Health System, University of Maryland Shore Regional Health, Easton Utilities, Chesapeake College and Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center.

ChesMRC is a key partner of the Talbot Language and Cultural Competence Committee, and is responsible for the project's initiatives both in the areas of interpreting and increasing cultural competence.

The Talbot Language and Cultural Competence Committee is coordinated by Lorelly Solano, Ph. D. Solano also underwent training through The Community Interpreter® program last week.

Since the Hispanic community in the Mid-shore is a growing section of such agencies' clientele, the agencies wish to better serve and understand the population and its needs. Improving capacity for bilingual communication is one of the main objectives of the Committee.

Most participants joined the program to interpret on a more professional level, to better assist the community, and to skyrocket their career opportunities.

Hianna Sabo, customer service representative at Easton Utilities shared her thoughts as well, and explained that she is on the leadership team for the company's Non-English Speaking Customer Initiative.

“Easton Utilities always had pretty high customer satisfaction numbers, but a customer survey sent out every other year has always been in English,” Sabo said. “In the last couple of years, seeing more Hispanic faces, the company wondered if they were actually serving everyone.”

Solano and Matthew Peters, Director at ChesMRC, met with the company to discuss population statistics.

“There's going to be a good size of our demographic that we need to start serving better,” Sabo explained.

Amongst the participants undergoing professional training, there were two Haitian Creole and one Urdu speakers. All other participants are bilingual in Spanish.

The 40-hour training was led by instructor Carola E. Green, a licensed trainer for Cross Cultural Communications. Green came to the U.S. from Guatemala, has been in the field for over 20 years and is also certified as a federal court interpreter.

“I hadn’t realized how challenging life could be when you were limited English proficient until I got ill in Paris and I didn’t know how to communicate,” Green said. “That was an epiphany for me, not knowing the dominant language.”

Green is driven by her strong belief that we all want equal access and she feels that it can only be accomplished at times through the interpreter.

As learned in the course, the minimum qualifications to become a professionally trained interpreter include: be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or equivalent, demonstrate bilingual language proficiency through a test, and complete a 40-hour training.

“It is a significant step towards improving access for limited English proficient people,” Green said.

Halfway through the program, Green noticed a critical turning point.

“We’re at a pivotal halfway point. Interpreters are thinking before they just mediate or intervene and take over,” Green said. “Not only is it beautiful, but it’s what I want. I want them to think ‘maybe, maybe I should just interpret.’ It’s not that we don’t care, it’s that we recognize the limitations and the boundaries of our role.”

Without proper training, bilingual individuals can make errors while attempting to interpret and can actually hinder progress more than help, even if they have the best intentions, Green said.

"The Community Interpreter® is the first and only national 40-hour certificate program for community interpreting in the U.S.," said CCC. "This course covers ethics and conduct, basic skills (from pre-session to post-session), positioning, terminology, modes of interpreting, steps for sight translation, intervention strategies, cultural mediation, and other vital skills and protocols."

The five days of instruction came with a cost of \$750 per participant. The hefty fee offered students a textbook, a workbook filled with activities and role plays, administration and grading of a 90-minute written assessment of participant knowledge of interpreting based on the program, The Community Interpreter® certificate issued by CCC, complimentary breakfasts and free parking space.

Most participants had to take a language proficiency test to demonstrate their command of a second language before beginning the course. The cost of the test was separate from the program fee, (it ranged from \$70 to \$139 depending on the choice of language and modality) and it was conducted by a company called Language Testing International.

Exemptions from the language proficiency test were possible if the participant held a four-year undergraduate degree or a graduate degree from an accredited university where the participant's non-native language was the language of instruction.

Two participants met this criterion by virtue of their graduate education. To succeed in this course, participants had to obtain an acceptable grade on the language proficiency test, attend the whole

course, and obtain a minimum grade of 75 percent in a final assessment.

Three certificate levels were available to recognize advanced and superior language skills.

Level 1 (known as Qualified Interpreter), recognizes those who obtained a grade of Superior or Advanced High on the language proficiency test (the highest credential granted in the course). Level Two (Professionally Trained Interpreter), obtained a score of Advanced Mid or Advanced Low. Level 3 (Hospitality Interpreter), scored Intermediate High.

In the event of not meeting the minimum expectations of the course, a certification of attendance would be granted to the participants who underwent the 40-hour training.

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Two-year associate degrees did not meet the exemption requirement.

Solano, who had previously become an Eligible Maryland Court Interpreter in Spanish, also participated in the Community Interpreting course.

“Ms. Green exhibited a great command of the topic, and delivered the course in a culturally competent manner,” Solano said. “As one of the participants, I was fortunate to witness a remarkable learning experience.”

Solano felt it necessary to give a lot of acknowledgement to Chesapeake College, as a co-organizer and host.

“From the inception of the idea to the last moment of execution of the training, we found a supportive partner,” Solano said. “The beautiful campus with state of the art technology and facilities added to the excellence of the course.”

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