

# Peer-to-Peer: Creating a Learning Community

**T**he Arizona RID is honored to be a recipient of the RID NCIEC Mentoring Grant for 2007-2008. With unprecedented support from additional sponsors including, Sorenson Communications, Arizona Freelance Interpreting Service and the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we are able to provide the first cycle of mentoring training by hosting a 12-week "Peer Mentoring Program" (PMP) during the winter of 2008.

Arizona RID has contracted with Wendy W. Watson, CI and CT, Master Mentor and Director of the Southeast Mentorship Project, to provide this exciting training. Deanna L. Ammon, CI and CT and Coordinator of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students at Boston University, will co-facilitate the Arizona PMP. Arizona RID's goal is to establish the foundation for a learning community and to foster opportunities for ongoing mentorship. The PMP is an established program, provided for the past five years with great success in Massachusetts and New York. The curriculum provides structure and guidance allowing participants to work collaboratively to enhance skill sets and to deepen their understanding of the field of ASL/spoken English interpreting. PMP participants expand their professional network and receive complex yet supportive opportunities for growth.

Many mentoring programs face the challenges of working with a population of interpreting practitioners that is extremely varied; one that does not easily divide into the traditional categories of mentor/mentee. These same practitioners often work in isolation, providing little opportunity to network with others. In addition, they can represent the widest possible spectrum of professional skills, ethnic/cultural backgrounds, work experience and progress in the credentialing process. In an effort to address the diverse needs of this population, the Peer Mentorship Model (PMM) created. It is the work of Laurie Shaffer and Wendy W. Watson.

The PMM is taught via the PMP; one tailor-made for just the population described above. The program operates on the premise that every participant has a contribution to make regardless of number of years in the field, amount of formalized training or areas of specialization. The primary guiding philosophy of the PMP is that each interpreter is the expert in regards to his or her work. They alone have access to the circumstances and the thought processes surrounding the decisions or choices made that result in a given interpretation. However, these professionals need the opportunity to

develop a means to assess their process and the resulting product. With the right tools, individuals can investigate their maximum capacities and abilities. And given this opportunity, the practitioner can thrive, providing the best quality of service possible. With this understood, one who is a mentee can, in turn, provide mentoring. All participants take on the role of both mentor and mentee during the 12-week cycle. A six-workshop series is designed to enhance discreet dialogic skills and to develop strategies for effective independent analysis of an individual's interpreting work. Participation in the series creates a consistent approach to talking about the work that is objective, constructive and action-oriented.

Registration is limited to 14 to ensure individualized attention as well as an environment that encourages group/peer learning. All activities within the PMP are undertaken with the stated goal of enhancing the services we bring to our consumers. Arizona RID is grateful for the support which runs locally and nationally and allows us not only the opportunity to provide this first cycle of the Arizona RID Peer Mentoring Program but also to continue to strive for unity in our community. ■