

Deaf Members in Leadership (DML): Representing the Deaf Perspective in RID

By Lewis Merkin, CDI, New York, DML Committee Chair

Most of us know that RID is a member-driven association with policies derived at the local or state level that work their way up to the national level. There are a number of national committees which tackle issues that come up between the national conferences as well as gather information to help RID on these issues. One of these, Deaf Members in Leadership, is relatively new, having first been established in 1997. The current committee recently formed, consists of Cassie Schellfeffer, CDI, Wisconsin; Regan Thibodeaux, CDI, Maine and myself, along with strong assistance from Jimmy Beldon, CDI, RID Vice-President, our board liaison and Melissa Bowhay, our national office liaison. We wanted to inform the membership of our activities and ideas, and to request input. The information below describes the current purpose of DML.

Deaf Members in Leadership Committee Purpose:

- To strengthen the organization by including deaf members in leadership roles.

Objectives:

- To develop an aggressive plan for the identification, recruitment, and training of members who are deaf to assume leadership positions throughout the association's structure.
- To act in an advisory capacity to the RID Board of Directors, representing the interest of the deaf members and promoting the best practices.

Since its inception, DML has created conditions for change within the organization. Some examples: having Deaf members on the national board, utilizing CDIs as conference interpreters, having Deaf and hearing co-chairs for various functions and making business meetings more Deaf-friendly. We are also contacted

by other national committees for input into their activities. For example, the Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee asked for ideas to include in their handbook (for all affiliate chapters) to make them more Deaf-friendly. Our suggestions were:

1) having local meetings be conducted in ASL (no voicing). Interpreters can be hired to voice in one corner of the room and those who need it can sit nearby; 2) reaching out to local chapters of national organizations (i.e., NAD, ASLTA, and NAOBI) by inviting their officers to present at RID meetings and vice-versa, and 3) creating committees that include the Deaf community-at-large. An example from my own chapter, NYC Metro RID, is the Deaf-Interpreter Relations Committee (DIRC). This committee sets up monthly meetings for both the interpreting and Deaf communities to discuss a topic of interest related to the interpreting profession. We have a two-hour discussion (led by one Deaf and one hearing), and whoever wants to goes out for dinner. Often, 20 of us go out socially and the discussion continues. This is a good setting for honest, open communication about issues between both communities.

Ideas that have been discussed

among the committee include stressing the need for continuing training on areas of interest for CDIs or for people wishing to become CDIs. We would like to see more workshops set up across the country and challenge each state/local chapter to provide at least two trainings a year for their Deaf members. Additionally, we suggest each chapter consider setting up their own CDI committee to explore issues that come up locally.

DML is continuing to seek input from RID members, especially our Deaf members. This is the current breakdown as of June 1, 2004:

The total number of deaf members of RID is 350:

Certified - 129
Certified: Inactive - 2
Certified: Retired - 6
Associate - 119
Student - 4
Supporting - 85
Trial - 5

A number of the certified interpreters are CDI-Ps and they automatically became associate members if they did not pass both the CDI written and performance tests by June 30. Although this notice has been posted since March 29, 2002, we anticipate issues arising from this and we will attempt to deal with this in conjunction with the Certification Council.

Feel free to contact us: DMLRID@aol.com. We request and look forward to your input and will do our best to represent you. ■

Logo Designs Sought for New NAD-RID NIC Test

As you may know, the new NAD-RID National Interpreter Certification (NIC) test is imminent. This is an historic time because it represents many years of collaboration between the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). The profession of interpreters for the deaf will have a new national standard which reflects the collaborative thinking of both professional interpreters and the deaf community. The new NIC test needs a logo. We want you to give us the benefit of your ideas and skills to come up with a logo. For background information regarding what brought us to this historic new test, go to <http://www.rid.org/nic.html>. The winner of the logo design will be awarded a cash prize of \$500.00. Get busy creating and drawing! ■