

For Immediate Release
Release No. PR-14-1306-01
Contact: Caron Mason, CAE
Public Relations & Marketing Manager
(703) 683-6100(703) 683-6100, ext. 3003
caron@atanet.org

ATA President Caitilin Walsh Reaches Out to Cherokee Nation Students

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Caitilin Walsh, president of the American Translators Association, connected with students of the Cherokee Nation through the ATA school outreach program, sharing the importance of translation with the students during a week that culminated with International Mother Language Day.

Walsh reached out to more than 50 students from junior high-aged to adults during her presentation. “Efforts to preserve the Cherokee language—and the rich culture it represents—range from elementary school immersion programs, to technical initiatives with major software developers, to translating the documents in their lives,” Walsh said.

Walsh added that one of the lessons taught to the students is how being bilingual is an asset, not a liability. “I started off by asking how many people speak a language other than English at home, and a few hands were shyly raised; then I asked how many of them were afraid to raise their hands, and more hands shoot up, this time quickly,” said Walsh. “Teachers love this because it is a pivotal teaching moment and a moment of clarity for the students because they know why they are studying language.”

The ATA president also stressed to students and adults alike that ATA, as a community of translators and interpreters, can help provide them with professional and practical information that would dovetail nicely with their mandate to preserve the Cherokee Language.

“The Cherokee language is one of the most important aspects of who we are as a tribe, and many elements of our culture are contained in our language,” Cherokee Language Program Manager Roy Boney said. “Our language offers more than communication. It transmits cultural knowledge and a mode of thinking that is uniquely Cherokee. To lose

our language would mean a huge loss of part of our heritage, and the goal of the Cherokee Nation Language Program is to ensure our language lives on for future generations.”

The Cherokee Nation is among the first tribes to start a formal translation department using its fluent speakers. Over the last six months, they have translated 150,000 modern English terms into Cherokee for Microsoft’s Office Online. Now users can create Word, PowerPoint, and Excel documents in a Cherokee interface.

Founded in 1959, the American Translators Association’s primary goals include fostering and supporting the professional development of translators and interpreters and promoting the translation and interpreting professions. ATA, based in Alexandria, Virginia, has nearly 11,000 members in over 95 countries. For more information on ATA, please visit www.atanet.org.

###