

Promoting Professionalism: María Elena Gaborov Wins 2013 School Outreach Contest

By Sonia Wichmann

This year's ATA

School Outreach Award was presented to ATA member María Elena Gaborov for a photo showcasing her presentation to an undergraduate Spanish class at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC).

Capturing Students' Attention

María, who works as a Spanish interpreter at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill, first became interested in doing a presentation for the contest after reading about a previous winner in *The ATA Chronicle*. The idea of doing this kind of outreach appealed to María, who describes herself as “constantly advocating for the profession.” She wanted to target college students preparing to go into the workforce, so she contacted UNC Spanish instructor Alan Reddick and arranged to visit his class of 20 students. Although the presentation was originally scheduled for only 20 minutes, students became so interested in the topic, and had so many questions, that the session extended to a full 90 minutes.

In her presentation, María began by explaining some basic facts about translators and interpreters: the different types of work that they do, the skills and training that they need for their careers, and the vital importance of using trained professionals. The students, who came to the presentation essentially unaware of this profession, were fascinated to hear about the impact that translators and interpreters have on people's daily lives around the world, and particularly here in the U.S. They were surprised to learn, for example, that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act gives millions of people with limited



The winning photo: María Elena Gaborov (far right) with undergraduate students from the Department of Romance Languages at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

English proficiency the right to receive interpreting services in health care and social service settings. They had many questions about such things as specific situations that arise in hospitals where an interpreter is needed, the difference between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, and the pros and cons of interpreting by video or phone as opposed to face-to-face interpreting.

Real-Life Connections

To prepare for her presentation, María referred to the tips and materials provided on ATA's website, and also collected interesting examples from the book *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, by ATA members Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetsche. But most of all, she drew on her own experiences and her passion for her work.

One experience she shared was the time she traveled to the small

rural community of Ixtepec, Mexico, as an interpreter assisting a medical team from Tennessee. Because half of the residents there only spoke the Totonac language, she needed an interpreter herself in order to be able to do her job. Being on the other side of the interpreting relationship helped her to understand better the experience of her patients and medical staff. This example led the students to think about what the presence of an interpreter can mean to patients and their families. As they discussed this, one student recalled the experience of a family member who became seriously ill on a trip to India and was unable to communicate with hospital staff.

Focus on Professionalism

As a certified medical interpreter, María is keenly aware of the importance of using trained professionals in a medical setting and feels strongly about getting this message across to medical workers, ➔

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patients, and the general public. To this end, she is active in the International Medical Interpreters Association, serving as vice chair for North Carolina. She participates in such outreach activities as having medical and interpreting students at UNC shadow her to learn about what interpreters do. In María's native Argentina, as in many other non-English-speaking countries, translation and interpreting are well-established professions that require a rigorous program of study. She was quite frustrated to find that so many people in the U.S. believe that simply being bilingual is equivalent to being a competent translator or interpreter.



ATA School Outreach Program Committee Member Tess Whitty (right) presents María with her award at ATA's 54th Annual Conference in San Antonio.



2013–2014 ATA School Outreach Contest

Make a School Outreach presentation this year, and you could win free registration to **ATA's 55th Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois, November 5-8, 2014. Here's how to enter.**

1. Visit ATA's School Outreach Resource Center at www.atanet.org/careers/school_outreach.php and click on Presentation Resource Materials.
2. Choose the age level you like the best and download a presentation, or use the resources on the School Outreach page to round out your own material.
3. Speak on translation and/or interpreting careers at a school or university anywhere in the world between August 1, 2013 and July 18, 2014.
4. Get someone to take a picture of you in the classroom. For tips on getting a winning shot, visit the School Outreach Photo Gallery on ATA's website at www.atanet.org/ata_school/photo_gallery.php and click on Photo Guidelines.
5. E-mail your photo to Meghan McCallum (meghanraymccallum@gmail.com) with the subject line "School Outreach Contest," or mail your entry to ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314. Please include: your name and contact information; the date of your presentation; the school's name and location; and a brief description of the class. **You may submit multiple entries.**

The deadline for submissions is midnight on July 18, 2014.

The winner will be contacted no later than August 20, 2014. You must be a member of ATA or an ATA-affiliated organization to enter.

María grew up in Argentina and studied at the Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, where, in 2008, she received a Public Translator of English degree (the equivalent of an MA in translation and interpreting in the U.S.). Since moving to the U.S. three years ago, she has continued to pursue specialized postgraduate courses in technical and scientific translation. In addition to interpreting at UNC Hospitals, she works as a freelance translator, translating medical and personal documents. She also volunteers at a local church, translating materials for the community.

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Call to Others: Get Involved!

When asked how she felt about winning the School Outreach Award, María said she was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend ATA's Annual Conference, which was something she had wanted to do ever since she was a student in Argentina. Above all, she added, "I am very excited about this amazing opportunity to

share my experience with the translation and interpreting community." She would like to encourage anyone who is thinking about doing an outreach presentation to go ahead and get involved: "When you really believe in what you do, it isn't hard to talk about it. This is not just a job that you go to every day, it's a profession." ■



2014 Honors and Awards Now Open!

ATA and the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (AFTI) present annual and biennial awards to encourage, reward, and publicize outstanding work done by both seasoned professionals and students. Awards and scholarships for 2014 include:

The Alexander Gode Medal, ATA's most prestigious award, is presented to an individual or institution for outstanding service to the translating and interpreting professions. This award may be given annually. Nominations are solicited from past recipients of the Gode Medal and the membership at large.

The Lewis Galantière Award is given for a distinguished book-length literary translation from any language, except German, into English published in the United States. The award is bestowed biennially in even-numbered years.

The ATA Student Translation Award is presented to any graduate or undergraduate student, or group of students, for a literary or sci-tech translation or translation-related project. The award is given annually.

The AFTI JTG Scholarship in Scientific and Technical Translation or Interpretation is presented to a student enrolled or planning to enroll in a degree program in scientific and technical translation or in interpreter training.

The S. Edmund Berger Prize is offered by AFTI to recognize excellence in scientific and technical translation by an ATA member. The award is given annually.

The Marian S. Greenfield Financial Translation Presentation Award is offered by AFTI to recognize an outstanding presenter of a financial translation session during ATA's Annual Conference.

The Alicia Gordon Award for Word Artistry in Translation is given for a translation (from French or Spanish into English, or from English into French or Spanish) in any subject that demonstrates the highest level of creativity in solving a particularly knotty translation problem. Open to ATA members in good standing.

The Harvie Jordan Scholarship is awarded to an ATA Spanish Language Division member in good standing to promote, encourage, and support leadership and professional development within the division. The scholarship is given annually.

For complete entry information and deadlines, visit www.atanet.org/membership/honorsandawards.php.