

## Marg McGrath: Third Nationally Certified Intervener

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The deaf-blind network has long strived to bring awareness and acceptance to the role of the intervener. We now celebrate Marg McGrath as she joins the ranks of interveners who have achieved national certification through the National Intervener Certification E-Portfolio (NICE) process. Marg, who lives in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, began her intervener training in Minnesota more than 20 years ago. Since that time, she has worked as a paraprofessional, a sign language interpreter, and an intervener in a variety of settings (home, community, and educational).

At the time Marg developed her NICE portfolio, she was working with a high school student who had always used interpreters; never an intervener. Using tactile interpreting, Marg facilitated communication between the student and his peers and teachers. She worked with him to fill in gaps in his learning and increase his decision-making skills, self-determination, and ability to self advocate.

Marg shared the following stories to illustrate her work with this student:

- "He didn't realize he had a lot of options for building his self-determination or making decisions. For instance, he didn't realize he could skip class like his peers. Once he asked me if he could go to the bathroom. I told him it was up to him if he wanted to go to the bathroom or not, but that he had to ask the teacher (who was a substitute). He asked her and she told him he could go. You could hear him laughing all the way down the hallway because he didn't need to go to the bathroom; he just wanted to get out of class."
- "During the election, we had to start at the beginning. His class was watching the debates a lot and he didn't have a clear concept of the different parties or

what they were talking about. I told him about the parties, chunking it into small bits of information that were easily understood. Once he understood the basics, we could fly. He was 18 when it was time to vote and he voted in the election! It was very cool. To watch him go from not knowing anything about the political process or the election system to voting, was a big deal.”

- “I also taught him to advocate for himself. We worked on explaining to his teachers how he could participate in projects or homework in a way that was good for him, like using tactile maps. In art, he made a tactile self-portrait. It had whiskers, but no pupils because he can’t feel that part of his features. It really looked like him!”

When asked about the NICE process, Marg said, “It’s a great process, but it’s not something to take lightly.” She stressed the importance of having a strong mentor with whom you work closely. Being an intervener for over 20 years gave Marg a lot of material to work with when searching for documentation to add to her portfolio. She used photos and videos from a variety of students, not just the one she was working with at the time she created the portfolio.

Marg shared a few words of wisdom for those pursuing national certification: “Take your time. Save EVERYTHING, even if you think it’s unimportant. And don’t be afraid to call your mentor at any time because it’s really helpful to have a mentor provide another perspective and help keep you grounded.”

Congratulations, Marg!



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