

Step-by-step

- by Pat Gardiner

Have you ever thought of providing CART/captioning for a church as soon as you graduate or are nearing graduation from a court reporting program? You may not be ready to go up on a large screen and let the “world” see your captions, but you might like to take the first step of the journey by providing CART/captioning on a small scale.

Lorraine Fedosoff is a December 2004 graduate of the court reporting program at George Brown College in Toronto, Ontario. When I heard she provides CART for two children that are deaf at Faith Community Church in Alliston, Ontario, a small town north of Toronto, I was very excited to hear her story and learn more.

I asked Lorraine to meet me at New Life Church in Milton, Ontario, on a Sunday in January, where Joanne Anderson, RPR, was the captioner for that Sunday, and the three of us shared stories and ideas on providing CART/captioning for a church.

“How did this all start?” I asked Lorraine, and she explained, “About a year ago, while participating on a school trip with my son, Debbie Bushby and I had a discussion about the course I was taking at George Brown. Her daughter, Alex, is partially deaf and Debbie was very interested in the captioning portion of the course and how I could help her daughter in the future.”

Then, nearing Lorraine’s graduation, Debbie contacted Lorraine to see if she would be interested in helping her daughter, along with another deaf child, Stephen, by captioning the service at their church. Lorraine said she was thrilled to help out as it would help her feel more comfortable writing in front of an audience, as well as working on building her dictionary.

Lorraine says, “On October 10th, 2004, I had my first opportunity to caption the service with both children sitting in front of my laptop computer while I wrote everything that was being said in the service. Luckily, all hymns and songs were displayed on an overhead projector so I was able to take a break. Being my first time captioning I was a little nervous, but about half an hour into the service I began to relax and feel more comfortable. As I felt more comfortable, my speed and accuracy got better and better.

“The pastor, Darren Milley, was very kind and spoke clearly and not too fast. I tried to include words of emotion such as "applause" and "laughing", so they would understand the feelings behind what was being said. I was able to enter Biblical names into my dictionary as well as places, such as Paraguay, which was discussed by the pastor as a place he had visited in the past.”

As this is the first time Lorraine has ever done anything like this, she wanted to take it step-by-step. She explained, “I am just using CAT software on my laptop computer. I sit in the front row of the church and the kids sit beside me and watch the computer screen. There is talk, however, of hooking me up to a bigger screen in the future. (I have to say, I'm pretty nervous about this!)

“I have found my speed has improved greatly since I started. Everybody is nice, and the kids are very forgiving about mistakes and, when someone is talking too fast, I try to get down what I can for them. Sometimes I will alter the wording to make it easier.

“I feel that captioning for these two deaf children has been a great incentive to practice. I can sit at home and practice captioning from watching television anytime, but you do get lazy at times and just end up not doing it. This way, I have two deaf children depending on me and I feel that I would let them down if I wasn't there.

“The pastor does mention, usually every Sunday, that there is a captionist available if there is anyone having trouble hearing the service.” (They also advertise in the local paper that the Sunday service is captioned.)

“One thing I have learned is to ask questions about what will be talked about during the sermon. Many times a word or name has been quoted from the Bible that is not in my dictionary and my mind goes completely blank. So, taking a few minutes beforehand to enter unusual names or words really helps out. Another thing I have learned is pastors are usually very good speakers, so they are more fun to listen to than a grumpy lawyer!”

“It doesn't take too much time out of my day, and you really feel good about yourself when you leave that you have done some good in the world. It's a great way to start building your dictionary and even getting some ‘bugs’ out

of your computer system or CAT software. The more practice you do, the more experienced you will be, and the more confidence you will have to go out into the working world.

“I was also introduced during the service and that made me feel really special. The best part was being asked to return the next Sunday so I can continue building my speed as well as helping out the children attending church. All in all, a wonderful experience!”

Lorraine is being very wise in taking this step-by-step, as she continues to build her dictionary, her speed, her accuracy, and her confidence. Then, one day -- and I don't think it will be very far into the future -- Lorraine will be able to go up on a large screen for the entire congregation to look at her captions, should she and her church see fit.

I wanted to know how the children and parents of the children felt about the captioning, too.

I asked Alex what was church like before the captioning, and she said it was hard and she couldn't understand anything. She said, “It was hard to understand the person that was speaking. I couldn't hear the announcements. I didn't know why people were laughing sometimes.” Alex says the captioning helps her a lot and she loves it. “I can understand what everyone is saying, so I have all the information.”

Then I asked her mum, Debbie, what she thought of the captioning and she told me, “Having captioning has dramatically changed Alex's church experience. Although before captioning, she was able to fully participate in the music, which is a large component of our service, she missed pretty much everything that was said from the front of the church. Announcements, although a very small part of the service, are such an important part of church life. Alex really was not aware of the general goings-on of the church. She also missed all the friendly banter that goes on in our church. She was often turning to me and saying ‘Why's everyone laughing?’ Now she's able to enjoy not just what is said from the speaker at the front (which she sometimes would catch), but also anything that is said by anyone else in the church. I think she feels much more like a part of the church community. It's been really an incredible thing for her!”

Then I asked Ruth, Stephen's mum, how she felt about the captioning. She e-mailed saying, "Thanks so much for your captioning work at Faith. Your work has enabled Stephen to fully participate in the church services, and to fully access information regarding all that goes on within the church. This makes him feel included in the church life, and validates his worth as a person. He regularly asks me questions about announcements and little comments that were made, and I can tell that this is information that he never even knew existed before. Even simple things like unfamiliar terminology, which he previously just "glossed over", he is now able to learn and understand. This also has the added side effect of increasing his vocabulary. He is so thankful for your services, and sees you as his link to what is going on."

Well, that is Lorraine's story. She is a wonderful lady, wanting to use her skills to make a difference in this world and, step-by-step, what a difference she is making!

Church short forms submitted by Lorraine Fedosoff:

Christian	KREUPB
scripture	SKREUP
church	KHUFP
confess	KTPESZ
announcement	TPHOUPLT
communion	KPHAOUPB
chapter	KHAPT
deliverance	TKHR*EUFPBS
passage	PAPBLG
disciple	SAOEUP

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