

Winter 2022/2023 • VOLUME 36, ISSUE 4

VISIONS

NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL

In this issue:

Region 6, Missouri lose Friend, Mentor

Page 2

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Cleveland

Page 3

Impressions of Cleveland

Page 3

Giving the Gift of Membership

Page 4

I Am From . . .

Page 5

Region 6 Members Honored

Page 7

State Reports

Page 8-13



VISIONS

**Newsletter for
NAI REGION 6 - SOUTH CENTRAL
Winter 2022/2023 • VOLUME 36, ISSUE 4**

IN THIS ISSUE

PG 1

- Table of Contents

PG 2

- Region 6, Missouri lose friend and mentor

PG 3

- A Funny Thing Happened on My Way To Cleveland
- Impressions of Cleveland

PG 4

- Giving the Gift of Membership
- *Book Review: Nature Swagger*
- The World at Large

PG 5

- I Am From . . .

PG 6

- A Message from the Director

PG 7

- Region 6 Members Honored

PG 8-13

State Reports

- Arkansas, Page 9
- Kansas, Page 12
- Missouri, Page 13



*Some photos from
Dreamstime.com*

NAI Region 6, Missouri lose friend and mentor

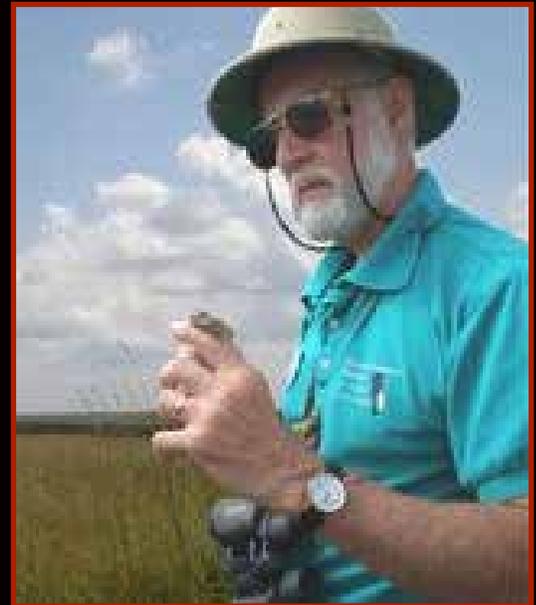
It is with a heavy heart we report the passing of our dear friend and Region 6's mentor of mentors, George Kastler. Those who knew George know he was a giant in the field of interpretation. His love for the profession, caring and support he provided for newcomers, his kindness touched many of our lives. He wrote his own obituary:

George Arthur Kastler to George J. Kastler & Mary M. Stowe, in Carlisle, Penn. His Dad was in the military police and Mom was a nurse. From between the late 1944-45, on, George lived and grew up in Lebanon, MO. with his mother and brother, Everett J. Kastler. In recent years he was blessed when he met William (Bill) Kastler another brother that he had been looking for, for many years. George is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, his God given life partner, two sons Alan S. Kastler & Neil F. Kastler and their wives, Ashley Kastler & Amanda Kastler, and their children, Aiden, Quinn, Oliver & Thatcher. His brother, Everett J. Kastler, and Bill Kastler & wife Joyce, and several nieces and nephews.

George experienced the feelings of nature early on and felt that he had a close relationship with God. His first experience was while in Carlisle Penn., where during a strong thunderstorm, he set on his mother's lap and she explained thunder and lightning to him, and he enjoyed it the whole time and had no fear of it. From then when he went to visit his Granddad (his mother's father) on his farm, his Granddad Stowe always answered George's questions with detail, he never just said that that was an old tree, but told George, the name of the tree, flower, animal, and explained why it grew where it was. So, George learned at an early age how to "interpret natural history and history at an early age because every question he ever has was answered in an interpretive fashion and how to communicate information on to others"

He gave and devoted his life to the teaching of God and Jesus when he joined the Methodist church and believes that we are to love everyone we come in contact with, no matter differences that may there between on another. Being honest and open in every life situation is a part of trying to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Written by: George A. Kastler



A Funny Thing Happened on My Way to Cleveland

by Ken Forman, Arkansas

Almost every year the National Association for Interpretation hosts a conference, inviting all members (and non-member intertypes, too) to attend, learn, network. I'd like to suggest, nay – there's no "liking" about it – I am suggesting that it's also a delightful party where we can all reacquaint ourselves with our craft.

Twenty-twenty-three's conference landed squarely on the south shore of Lake Eire. Cleveland Ohio is home of the Browns, home of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, home of some

of the friendliest service people, and home of the Cuyahoga River. When I learned that last bit of trivia it triggered a memory – isn't that the river that caught fire back in the 60s? Sure enough, my memory retrieval was successful this time. In 1969 an oil slick on the river caught fire, damaging a couple bridges, and focusing the country's attention on the issue of environmental regulation. I'm happy to report the river is now well-maintained and serves as a recreational hub for the city.

Flying out of the Ozarks can be

challenging. It's a 90-minute drive to the airport, then there are almost no direct flights anywhere because – well, because this is the Ozarks. I needed to fly from Springfield, Missouri to Atlanta, switch planes, then fly to Cleveland. I was surprised to see that the second leg of that flight actually traveled east. In my mind, Atlanta is on the east coast (more or less) while Cleveland is in the Midwest. And yet, it turns out parts of

See "What of the Conference", Page 6



Impressions of Cleveland

There's a first time for everything, right? For my first ever NAI conference, Cleveland did not disappoint. I met quite a few zoo people like myself, along with a variety of interpreters from different experiences. I enjoyed the opportunity to learn from both the presentations and the informal meet-ups. I did attend the conference with some veterans, so I knew where to go and I always had a lunch buddy. With that in mind, if I didn't have their guidance, it would still be a great experience! Everyone is a lunch buddy waiting to happen. The Whova app facilitates session planning, Q&A, and finding other interpreters with shared interests. My resource pool (and Pokémon GO friend list) has grown and I eagerly anticipate seeing everyone again in Little Rock.

Megan Froemling
Lead Interpreter
Saint Louis Zoo

For me, the National Conference is always a wonderful time to recharge. To be surrounded by peers that share an excitement for interpretation. Some are there to teach, some are there to learn. And while this year, we had thoughtful and well-developed presentations and keynotes, so much of the impact and value is the conversations that we have with each other in-between those sessions. So many ideas are shared, plans are made, and friendships are forged. It is truly both an inspiring and rejuvenating event, year after year.

Brady McKellar
Managing Director
Vermilionville
Lafayette, LA

This conference truly included some of the best of the best people, organizations, and presentations. Every person was welcoming and interested in having continued conversations beyond the designated times. I was amazed by the overall passion of every single participant to reach as many people as they can in unique and creative ways. The ambition to continue to make interpretation available to everybody and combat inaccessibility in innovate ways is something I work on and makes me glad to be a part of this field. I took home inspiration, friendships, ideas, and a renewed energy to keep being the best interpreter I can be.

Jesze Doleh
Park Specialist
Thousand Hills State Park
Kirksville, MO

Giving the Gift of Membership

Jeanne Spencer, Membership Chair

Region 6 members are a generous lot, as evidenced at the auctions held at regional conferences and through the many good deeds they perform throughout the year.

From simple acts of kindness, to nominating colleagues for Regional Awards, in my opinion, our members are some of the best folks on earth. Are you ready to go above and beyond these measures?

If so, think about giving the gift of a NAI membership.

Do you have a deserving team member? A new seasonal or student who shows great potential? Want to reward a hardworking volunteer?

Memberships are wonderful tokens of appreciation they can enjoy the whole year round!

Current membership rates are:

- \$35 for student
- \$65 for Seasonal, Volunteer, or Retired
- \$90 for Professional
-

Benefits include access to NAI's Member Only content, networking opportunities, discounts on NAI merch, and a subscription to Legacy magazine. Email membership@interpnet.com for more information.

Book Review

NATURE SWAGGER:

STORIES AND VISIONS OF BLACK JOY IN THE OUTDOORS

by Rue Mapp

Publication date: 2022; Publisher: Chronicle Books; San Francisco, CA

This book's author was the recipient of the National Wildlife Federation's "COMMUNICATION AWARD." The author is the founder and CEO of OUTDOOR AFRO, a national organization that runs workshops, excursions, and leadership training to connect Black people with the power of Nature.

Included in the book is a Foreword/Introduction by Shelton Johnson ... i.e., the National Park Service ranger that was featured in the Ken Burns' documentary: "THE NATIONAL PARKS: AMERICA'S BEST IDEA."

The book is an enjoyable read. It offers in-person testimonials from thirty writers about how the natural

world has functioned as a wellspring of healing, inspiration, and motivation for all of life's challenges.

The description on the back cover of the book says it best: "...honoring the rich history and traditions surrounding Black people's relationship to the outdoors."

The World ... at Large

by Neal Garrison

MAN AVOIDS PRISON AFTER 2021 ATTACK ON TORTOISE

The San Jose Mercury newspaper reports:

A northern California man avoided prison time on December 16th after he drunkenly trespassed at a preschool in 2021 and attacked a pet tortoise named Michelangelo.

A judge sentenced the man on December 16th to two years of probation and mandatory health

and substance abuse treatment. The northern California man had pleaded no contest to charges of animal abuse, commercial burglary, and vandalism earlier in 2022.

HOW DO WOODPECKERS AVOID BRAIN DAMAGE?

According to some researchers, woodpeckers have a special muscle in their necks that squeezes the jugular vein when they are pecking on trees. This traps more blood in their brains and, in effect, cushions

the brain from any consequences of concussion. Considering this, medical researchers have developed a device called the "Q-Collar." This device is being worn by some athletes in both professional and college athletic endeavors. The "Q-Collar" is a silicone clamp (of a sorts) that fits around the lower part of the athlete's neck; it does about the same thing as what happens in the necks of woodpeckers. The device sells for about \$200.

A Poem

I Am From . . .

by Ken Forman

In the most recent Legacy magazine outgoing NAI President Jay Miller included his own version of a poetry-type called "I Am From..." The challenge is to put together images and thoughts that best frame your life experiences. A few years ago, I wrote my own version. I encourage other Region 6 members to write and submit their own versions of "I Am From..."

"I AM FROM..."
by Ken Forman

*I am from next door to the Happiest Place on Earth
With a shared day of birth – from cul-de-sacs filled
With grills smoking in the July sun, fireworks' fun
Every night from D-land, and on the fourth lit by my hand.*

*I am from gigantic tumbleweeds rolling in hot,
Dry, static-charged Santa Ana winds, kites pulling knots
From my hand – digging in the sand not from the beach
Or the big LA, or the mountains, but with mountains in reach*

*I am from the desert that blooms. The Anasazi tombs
And dust devils loom until the haboobs blot out the sky
Spelling doom to anyone unwise, who leaves their doors
And windows open wide.*

*I am from science, and chemistry, and theater
All rolled into one, the fun lasting late into the night
And then parentals fight, crushing the joy
That is then relighted with theater, and chemistry and science.*

*I am from a source of self-reliance
Defiance, success, and denial. Trials and tribulations,
A child who has a child, who no longer has a child.
Raging at the emotions that fly, emotions I try to deny.*

*I am from the glitter of El Dorado, though I know
Not how it will go. Upending everything on the
Dice's throw. The promise of gold and riches, untold.
Building a life from the dust of a ghost. Gung ho!*

*I am from concrete, discrete, and hundreds of feet
Both walking and towering, a new life that's neat.
Electricity and water flowing to complete the circuit
That so many lives need.*

*Interpretation, education, explanation
A nation that needs edification
The guy who points thing out
Here, and about.*

*I am from these and so many more
Memories fragmented and torn
What is here, what is now keeps me
Somehow, grounded in the clouds.*



Region 6 Message from the Director - Amber Meyers

Happy New Year! I am looking forward to a great 2023 in the South-Central Region. I would like to personally thank each of you for being a member of the best and most humble region in the NAI network of interpretive professionals. The upcoming conference in Columbia is going to be a wonderful reunion and I hope you can all join us in person.

We can all take a moment to reflect on what we have learned and experienced in the past year and appreciate that through it all, we became better interpreters and humans through our bonds in our workplaces, connections made, and changes we faced together.

Thank you for our outgoing Board Members, Mystina Swaim and Neil Garrison. Their time and support to our members has been a great inspiration to me as a newer Board Member. We welcome our new region Secretary, Casey Watson and new Deputy Director, Dr. Pat Silovsky! Thank you for serving our region. See you in Columbia!

What of the Conference? *from page 3*

the Midwest are east of the east coast. It's all relative, I suppose.

But what of the conference? The committee outdid itself with the preparations. The entire conference was held in one hotel, although on different floors. Registering was easy and conveniently located next to the exhibit hall. This was especially helpful for me since I had volunteered to man the Region 6 booth as often as I could throughout the conference. It was a little odd, though, that the only thing at the booth was a table covered with a black, convention-style tablecloth, and a printed piece of paper that said, "Region 6 / Little Rock". "Well, this will never do," I thought to myself. With a flourish I spread a handful of puff stars across the table to give it some POP!

I had folded and brought a bunch of these little origami pieces to scatter throughout the conference. They turned out to be a big hit as many visitors to our booth asked to learn the folding technique.



The conference swung into full-blown action the next day with an inspiring keynote talk by Talon Silverhorn. He shared his insights on cultural interpretation from his perspective as a member of the Eastern Shawnee of Oklahoma (go Region 6). Please visit his website for more information about him – www.talonsilverhorn.com.

The evening reception took place in the freekin' Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, for heaven's sake. This is going to be a tough act for any subse-

quent national workshops to follow. The RRHoF is five floors of history ranging from Big Mama Thornton to Machine-gun Kelly. Trying to summarize my experience there in a few words is nigh impossible. The one thing that kept going through my mind was, "I want to hire whoever curated and designed these displays."

The rest of the conference was a blur of new friends, new ideas, and a plethora of notes filled with ideas I'll definitely incorporate in future interpretive programs. I recommend viewing the amazing recap video produced and shared by the Cleveland Committee. You can find it here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9dc62e>

I will leave you with this phrase I learned from Talon Silverhorn. He explained that when someone asks something of you, the proper Shawnee response (which translates to "I will do my best") is: Nic -Oh Ch-O-Yah!

Region 6 members honored in Cleveland

Two Region 6 members were honored during the Professional Awards Banquet at the NAI National Conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

Katie Raney of Texas and Stacy Gray of Louisiana were honored among others to receive awards. Raney was awarded Master Interpretative Manager, while Gray was awarded Master Frontline Interpreter. Please join us in congratulating them on receiving these awards.



Katie Raney, Texas - Master Interpretative Manager



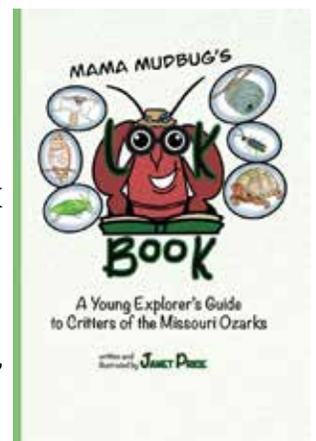
Stacy Gray, Louisiana - Master Frontline Interpreter

Mama Mudbug's LOOK Book by Janet Price

Everyone loves a new toy, right? Especially if it helps make our jobs easier. If your job is to facilitate a connection between kids and nature, then take a look at this... Mama Mudbug's LOOK Book.

This new, "hot-off-the-presses" exploration guide might be just what you need. Designed for kids ages 5-12, this guide is great for younger kids, too and appeals to adults as well. I watched kids 3 and 4 years old abandon their toys to spend a full hour looking at the LOOK Book. (Imagine what fun they could have had with it outside!) The book has also been a conversation starter for many, including a 16-year-old boy and his mom.

The LOOK Book is more than a colorful "field guide" for common and interesting critters found in the Ozarks, the Midwest and probably much of the east. It is packed with fun facts, along with suggestions of things to look for and to do outside. This exploration guide will help make being outdoors fun! Mama Mudbug's LOOK Book is available from Barnes and Noble, Better World Books, Amazon, and other online booksellers. Check it out!





State reports

Arkansas - Chris Pistole

Louisiana - Rusty Scarborough

Kansas - Amber Meyers (Reporting)

Missouri - Michelle Soenksen

Oklahoma - Amanda Markey

Texas - Erin Holley

ARKANSAS

REPORT

Kayla Gomance, Field Interpreter, Arkansas State Parks: Arkansas State Parks has lots of exciting news to report!

- On November 1st, ASP held a ground breaking ceremony for the John H. Johnson site at Delta Heritage Trail State Park. This site will honor the legacy of John Harold Johnson, an American businessman and publisher with one of the most influential African-American businesses in media in the second half of the twentieth century. The park will include walking paths, landscaping, interpretive exhibits, and a small amphitheater.



^ Photo by Zachary Elledge

- An open house was held for Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park's new collections management facility.

- A dedication and opening of the historic Powhatan Methodist Church was held at Powhatan Historic State Park. The celebration of many years of work included various community stakeholders as well as staff.



Photo by Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism ^



- Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park is now called Plum Bayou Mounds Archeological State Park to better reflect the distinct culture of the people who built the mounds. People originally assumed that the mounds were built by the Toltecs of Mexico. Although it was later determined that the people of the Plum Bayou Culture had built the mounds, the Toltec name remained. This process included conversations between Arkansas State Parks, the Arkansas Archeological Survey, representatives of Arkansas's Native American groups, and other stakeholders. A public open forum and call for public input was also held in April to gather input from the community.

< Photo by Amy Griffin

- Arkansas State Parks will kick off celebrating our Centennial year on Janu-

**AR Report continued
Page 8**

ary 1st with state-wide First Day Hikes. A full list of events can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/mubfb8mx>

Sheri Storie, Executive Director, Explore Pine Bluff:

Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District Brings New Promise to Pine Bluff, Arkansas

By Jimmy Cunningham

What has been a concept brewing in the minds of community leaders in recent years has just been given octane fuel with the passage of a resolution by the Pine Bluff City Council providing \$2 million dollars for the development of a portion of the Delta Rhythm & Bayous (DRB) Cultural District in downtown Pine Bluff. Excited community members and policy holders have been literally buzzing for a little over three weeks about the powerfully compelling plans which were revealed for this project by the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County National Heritage Trails Task Force.

So what's all the buzz about? Well, this Lower Arkansas Delta town which has had some tough losses in population and industry over the last few decades, has just developed a cultural heritage plan which could put it on the map as a national destination and bring a boon of tourism revenue. The Pine Bluff/Jefferson County National Heritage Trails Task Force, in partnership with the Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission and the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Alliance, developed the concept for the district's epicenter which includes: 1) the nation's only park honoring the Chitlin' Circuit (the entertainment network for black performers during the years of segregation; 2) an outdoor memorial plaza honoring more blues greats than any other in the nation; 3) a unique outdoor cinema park honoring regional greats in film, television, and theater and; 4) a food truck park designed to bring the best regional cuisine to tourists with mouthwatering tastes.

But wait, there's more! To show that this concept is not only loaded with oodles of creativity and fervent enthusiasm, but also quantifiable data, the Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission had an economic impact study commissioned by Tourism Economics, a Philadelphia based consulting firm which is a subsidiary of Oxford Economics. They analyzed current market conditions to estimate potential visitation at the proposed cultural district, as well as the potential fiscal (tax) benefits attributable to new visitation and tourism. Their findings showed that they estimated a total of 128,000 visits to the district annually, with \$13.6 million spent annually with a total of \$18.2 million in overall economic impact. The total jobs estimated to be generated is 250 and the total annual state and local tax revenues are estimated to be \$1.9 million each year.

At the city's Planning and Development Committee meeting in November of 2022, the public was also wowed by an engaging and dynamic 3-D rendering of the epicenter of the DRB Cultural District (<https://www.explorepinebluff.com/delta-rhythm-bayous-cultural-district>) showing the stylistic intersections of architecture, art, place-making, and landscape which made the plan come to life for many. The crowd atmosphere was euphoric as the Planning and Development Committee recommended unanimously to fund \$2 million of the estimated \$6 million cost over the next two years. With an even



**AR Report continued
Page 9**

larger crowd at the City Council meeting the following week maintaining the same electricity and enthusiasm, Council members voted 8-0 to accept the recommendation of the Planning Committee and fund the project at a level of \$2 million for the first two years.

While the DRB Cultural District model is actually far bigger than the epicenter which the Pine Bluff City Council voted to support, the fact the initiative has funding to begin development is one of the most exciting developments for the city in 2023. Pine Bluff with all of its enormous history and culture is finally doing what other communities have been doing in riding the wave of prosperity which has come from heritage tourism across the country.



Taylr Rad, Park Interpreter, Millwood State Park:
(Taylr shared this photo of some red-eared sliders she hatched after incubating the eggs discovered this past summer at Millwood. Apparently, crows are very fond of the eggs that are laid near the Visitor Center!) She says, "I simply kept them in a small critter tote on my screened in porch, buried in soil that I would periodically add water to for extra humidity. After 70 days, 5 cute babies appeared. It felt like a big win because I wasn't sure how'd they do with all this heat! It is safe to say they are all probably females as turtle gender is usually determined by the temperature outside; females being 88 degrees Fahrenheit and males closer to 79.

Chris Pistole, Park Interpreter, Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area:



This fall we booked every available date we could with school field trips. The kids and teachers were excited to visit after nearly 2 years due to COVID-19. One of the most popular programs we offered was on outdoor survival skills where students got to experience building a fire and a brush shelter, and how to get water and forage for wild edibles. They even got to eat a beetle larva or mealworm, a "larvet", if they chose to! Most of them couldn't resist, especially after their friends tried it. Even most of the teachers tried one, which the students loved! Once the word got out about this program, every Bentonville 6th grade class booked this field trip which tied into their reading of the book, Touching Spirit Bear. It was originally written to go along with a 4th grade curriculum at a different district that reads the classic book, Hatchet.

Every Bentonville 6th grade class booked this field trip which tied into their reading of the book, Touching Spirit Bear. It was originally written to go along with a 4th grade curriculum at a different district that reads the classic book, Hatchet.

We also got to have a special event again, the Living Forest, in



October. We had about 600 kids and their families come to the park on a gorgeous Saturday afternoon to meet Mother Nature and hike our Ozark Plateau Trail. In groups led by interpreters, they met volunteers in animal costumes from the Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalist Chapter to hear their stories. They also got to make some crafts, and after the hike they could roast marshmallows and make s'mores. We were not anticipating such a huge turnout, the largest this special event has ever seen. We'll be better prepared next year!





from Amber Meyers

Recently, it has come to our attention that Arkansas does not pronounce Ar-Kansas River correctly. We would like to let our friends in Arkansas know, we will do our best to honor their customs when we are in the beautiful land of Arkansas, but here in the Sunflower State, we will still go kayaking and fishing and wading and exploring in the Ar-Kansas River. We don't have the magical Buffalo River, to which we are slightly envious, so give us just this one thing please.

Amber Myers and Karl Miller were two Kansans who attended the National Conference in Cleveland. Hi Karl!

Let's all have a bowl of chili with a cinnamon roll and keep warm.

Still looking for a Kansas rep...if my fellow Kansans prefer I don't start friendly feuds with other states, such as the one above, you may want to step up! -Amber Myers

My National Conference anecdote:

I had a great time visiting the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and crying over John Lennon's glasses after walking over ten miles through downtown. National committee was right, downtown Cleveland was very walkable, and surprisingly welcoming!

I connected with historical interpreters at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial who were so informative and kind. They were former members of NAI, and I did my best to recruit them back into the fold.

Lakeside Cemetery was one of the most beautiful cemeteries I've ever been in. I enjoyed honoring people of the past by reading about them, reading their names out loud, and admiring and identifying the gorgeous trees.

The USS Cod experience on the last day in Cleveland was one I will never forget. The interpreters on board gave us a spur of the moment personalized tour and didn't recoil when I asked questions about how you poop in a submarine and how do you flush? I got the full mechanical explanation and lots of laughs. They let me experience the ship's dive alarm after I mentioned always wanting to make a submarine say "arooogah!" Good interpretation really does make you FEEL, and those fellas nailed it.

Conference sessions are always informative, and my favorite was Lucas Hernandez's Pop Culture: An Interpreters Best Friend in a Connected World. Lucas was fun, knew his audience, and inspired me to find more ways to connect via pop culture references. It also made me realize my research must now include playing video games and watching shows I might never have considered my thing. #notagamer



We are ready to see you in Columbia, MO February 19th-23rd, 2023 for Show Me Interpretation in the Heart of Missouri. Hopefully, it won't be this cold in February but pack the winter gear just in case.

Conference overview

- Sunday February 19th, 2023: Travel, Preconference on your own and evening mixer
- Monday February 20th, 2023: Registration, 9 AM opening plenary session, concurrent sessions, Interp Olympics
- Tuesday February 21st, 2023: Field sessions, dinner on your own, scholarship auction
- Wednesday February 22nd, 2023: Concurrent Sessions, business meeting, Brian Barnett quiz and Awards banquet
- Thursday February 23rd, 2023: Return safely home inspired with ideas, solutions, and a full heart.

- Registration will go live in the new year. Watch your e-mail and the website for updates.



Hotel room block is open for reservations. Contact Amber Edwards if you have any questions, edwardsamb@missouri.edu

<https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/deeplink/?ctyhocn=COUUMHX&groupCode=CHHNAI&arrivaldate=2023-02-20&departuredate=2023-02-23&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT>

Registration Packet can be found at <https://nairegion6.wordpress.com/annual-workshop/>

**NO REPORTS AVAILABLE FROM:
LOUISIANA
OKLAHOMA
TEXAS**

Catch you in the Spring Edition

Send any State updates to your state representative or the *Visions* editors by the deadline posted on the publication information page.

NAI REGION 6 VISIONS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION



Visions Newsletter is the newsletter for Region 6 of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). Region 6 includes states of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. For Region 6 information go to www.nairegion6.wordpress.com. The national office for NAI is located in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Their website is www.interpnet.com.

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DEADLINES FOR VISIONS ARE:

Spring: March 20 • Summer: June 20 • Fall: September 20 • Winter: December 20