

# VISIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAI SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

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## Deputy Director's Report

### Winterizing with Hygge

By Angel Ray

As we brace for winter's chill, I can't help but think of foxes in their dens, rabbits in warrens, and groundhogs in burrows. I too, want to go deep, winterizing within myself, shrouded in cozy blankets with the softness of candlelight surrounding me as I muse...

How fleeting were the flowering ephemerals!  
How quickly the summer sun filled the creeks with children's nets and buckets!  
How whimsically the leaves in their golds and reds floated on the Fall wind!

And now, a natural *slowing down* commences with the shortening of days.

If you too embrace the slowing, the softness of blankets, warm beverages and comforting conversation this season, you might find that you are stepping in what the Danish call hygge. Hygge (hoo-gah), is a Danish/Norwegian concept surrounded by coziness, warmth, and contentment. A pleasantness that takes the nip out of the air. A scene that speaks of warmth and satisfaction.

I hope that you, too, find yourself enjoying hygge this winter, knowing that the greening of spring will soon follow and all of the activity that goes with it.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Deputy Director's Report  
Scholarship Committee  
Conference Recap  
Connie Elpers-Leger Winner

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# Seeking Scholarship Committee Members

By Jeanne Spencer, Scholarship Chair

The South Central Region's Scholarship Program makes a big impact - but we can't do it without you! We're looking for committee members who want to help shape the future of interpretation.

As a committee member, you'll:

- Share input on the scholarship process
- Review and score applications
- Promote scholarship opportunities in the field

Our scholarships are funded by the annual Scholarship Auction during the regional conference. We process applications three times a year so the time commitment is about 10 hours annually. All of it is accomplished through email and virtual meetings as necessary.

If you're passionate about supporting interpreters and giving back to the profession, join us! Email [naisouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:naisouthcentral@gmail.com) to volunteer or learn more.



## Recap of the NAI National Conference

By Lacey Esau, Freeman Tilden Scholarship Winner

Attending the NAI National Conference in Virginia Beach was a very meaningful experience for me, both as a student and in relation to my future goal of becoming an interpreter. It was my first national conference, and being surrounded by other interpreters from different backgrounds, each with their own approaches to interpretation, was inspiring. The sessions were interesting and educational. I learned about moths, ways to make your own props, tips for leading stargazing programs even on cloudy evenings, and creative interpretation



programs. Each session gave me ideas and inspiration for future programs.

I really enjoyed meeting and getting to know so many people in the field. One of my favorite moments was finally meeting my CIG instructor, Monique Thompson, in person! After taking the course online, it was great to

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One thing I wasn't expecting was the amount of wildlife I saw outside of the conference. I love animals, especially birds, so I was excited to see a sharp-shinned hawk outside the conference center. The hotel I stayed at was on the beach, so I enjoyed watching all the gulls but especially the brown pelicans diving into the ocean for food. On two separate evenings, I even saw dolphins, which I don't see often living in a landlocked state!

Overall, attending the NAI National Conference was an incredible opportunity. I am extremely thankful to have been selected to receive a scholarship to attend. I look forward to taking what I learned and applying it in future positions. I hope to attend the national conference in St. Louis in 2027 and I am looking forward to the South Central Region Conference in February!

Picture on previous page: Lacey Esau. Picture at left: Monique Thompson (left) with Lacey Esau. Photo courtesy of Lacey Esau.

connect face-to-face. I also ended up rooming with Maddi, the other Freeman Tilden scholarship winner. She was incredibly kind and let me tag along with her throughout the week. Having someone to go to sessions with made the conference feel less overwhelming and more enjoyable.



## 2025 Connie Elpers-Leger Scholarship Winner

By Jeanne Spencer, Scholarship Chair



The South Central Scholarship and Professional Development Committee is pleased to announce **Elizabeth Booth** has been named the recipient of the **2025 Connie Elpers-Leger Scholarship**, an award that supports students who have demonstrated academic and professional success and have the potential to make an outstanding contribution to the field of interpretation. Elizabeth is currently pursuing her Doctor of Philosophy in Forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University, where she's working

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toward her dream of teaching the next generation of interpreters and educators.

Elizabeth looks forward to the opportunity to strengthen her professional skills, connect with experienced interpreters, and learn new strategies she can apply directly to her work with Texas Parks and Wildlife's Texas Outdoor Family program.

Elizabeth's journey into interpretation began during her very first job as a Seasonal Interpretive Ranger with Tennessee State Parks, stationed at Chickasaw State Park. After college, Elizabeth joined the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as a Park Interpreter at Eisenhower State Park and eventually took on the role of Dallas/Fort Worth area lead for the Texas Outdoor Family program, where she discovered

a new purpose: introducing families to Texas State Parks through weekend camping workshops. These programs provide equipment and guidance to ensure positive first experiences in the outdoors. During this time, Elizabeth learned just how much she enjoyed mentoring new program assistants, many of whom were college graduates unsure of their future. Elizabeth helped them recognize their strengths and encouraged them in taking their next steps in their life's journey.

Through TPWD, Elizabeth has taught interpretive skills to volunteers, program assistants, and park staff; presented at national and regional conferences; and trained teachers and nonprofit leaders to take their students camping in state parks. Teaching has always been her passion, from being a Girl Scout camp counselor to teaching Sunday school to leading interpretive programs.

Elizabeth aims to become a professor and teach the next generation of interpreters, educators, and resource professionals. "I want to show that interpretation belongs not just in natural and cultural resources, but everywhere there is a connection to be made."

Elizabeth Booth embodies the resilience, passion, and vision that the Connie Elpers-Leger Scholarship celebrates. Her journey reminds us that interpretation is more than a job - it's a calling to connect people with nature, foster curiosity, and inspire future generations.

Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Booth.



# State News

## Missouri

This month, MDC hosted a two-hour workshop with the Alzheimer's Association. The program highlighted behavioral changes we might experience in return visitors exhibiting signs of dementia. Real life scenarios were given to problem solve and role play redirection and empathy. A great presentation!

Lead Interpreter, William Ray, has taken a new position within St. Charles County Parks. After 16 years in the Lead Interpreter role at The Historic Daniel Boone Home, he is now the historic Carpenter and Restoration Specialist for the department. This exciting move allows for the care and preservation of the buildings William has long interpreted. Along with the new position, he will have the opportunity to continue interpreting joinery and other heritage crafts.



William Ray

Photo courtesy of St. Charles County Parks

The Historic Daniel Boone Home hosted its annual Christmas Candlelight Walks, where visitors can step back in time and learn about holiday traditions in the early 1800s. Dedicated staff and volunteers make this a successful event year after year, decorating the site with natural greenery and lighting around 2,000 candles each night.



*Above:* The Historic Daniel Boone Home  
*Right:* Pam Jensen in the General Store at  
The Historic Daniel Boone Home  
Photos courtesy of St. Charles County Parks



# State News

## Kansas



### From Ernie Miller Nature Center, Olathe, KS

Ernie Miller had another extravagant and successful winter solstice to welcome this season.

Take a break from the busy holiday festivities as we walk through the woods along Little Cedar Creek to witness the natural display of winter's quiet time. The trails will be lit by luminaries. Warm up by the fireside and listen to stories about the longest night of the year. Visit live owls and discover animal mysteries of survival during the long winter. Gather round for a campfire treat of toasted marshmallows.



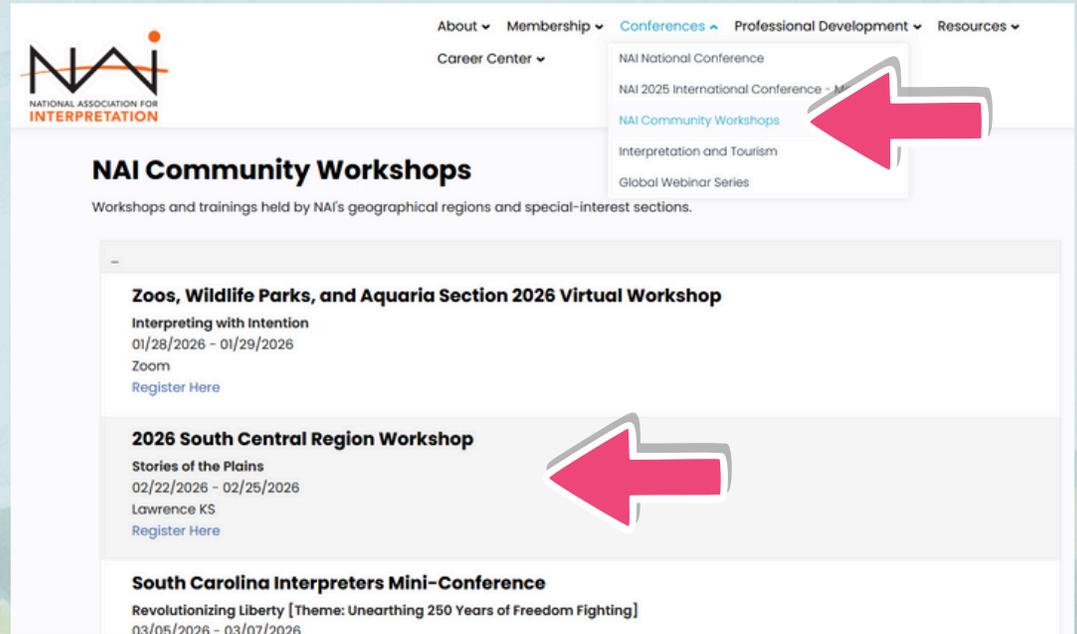
### Thoughts from Lindsay Evans

Are you somebody who likes a fresh start at the New Year? Or somebody who feels better waiting until the spring equinox? I personally participate in all of them! The winter solstice reminds me to rest, to be gentle on myself and others, and to enjoy making my space cozy. The new year helps me reevaluate the prior year, and establish new goals moving forward. Spring equinox is when I start warming up and running into the upcoming warmer weather and sunshine! Although, winter is still my favorite season. It is a beautiful chance to see the depth of the lands around us, the bones of the Earth that quickly get consumed the rest of the year. The stars even seem brighter. There is much beauty in winter!

# 2026 Conference Updates

Register  
Now

Register by clicking [here](#), or by visiting the NAI Community Workshop page under the Conference tab on the NAI website



If you're new to the region, we hold an annual conference in one of our 6 states - Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Kansas. This year in Lawrence, Kansas, we will all gather together again February 22-26<sup>th</sup>! It's a beautiful opportunity to recharge, reconnect, renew our minds to bring into our workspaces! Historians, naturalists, zoologists, conservationists, outdoor people all come together to sharpen each other's iron. You probably have so much on your plate, but this isn't just another work event - it truly is a place to fill your cup so you can pour into your audiences and guests with fresh enthusiasm and ideas. Attending my first regional conference in 2016 changed my life in ways I'll never forget. Don't underestimate this opportunity.

Check out our South Central website for more information and our **\*personalized\*** hotel link with the discount reflected!

Website and hotel info here

<https://naisouthcentral.com/conference/>