

Promoting Translation in Public Education

By Kirk Anderson

ATA's pro bono project, which is undertaken in conjunction with ATA's Annual Conference, highlights the critical role that translators and interpreters play in our society, and often gives volunteers an opportunity to

make a difference. In 2007, ATA's pro bono project ventured into new territory. For the first time, ATA partnered with its local chapter, in this case the Northern California Translators Association (NCTA), to develop and

implement a pro bono project that combines several innovations:

- Never before has a pro bono beneficiary been an organization specifically devoted to translation, in this case the San Francisco-based Center for the Art of Translation (CAT);
- Never before has ATA had the opportunity to combine its school outreach work with its pro bono project;
- Never before has the pro bono project been grounds for the presentation of an award: CAT was the recipient of ATA's first Award for Outstanding Achievement in Promoting Translation in Public Education; and
- Never before has the pro bono project kept on giving: this one will continue through the rest of the 2007-2008 school year.



The Center for the Art of Translation (CAT) was the recipient of ATA's first Award for Outstanding Achievement in Promoting Translation in Public Education. CAT founder Olivia Sears accepted the award on behalf of the Center.

So what is all the fuss about? Founded by ATA member Olivia Sears, CAT's many activities include the publication of the respected literary annual *Two Lines: A Journal of Translation*—now in its 14th year of publication—which features English translations from dozens of languages, in genres extending far beyond traditional literature. On



ATA member Tony Beckwith, along with Inés Swaney (not shown), talked to students about the profession as part of the San Francisco-based Center for the Art of Translation's Poetry Inside Out program, which brings literary translators into Bay Area elementary and middle school classrooms to teach the art of translation.

Photo courtesy of Olivia Sears, Center for the Art of Translation

November 1, CAT launched its most recent series: *New World/New Words: Recent Writing from Latin America*.

One of CAT's most innovative initiatives is its Poetry Inside Out (PIO) program, which brings literary translators into Bay Area elementary and middle school classrooms to teach the art of translation. Through a series of activities, culminating in anthologies of student work and public poetry recitals, the PIO program seeks to demonstrate the benefits of bilingualism, encourage language learning,

and promote reading and translation skills. Although the current program works predominantly with bilingual Latino children, a pilot program in Chinese is being developed.

On October 31, 2007, two intrepid ATA volunteers, Inés Swaney and Tony Beckwith, visited a PIO classroom in San Francisco. We had been forewarned to recruit engaging, charismatic presenters because the kids were capable of "eating unwary visitors alive." The visit was a resounding success. The kids listened

in rapt attention to Inés and Tony's anecdotes about their experience as professional translators and interpreters, and—I think this says it all—the session ended with the kids asking for Inés and Tony's autographs. Tony and Inés walked away inspired by the students and confident that they had planted some seeds that may one day bear fruit in the form of the next generation of our colleagues.

For the first time, ATA's pro bono project will extend beyond the conference. Over the rest of the school ➤

Promoting Translation in Public Education Continued

year, members of ATA's local chapter, the Northern California Translators Association (NCTA), will visit other PIO classrooms to discuss our professions with the students. CAT is also considering bringing professional translators and interpreters into the classrooms as a permanent component of their program. (If you are a Bay Area translator or interpreter interested in getting involved, please contact NCTA for more information.) Inés and Tony would also be pleased to talk to anyone interested in learning more about their experience in the classroom.

As mentioned earlier, ATA presented CAT with the first ATA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Promoting Translation in Public

Education. The PIO program echoes ATA's primary purpose: to promote the recognition of the translation and interpreting professions. By recognizing and supporting such a program, ATA not only encourages the expansion and replication of their efforts and similar efforts to raise awareness of translation and interpreting, but also plays an active role in the cascading impact such efforts will have on future generations of language professionals and their clients.

On behalf of ATA, I would like to thank CAT and their PIO program for the great work they are doing; the NCTA in general, and Tuomas Kostiaainen, Yves Avérous, Naomi Baer, Alison Dent, and Jacki Noh in particular for their support of this

project; the ATA Board and Headquarters staff for their assistance in making this project a reality; and especially Inés Swaney and Tony Beckwith, for going where no translators have gone before.

Get Involved!

If you are interested in offering your services for a pro bono project in conjunction with ATA's 49th Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida (November 5-8, 2008), please contact ATA Executive Director Walter Bacak at walter@atanet.org or 703-683-6100 (ext. 3006).



Suggested links for more information:

Center for the Art of Translation

www.cattranslation.org

American Translators Association

www.atanet.org/pressroom/pro_bono_project_next.php

Northern California Translators Association

www.ncta.org

Poetry Inside Out

www.cattranslation.org/education.html

Two Lines: A Journal of Translation

www.cattranslation.org/Translation/issues.html