



## **Cornett Scholarship Winner Perseveres at RIT, New York**

**by Tammy Lamb**

**NCSA Scholarship Committee Chair**

The NCSA's Scholarship Committee was pleased to announce Nicole Dugan as the 2014 R. Orin Cornett Memorial Scholarship Winner. Cornett, the inventor of Cued Speech dedicated his life to increasing communication, language and literacy skills among deaf and hard of hearing children. While this award honors his memory, it is also intended to provide assistance to accomplished deaf cuers pursuing higher education. Nicole is a testament to the Cornett legacy as she exemplifies how the use of Cued Speech throughout her lifetime has played an important role in her academic and personal successes.

Nicole has left somewhat of a legacy of her own on the campus of RIT. In 2003, while pursuing her undergraduate degree, Nicole filed a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights against Rochester Institute of Technology after RIT failed to provide her with cued language transliterating services for two years of her education. When asked what that was like, Nicole responded, "It was hard adjusting to RIT my first two years. It took me a long time to become very fluent in ASL so I felt "boxed" in with glass walls for a long time with not being able to have full access in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. Just about every person I shared my story with was very sympathetic and understanding, but in the end it was really my fight to fight alone. I had heard about prior attempts to get CST services at RIT but all had failed pretty much because they knew sign language well enough to receive ASL interpreting in the classroom. That tidbit alone deterred me from becoming fluent in ASL for two years so that I could have real chance of winning my case and opening up more doors for others like me."

In 2004, RIT modified its policies and granted Dugan CLT and C-Print services. Nicole reflects, "I was finally able to request Cued Speech transliterators and ... once again be on par with classmates in courses where spoken English was used."

Colleen Galletta, former CST/Paraprofessional from Glassboro, NJ testifies, "Nicole is very gifted and talented. She was involved in every activity that school offered to her. She was a good athlete, an actor, an artist and a musician. She played in the marching band, pep band, and jazz band. She was in so many activities, that if it weren't for her friends that cued for her, I would have never seen my own family. She excelled in all that she did. That earned her the respect of her peers and pretty much anyone that got to know her...She has worked at Cue Camps over the years as well. In the next five years I see Nicole achieving any goals that she sets for herself."

Nicole has already earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Human Resource Development. One CLT on the RIT campus, Jill Burress, testified that; "This past year, (Nicole) has served as the President of the Cued Speech Club, in which I serve as the advisor. She has taken a very proactive role in that she has organized weekly lunches to encourage cuers to gather together along with promoting the club at every chance possible. She has been a role model for those who attend RIT and are less assertive about their communication needs."

\*Nicole is pursuing a second Master's in Business Administration at RIT. The NCSA is proud to support her by way of the R. Orin Cornett Memorial Scholarship. For more information on 2015 Scholarships, please visit <http://www.cuedspeech.org/cued-speech-scholarships>