

History of the Tony Winsor Award

Attorney Tony Winsor worked for Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and dedicated his 39 years of practice to advocating for the disadvantaged. Attorney Winsor worked endlessly on many cases and battles, but the battle most near and dear to medical interpreters was leading the task of passing the Massachusetts Emergency Room Bill signed into law as Chapter 66 of the Acts of 2000. The law states that all hospitals which provide acute care in emergency rooms or in acute psychiatric services must use competent interpreter services when treating non-English speaking patients. The passing of Chapter 66 of the Acts of 2000 was the forward thrust to professionalize medical interpreters and ultimately allowing disadvantaged patients to have a voice and seek quality care.

MassAHEC Network established the award for medical interpreters in Tony Winsor's name in 2015. The purpose of this award is to honor a person who, like Tony Winsor, has advocated for professionalizing the work of a medical interpreter to improve language access for all persons. The contributions to the field of medical interpreting may include advocating for the utilization of medical interpreters, providing education for medical interpreters, or promoting the work of medical interpreters.



Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Training

Helping bridge communication barriers faced by patients accessing health care services.

Paving the Way to Health Care Access: Two Days of Learning for Interpreters

Tony Winsor Award Honoree for 2020 is Oscar Arocha-Pietri, MM

Words from Committee:



Many may not have known the person being honored for the Tony Winsor Award at Paving the Way 2020: Oscar Arocha-Pietri, MM.

Oscar Arocha was a long-time presence in the Medical Interpreter Field in Boston, Massachusetts. He was taken suddenly and too soon earlier this year.

Some of Oscar's early years in the field were spent at Tufts New England

Medical Center, as Spanish and Portuguese interpreter. He then progressed to become the Operation Manager at NEMC before moving to Boston Medical Center (BMC). Eric Hardt, MD, a long-time interpreter champion, based at BMC, was instrumental in hiring Oscar. He knew when he met Oscar, that he had found the right person to lead the Interpreter Services at BMC. As the Director of Interpreter Services at BMC for years, he brought his passion for social justice to his role as he transformed the department.

While at BMC, Oscar proved to be a leader determined to bring pride and professionalism to the medical interpreter field. As someone who grew up around the world, linguistic acumen was important to Oscar. Like Tony Winsor, for whom this award is named, Oscar believed that advocating for professionalism in the work of medical interpreting improves language access for all persons. A driving philosophy of his was: "the more available you make your services - the greater access there is to interpreter services - the more the system gets utilized." We still talk about access today, decades later.

He also understood that for medical interpreters to be accepted as professionals, they had to present themselves as such. He insisted interpreters come to work dressed as professionals: men with ties- and if not, you were sent home to put one on! While it was seen as strict, it made an impact both on pride of interpreters and how they were

Past Awardees

2019 – Vonessa Costa, Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA)

2018 – Joy Connell, DMH Interpreter Services

2017 – Estela McDonough, UMass Memorial

2016 – Jane Kontrimas, Beth Israel Hospital



viewed. Continuing his efforts at professionalizing the field, Oscar became active in the Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Association.

Oscar became the mentor of many to follow, including current leaders in the field at prominent hospitals such as Brigham & Women's. Yilu Ma, Director of Interpreter Services at B&W, remembers his mentor: "When I was at BMC, he would give me a ride home every day, during which he would freely meander on lots of things besides offering his coaching and management 101; he was trained as a drummer. Drumming to him after work was "mental messaging" after hectic workdays".

Post BMC, Oscar spent time at Language Line Services, and most recently Manager, Medical Practice at Edward M. Kennedy, while keeping active in the field at UMass Memorial Medical Center, as a Spanish interpreter.

Not only was Oscar a mentor for many in the field, he was a great resource for many language access leaders, always looking to assist and contribute in any way he could to move the profession of medical interpreters forward and to ensure the collaboration between language access counterparts in the Boston area. He shared freely and generously. As a colleague, you could always go to Oscar for his advice, he was always ready to lend you a hand no matter what.

Oscar had many loves and passions in his life, his love for music, his love for his family. Oscar was a man of many talents and one of those talents was the ability to speak several languages, which he learned during his time living in different countries throughout his life. Oscar loved people of all lands: he was an International presenter and speaker in conferences in the U.S., Japan, Australia, Italy, Germany and Belgium. He enjoyed music, traveling, luxurious quaint hotels, French cuisine, Swiss chocolates, and watches.

His passion for language access, sense of social justice, and for many and perhaps his most precious gift: his friendship ~ will be missed, not only by those who had the privilege to work with him, but by the language access industry at large. His legacy and contributions to the field will live on.