ATP’s Spring Open House

More than 100 guests attended the Open House at Assistive Technology Partners on March 8. New technology for mobility, communication, positioning and learning were available for demonstration and trial as well as information on current research. One demonstration included ATP’s innovative Smart Wheel project which allows specialists to help determine which kind of wheelchair is best for individual clients. In addition, technology being evaluated in the Product Testing Lab was also on display. Gourmet Fine Catering provided an elegant and tasty selection which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. ATP hosts Open Houses twice a year, in the spring and fall so watch our website or Facebook page for the next opportunity!

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Assistive Technology Partners envisions a world where all persons with cognitive, sensory and/or physical disabilities are engaged in life at home, school, work and play, without barriers and without boundaries.
Clinic Spotlight: Meet Adrian

Adrian is an amazing young man who first came to our clinic for an Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) evaluation in July, 2011. He has a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy and is blind. He is also nonverbal and uses some sign language and facial expressions to communicate. He and his family were excited to find a device that would provide him with the ability to communicate with his family and friends.

Adrian’s primary goals are to be able to communicate phrases and sentences in both English and Spanish. During the evaluation, he chose a high-tech AAC device called the VMax+. The device provides auditory feedback, so he is able to listen for the words he wants and then press a switch to say them out loud. Because he is blind, he is learning to use his device just by listening. He’s had the VMax+ for a few months now and is participating in follow-up training sessions every week. His mother, father and brother attend the sessions with him and are an integral part of the training process.

Adrian is learning to utilize the onscreen keyboard with a key-guard to type words and is able to listen and scan through his communication choices to find what he wants to say. He is able to navigate back and forth between English and Spanish with just the hit of a switch. When he visited his family in Mexico, they were very impressed with his new communication device. Adrian and his family are working on adding music to his device so he can independently navigate through his MP3 files.

Since his first visit in July, he has turned 21 and graduated from the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. With the help of his new communication device, he is looking forward to what the future has in store for him.

AT Coalition Seeking New Members

The AT Coalition was formed in 2001 by leaders from several state agencies who provide assistive technology services/equipment to Colorado residents. In 2006 the AT Coalition voted to expand to become the Advisory Council for the Assistive Technology Program of Colorado, a program under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. The purpose is to improve access and acquisition of AT devices and services statewide for individuals with disabilities in education, employment, community living and information technology.

A majority of the council must be individuals with disabilities who use AT or family members or caretakers of these individuals. The council also must include representatives of designated State agencies. Currently we are seeking new members that represent areas outside of the metro Denver area.

The AT Coalition meets no less than 4 times per year in January, March, May, July, September and November. Members can attend by phone. Upon request, accommodations are provided for full participation in the meetings for individuals with disabilities.

If you are interested in receiving more information about the AT Coalition or would like an application to join the AT Coalition, contact Assistive Technology Partners.
Video: Assistive Technology for Young Children: A Parent’s Perspective

Ask the parent of a school-age or older child about their early experiences with AT, and there’s a good chance they may tell you, “I wish I could have known more when my child was young”.

Young children who need AT present a paradox. Because of their tremendous potential for rapid brain growth and development, they have the ability to benefit immensely from the early use of ATs. Unfortunately, there can be many barriers to acquiring the technology they need.

One challenge is helping parents and families understand what AT is and how it can help their child. Parents of a child with newly identified problems have their hands full with understanding a whole new world of medical issues and early intervention services, let alone coping with the emotions of having a child who is not “typical”. And they often aren’t aware of the doors AT can open for their child.

Assistive Technology Partners, through funding from Early Intervention Colorado, Colorado Department of Human Services, recently produced a video to address this issue. Thanks to the generosity of Ed and Christine Quayle, we were able to videotape conversations with them about their early experiences with their son, Brian. Their insights about the use of technology, and the difference it has made in his life and theirs are touching and very pertinent. We hope through this video, to educate parents and care providers about the importance of early use of AT. To watch the video go to: www.TechForTykes.org

Update from ATP-WesTAC

On February 3, ATP-WesTAC hosted Technology for Tots: The Use of Laptops, Tablets, iPads and iPods for Play, Learning and Communication with Young Children in Grand Junction.

Brian Burne, MSM, OTR, Assistive Technology Partners, taught the workshop. It was well attended and provided numerous ideas and strategies to help participants interact with young children and technology so they can more easily play, learn and communicate.

The workshop included an overview of desktops, laptops, netbooks, tablets, iPads and iPods and access to these devices for young children with disabilities. Early childhood software, websites and apps for play and learning at a pre-reading level were also shared.

Opportunities for hands-on exploration of the devices and software was a big hit! A big thank you to Mesa Developmental Services for providing the training space and the opportunity for learning.
AAT Faculty Present at the 28th International Seating Symposium in Vancouver, BC

In March, Assistive Technology Partners’ Clinic Coordinator Kelly Waugh, PT, MAPT, presented on the topics of Wheelchair Seating and Nighttime Positioning at the 28th International Seating Symposium. With her colleague, Dr. Barbara Crane of the University of Hartford, Kelly spoke on the history of the development of international wheelchair seating standards and the status of a clinical application guide that she is developing through a grant from the PVA Education Foundation.

Their presentation, “Measuring Wheelchair Seated Posture and Seating Supports: Standardization of Terms and Methodologies” was attended by over 150 therapists, engineers, manufacturers and suppliers from 13 different countries. Kelly also presented a poster titled “A Nighttime Positioning Clinical Service: Preliminary Investigation of Program Characteristics and Benefits” which outlines early data from a quality assurance project ATP is implementing.

Assistive Technology Partners’ faculty Joel M. Bach, PhD, who is also an Associate Professor in the Center for Biomechanics and Rehabilitation Research, Colorado School of Mines, also attended the conference with Kelly to learn about the state of the science from an engineering perspective.

SWAAAC Summer Symposium: Creating Access Through Technology in Education

This two day event sponsored by the Colorado Department of Education and Assistive Technology Partners will feature a variety of full day workshops. This year’s Symposium will explore the concepts and implementation of technologies that exist at the intersection of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Assistive Technology. One hour of graduate College Credit will be available from Adams State College. Our workshops will feature the following full day presentations:

Monday, June 4:
*Using 21st Century Tools for Teaching & Accessible Learning
Dan Herlihy
*AT & UDL: iPads & UDL
Therese Willkomm, PhD, ATP
*Assistive Technology and Universal Design for Learning: Regional and District Implementation Strategies for Success
Kirk D. Behnke, MEd, ATP

Tuesday, June 5:
*Utilizing Your iDevices in the Classroom - Connecting the Dots Beyond the App
Dan Herlihy
*AT and UDL: Low Tech Solutions in a High Tech World
Therese Willkomm, PhD, ATP
*Designing UDL Interventions
Dave Edyburn, PhD

Visit our website for complete schedule and registration information.
2012 AT Expo: Technology for Living & Learning
Sunday, June 3, 2012
11:00 am - 6:00 pm
The Conference Center at Adams 12
1500 East 128th Avenue, Thornton, Colorado

The AT Expo will feature vendors showcasing the latest innovations in hardware, software, educational materials, Assistive Technology (AT) devices and solutions for home, school, work and play. With reasonable accommodations anyone can become job ready, increase learning abilities and be more independent. Colorado organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities or to those who are experiencing problems associated with aging will also be present. The AT Expo will include a large vendor hall as well as 45-minute presentations from a variety of vendors. Periodic door prizes will be awarded to those present for the drawings. The AT Expo is free and open to the public. For more information about the expo, driving directions, exhibitor registration and a list of attending exhibitors, please visit the ATP website.
Tips on Low - Tech Tools for Everyday Living

In 2005 it was estimated that 19% of the total population suffered from some form of arthritis or rheumatism. It was also reported that 8% of the individuals over the age of 65 reported having difficulty preparing meals. The Jar Pop is a jar opener that breaks the vacuum seal and allows the jar to be easily twisted open. Lids are still resealable. Great for individuals with arthritis or limited hand mobility.

Available at: YouCanTooCan or Bed, Bath & Beyond
Cost: $5.00

NRG (pronounced energy) Ergonomic Garden Tools. Its ergonomic design keeps your wrist in an neutral position so you have more power and more strength for gardening with significantly less stress and fatigue. The unique curvature and contour of the grip encourages a safer, natural, wrist-neutral approach to gardening. People with conditions like arthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome often find this grip greatly increases their enjoyment of gardening. Available at most garden centers for $10.00.