



CommunicATor



Winter 2011

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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.

Early Intervention

The Tech For Tykes program at ATP has been actively recruiting new Early Intervention Assistive Technology (AT) Consultants to expand the existing network. Recruitment efforts began this past fall through notification among Community Center Boards (CCB's) and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) throughout the state. The response has been extremely good on a number of levels.



First, a total of 36 early intervention providers applied for the open positions. Twenty-seven have currently been accepted. Geographic representation throughout the state is good with the excep-

tion of some rural areas and, ironically, Denver, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. We are looking into further recruitment with Denver Options and Developmental Pathways to address this southern metro need.

Second, response from the new recruits has also been extremely encouraging. Virtually every new applicant has demonstrated a high level of excitement for the position and passion for the use of AT in early intervention. Many recognize the commitment of time and effort required by the position and embrace it with excitement.

The hope is that this new group will bring renewed enthusiasm and passion that will create new energy throughout the state.

The outlook for the near future is that this expanded network of AT Consultants will be prepared to take on the increased referrals and requests for consults and evaluations that are anticipated as a result of Assistive Technology Partner's new web-based training for early intervention providers.

NIH AAC study well under way....

Nearly half of the participants for the Augmentative Alternative Communication Comparative Device Study have been enrolled and are attending the intervention phase of the research. The ATP clinic is lively with afternoon visits from our wonderful study participants.

Preliminary data suggest that all of the Colorado participants are making progress with the functional use of the targeted vocabulary regardless of the assigned device (AltChat or Chatbox 40). However, participants who scored higher on their initial receptive vocabulary tests seem to be mastering the vocabulary on their AAC devices faster than those with lower initial scores. Some of the most popular words and phrases so far include, "More," "My turn," and "Hey!"

The Denver site continues to actively recruit participants with a diagnosis of Fragile X. If you would like more information about joining this study, please contact Christina Perkins at 303-315-1278 or visit the ATP website.

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Clinic Spotlight: Meet Ross



Ross Huguenard

Ross is a 25 year-old young man with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy who is an avid video game connoisseur, playing up to 13 hours a day on his Xbox 360. For Ross, video games are much more than a past time, they are a way of life. They open the door for Ross to socialize and interact with friends all over the world. With the

Xbox, Ross can participate at a high level of competition despite his physical disability. He is also able to interact and talk with his friends through an internet connection while he plays.

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is a progressive neurological disorder that leads to a degeneration and weakness of muscles all over the body. Initially, the muscles of the legs, thighs, and pelvis are affected, but over time all muscles become involved. In Ross's case, he is no longer able to walk or move his arms and legs. He prefers to sit propped against pillows in bed, because he has extreme weakness in his trunk. Ross is able to move his head, a few fingers, and toes.

For many years, Ross used his Xbox 360 successfully, relying on his excellent hand and finger strength and dexterity to control the 17 functions on the Xbox controller. Recently, however, Ross's strength in his fingers and hands has declined, making it difficult for him to control all the functions on his controller. He contacted Assistive Technology Partners (ATP) for help to determine if his controller could be adapted with specialty switches. He was evaluated by Becky Breaux, MS, OTR, ATP and Gavin Philips, M.S.E.E., of ATP.

Initially, the team worked with Ross to determine which buttons and joysticks he was having difficulty reaching or depressing on the controller. This

assessment revealed that he was having trouble depressing or reaching up to nine different buttons/joysticks. After careful review of his hand movements, the team determined that some of the buttons



could be rearranged on the device, and moved to locations that were easier for him to reach. Other buttons could be "softened" so they would be easier to de-

press. Still, there were several buttons that could not be reached, modified, or moved to a new location. For these buttons, the team determined that Ross would need to access them using external specialty switches.

Becky worked with Ross to determine all of his movement capabilities and the potential types of switches he could use at each location.

For example, Ross is able to bend the big toe on each foot to activate a string switch, move his head in many different directions to hit switches located behind or next to his



head, and he is able to blow or sip air into a sip and puff switch. He has several good switch sites that he can control with excellent skill.



Once these switch sites were determined, Gavin worked closely with an engineer who specializes in modifying game controllers for people with disabilities. Gavin created a model of the desired game controller and communicated with the engineer all the changes the team wanted to make to the controller. Some buttons or joysticks were moved to a new location, some buttons were softened so they were easier to push, and some buttons were modified with switch jacks. **Continued on Page 3 ...**



Clinic Spotlight Continued from Page 2 ...

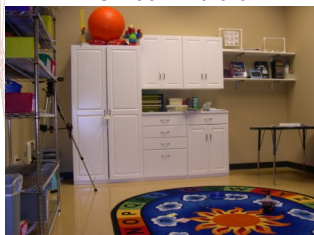
After just a few weeks, Ross received his new controller. Initially, some of the changes made to the controller were not successful. The team re-assessed his ability to reach the new button locations and made more recommendations for change. Ross also decided which switch locations he liked the best, and made final decisions about which switches to buy. Today, Ross has a modified Xbox 360 and he is able to use it successfully to control all 17 functions! Ross had to learn to do things in a new way, which can be frustrating at times, but he is very happy that he can continue to participate in an activity that brings so much meaning and joy to his life.

Advisory Committee Goes the Extra Mile

One member of the Advisory Committee for Assistive Technology went beyond expectations. The committee is primarily composed of people from the Denver construction community. Dean Nelson, a long time member is also on the Déjà vu Rendezvous subcommittee and recently contributed hands-on improvements to our AAC clinic room. With funds donated by the subcommittee members, he built cabinets and shelving for the room that allow staff to control the flow of therapeutic activities and make better progress in treatment. “Some of the kids we work with are easily overwhelmed and or distracted. Being able to control what they see and have access to makes a tremendous difference in our ability to guide learning.” Assistive Technology staff are grateful for his contributions!



AAC Room Before



AAC Room After

Moodle

Moodle is a new word that has crept into the vocabulary of Assistive Technology Partners (ATP) staff. Although it sounds like either some kind of dog or a form of pasta, Moodle is actually a free online training tool ATP is utilizing for web-based training programs. With much input from numerous ATP faculty and Early Intervention Colorado, Maureen Melonis and Brian Burne have put extensive work into the development of an online training tool. The training provides a comprehensive base of knowledge about assistive technology (AT) for infants and toddlers. It is now complete and ready to go live following alignment of University technology.



We are very pleased with the end product. Significant hours were devoted to writing and creating this training and it is anticipated to have great impact on the awareness and use of AT in early intervention (EI). Because the training provides comprehensive information about the use of AT with young children, it will be a useful tool for EI providers and service coordinators, as well as families and consumers.

The initial phase involves access for the new AT consultant recruits to the Moodle training in preparation for their two-day face to face training in early 2011. This experience allows ATP to “pilot” the online training in preparation for more diverse and expanded use with service and program coordinators, who are ultimately the prime target audience.

To be added to the CommunicATor distribution list or to request a hard copy, contact <http://medschool.ucdenver.edu/atp> or 303-315-1280



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2011 Training Opportunities

Assistive Technology Partners is offering several exciting training opportunities in 2011. Included are a wide-range of topics from a general overview of technology to implementation ideas with specific technologies. Classes offered in the next few months are listed below. All of the educational offerings can be found on the website:

<http://AssistiveTechnologyPartners.org>.

Your Phone and You: An Assistive Technology Toolkit in Your Pocket

Presented by Jim Sandstrum, MA, CCC-SLP
February 11 and 18th, 2011

Spring Student Open House

April 19, 2011 Session 1 3:00pm-4:15pm
 Session 2 4:30pm-5:45pm

Grant Writing 101

Presented by Cathy Bodine, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
April 22 & 23, 2011

Screen Play: Hardware, Software and Web Options for Young Children

Presented by Brian Burne, OTR
Date in May, 2011 to be announced.

Wheelchair Seating and Positioning for Postural Control and Function

Presented by Kelly Waugh, PT, MAPT, ATP
Three consecutive days to be scheduled.
Dates to be announced.

Making the Switch to Switches: Assessing Motor Access for People with Physical Disabilities

Presented by Becky Breaux, OTR
Date in July, 2011 to be announced.

There's an "App" for That!

Presented by Maureen Melonis, MA, CCC-SLP
Date to be announced.

Usability Issues for the Aging Brain

Presented by Greg McGrew, M.E.E
Date in August, 2011 to be announced.

MathPad & MathTalk: Accessing Math Curriculum using Speech Recognition

Presented by Aleaza Goldberg, MA, CCC-SLP
September 15, 2011

Any questions can be directed to the Educational Coordinator at 303-315-1277 or you can e-mail aleaza.goldberg@ucdenver.edu.

WESTAC Office

The word is out that the ATP WestTAC office has accessible phones for demonstration. Several phone calls were received in November and December from children whose parents are either hard of hearing, visually impaired or both who have difficulty using their phones. The Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) is managed by the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (<http://coloradodeafcommission.com>). The TEDP supplies telecommunications equipment to deaf and hard of hearing residents who qualify. The equipment includes:



amplified telephones, CapTels, speaker telephones, TTYs, video-phones and specialized telephone equipment for deaf-blind citizens." All three of the ATP locations (Denver, Colorado Springs, and Grand Junction) are Demonstration Centers for the program.

One woman contacted WestTAC and explained that her mother was hard of hearing and could not hear over the phone. She visited WestTAC and trialed several of the phones choosing the one with white numbers on a black background, thinking that her mother would also be able to see the numbers clearer.

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WESTAC Office Continued from Page 4...

ATP also has ATNetwork demonstration kits covering a wide variety of disabilities. Denice Roberts from WestAC gave two presentations on the kit with devices for people with hearing impairments, including information about the TEDP. She has received follow-up phone calls from attendees. One of the calls was a son who wanted to get a CapTel phone for his mother. Contact ATP in Denver, Grand Junction, or Colorado Springs to schedule a time to see the telecommunication equipment.

SETAC Happenings

Assistive Technology Partners' Southeast Technical Assistance Center is represented by Heather Lyons in the Pikes Peak Interagency Transition Team (PPITT), which is one of the longest standing teams in Colorado formed with the goal of interagency collaboration to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. The group was nominated for and received the Unsung Hero award presented by the Arc of Colorado. Each year The Arc of Colorado (comprised of 11 local Arc chapters in Colorado, including the Arc of the Pikes Peak Region) recognizes individuals or organizations that are making significant contributions to improving the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. On November 13, 2010, two representatives from the Pikes Peak Interagency Transition Team accepted this prestigious award.

SETAC will be one of approximately 90 agencies attending the PPITT's annual Community Collaborative Resource Fair, which brings together agencies serving individuals with disabilities to disseminate information to these individuals and their family members and caregivers. The fair will be held on Thursday, April 21st, 2011 (or the following Thursday in the event of inclement weather) at Wasson High School in Colorado Springs. Please plan on attending, telling a friend or colleague, or follow the event on Facebook. You can also contact Heather Lyons at (719)380-6229 or heather.lyons@ucdenver.edu for more information.

New Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) group at SETAC

Assistive Technology Partners' Southeast Technical Assistance Center (SETAC) has a new group of adults using various augmentative alternative communication devices to help them communicate. Currently, the group is meeting for 90 minutes every other week to learn how to use their AAC devices and to discuss strategies for effective communication. The group also provides support to its members through empathy and collaboration. Facing the communication challenges associated with different etiologies such as aphasia, Parkinson's disease, and other motor speech disorders can be overwhelming. This group is working together, facilitated by Heather Lyons, CCC-SLP, to address members' skills in utilizing their AAC systems and to brainstorm strategies to make communication more efficient and effective with family, friends, and caregivers.

The Central SWAAAC Office

Plans for the Assistive Technology (AT) Institute: SWAAAC 202

On February 7th and 8th, 2011, the SWAAAC Project will be hosting the AT Institute: SWAAAC 202 at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Day 1 of this event will explore a wide variety of assistive technologies to support cognitive disabilities, computer access technologies, Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) and Electronic Aids for Daily Living (EADLs). On day 2, participants will choose one full day workshop from the following topics: Assessing for Motor Access, AAC Evidence Based Practice: Making it Real, Implementing Educational Assistive Technologies in the Classroom. These three workshops will be full of opportunities for group interactions, discussion and sharing of real world experiences. Participants from across Colorado, representing parents, AT specialists, special educators, administrators, PTs, OTs, and SLPs will be in attendance. The SWAAAC Project is excited to provide this new training opportunity and hopes it will be a great success!



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KUDO'S

Cathy Bodine, Executive Director of Assistive Technology Partners, presented at the "DOWN SYNDROME: National Conference on Patient Registries, Research Databases, and Biobanks" Dec. 2-3,2010 in Rockville, Md. *The Linda Crnic Institute for Down Syndrome, the Global Down Syndrome Foundation and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)* hosted the conference, the first of its kind. The conference aimed to address the lack of a national Down syndrome medical registry and biobank by bringing together database and biobank experts with Down syndrome experts.



Chris Perkins from the ATP SWAAAC Team was honored by Joshua Gonzalez and his family for “going the extra million miles out of her way” in making lives easier and filled with happiness.

Denice Roberts presented “Introduction to Dragon Naturally Speaking” at the 13th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Accessible Media, Web and Technology Conference November 15 - 19, 2010. The conference is sponsored by CU Boulder.

The [Center on Knowledge Translation for Technology Transfer's \(KT4TT\)](#) has recognized Assistive Technology Partners for the 2011 PUSH award. The Product Utilization Support and Help (PUSH) award is a peer-to-peer dissemination activity. It is based on the identification and distribution of ‘best practice’ approaches to the development, transfer and/or production processes utilized by. With the recognition comes a \$1000 monetary award.

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