



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.

Summer 2011

Assistive Technology Awareness Week

Governor Hickenlooper proclaimed Oct 16-22, 2011 as Assistive Technology (AT) Awareness Week in Colorado. Organizations who serve people with disabilities are gearing up to remind people about the tools and resources that are available to improve the quality of an individual's life. AT comes in many shapes and forms and can be as simple as hearing aids, a talking



alarm clock, knee braces or manual and power wheelchairs, or as sophisticated as voice-activated computer systems and stair climbing wheelchairs. AT tools can assist in dressing or cooking as well as helping people stay in communication with friends and family through specially adapted electronic devices such as computers or the telephone. Because

people need this technology for the workplace, to be independent in their homes, and in the community, the tools and services are necessities rather than luxury items. Contact one of Colorado's Assistive Technology Program sites to find opportunities in your area to learn more about AT. Or if you are already an expert in the field, find a way to raise awareness about AT with colleagues, family and friends.

AT Device Demonstrations

Free demonstrations on AT are offered to potential AT users and their family members, as well as advocates, employers, and educators. If you are interested in learning about specific technology, contact one of the three AT Partners sites located in Denver, Colorado Springs

(SETAC), and Grand Junction (WesTAC) either by phone or email. Describe what your need is. You will then be contacted by someone who will arrange a short demonstration of approximately 30 minutes that will include an explanation about how the device(s) work and allow you a chance to try it. The intent is for you to have "guided exploration" of

a specific device or category of devices so that you can determine what will best meet your need. Often more than 30 minutes is needed to determine the best tool and perhaps a clinical evaluation is more appropriate. Participants will be given information about further assessment if required, funding options, and assistive technology vendors that sell what you want. The demonstrations are free although appointments are necessary to assure that the appropriate technology is available.

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Assistive Technology Partners
BREAKING BARRIERS, CHANGING LIVES

Spotlight: Colorado Educator Shares 20-Year Perspective on Assistive Technology and IDEA

November 29th, 2010 marked the 35th anniversary of IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, originally enacted in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 94-142. The legislation was signed by President Gerald Ford at a time



when nearly 1.8 million kids with disabilities were excluded from public schools.

Fast forward 14 years from this enactment and meet Alison Montana, an AT Specialist in Colorado who began her career in 1989. At that time, disability laws were in their infancy. "There was no assistive technology back then," said Alison, "but many of the key issues in IDEA are still the same today such as due process, parental rights, and a free and appropriate education for all (FAPE). "And today 2010, teachers are working hard to create a least restrictive learning environment for children with special needs. The challenge, however, is many teachers still don't have the knowledge or time to realize how assistive technology tools can benefit their students."

An AT early adopter, Alison was one of the first educators to envision what a simple technology tool could do for students with disabilities. She fought for visual pictures to represent words for children who had no voice. She asked for a switch interface to help a young teen operate a computer. She saw students motivated to learn and this motivated her to keep the momentum going. Her special education director was an early adopter of technology and set high expectations for her staff to explore devices that would spark a child's interest. Alison said, "That's when we discovered Don Johnston, a man who built his company to serve children with special needs. It is truly amaz-

ing when you see a child write for the first time!" Today, her Colorado school district is an exemplary model of using AT to support a wide-range of students' needs from the most significant disability to high incidence. The Colorado Department of Education built teams of multi-disciplinary specialists, known as SWAAAC, (Statewide AT Augmentative, Alternative, Communication or Supporting Learning Through Assistive Technology) to evaluate students together and make joint recommendations. Alison remembers OTs, SLPs and parents who could not believe the progress children made using the tools. There are 70 teams now that make up SWAAAC and Alison manages the coordination for the Adams School District 14 which supports more than 7000 students with an 80% Hispanic population.



In 2009, her district used ARRA funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) to purchase SOLO, a literacy software suite of four accommodation assistive technology tools. The tools support students with cognitive delays, physical disabilities and who are at risk of failing general education literacy requirements. Alison recommends the software for ESL students who find it difficult to spell in English. "I see their reading comprehension skills improve," she said. "It's a good supplemental learning tool that doesn't replace a teacher, but helps them to deliver instruction in multiple ways, which keeps kids focused."

A student with a traumatic brain injury recently told Alison he wanted to drop out of school. He was behind and lost hope of graduating. She set up a tripod on his wheelchair and introduced him to the Alpha Smart with Co:Writer, a word prediction program that helped him gain back his vocabulary and grammar skills. Alison likes the pre-made word banks relevant to her curriculum. Her student liked that he could add

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to request a hard copy, contact
<http://medschool.ucdenver.edu/atp>
or 303-315-1280

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his own topics, like skateboarding. He stayed in school, graduated and went to college.

For students with autism, Alison says AT can be an excellent resource. One student who did not speak, but interrupted classes finally settled down after being put on the computer. By the end of the year he was talking and doing well in class. Mrs. Angie Vasquez, a parent of twin boys with autism said, "I like SOLO because my boys both have trouble with reading comprehension. Now they understand what they read, are more organized and write more often, which has improved their writing skills."

Matt Bitner, a special education teacher for the district said, "When we looked at student behavior in our writing classes we found that a number of students always acted out. We tried SOLO in our writing lab as part of an intervention program. Not only did bad behavior decrease, but these students wrote three to four more paragraphs and more frequently with correct grammar."



Alison's district also uses Read: Out Loud, an accessible eReader that reads digital text aloud and has built-in study tools. She said students used to listen to books on tape, but they didn't take notes or collect facts. In Read: Out Loud students can highlight text and add notes in a sidebar.

Teachers can write instructional notes, too to help their students gather the right information for a good book report. "These study tools are convenient for kids and keep them on task," shared Alison.

"Teachers care about children and want to see them learn," summarized Alison. "I personally believe teachers are getting a bad rap. We have to find new ways to help them teach and to show them how AT can help them do what they do best. Kids in this digital age want to use technology. And from my experience, I know it can level the learning field, which is

what the IDEA law was designed to do. I wouldn't have pictured myself as a technology pioneer, but I'm proud of it. Over the years, I've seen lots of students succeed who were labeled 'unlearnable.' It's time we explore assistive technologies and put them to the test for lots of kids in different learning environments."

Written by: Valerie C. Cherek with Alison Montana, AT Specialist for the Adams School District 14, Denver, CO (Reprinted by permission from Valerie Cherek, Don Johnston, Inc., 1-800-999-4660/www.donjohnston.com)

Smartwheel at Assistive Technology Partners

The Wheelchair Seating and Mobility clinic team at Assistive Technology Partners received a \$20,000 grant from the Caring for Colorado Foundation. Monies from this grant will enable the clinic to purchase a Smartwheel and develop a new clinical service at ATP that will benefit adult and pediatric manual wheelchair users across the state of Colorado. The Smartwheel is a measurement tool that is attached to a user's wheel-



chair and collects propulsion data such as push length, push frequency, speed and the amount of force the user applies to the push rim. Information gained from this tool can assist clinicians with determining proper wheelchair selection, wheelchair set up and provides visual feedback to assist with wheelchair propulsion training. The Smartwheel is portable and can be easily transported to one of our satellite clinics in Grand Junction or Colorado Springs to assist in evaluations with clients who live in more rural areas of Colorado. The clinic team is part of an international users group to develop standards in the prescription of manual wheelchairs for pediatric users and will be partnering in research studies using the Smartwheel.

Development of a Clinical Guide to Wheelchair Seating Terms and Measures

Assistive Technology Partners' Clinic Coordinator Kelly Waugh, PT, MAPT was awarded a one-year grant from the Paralyzed Veterans of America titled "Development of a clinical guide to wheelchair seating terms and measures". Kelly has been a leader in the development of international standards for the description and measurement of wheelchair seated posture for over a decade, and this grant will allow her to develop a comprehensive clinical guide to these standardized measures.



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Successful outcomes in the provision of wheelchairs require an appropriate match between the seating support system and the wheelchair user's body; however, standard terms and measures have been lacking for communication of this critical information. There is significant inconsistency in the terms that are used to describe and measure wheelchair seating parameters (such as leg rest angle, seat height) and postural measures (such as hip angle, trunk lean, pelvic tilt). A common vocabulary of terms and measures is needed by clinicians, suppliers, manufacturers and technicians for accurate translation of assessment information into a seating prescription, and for effective set up of the prescribed product.

Additionally, the adoption of standardized measures will encourage collaborative research regarding the effect of seated posture on a wheelchair user's health, comfort and function. To address this need, a Clinical Application Guide to standardized terms

and measures related to wheelchair seating will be developed and disseminated, translating a highly technical international standard into a format and language that is easy to understand and clinically useful. There is currently no single resource containing this information that is free, easily accessible and practical to use for health care professionals in the field of wheelchair prescription, service delivery and research.

KUDOS



Cathy Bodine, PhD, CCC-SLP, Associate Professor, Departments of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and Pediatrics and Executive Director of Assistive Technology Partners was recently recognized by the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America (RESNA) as a 2011 Fellow. RESNA Fellow Awards recognize members who have made long-term and substantial contributions to the fields of rehabilitation or assistive technology as well as significant contributions to RESNA.



Assistive Technology Partners' Southeast Technical Assistance Center (SETAC) would like to welcome Aleaza Goldberg, M.A., CCC-SLP, to the office on Tuesdays beginning July 26, 2011. Aleaza currently works in the Denver office, but will be coming to SETAC to perform assistive technology evaluations and device training for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and individuals with disabilities.



Heather Lyons, M.S., CCC-SLP continues to provide services to southeast Colorado, working out of Bellwether Nutritional & Rehabilitative Services clinic in Pueblo on Tuesdays. Please contact the SETAC office directly if you have questions or need to schedule services, (719)380-6229.



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Screen Play

A workshop on the using laptops, tablets, iPads and iPods for play, learning and communication with young children was presented at ATP on Friday, July 15th. Brian Burne and Shelly Elfner were the presenters. The four-hour workshop featured two, 2-hour sessions and an afternoon open lab. The workshop opened with an overview of laptops, tablets, iPads and iPods, and access to these devices; as well as software, websites and apps for play and learning for young children. Then the rest of the morning was devoted to covering items like the longstanding Big Mac communicator as well as the latest communication apps. During the afternoon an open lab was offered for hands-on exploration of the devices and software with facilitation by Brian and Shelly. If anyone is interested in this workshop for their organization or agency, contact AT Partners.



Wheelchair Seating Workshop – A Success!

On July 21st, 22nd and 23rd, ATP was home to Kelly Waugh's Wheelchair Seating for Postural Control and Function. The 3-day intensive workshop taught participants a comprehensive approach to seating assessment and intervention for individuals with mild to severe



postural and/or orthopedic impairment. The first two days of the training, participants learned a thorough, client-centered approach to seating assessment and intervention. The third day allowed the participants to work in small groups with actual clients and apply the information and methods learned to problem solve and complete a full assessment of an individual

with wheelchair seating needs. Attendees for this course came from Maryland, Texas, Iowa, California, Arizona, Nebraska and Colorado, with disciplines ranging from PTs, OTs, Pediatric Rehab Medicine to Engineers and DME Suppliers.

Making Connections in Durango

The ATP/WesTAC office covers the Western Slope of Colorado. Denice Roberts is the AT Specialist on site. Recently she had the opportunity to attend the *Colorado/Wyoming Consortium of Support Programs for Students with Disabilities* meeting held on June 24th at Ft. Lewis College in Durango. Denice has been involved in this organization since 1994. This group meets five times a year, with the June meeting held at a "rural" site. Membership is primarily people who are disability specialists in colleges and universities in Colorado and Wyoming.

While in Durango, Denice had an opportunity to visit organizations/agencies in the area and reaffirm old contacts and create new contacts. She met with Tim Erickson from the Southwest Center for Independence who coordinates the Durango Low Vision Expo in the fall and agreed to bring the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program cart Expo in September.

Denice met with two different Assistive Living Center representatives in Cortez. She was invited to participate in the Caregivers Conference in September. An event she is looking forward to being a part of.



When Denice visited the Durango Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, counselors expressed an interest in learning more about the AT Network and the demonstration kits filled with assistive technology for various rooms in the home. In a future trip she will bring some kits to share.

AT Funding Sources

Tobii ATI Beginning Communicator and Sono Suite Training

Tobii has an array of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) solutions that help individuals communicate. On Thursday, October 6th, 2011, 3:00pm-6:00pm at Assistive Technology Partners join Wendy Woods, MA CCC-SLP as she discusses the full range of Tobii ATI software that is available. In this class you will learn how to add music/photos to buttons, customize pagesets to your needs, use pagesetcentral.com and more! Please RSVP directly to Wendy Woods: 719.433.0731 or wendy.woods@tobiiati.com

Training Opportunities in Colorado Springs

SETAC and the Foundation for Successful Living will begin their assistive technology series again this fall. The topic for September will be Assistive Technology for Handwriting and will provide information on the Handwriting without Tear program as well as the opportunity to demo low to high tech assistive technology devices and software for writing. This learning opportunity will have a session geared toward the needs of parents and consumers and another session later in the day for service providers and professionals.



Please contact Heather Lyons (SETAC) at (719)380-6229 or Tricia Harris (Foundation for Successful Living) at (719)227-3939 for more information. Other topics for fall include Apps for the iPad/iPod Touch (Apple), Assistive Technology for Low Vision (HumanWare), and Cognitive Supports (Ablelink Technologies).

SETAC is participating in the Endeavor Talker Beta project. This communication software was developed by Ablelink Technologies, located in Colorado Springs. If you would like more information about this new communication tool or would like a demo, please contact Heather Lyons at (719)380-6229.

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