



Assistive Technology Partners

BREAKING BARRIERS, CHANGING LIVES

# Journeys

ATP Newsletter, vol. III, May 2006



## Meet Jacob Ancell

Jacob Ancell is an 11-year-old who enjoys going to Creekside Elementary School, playing with remote (infra-red) control toys like Robo-Sapien and Robo-Raptor, and talking with his friends on a speaker phone.

Jacob's mother, Holly, says Assistive Technology Partners has been working extensively with Jacob since he was 3-1/2, ensuring that he is properly positioned in a manual and a powered wheelchair as he grows, and providing a communication system (along with support from private speech therapists) so that he can talk with others.

ATP has "been a blessing," Ms. Ancell says. "Without technology, people would underestimate Jacob's intelligence and ability. There is a very smart kid locked in this body."

Jacob, who has cerebral palsy, operates his power wheelchair using movements of his head to trigger laser switches. He also uses switches to make his communication system or Dynavox speak out loud for him. "It's very frustrating without speech," his mother says. The ability to communicate "helps him express his needs and feelings, just like everyone else."

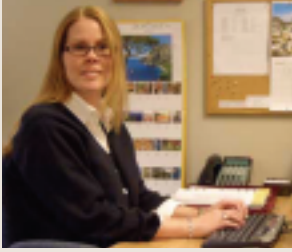
"We are very grateful for all that ATP has done for him," she says. "Technology is Jacob's future."

## Loan Bank Serves Children Across Colorado

One of the extraordinary services that Assistive Technology Partners provides for children with disabilities and their families and teachers is a Loan Bank containing more than 1,600 items. The items range from simple adaptations such as a pencil grip to sophisticated software and hardware to assist in the development of literacy.

Access to the Loan Bank is through a member of a Statewide Assistive Augmentative Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) team. The teams — there are currently 67 of them across Colorado — typically include physical and occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, psychologists, teachers and special educators.

The SWAAAC project and Loan Bank are funded by a grant from the Colorado Department of Education. SWAAAC team members can borrow Loan Bank items free of charge through a team coordinator to try out with individual students before making recommendations about purchases. On any given week during the school year, more than 475 items are out on loan.



Julie Bowles

## New Program Administrator for ATP

Please welcome Julie Bowles, BGS to the ATP family. Julie will work with program faculty and staff to streamline administrative functions; improve business processes; and engage in long-range program planning. Julie has worked with rapid growth companies for the past 15 years, leading cross-functional teams to achieve aggressive business goals. Most recently she served as an executive of a national education company, developing and expanding multimillion dollar branch offices.

## Donor Support for ATP

ATP is extremely grateful to the anonymous donor who recently gave \$4,000 to support our work. The donation will be matched dollar-for-dollar by Advisory Council Chair Bill Caile. Bill encourages others to lend their support to ATP as well. He says with a smile, "Won't it be fun watching me have to write another check?!"

# ATP Develops Library Backpacks

What better way to help families stimulate the development of young children with disabilities than by providing backpacks filled with adaptive play materials? And what better place to reach the children's families than at their local library?

This concept led ATP to develop 16 Library Backpacks for children with disabilities. ATP's experienced faculty selected age-appropriate, adapted materials for children from birth to age three. When assembled, the backpacks contained books and toys with assistive modifications such as page-turners for books and augmentative pictures and communication boards. In addition, the backpacks contained resource materials for families and library staff.

The project was part of the Adaptive Play Library Project spon-



sored by Early Childhood Connections for Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, Inc. In addition to the backpacks, ATP's faculty conducted training for parents, library staff and child care providers. "We wanted to increase awareness of the importance of play in the development of young children, and ways that many materials can be adapted for children with disabilities," says ATP's Maureen Melonis, MSN.

The backpacks became available in mid-2005 for short-term loans in four Arapahoe and Douglas libraries.

Library backpacks — another example of how ATP is leading the way to develop partnerships and creative approaches to reaching out to people with disabilities and their families.

## Planning for June Conference Under Way

Mark your calendar now for June 8-10 so you won't miss the Collaborative Assistive Technology Conference of the Rockies! This conference, which is sponsored by the Colorado Department of Education and SWAAAC in collaboration with states in the Rocky Mountain region, will feature 60 educational sessions on topics ranging from early childhood to science software to wheelchair positioning, as well as hands-on computer labs and exhibitors from throughout the U.S. The conference offers a wealth of information. It also provides opportunities for networking with clients, families and professionals.

Nancy Stevens, tandem cyclist, skier, rock climber, successful entrepreneur and inspirational speaker will be the conference's keynote speaker. Although blind since birth, Nancy has never let

anything stand in the way of achieving her goals. The founding director of High Country Options in Frisco, Nancy has helped more than 100 people with disabilities to achieve a new sense of self-worth.

The conference's closing address will be by John Beckman, the coordinator for self-employment for the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. As an Achondroplastic Dwarf, John combines an understanding of the challenges of disabilities with a keen sense of humor that has enabled him to meet his personal and professional goals.

And as always, the Adapted Home and Accessible Classroom will be a highlight of the conference. Featuring hundreds of adapted items, the home and classroom will be free and open to the public on June 9 and 10.

For registration and additional information, call 303-315-1280, toll-free 800-255-3477, or visit [www.AssistiveTechnologyPartners.org](http://www.AssistiveTechnologyPartners.org).

## Helping People with Disabilities Find Work

For most adults, doing productive work is central to independence and feelings of self-worth. ATP's Jim Sandstrum, MA, CCC-SLP, knows that better



*Jim Sandstrum*

than most, for he has been working for the last six years to improve access to Colorado Workforce Centers for people who are disabled.

The mission of Workforce Centers across the state is to help unemployed workers find jobs. However, until ATP became

involved, few of the Centers possessed the technology to accommodate people with vision, hearing, communication, cognitive and/or motor challenges.

In order to address this need, Colorado's Office of Workforce Development formed a collaborative initiative between Colorado Win Partners and ATP with the goal of improving the accessibility of Workforce Centers across the state of Col-

orado. The initiative received additional support and funding from the US Department of Labor, Colorado's Department of Labor, and Colorado's Department of Human Services - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In an initial pilot project, Jim worked with Centers in Colorado Springs and Grand Junction, analyzing their needs for assistive technology, ordering and installing that technology, and training Center staff to use it. Subsequent grants allowed the installation of AT in 15 additional centers. All told, Jim installed assistive technology worth more than \$250,000 in the 17 Centers.

The results were so positive that other Centers began using their own funds to have Jim help them address technology needs. Today, 24 of Colorado's 60 Workforce Centers have some assistive technology, Jim says, including software that enlarges images on a computer screen and large-print keyboards for people with low vision, power-adjustable tables to permit wheelchair access, and talking software for people with learning or vision disabilities.

Thanks to ATP and the ongoing training Jim is providing to Workforce Centers across the state, people with disabilities have access to services that can help them be fully participating members of society, and employers are benefiting from the services of hard-working, valuable employees.



*Back row: Cynthia Audo, Wendy Schlageter, Glenda Nash Buscarello. Middle row: Lisa Visca, Jamie Janikowski, Danielle Tornambe, Sara Salzman. Front row: Tracy Adams, Chantelle Brockwell, Thomas Kovacs, Teresa Beinema. Not pictured: Dana Tolman.*

## Personnel Prep Graduate Students

A second set of graduate students have begun a year of advanced study at Assistive Technology Partners. They are among the 60 students who will be trained to use assistive technology with children with low incidence disabilities under a grant designed to address the shortage of trained personnel to meet the technology needs of children. The grant will also enable ATP to develop Masters and Doctoral programs in assistive technology at UCDHSC.

## We've Moved!

At the end of February, ATP moved from our former offices to the Pearl Plaza, just a few blocks away. The move involved a lot of hard work, but the new space is larger and more economical, and ATP will be able to serve clients more efficiently in our new home. For example, we will have better use of space overall, a larger computer lab, and two rooms for our Seating and Mobility Clinic. In addition, there will be more room for the PVC/Triwall lab, for items in the Loan Bank, and for storage of items for the annual Adapted Home. The new location also has camera security and keycode access to keep staff and clients safer.

Please note our new address: 601 E. 18th Ave., Suite 130, Denver, CO 80203-1492. Our telephone numbers remain the same. Drop by and see us in our new location!

## Autism Training Draws Large Numbers

On November 7, 2005, ATP organized a distance-learning training for teachers, therapists, school support personnel and administrators who work with preschool and elementary-aged children. Titled "Educating Students with Autism Using Assistive Technology," the training session attracted a record 200 people from across the state.

Conducted via videoconferencing facilities at Area Health Education Centers, the session was taught by Melinda Graham, Senior Consultant, Significant Support Needs/Autism, Colorado Department of Education.

ATP and SWAAC conduct an educational videoconference each fall and spring. Look for "Extreme Makeover Classroom Edition," coming in May.

