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### DID YOU KNOW?

**1 IN 5 PEOPLE  
IN THE U.S. LIVES  
WITH A DISABILITY**

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.

To receive the communicATor e-newsletter or to request a hard copy, contact us: [generalinfo@at-partners.org](mailto:generalinfo@at-partners.org) or call 303-315-1280.

Alternate formats available upon request.



## Colorado Self Storage Association and Schur Success Auction & Appraisal Partner to Help ATP

Assistive Technology Partners (ATP) is pleased to announce a new partnership started almost two years ago between our agency and the Colorado Self Storage Association (COSSA). It all began with a casual conversation about the needs of ATP which closely meshed with COSSA's desire to give back to the Colorado communities they serve. The mission of COSSA is to provide a unified voice so all self-storage operators can promote, educate, protect, exchange, develop and improve both their own business and the industry. COSSA represents the interests of all self-storage operators.

After a few initial gatherings and tours, board members learned more about the research, design, testing and application of technologies for persons with cognitive, sensory and/or physical disabilities. Schur Success Auctions, a COSSA member agency, volunteered to provide fundraising support for ATP. They have a long track record of donating a portion of all auction proceeds to an organization that can truly benefit, and they have chosen to offer these services on our behalf.

Over the past year, ATP has attended several COSSA events including the annual spring meeting where ATP hosted an assistive technology display for COSSA members to learn more about what we do. They were particularly interested in our robotics research to help young children with physical impairments move more independently. Everyone who attended had an opportunity to control a robotic bear by moving their arms. It was a popular demonstration and helped members see how technology can open doors to independence and learning. Other events this past year have included a live auction benefitting ATP and an official announcement at the fall meeting of our partnership. To date, COSSA has donated more than \$3,000 toward ATP services in the communities in Colorado and is pledging to raise over \$15,000 in 2015. We are so thankful for this new relationship and for an amazing and fun group of people who clearly care as much about individuals with disabilities as we do! Thanks COSSA for your support in 2014 and for all that 2015 may bring. <sup>ATP</sup>



## CLINIC SPOTLIGHT A Toy for Jady

*A Toy for Jady originally appeared on University of Colorado Newsroom. It also was recognized as one of the Top Ten Stories of 2014. Story by Vicky Hildner | University Communications.*

When Chelsea Arenas tried to find toys for her 6-year-old son, she always came up empty-handed—until the faculty and staff at Assistive Technology Partners decided to take on the challenge of creating a toy for a child like Jady.

“With most toys, you have to hit a button, flip a switch, squeeze, push or pull,” Arenas explained. “Since Jady can’t do any of those things, there was no toy we could find that he could play with by himself.”

On a recent morning at ATP’s building located midway between CU Denver and CU Anschutz, Jady didn’t even notice the two cameras recording his playdate with a colorful robotic toy named “Glus.” He also didn’t realize that he’s participating in research to develop “socially assistive robotics”—robotic devices that provide a

social connection for the user. All Jady cared about was the fact that Glus was talking to him and interacting with him.

“The robot adds more quality to his life,” Arenas said.

When Jady was born, Arenas had no reason to suspect he would not develop normally. But by the time he was 8 months old, an MRI produced a diagnosis that she had never heard of but would certainly never forget—schizencephaly, an extremely rare developmental birth defect characterized by abnormal clefts in the cerebral hemispheres of the brain. Jady was missing a large part of the left side of his brain and a smaller part of the right side.

“I still have that MRI,” Arenas said. “To actually see [schizencephaly] is shocking.”

But Arenas, a single

mother, faced the future with optimism. She sought every type of therapy and service that might help her son, and after his fifth birthday, Arenas brought him to ATP to get a power wheelchair.

“They spent time fitting the chair for him and helping him learn how to make it go,” Arenas said. “When they asked if we could be willing to help them develop a robot toy, I said we would definitely be interested.”

Glus is being developed through the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for the Advancement of Cognitive Technologies, which is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The toy is a prototype and must be controlled by a human being (dubbed the “Wizard of Oz” at ATP). ATP engineers are already working on a next-generation of Glus, an autonomous robot toy that operates independently using sensors that pick up a child’s movement patterns and auditory cues. The future Glus will be programmable to interact with Jady, encouraging his unique development without any human interaction.

Brian Burne, MSM, OTR, a research

(Continued on pg. 3)





(“Toy for Jady” cont.)

instructor and occupational therapist at ATP, was initially skeptical about developing a robot toy for children like Jady, since he believes nothing can replace the value of human interaction for a child. But as Burne has seen Glus and Jady interact, he has changed his mind.

“The beauty of this is that it takes the adult out of the equation,” Burne said. “That’s what’s exciting to me. It enables the child to dictate how he wants to interact with the toy, instead of relying on an adult’s interpretation of what he wants. The adult can walk away, and the child is still playing.”

For the most part, Jady can only use his left side, but when he plays with Glus, his mother has seen him move his right hand.

“This toy motivates him to try new things,” Arenas said.

ATP is now working with Jady to

adapt and customize a bed to prevent deformity, enhance his physiological needs and help him (and his mother) sleep better. For Arenas, who says that Jady is “her life,” having ATP’s technical expertise and support is life-changing.

“It’s so amazing,” Arenas said. “I just love them.”

When Jady was first diagnosed, the doctors at Children’s Hospital Colorado never told Chelsea Arenas what he would be able to do and not do. They never said to her that he may never walk, talk or feed himself. That, she says, was a “good thing.”

“I have high hopes,” Arenas said. “I’ve



always said he can do what everyone else does.”

That, in a nutshell, is the mission of ATP—allowing all people to “do what everyone else does.” ATP measures success in small victories and large achievements, but they are all human victories.



## RESNA 2015 is Coming to Denver

For the first time since the organization was started back in 1979, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) will hold their annual conference in Denver, Colorado. Their coming to our area provides a great opportunity for people in Colorado and surrounding states to experience this unique professional conference event. The RESNA conference stands as the premier gathering for all people involved in technologies that enhance the independence of people with disabilities.

The annual RESNA conference is a unique, multi-disciplinary gathering of assistive technology

professionals from around the world. No other assistive technology conference strives to cover the entire field. It doesn’t matter whether you specialize in seating and mobility, communication, computer access, universal design, or new technologies - RESNA is the place where you can discover new ideas, network with other professionals and expand your horizons.

Designed by and for people passionate about the use of assistive technology to improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities, RESNA 2015 offers educational sessions, scientific paper sessions, posters, plenary sessions with internationally-recognized speakers and exhibits. The Exhibit Hall of Technologies is free and open to the public. Visit the RESNA website for conference events and registration details - [www.resna.org](http://www.resna.org)



## Say Hello to Our New Staff & Students

ATP is home to some great faculty, University student employees and interns. Check out the bios below to learn more about the new faces around ATP



**Kelly Erickson** is a Professional Research Assistant with Assistive Technology Partners, Department of Bioengineering. Ms. Erickson received her BBA

in Human Resource Management and a BS in Hospitality and Tourism Services from New Mexico State University. She is currently working with the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Advancing Technologies for Adults with Cognitive Impairments (RERC-ATACI) as the Project Coordinator providing administrative, research and project management. For the three years prior to joining ATP, she provided financial, communication and project management support to a HR Consulting firm at Towers Watson in Denver. Additionally, Ms. Erickson brings over twenty years of

management experience to ATP.

**Jorge Alcocer** is an undergraduate student majoring in Biology at the University of Colorado, Denver. Although unsure about his long-term career goal, Jorge plans to attend higher education at a medical campus. He currently works as a student assistant and helps manage the administrative tasks of the ATP clinic.



**Rachel Fry** is a first year graduate student pursuing a MS in Bioengineering and MBA at the University of Colorado Denver. She is completing

her master's project at ATP under the mentorship of Dr. Cathy Bodine. Her project involves using social media concepts to develop a method to easily create and upload work-task sequences for prompting templates and libraries that will help direct warehouse employees. Outside of school and work, Rachel enjoys attending concerts and adventuring outdoors.

**Jacob Melonis** is currently a senior at Highlands Ranch High School. He plans to attend college next fall to major in computer and electrical engineering. He



currently works as the student assistant webmaster for the RERC, ATP and SWAAAC websites. He came to ATP to gain skills in a professional environment and learn valuable experience and



knowledge for his future career.

**Alyssa Sawyer** is a Master's student in Bioengineering currently working as a research student under the mentorship of Dr. Cathy Bodine.

She graduated from the University of Colorado Boulder with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and was interested in Assistive Technology because of its ability to help people with cognitive disabilities complete tasks independently.

## Spring Training & 2015 SWAAAC Summer Symposium

Friday, April 17, SWAAAC presents **Frameworks that Work: Organizing Language and Literacy Instruction for Learners who use AAC**, presented by Michele Boruta. Participants will learn practical frameworks for designing and organizing language and literacy instruction in an AAC classroom. The presentation will be hosted at Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, with distance learning locations in Colorado Springs, Durango, Evanston (Wyoming) Grand Junction and Haxtun. To learn more and register, please visit [www.swaaac.com](http://www.swaaac.com).

The Colorado Department of Education's SWAAAC program and Assistive Technology Partners are also proud to announce open registration for the **2015 SWAAAC Summer Symposium**. The symposium will be held June 8 and 9 at Auraria Higher Education Center in Denver, Colorado. This 2 day conference features workshops with nationally renowned trainers, break-out sessions and roundtable discussions addressing topics related to the academic support needs of students with disability. In addition to the workshops, participants will enjoy a state-of-the-art exhibit hall, lunch and awards ceremony and professional networking.

To learn more about the workshops and to register please visit [www.swaaac.com](http://www.swaaac.com).

