

**Assistive Technology Provided in Home Refurbishing Efforts**

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Over the past four years, IPAT has had the opportunity to work closely with the Rebuilding Together® (RT) affiliate in the Bismarck/Mandan area. Rebuilding Together® is a national nonprofit organization, with the mission of preserving affordable housing. This is accomplished by bringing volunteers and community members together, to rehabilitate homes for those in need, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The overriding goals of RT are to make it possible for homeowners to remain in safe and healthy homes, keep their independence and dignity, and revitalize the community. All home improvements are provided at no cost to the recipient.

The Bismarck/Mandan RT affiliate has been refurbishing homes for ten years. It was during their sixth year that RT board members realized that the individuals whose homes they were improving had needs beyond plumbing and electricity repairs. It was then that IPAT was asked to join the RT efforts to provide assistive technology (AT) expertise to promote in-home personal safety.

Each year, the Bismarck/Mandan RT affiliate selects from a pool of applicants those homes to be refurbished on National Rebuilding Day – held annually on the last Saturday of April. Months before that date, house captains are identified, the individual homes are visited, and a slate of refurbishing needs is drafted. The RT board prioritizes needs by house, approves improvements based on RT guidelines and budget, and the preliminary work begins. This includes lining up volunteers, hosting fund-raisers, finding licensed tradesmen, partnering with agencies or other programs for supplies, and canvassing the community businesses for materials and donations. This is also the time that IPAT does a walk through of each home to identify needed AT for safety and continued aging in place.

During National Rebuilding Day, RT may rewire a home or add a wall switch; IPAT may recommend a wall switch extension handle so that an individual in a wheelchair can use the switch. RT may fix a dripping faucet in the bathroom; IPAT may recommend grab bars, bath chair, a toilevator or hand-held showerhead to promote safety while using the bathroom. RT may replace a front door; IPAT may recommend a lever door handle, extended threshold, off-set hinges, or infrared remote control deadbolt so the person can get in/out of the door.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, eight homes in the Bismarck/Mandan area will be refurbished by RT and their army of over 300 volunteers. Each homeowner will also receive the

AT devices needed. Together, RT and their volunteers will make a difference by creating a safer, healthier home environment, one homeowner at a time.

## **AFFORDABLE BATHROOM ACCESSIBILITY**

Making your bathroom accessible does not have to equal a major re-construction project. There are some simple, affordable changes you can make that may just do the trick! Below is a sampling of these quick, inexpensive fixes, as well as, links to more information, and websites to purchase suggested items. If you have further questions, please give IPAT a call at 1-800-895-4728.

### **Entrance/Doors**

- **Offset Hinges:** These hinges allow a door to be opened completely flush with the wall providing up to 2 more inches.
- **Curtain:** Removing the door and using a curtain can provide access when money is tight.
- **Lever Door Handles:** These handles require a push downward versus the twisting motion of a standard door knob. They come in metal, hard plastic or rubber. Many can fit around an existing door knob.
- **Strap to Close Door:** Attaching a strap to the door handle provides a way for someone to close the door from their wheelchair.

### **Toilet**

- **Raised Toilet Seat:** These can be purchased with and without handles & sit atop the toilet.
- **The Toilevator:** This device raises the entire toilet 14-15 inches and is installed under the stool.

### **Sink**

- **Pipe Drain Covers:** These are plastic or rubber covers that fit over the pipes under the sink to prevent burns and cuts, allowing a person in a wheelchair to get closer to the sink.
- **Long Handled Single Lever Faucet:** Decreases reaching, works well for one-handed users.
- **Automatic Faucet-Infrared:** Turns water on by breaking a light beam – can be hard wired or battery operated.
- **Automatic Faucet-Lever:** Turns water on by touching the rod that has been attached to the faucet with a nozzle replacing the standard aerator.

### **Tub/Shower**

- **Transfer systems:** To go from wheelchair to tub there are; transfer boards, bathing seats with sliding elements, and benches that extend outside the tub.
- **Bath Chairs/Stools:** These come with and without backs and handles, and can be portable or attached to the wall.
- **Handheld Shower:** Reaches where a standard shower cannot.
- **Curved Shower Rod:** Adds space in the shower for maneuverability.

- Wall/Floor Mount Grab Bars
- Portable Grab Bars with Suction Cups
- Non-slip tub decals & rubber bath mats
- Shampoo and soap dispensers

### **Anti-Scald devices**

- Install anti-scald devices to the sink and tub faucets to prevent burns.

### **Grooming Aids**

- Large handled automatic tooth brush
- Flossing sticks with the floss already strung.
- Hair dryer holder
- Long handled hair brush, comb

### **Mirror**

- Magnifying mirror
- Mirror on an arm attached to wall that can be pulled out.

### **Lighting**

- Use non-glare lighting.
- Use a night light to prevent falls.

### **Sources:**

[www.infinitec.org/live/homemodifications/bathrooms.htm](http://www.infinitec.org/live/homemodifications/bathrooms.htm)

[www.catea.gatech.edu](http://www.catea.gatech.edu)

[www.nationalmssociety.org](http://www.nationalmssociety.org)

[www.dynamic-living.com](http://www.dynamic-living.com)

[www.activeforever.com](http://www.activeforever.com)

[www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)

[www.allegromedical.com](http://www.allegromedical.com)

### **Technology Tidbit**

IPAT has once again been awarded a contract to administer the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Service (TEDS) in North Dakota. This program provides specialized telecommunications equipment to qualified state residents who have difficulty using a standard phone. IPAT's contract is with the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Aging Services Division and is funded through a telephone surcharge.

The TEDS program is designed to provide free telephones and needed telephone accessories to meet the needs of people with speech, hearing, or physical impairments, who might otherwise be disadvantaged in their ability to obtain such equipment. If you or someone you know is having trouble hearing, dialing, or answering the phone, call IPAT at 1-800-265-4728 to see if the TEDS program is an option for you. To preview a TEDS application, go to

[www.ndipat.org](http://www.ndipat.org), click on IPAT Services/ Additional Services/Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Services.

## **FUNDING NEWS**

### **Paying the Costs of Home Accessibility**

Unless you're planning major renovation of your current home and you're not afraid of exploring the dizzying maze of state and federal housing rehabilitation programs (e.g., local Community Housing Development Organizations or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency may be a good source for helping you pay for the costs of making your home more safe and comfortable. Their Rehab Accessibility Program (RAP) grants help remove barriers and "turn single or multifamily properties occupied by low-income people with physical disabilities into safe and comfortable homes adapted for their needs."

Grant dollars are available to qualifying homeowners or tenants and may be used for various renovations and improvements such as installation of walk-in or roll-in showers, grab bars, audio and visual smoke detectors, chair lifts, door hardware, widening of doorways, or even building entrance ramps. All items that make living easier and safer for persons with disabilities!

Those eligible for grant funds must have household incomes equal to or less than 80 percent of their county median income, adjusted for family size. Household income level must be proven (certified) at the time of grant application. A maximum of \$4,000 may be awarded with a limit of one grant per single or multi-family property in the calendar year. A minimum 25 percent match is required to be eligible for the program.

Once your application has been approved and your project has been completed, grant funds will be distributed. Scheduling is important – the RAP grant won't provide for reimbursement of any project work before your application has been approved.

For more information contact the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency at (800) 292-8621 or check the following website links:

General information: [www.ndhfa.org/Web\\_Images/rapbrochure.pdf](http://www.ndhfa.org/Web_Images/rapbrochure.pdf)

Grant application: [www.ndhfa.org/Web\\_Images/2008rappacket.pdf](http://www.ndhfa.org/Web_Images/2008rappacket.pdf)

## **CONSUMER CONNECTION**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual AT Expo, held in Fargo, on April 10, 2008, brought both vendors and conference participants together from around the region to explore and

exchange ideas about assistive technology. The event was held at the Ramada Plaza Suites, and provided participants a number of learning options. There were informational sessions in the morning, a time to network and share information over lunch, and an opportunity to discover various assistive technology solutions showcased in the vendor hall during the afternoon and early evening. The 2008 AT Expo had the highest attendance numbers to date – there were 490 participants, and 57 AT device/service vendors. To be part of the action next year, hold April 30, 2009, as the date to increase your knowledge and familiarity with assistive technology by attending the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual AT Expo, in Fargo.





## Equipment Spotlight



### Comfort Duett

This month, the equipment spotlight is focusing on IPAT's newest assistive listening device – the Comfort Duett by Comfort Audio. It is a small, easy to use, rechargeable, personal amplifier, selling for around \$170. It amplifies conversational speech, and with optional kits, amplifies TV, radio, and telephone. The base unit serves as a charger and interface for the TV and telephone. This device, with kits, is ideal for the individual that needs amplification, but their spouse or friends do not. Just plug in the kit's cable and the device amplifies the audio coming from the TV or telephone; pull the Duett out of the base unit and it is now in communicator mode and amplifies all sound sources. The device can function as a t-coil induction receiver and can be used by people with t-coil hearing aids. The Comfort Duett is ideal for increasing hearing capabilities one-on-one, in small groups, in autos, and at church.

For more information on this device please contact the manufacturer at: (310) 945 3048 or visit their website at [comfortaudio.com](http://comfortaudio.com). If you would like to rent this item from the IPAT loan library, please call 1-800-895-4728 or email: [ipatinfo@ndipat.org](mailto:ipatinfo@ndipat.org)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **May 13 – 15, 2008**

Clinical Forum on Mental Health: Turning Knowledge into Practice

Seven Seas Hotel

MANDAN ND

Sponsor: Department of Human Services

Contact: UND 866-579-2663

[www.conted.und.edu/clinicalforum/](http://www.conted.und.edu/clinicalforum/)

**May 14, 2008**

ADA Restoration Forum  
7:00pm – 9:00pm  
Seven Seas Hotel – Fleet Ballroom  
MANDAN ND  
Free & Open to the Public  
Contact: NDDAC 877-766-6907

**May 15, 2008**

Autism Spectrum Disorders  
4:00pm – 6:00pm CST  
TELECONFERENCE - WEBINAR  
Contact: Teri 800-233-1737

**June 5 & 6, 2008**

Autism & PDD: Intervention Strategies  
Jamestown College  
JAMESTOWN ND  
Contact: Julie 800-568-5175 ext. 151