

A Phone for You

Judie Lee, IPAT Executive Director

Is it difficult for you to use a telephone due to a hearing, speech or physical limitation? When a standard phone no longer works for you, it is time to explore a more specialized phone so you can stay in touch with your friends and family, as well as, increase your security and peace of mind. There are many different types of phones that can help you.

A common request is for *amplified* telephones. There are many reasons people lose some of their hearing, including the aging process, making hearing a conversation on the telephone difficult. Amplified phones come with different levels of amplification, up to 60 decibels, and have bright ring flashers and super loud ringers. They work the same way as typical telephones, only louder. The amplification feature can usually be turned down/off so others can use the phone as well.

For the person who can speak but not hear, there is a *voice carry over* phone. The user speaks to the other party but reads their incoming message on a screen that is part of the phone. For the person who cannot speak but can hear, there is a *hearing carry over* phone. The number pad on the phone is used as a keypad to type a message to the person on the other end of the line. Both of these phones place calls through a toll-free relay service. The *TTY* is used by someone who does not speak or hear; their conversations are typed and read. These calls are also placed through the free relay service or can be direct to another TTY.

The *photo phone* works well for people with low vision or memory difficulties. It has memory frames in which you can insert pictures and program a number to coincide with the picture. One touch on the photo dials the number.

The *emergency connect phone* is used for safety purposes. It comes with a wristwatch or pendant style remote control with programmable contact numbers. The numbers are activated by pressing the control button on the remote.

There are amplification devices for *cell phones*. People are also using text messaging instead of voice. We have yet to find a large button, easy to use, amplified cell phone that is available through local service providers, but continue to look.

There are other types of phones that may fit your specific need. For North Dakota residents, the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Service (TEDS) provides these phones free to eligible individuals. TEDS is administered

by IPAT and is funded through a contract with the ND Department of Human Services, Aging Services Division. Call 1-800-265-4728 for more information or visit IPAT Services at www.ndipat.org.

AT for Returning Servicemembers

As long as there have been wars, there have been soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines returning to their families and communities. Sadly, a number of today's servicemembers will return as newly disabled war veterans, due to improvised explosive devices, booby-traps and landmines that permeate their war zones. These wounded and disabled servicemembers will need accommodations for their acquired vision, hearing, dexterity, mobility, speech and/or cognitive disabilities. Assistive technology (AT) is one of the essential accommodations for this population, and yet it is NOT widely recognized or routinely considered when servicemembers begin planning their return to home, school, work and/or community environments.

Returning servicemembers with disabilities need AT devices and services. AT devices will enable them to accomplish everyday tasks, while assisting them in seeing, hearing, moving, speaking and thinking. Devices will be used to gain greater independence and enhance their quality of life. AT services will support them to help select, acquire, or use assistive devices. Such services include functional evaluations, training on devices, product demonstration, and equipment purchasing or leasing.

The types of AT available to improve performance is as unlimited as the imagination. For returning servicemembers, even though a limitation now exists, they can work, play, drive, go to school and live at home again with AT. For example a servicemember with

- the use of only one arm can use a mini keyboard to produce paperwork;
- limited vision can use a screen reader to assist with computer operation;
- a hearing loss can use an alternative telephone to talk with friends and family;
- memory problems can use a personal digital assistant to keep them on track; and/or
- unclear speech can use a speech generating device to communicate.

Being aware of and asking for AT to promote success after injury is the first step. To help you understand the range of AT and identify local resources, connect with IPAT at 1-800-265-4728 or visit www.ndipat.org.

New IPAT Equipment Continued from June 2008:

IPAT recently added the new equipment described below to the Equipment Loan Library and Technology Access Centers. Check our website www.ndipat.org/Equipment to see a complete inventory.

Hearing

Bellman Audio Maxi Digital – an easy-to-use personal listening device with large tactile controls and clear indicators

Vision

MyReader2 – a closed circuit TV magnification system with the additional ability to scan documents or pages from a book into memory, which can then be read using the automatic scrolling feature

Color Mouse USB – this portable magnifier can be plugged into your computer to magnify any hard copy document or page that you choose

Color Detector – this portable color detector works by simply holding it up to any item; the color will be determined and voiced by the device

Note Teller – a portable bank note reader for blind, and visually impaired, it scans and voices the denominations of all old and new designs of U.S. bills

Tap Memo – a pocket-sized digital recorder that includes a voice recognition interface

Sense View – a portable magnification device with a 4.3" LCD widescreen; it displays in full color and magnifies from 4X to 22.5X

Pocket Viewer – a portable magnification device with large tactile buttons, it changes contrast to fit your needs and magnifies up to 7X

I-VU – a portable magnifier with a 2" LCD screen, it fits in the palm of your hand; handy for reading menus, books, bills, seeing pictures, and magnifies 5X to 20X

Learning/Developmental

Classmate Reader – a portable, digital audio book player

Read and Write 8.1 Mobile – a literacy support tool housed on a flash drive; designed to assist users of all ages who require extra assistance when reading or composing text

Health/Safety/Daily Living/Recreation

Voice IR – a voice activated environmental control device; eliminates the need to physically manipulate a control switch

Surfboard Remote Control – a voice activated and standard remote control in one unit; it can be programmed to control your TV, VCR, DVD, and stereo

Bongo Drums Toy – a set of switch activated bongo drums

Happy Feet Walk N' Talk Dancing Mumble – a switch activated dancing penguin

Magic Frog Toy – a switch activated toy that provides tactile feedback

Contact IPAT staff to make arrangements to see and/or try the new equipment.

FUNDING NEWS

Alternative Financial Loan Program

Funding for assistive technology (AT) has been recognized as a significant barrier for individuals with disabilities in acquiring the AT devices and services

they need. Although some types of AT are covered by Medicaid, Medicare, insurance, vocational rehabilitation, and education; other purchases such as computer adaptations, environmental controls, and home/vehicle modifications, may not be covered under any plan. The North Dakota Alternative Financial Loan Program (AFP) is available to help state residents with disabilities or those experiencing the effects of aging obtain assistive technology. It has become an affordable alternative in AT financing for North Dakotans, primarily because of its two major benefits of lower interest rates and flexible repayment terms.

Any North Dakota resident with a disability who needs assistive technology and can demonstrate the ability to repay the loan is eligible. Family members may apply on behalf of children or other family members with disabilities, as long as the device or service is for the person with the disability.

Loans may be used to purchase assistive technology devices and services, including but not limited to: modified vehicles; home modifications; computers and adaptive hardware/software; environmental control devices; communication devices; recreational items and used AT equipment.

The amount of money that can be borrowed ranges from \$500 to \$50,000. A person's ability to repay the amount requested will affect the approval of their loan. The rate changes from time to time, and is approximately 1% under prime (currently the loan rate would be about 4%). Re-payment terms are based on the expected useful life of the assistive technology device.

The AFP is locally administered by the North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) in partnership with Alerus Financial, IPAT and P&A. Please consider using the AFP if you feel a loan would help you purchase needed assistive technology. For more information call 1-800-532-6323 or visit www.ndad.org

CONSUMER CONNECTION

Rescued by the Push of a Button

My name is Paul Orner, and I have a story to tell. I live by myself in an apartment in Carrington, North Dakota. I have neuropathy due to diabetes, which means I don't have feeling in my legs. This limits my getting around, so I use a power chair.

Due to my loss of mobility, I was able to get a specialized telephone through the TEDS program. I learned about this program through Mavis, at the Senior Center here in town. The phone that meets my needs is called the Emergency Connect phone. It comes with a pendant you can wear to call for help.

Just two days after I got my phone, I decided to take a shower. While showering, I accidentally let go of my grab bars, slipped on the soapy surface and fell out of the tub. I landed in such a way that I was wedged between my toilet and the tub. I could not get up. Thankfully, I had worn the emergency pendant that came with

my phone. I pressed the button, and sure enough it automatically called my pastor whose number I had programmed in.

He answered, and I told him what had happened. He came right over, but he couldn't budge me – I'm 6'6" and weigh 250 pounds; so we called the fire department. The firemen arrived and had to remove the toilet to free me, but they got me up. I shudder to think how long I would have lain on my bathroom floor without the emergency connect pendant.

I never take my pendant off. Oftentimes, people ask me what it is for and I tell them my story. To date, I know of 3 other people who now have the same phone I do. For more information about these specialized phones, call IPAT at 1-800-265-4728, I'm sure glad I did.

Paul Orner



EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

FOOTIME Foot Mouse and Programmable Pedal



The device featured in this edition of the equipment spotlight does a good job explaining itself- the Footime foot mouse. The description is simple but the design and functionality of the mouse is anything but. The device comes with a foot platform used to control the mouse movements with one foot, and a pedal used to control the mouse clicks for the other foot.

The foot mouse can be used right out of the box by simply plugging the device into your computer. But the real beauty of the device is the ability to customize the foot mouse for the individual computer applications that you use. For example, when using a word processing program one can customize foot mouse buttons to auto save or print. When using an internet browser those same buttons switch over to being one's go back one page and increase text size buttons. The customizing options available are staggering and the ability to move from program to program with your most used options readily available is a great advantage. The foot mouse is helpful for people that are unable to use their hands to control a standard mouse; and for those with repetitive stress injuries.

For more information on this device please contact the manufacturer at: 626-333-8718 or visit their website at bilila.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

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Conference on Aging & Disability

Life's Your Legacy . . . Live It!

Sept. 23-25, 2008

Ramada Plaza & Suites

Fargo, ND

www.northernplainsconference.com

Communication Partners – Building Social & Communicative Lives for Late Talking Children

Sept. 23 & 24, 2008

Memorial Union – UND

Grand Forks, ND

Contact ACCC – Julie 1-800-568-5175

ND Assoc. for the Education of Young Children Conference

Sept. 26 & 27, 2008

Ramada Plaza & Suites

Fargo, ND

NDAEYC – 1-701-234-0517

26th Annual Closing the Gap Conference

Oct. 16-18, 2008

Bloomington, MN

www.closingthegap.com/conf