

Announcing New AT Grant Program for Individuals
Judie Lee, IPAT Executive Director



The Board of Directors of the Technology Access Foundation (TAF) is pleased to announce their sponsorship of the Technology Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is an exciting new program that has a great deal of AT funding potential for North Dakotans. The Board wishes to provide financial assistance to state residents, who would like to purchase assistive technology devices or services, but have been denied by, or are ineligible for other funding sources. The Board is pursuing avenues to increase the number of grants available, as start-up dollars are limited – but grants are available.

The Facts...

Any North Dakota resident who has an identified disability and would like to purchase assistive technology devices or services, and has been denied or found ineligible for funding from other sources is eligible.

Any assistive technology device or service that meets the federal definitions may be obtained. *“Device...any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” “Service... any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.”*

There are no restrictions on what assistive technology devices(s) can be purchased (or repaired) or services requested. Although there are no specific caps set on the amount you may request, the average award is anticipated to be about \$1000. Funds for payment for the identified devices or services are treated as a grant and are not expected to be repaid.

TAF will partner with other funding entities and/or accept personal sources to help fund the cost of proposed purchases. TAP assistance is viewed as a “last resort” option and it is understood that individuals have thoroughly pursued other means of funding (e.g., private insurance, public funding, or personal savings).

Further information and/or application forms are available by email request to taf@integra.net or by calling the toll free number 800-895-4728.

Freeware as an Assistive Technology Solution

Have you ever wondered if there might be a software program that would make using a computer easier or more efficient, but were wary of making a purchase on a hunch? Did you know that there are software products that may be downloaded and used at no cost called freeware? Freeware provides an opportunity to use software products for an unlimited amount of time, fully and freely. There is a considerable amount freeware for both personal and commercial use available online. To follow are a few freeware programs that are currently available that may be of interest to many.

- **Magnifier: Virtual magnifying glass** <http://magnifier.sourceforge.net/>
A screen magnification program that increases text size from 1X to 16X; allows an individual to magnify any part of the monitor screen.
- **On-screen keyboard: ALS March of Faces** <http://www.march-of-faces.org/resources/vkt.html>
Intended for a person who cannot use a keyboard, this freeware places a keyboard image on the monitor screen.
- **Screen reader: Serotek** <http://www.satogo.com/>
A program to help individuals with difficulty either reading or seeing the information on their monitor screen; it reads the visual information out loud.
- **Text Production: Dasher** <http://www.inference.phy.cam.ac.uk/dasher/>
A unique program that allows a person to produce text by selecting letters and/or words using pointing gestures.
- **Text to speech: Sofotex** http://www.sofotex.com/Free-Natural-Voice-Text-to-Speech-Reader-download_L10611.html
Freeware that allows an individual to have both self-created and webpage documents read aloud.
- **Calculator: Calculate for Free** <http://www.calculateforfree.com/>
A site that provides a range of calculators for individual selection and use.
- **Games: Discover Technology** <http://discovertechnology.com/GameP/gamep.html>
A site listing a variety of games for individual use with many links to other accessible game websites.

These freeware programs are just a few examples of what is available at no cost online. By searching the internet, other freeware programs may be found to fit individual needs making computer use possible or more effective.

Ready, Set, Modify

IPAT is pleased to sponsor a full-day workshop in conjunction with the 6th Annual AT Expo! The topic is home modification, and the workshop will provide participants with a range of solutions to meet both present and future needs of home-owners as they accommodate for disabilities. This hot topic is fast becoming needed information as American “baby-boomers” begin to experience the effects of aging. With the cost of nursing home placements, and the desire of the majority to remain at home throughout their lifespan, this workshop will be of interest and value to all.

Mark your calendar to be in Fargo, at the Ramada Plaza & Suites on April 29, 2009. The workshop, “Accommodating Home Remodeling 101,” will be presented by Diane Sprague, director of the Lifetime Home Project, which is based in Minneapolis, MN and promotes accessible/universal home design and home telehealth technologies for long-term community living.

Watch for registration information on the AT Expo website www.atexpo.org or call toll-free 877-760-2939 for further information.

College Students Learn about AT

Occupational Therapy Aid (OTA) students and their professors from the ND State College of Science (NDSCS) in Wahpeton toured the IPAT Technology Access Center in Fargo. The purpose of the visit was to learn about IPAT services, various types of assistive technology (AT), and how AT devices and services can be used to help the people they will work with in the future. During the session, each student chose a piece of AT to explore and were given an opportunity to ask questions about it. Examples of questions raised were; how to use a digital recorder when taking class notes is difficult, how a locked medication dispenser can help someone with memory loss, and how a hands-free phone can re-connect a person with a severe physical impairment to the world of communication.

According to the NDSCS OTA Fieldwork Coordinator, students had a “great experience” and “really enjoyed themselves”. The Technology Access Center tour was valuable in helping students see the range of AT available, and experience first hand where they can go to get help when an individual they are working with has AT needs.

IPAT extends an invitation to groups big and small to arrange a session at either the Fargo or Bismarck Technology Access Center. Sessions are free and can be tailored to fit your group’s needs. Contact the Fargo TAC 800-18995-4728 or Bismarck TAC 888-540-4728.



FUNDING NEWS

The ALS Association, MN Chapter is Now Serving North Dakotans

Each year, the ALS Association, Minnesota Chapter serves more than 400 people living with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) in: Minnesota; Superior, Wisconsin; and now the entire state of North Dakota. They provide several programs and services to people with ALS and their families at no cost.

The Chapter's *Hrbek-Sing Communication and Assistive Device Program* assists individuals with ALS, who have lost their ability to verbally communicate and/or who are having difficulty using a computer and other electronic devices in their home. The program loans devices and equipment (augmentative communication, computer access, and/or environmental control devices) that are not covered by medical insurance. Insurance is pursued for funding whenever possible, but there will be no out-of-pocket expense to the person with ALS. The equipment is loaned at no charge.

Additional programs offered by the ALS Association include:

- The family respite care program which allows full-time caregivers to receive a much needed break. This program provides up to 24 hours per month of respite.
- The ALS's equipment loan closet provides new and used durable medical equipment to people with ALS.
- The ALS Association also has a volunteer program that matches trained volunteers to help those with ALS and their families with cleaning, errands, and more.

For more information on any of these programs please contact Linda Lorentzen, OTR/L, CAPS, Patient Services Director, The ALS Association, MN Chapter now serving North Dakota, at 1-888-672-0484 or linda@alsmn.org.

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT



Trekker Breeze

This Equipment Spotlight takes a look at a device that puts Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology to use for people disabilities. GPS has been around for many years, it was first developed by the United States Department of Defense as a way to determine current location, time, and velocity. HumanWare™ has taken this technology and made a GPS orientation device, the Trekker Breeze, to make travel easier for individuals with low vision and blindness. This device is designed for traveling in familiar surroundings or on pre-defined routes; it increases confidence and makes learning new routes easier. When walking, users receive audible information, such as street names, intersections and reference landmarks. If lost, a person can retrace their steps. Users can also record routes, and activate them for future use. They can also choose to reach favorite destinations with turn-by-turn audible instructions. For more information on this device please contact the manufacturer at: 1 800 722-3393 or visit their website at www.humanware.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

The Importance of Belonging

February 6, 2009

Doublewood Inn – BISMARCK

Contact: Mary 800-233-1737

The Impact of Trauma on the Developing

Child: Implications for Child, Family and the Community

March 2, 2009

Ramkota Inn – BISMARCK

Contact: 710-223-5707

Health Care in Crisis: Creative Strategies

April 1 -3, 2009

Seven Seas – MANDAN

Contact: 701-777-5380

Accommodating Home Remodeling 101

April 29, 2009

Plaza Inn & Suites – FARGO

Contact – 877-760-2939

www.atexpo.org

6th Annual AT Expo!

April 30, 2009

Plaza Inn & Suites – FARGO

Contact – 877-760-2939

www.atexpo.org