

**AT KEY NEWSLETTER**  
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**Access to Assistive Technology: *Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime!***

*Judie Lee, IPAT Executive Director*

Do parents know what opportunities are available for their young children through the use of AT? Do they know about the tools available to support a learning environment? Do employers in small businesses know about the many types of computer access methods that could help them retain a valued employee who is losing their sight? Do senior citizens understand the many AT options available to help them remain at home safely or continue activities they have enjoyed throughout their life? Members of the national Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) know the answer to these questions is often NO.

To address this lack of AT awareness, ATAP formed a committee to develop information that could be used by all 56 AT programs nationwide. This committee, of which IPAT was a member, identified 10 content areas to develop specific brochures to promote public awareness and AT use. Can AT help with any of the questions posed in paragraph one? The answer is YES to all of them!

**Maintaining Lifestyles As We Age:**

As we grow older, we experience gradual changes in hearing, memory, vision, and mobility; AT can help lessen the impact.

**Staying or Returning Home with AT:**

AT is one of the essential support services, and yet it is NOT widely recognized or routinely considered when people begin planning to stay or return home.

**Home Design for Diverse Populations:**

There is a movement to make homes more flexible to meet people's needs as their lifestyles change.

**Vehicle Modifications:**

Persons with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging may require vehicle modifications to accommodate driving needs.

**AT and the Young Child:**

Children with disabilities may have limited opportunities to independently play and interact, which may result in slower intellectual and social growth; AT can provide these opportunities.

**AT and Education:**

AT offers a means for student success and can make the school setting much less restrictive.

**AT and Transition to Adult Life:**

There are a wide range of AT devices and services available for individuals with disabilities leaving the high school setting.

**AT for Employment:**

It makes good business sense to retain valued employees through AT as they grow older or become disabled.

**Selecting AT:**

Identifies a process to find the “best fit” between person, environment and technology.

### **AT & Emergency Preparedness - Individual Responsibilities:**

Being ready for a disaster is part of maintaining independence and is an individual responsibility.

IPAT is excited to offer free copies of these 10 brochures, to promote the use of AT in each selected area ...call 1-800-895-4728 or e-mail us at [ipatinfo@ndipat.org](mailto:ipatinfo@ndipat.org) to request your copies today.

### **Know Your Housing Options**

North Dakotans are living longer, great news! This has created a need for housing options as we age. What are the housing options available for seniors that will support safe and comfortable living? How do they differ? Have you considered what option might best fit your needs or those of a senior you know?

**Age-Restricted Communities:** also known as "active adult" or "[age] 55+" communities.

There is usually a mix of housing types—single-family homes, townhomes, or apartments.

Active-adult communities are most appropriate for older people who are healthy, independent, and interested in the social benefits of living among peers. Many age-restricted communities don't allow multigenerational living.

**Senior Apartments:** age-restricted apartments are typically available to people age 55 and older. Most often the units are constructed for older adults, so they are often designed to be accessible and include transportation services. Many offer recreational and social services, too.

**Cohousing:** designates "a type of 'intentional neighborhood' in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of the community." In elder or senior cohousing communities, the "intentional community" is only for older people. Homes and facilities are designed for aging in place, and residents often share the cost of health aides or an on-site health-care provider.

**Continuing-Care Retirement Communities:** are facilities that feature independent-living apartments and homes and offer the various social, recreational, and cultural activities of other retirement communities. But they also have assisted-living and nursing-level care. In this "continuum-of-care" system, residents usually enter the facility at the independent-living level. Later, if their health and abilities decline, they can move to the assisted-living tier, and then, if necessary, to the nursing-home tier.

**Assisted Living: provides apartment-style living while offering necessary help.** They provide personal care and support services or help with basic daily activities, such as bathing, dressing, and medication management. They offer meals, activities, housekeeping, transportation, and some level of security.

**Nursing Homes:** are facilities that provide skilled nursing care for people who require it. While the homes have doctors on staff, nursing assistants provide most of the help with basic, daily activities, and nurses direct medical monitoring and intervention when necessary.

If a change in housing is needed, remember to consider your options, visit a number of sites, and don't forget to explore assistive technology (AT) as a means to stay safe and independent as well. Need help in exploring AT options, call IPAT 1-800-895-4728.

*Information from: 'Home is where the Heart Is' AARP, July 2009.*

## **‘An Address for All’ Now a Focus in ND**

The Housing Alliance of North Dakota (HAND) hosted a planning conference, ‘An Address for All’ in Bismarck on Friday, July 24. The 80+ diverse stakeholders present for the daylong event, tackled the challenge of providing affordable, accessible, and safe housing options for all North Dakotans. The focus was on how accessible housing choices and supportive services (which allow individuals who are elderly or who have disabilities to remain in their communities) could be made available to more people in need statewide.

After hearing from others who have made housing with support happen in Tennessee and Illinois, the participants discussed options for North Dakota. Ideas ranged from developing an awareness campaign of housing needs/issues to including assistive technology as part of safe housing options and services. Work groups and next steps were identified to keep the days efforts focused and moving forward. If you are interested in being part of this statewide planning effort, call 800-233-1737 to sign-on.

## **CONSUMER CONNECTION**

### **IPAT is Cleaning House!**

Looking for gently used assistive technology (AT)? IPAT may be able to help. To make room for new equipment, IPAT is giving away AT software/devices that are in working order, but are seldom used or no longer manufactured. Equipment from all assistive technology categories is available such as: augmentative communication, environmental controls, computer access, aids for learning, aids for daily living, vision and hearing. Examples of devices that will be given away are: AlphaTalkers, AlphaSmarts, trackballs, walkie-talkies, switches, emergency dialers, and keyboards. In some cases, kits of items will be given away such as a communication device, with a keyguard, and overlay software, or an adaptive keyboard, overlays and accompanying software.

Look for the items to be given away now and in the coming months on the IPAT website [www.ndipat.org](http://www.ndipat.org) – click on News & Events, or you may call IPAT at 1-800-895-4728. There will be no charge for the listed items; however, shipping of the item will be the recipient’s responsibility.

## **FUNDING NEWS**

### **Safe and Accessible Home Financing Option**

The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Rural Development’s housing program, in North Dakota, has various programs available. The state office in Bismarck (and their seven field offices) has the responsibility of coordinating Federal assistance in rural areas, and work closely with profit and non-profit sectors, along with state, tribal, and local governments to meet rural needs. The following are two examples of Rural Development’s single family housing program offerings.

### **Housing Guaranteed Loans**

Single family housing guaranteed loans are available to credit-worthy applicants. The loans are made by an eligible bank or lender with guarantees by the Rural Housing Service. Loans are available for residents of rural areas and towns with under 25,000 in population. Funds

can be used to build, repair, renovate or relocate a home, or to purchase and prepare sites, including providing water and sewage facilities. Applicants for loans may have an income of up to 115% of the median income for the area. Families must be without adequate housing, but be able to afford the mortgage payments, including taxes and insurance.

### **Home Repair and Rehabilitation Loans and Grants**

These two options are designed to enable very-low-income rural homeowners to remove health and safety hazards in their home and to make homes accessible for people with disabilities. To obtain a loan, homeowner-occupants must be unable to obtain affordable credit elsewhere and must have very low incomes, defined as below 50 percent of the area median income. Rural Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Loans are loans funded directly by the Government.

Rural Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Grants are also funded directly by the Government. Grants are only available to homeowners who are 62 years old or older and cannot repay a Section 504 loan. Funds may only be used for repairs or improvements to remove health and safety hazards, or to complete repairs to make the dwelling accessible for household members with disabilities. The lifetime maximum grant amount is \$7,500.

For more information on these and other options for financing, contact the USDA, Rural Development Housing Program Director at 701-530-2050 or check the following website link: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RHS/common/program\\_info.htm#top](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RHS/common/program_info.htm#top)

### **Safe and Accessible Home Financing Options**

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development's housing program, in North Dakota, has various programs available to aid in the development of rural America. The overall mission of the USDA Rural Development is to improve the quality of life for rural Americans. To accomplish this, North Dakota's state office in Bismarck (and their seven field offices) has the responsibility of coordinating Federal assistance in rural areas of our state. They work closely with profit and non-profit sectors, along with state, tribal, and local governments, to fundamentally change the way in which the Federal government does business. With this new philosophy of public partnership many positive outcomes for rural Americans are occurring daily.

The housing program is divided into two categories: Single Family Housing (SFH) and Multi-Family Housing (MFH). These programs were formerly administered by the Farmers Home Administration. The following is a summary of Rural Development's single family housing program offerings that may be of interest to you as you look to finance accessibility or safety improvements to your existing home or consider the purchase of a new dwelling:

### **Rural Housing Direct Loans**

These loans (commonly referred to as Section 502 Direct Loans) are available to aid low and very-low income rural residents to purchase, construct, repair, or relocate a single family dwelling and related facilities. These government funded loans are typically made with payment assistance depending on the income level. Loans may be made for the market value of the property with improvements. The home must be located in rural areas, or towns

under 20,000 residents, and applicants may obtain 100% financing for their purchase. Applicants must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere, yet have reasonable credit histories.

### **Housing Guaranteed Loans**

Single family housing guaranteed loans are available to credit-worthy applicants. The loans are made by an eligible bank or lender with guarantees by the Rural Housing Service. Loans are available for residents of rural areas and towns with under 25,000 in population. Funds can be used to build, repair, renovate or relocate a home, or to purchase and prepare sites, including providing water and sewage facilities. Applicants for loans may have an income of up to 115% of the median income for the area. Families must be without adequate housing, but be able to afford the mortgage payments, including taxes and insurance.

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For more information contact the USDA, Rural Development Housing Program Director at (701) 701-530-2050 or check the following website link:

Program directory:

[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RHS/common/program\\_info.htm#top](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RHS/common/program_info.htm#top)



### **iScan-MP3**

The iPod has been a worldwide phenomenon for some time. With the iScan-MP3 the disability community now has access too. The iScan-MP3 is an accessory that gives a person with no hand function control of Apple's iPod personal music player.

The iScan-MP3 plugs into the power adapter socket, and using a single switch suited to the individual, all remote control functions specific to the music portion of the iPod are controllable. The iScan-MP3 does not work with all iPod models, check with the manufacturer for specific models.

For more information on this device please contact the manufacturer on their website: [www.tecsol.com.au](http://www.tecsol.com.au) . 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)

### **Mark Your Calendar**

The Northern Plains Conference on Aging & Disability

#### **Resilience and Wisdom through Aging**

September 22-24, 2009

Ramada Plaza Suites

Fargo, ND

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

5<sup>th</sup> Annual Health Fair

**Living in Balance**

September 22, 2009

The Waterford – 1000 West Century Ave.

Bismarck, ND

Lindsey or Autumn 701-323-7000

27<sup>th</sup> Annual AT Conference

**Closing the Gap**

October 13, 14, 2009 Preconference

October 15-17, 2009

Sheraton Bloomington Hotel – Hotel Soffitel

Minneapolis, MN

[www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com) (507) 248-3294