

THE AT KEY: What Next?

Judie Lee, IPAT CEO

The first issue of the AT Key was printed in February 1996. The format has been very consistent. Every issue has a Consumer Connection, funding article, equipment spotlight, and calendar of upcoming events. Over the last 14 years, IPAT has re-evaluated or assessed whether it should continue printing the newsletter. You, the readership, has consistently asked that it continue. Once again IPAT is asking for your input.

It is hard to remember a world without internet access, Google, or commonly used websites. However, that was the world we lived in when IPAT launched the first issue of the AT Key. We have now entered into another era of information dissemination with Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as examples. The electronic world is changing fast with us racing to keep up and asking questions along the way. We are wondering: Should IPAT continue printing the AT Key? Should it be sent via e-mail? Should we be using Facebook for articles? Do readers want us using Twitter?

We NEED to hear from you.

Please let us know of your format preference by October 30, 2010. You can call Connie at 800-265-4728; email crawls@ndipat.org or send comments by mail to: IPAT, 3240 15th St S, Suite B, Fargo, ND 58104. You can help us by letting us know your information dissemination preferences:

I would prefer to continue receiving the printed AT Key.

I would rather have it sent via e-mail.

I would like to see articles on Facebook.

I communicate with Twitter.

Thank you for your help.

Students and Assistive Technology

Do you know a person who is having a hard time keeping up at school? Maybe it is an inability to spell, read with comprehension, or use a computer with a standard keyboard and mouse. Do you know that assistive technology (AT) is redefining what is possible for people with a wide range of cognitive and physical disabilities? Whether AT is used at home, in the classroom, workplace or community, it is helping individuals with disabilities be more independent, self-confident and productive.

As wonderful as AT can be, it is not always easy to learn about and acquire. It takes expertise and persistence to find the correct devices and figure out ways to pay for them. Do you know that children with disabilities who are eligible for special education have a legal right to technology to assist them with learning? Both the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are potentially powerful tools for incorporating assistive technology into the education of students with disabilities. Unfortunately, assistive technology does not become part of a student's special education plan unless parents and teachers are knowledgeable about technology, and know what to do to ensure that AT becomes an integral part of the child's school experience.

How can individuals become more knowledgeable about what AT is available to help a particular child? Parents and teachers can seek the input of professionals in education and medical settings, contact their state Protection and Advocacy Project, connect with other parents, and/or use the expertise of IPAT staff and the devices within their technology access centers. How can they incorporate the use of AT into an IFSP or IEP? Get involved. Ask school personnel if AT has been considered, if so why, when and for what. If not, why not? Request an AT assessment, or have the school explain the process for acquiring AT. As the school year begins, make this the year to explore AT as an avenue for students who may struggle without it.

Learn, Eat and Earn

In an effort to expand knowledge and familiarity with assistive technology, IPAT is going to offer training opportunities in the coming year as a regular component of our AT service delivery model. In recognition of Alzheimer's Awareness Month, the first training will be held in November, and the topic will be 'Assistive Technology for Dementia'. Plan now to join IPAT at the Fargo Technology Access Center over a November noon-hour. IPAT will provide the training, a box-lunch and the chance to earn CEU's. Check our website www.ndipat.org for specifics and registration details after October 1st.

In an effort to be responsive to the AT training needs of the people in North Dakota, please contact IPAT and tell us about the AT training topics you are interested in, and/or training times that would work for you. We welcome your suggestions and will strive to meet the needs expressed, just call 800-265-4728 and provide your input today.

Consumer Connection

Hi, my name is Abe, and I am a person who was injured in an accident in 1996. I am now a person with a disability, specifically a C5-C6 spinal cord injury which has significantly reduced my mobility. I have accomplished many goals over the last 14 years, including finishing a 2 year degree, becoming self-employed and purchasing my condo in 2001. I have had help from special friends, family, agencies and non-profit organizations to make my goals a reality. Most recently I received help from Rebuilding Together of the Greater Bismarck and Mandan area (RT) to make some needed changes to my condo.

Before contacting RT, my condo had a wheelchair accessible shower, leg room under the sinks and a small outdoor ramp at the front door; but I was having trouble in other places. What I needed to have help with were areas in my home that were not working well for me as a person using a wheelchair. These trouble spots included: driving my chair in/out of the condo safely due to the difference in grade between inside and outside; getting out to the patio unharmed due to threshold heights; using my fireplace with a carpeted hearth and the occasional escaping hot ember; driving my chair on carpet; and getting food out of my refrigerator. My care staff was also apprehensive about my ability to call for help once I was in bed.

Rebuilding Together solved these problems for me; they replaced my carpet with laminate flooring. This change has made it easier for me to get around in my wheelchair; plus it provided a bonus I did not expect, much less dust to deal with! The carpeted hearth was replaced with fireproof tile and a fire screen was purchased, decreasing the likelihood of a fire. They built ramps at both the entry door inside the condo and patio doorway, making it much easier to go in and out. The ramps were installed before the laminate, so they are virtually invisible. They installed a slide out shelf in my fridge which makes getting to my food much easier. I also received a safer phone system through IPAT, one I can access remotely with a switch using preprogrammed numbers. The work done has made a big difference for me and makes living in my condo a safer, more independent experience. The modifications were not huge, but their impact has been, thanks to all for the modifications.

Funding News

Alternative Private Resources

FOUNDATIONS A wide variety of national, regional, and local private foundations can be sources of AT funding. The focus of their funding, application procedures, and application response time vary significantly. A good general resource is the **The Foundation Center** in New York City (phone: 212-620-4230 and website: <http://fdncenter.org>). For spinal cord injury try the **Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation** (phone: 800-225-0292 and website: www.christopherreeve.org). For computers there is the **Cristina Foundation** (phone: 203-863-9100 and website: www.cristina.org/contactus.html).

FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICE CLUBS There are numerous organizations and clubs that may provide assistance with the purchase of assistive technology. A personal contact within the group is most helpful; but if you don't personally know someone in the organization, contact the organization's leadership and explain what you are seeking. For vision contact the **Lions Clubs International** (website: www.lionsclubs.org); for speech/hearing, the **Sertoma International** (website: www.sertoma.org); for children with orthopedic needs, the **Shriners International** (website: www.shrinershq.org).

HEALTH AND DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS Health and disability organizations provide different kinds of assistance for obtaining AT devices and services for

individuals with disabilities. Examples: **Alzheimer's Association** (phone: 701-277-9757 and website: www.alz.org); **Arthritis Foundation** (phone: 800-333-1380 and website: www.arthritis.org); **Easter Seals** (phone: 800-247-0698 and website: www.easterseals.com); and, the **North Dakota Association for the Blind** (phone 701-282-4644 and website: www.ndab.org).

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT



Wellness Wizard

No matter what age you are, receiving help to remember important things may be necessary. In this edition of the equipment spotlight we will look at the Wellness Wizard, a device that aids in reminding loved ones of all sorts of important tasks, and also gives peace of mind at the same time.

The Wellness Wizard is a device that is connected to a land-line phone. Once connected, reminders can be recorded to notify the intended recipient of any daily activity that may be needed, e.g. medication, appointments, lock the door at night. When a message is activated it will continue to play until the user presses the large yellow button. If the button isn't pushed within 20 minutes an emergency contact is called automatically. Another great feature is that the reminders can be recorded while using the device or can be done remotely through any telephone. The reminders can be set up to repeat as needed or for a day in the future.

For more information on this device please contact Safety Response Systems at: 973-872-9400 or visit their website at www.safetyandwellness.com. If you would like to rent this item from the IPAT loan library, please call 800-895-4728 or email: ipatinfo@ndipat.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

September 28-30, 2010

Northern Plains Conference on Aging & Disability

Ramada Plaza Suites

Fargo, ND

www.northernplainsconference.com

218.477.5862

October 6-8, 2010

Title I/Special Education Fall Conference

Bismarck Civic Center

Bismarck, ND

jharasym@nd.gov

701.328.1876

October 13-15, 2010

Legion VIII Head Start Conference

Ramada Plaza Suites

Fargo, ND

October 21-23, 2010

Closing the Gap

Minneapolis, MN

www.closingthegap.com

507.248.3294