

Remaining at Home, *Priceless*

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

In August, 2003, IPAT partnered with the Independent Living Centers to implement a 'Real Choice' grant through the Department of Human Services. The grant identified a number of activities to promote living in place or living arrangements other than long term care facilities for North Dakotans. IPAT's role was to help people with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging or long-term illness, explore assistive technology (AT) options which could help them continue to live at home. IPAT was granted funding to provide AT assessments, purchase and set-up AT devices within a designated dollar amount, and deliver the necessary training on the use of the devices for a minimum of 15 individuals. The following is an overview of the AT activities carried out by IPAT under this grant award.

There were 23 people who received AT services through this project. They lived in communities and on farms scattered throughout the state. The individuals had a variety of disabilities and represented a wide range of ages. The cost of the AT equipment purchased to help them to remain in their current setting ranged from \$117 to \$1,687. The time needed to evaluate the individual's needs, set-up the equipment, and train them on its use ranged from 3 hours to 27 hours.

A sample of individual outcomes of the grant activities include: – a spouse, serving as a primary care-giver, can now run errands when needed rather than wait until someone is available to take over care-giver responsibilities, thanks to the peace-of-mind offered by an Emergency Phone Dialer; - a married couple, both wheelchair users, can now safely enter and exit their home, thanks to a ramp; *"We feel so much more independent, we can even get out to empty our own garbage."*; - a single woman, living alone with limited mobility, can now turn on a fan and lights when she needs them rather than waiting for staff, thanks to a remote control and X-10 modules.

Each one of the 23 people served through this project was in jeopardy of having to move to a more restrictive setting because they couldn't do some critical function of daily living in their current home. Each one of them was able to remain living where they wanted to for an average cost of \$1,260. Each one of them avoided or has delayed moving to a more restrictive setting. The average monthly cost of nursing home placement in North Dakota is \$4,000. The availability of the option to choose to remain living at home with AT, *Priceless*.

Blind and Reading Labels

Imagine going to a shopping center, or to a cupboard at home to select groceries, a few CDs, and medications - now imagine doing those same tasks as

a person without vision. According to a Minot resident without vision, it is easy with the aid of a bar code scanning device, the i.d. mate.

She uses it in the grocery store to identify the contents of canned goods, bottles, boxes, and bags before purchase. Once home, she prepares meals independently and without waste by using the scanner to identify the container contents, and then 'reads' the directions on how to cook it provided on the package. *"No more opening a can of peaches when I wanted kidney beans for chili."*, or *"Adding too much water to a rice dish and ending up with an icky rice soup."*

She also finds the i.d. mate a handy laundry tool; scanning it over clothing tags to 'read' the recommended washing instructions. *"It makes doing laundry so much easier and I'm not shrinking my clothes."* Other ways she uses the i.d. mate are: to scan through her mail to identify catalogs and other junk mail to discard, while separating and organizing the mail to keep; scans her CDs to identify the artist rather than playing each CD until the desired artist is found; and scans medication vials to determine contents and dosage. As a person living alone she relies on this AT device to remain organized, independent and safe.

AT Programs Continue to Meet Need

IPAT administers two assistive technology (AT) programs funded by the Aging Services Division, North Dakota Department of Human Services. Both programs provide specific AT devices and services to eligible individuals at no cost to them.

The first is the **Medication Management Program**. This program serves all North Dakota residents who are 60 years or older (not living in a nursing facility) by providing, at no cost to the individual, a medication management device specific to their needs. When needed, training for care givers and individual recipients on how to use the dispenser is provided by IPAT staff. To date, over 300 medication dispensers have been supplied to ND seniors; helping them to take their medication as prescribed by their physician, thus promoting independence and health. Dispensers are just a toll-free phone call away for qualifying individuals, 1-866-265-0450.

The second AT program is the **Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP)**, which provides alternative telephones at no cost to eligible state residents. The purpose of the program is to provide special phones to people with speech, hearing, and physical impairments. Through the TEDP, IPAT sends out a variety of specialized phones and teaches recipients how to use them. To date, over 275 phones have been provided, thus keeping people with a variety of communication difficulties connected to friends, family, and services. Information about alternative telephones and an application to receive one through the TEDP is available by calling toll-free, 1-800-265-4728.

CONSUMER CONNECTION

Another Successful AT Expo!

Thanks to all of the attendees, vendors, presenters, and sponsors, who together made the AT Expo 2005 a resounding success. The second annual AT Expo was held on April 14, at the Civic Center in downtown Fargo and was identified as time well spent for over 35 vendors and 300 attendees!!! See you next year!

FUNDING NEWS

AT Funding for Veterans and Federal Employees

-Information reprinted with permission in edited format from the CAP website:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/cap/index.cfm>

The Department of Defense (DoD) established the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP), in 1990 to eliminate employment barriers for its employees with disabilities. In 2001, CAP was expanded by Congress to serve as the government's centrally funded program to provide assistive technology and services free of charge to Federal agencies that have a partnership agreement with CAP. Since its inception, CAP has filled over 40,000 requests for accommodations for individuals with visual, hearing, dexterity, and cognitive disabilities within DoD and the Federal government.

CAP provides assistive technology and services to people with disabilities, Federal managers, supervisors, IT professionals and returning wounded service members, increasing employment opportunities and access to the information technology environment.

If you have a disability and you are employed by a component of the Department of Defense, or by one of the Federal agencies that has a partnership with CAP, you are eligible to benefit from CAP services. Accommodations are provided to individuals who are blind, have low vision, are deaf, hard of hearing, or have dexterity, communication, cognitive, or learning disabilities.

CAP conducts needs assessments to identify the most appropriate solutions for each individual requesting an accommodation. In addition to providing the accommodation, CAP covers the cost of installation, integration, and training for the assistive technology.

For more information on this program or to obtain an Accommodations and Services Request form, please visit the CAP website:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/cap/index.cfm> or contact:

Michael Young, CAPTEC Manager

703-693-5160 (voice)

703-693-6189 (TTY)

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

Control Your Home with Just One Switch

The Relax 3 from Tash can let you do just that - relax! This device is a programmable remote control that can control up to 4 infrared devices (TV, VCR, CD player, infrared telephone, and DVD player) and 10 X-10 functions (i.e. turn lights on/off). It comes with an infrared telephone which can scan through 10 preset telephone functions, answer, hang-up, directory, down, up, dial, and 5 speed dials.

The Relax 3 is controlled by scanning through the menus with any single switch. This allows an individual with at least one controlled, repeatable voluntary movement (hand, arm, head, chin, leg, foot, etc.) to access to the technology within their home.

The Relax 3 can be viewed at the IPAT Technology Access Center in Fargo. Please call 1-800-265-4728 for more information.

The Relax 3 is also available for a 30 day evaluation period through the TASH, Inc. You can seek out more information on the Relax 3 at their website: http://www.tashinc.com/catalog/env_infrared.html or give them a call at: 1-800-463-5685.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

July 16 & 17, 2005

Escape to the Lake

Adaptive water skiing event – no charge

Lake Nelson, near Center, ND

Contact: North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD)

1-800-532-NDAD (-6323)

October 18 & 19, 2005 Preconference

October 20-22, 2005 Conference

23rd Annual Conference

Closing the Gap

Computer Technology in Special Education & Rehabilitation

Sheraton/Hotel Sofitel – Bloomington, MN

www.closingthegap.com

1-507-248-3294

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Assistive technology devices and services are just a toll-free phone call away.

IPAT Equipment Loan Library

1-800-895-IPAT (-4728) Voice/TTY

Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program

1-800-265-IPAT (-4728) Voice/TTY

Medicine Dispensers & Reminders

1-866-265-0450