

**President Bush's New Freedom Initiative and AT**

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

It is exciting to hear President Bush's commitment within his New Freedom Initiative to increase access to assistive technology (AT) for individuals with disabilities. Significant federal dollars are being put into research and development of assistive technology and AT financial loan programs. These are very critical programs that will help to ensure the technology is developed and funding options are available for individuals wishing to purchase it.

**However**, funding to support activities which bridge the gap between the results of research and the financial lending programs has been overlooked. To date, that conduit has been the assistive technology programs (ATP) located in every state and six territories. IPAT is North Dakota's ATP. These programs are all facing serious reduction in dollars and elimination.

Over the past 10 years, the ATPs have provided AT training and assessments, disseminated information, educated policy makers, advocated for changes, coordinated resources, and supported demonstrations and trial use of equipment for citizens, state agencies, educational institutions, private organizations and businesses. These services have resulted in improved understanding of, access to and acquisition of AT for many individuals.

The job is NOT done. Technology will continue to change, new frontiers will open, BUT the leadership for bringing this technology and information to the general public will be lost if the ATPs go away. Consequently, the President's goal to increase access to assistive and universally designed technologies, "based upon the principle that every American must have the opportunity to participate fully in society", will be hard to meet.

Let's consider the impact as it relates to North Dakota. Without IPAT, who will keep AT on their radar screen 100% of the time to:

- Support the AT Equipment Loan Library so people can have a trial use of equipment before purchasing?
- Provide outreach AT services to North Dakotans living in our rural areas?

- Maintain the expertise needed to provide training and services on a wide range of AT topics for individuals with disabilities, teachers, service providers, employers, and governmental agencies?
- Disseminate the most current and accurate information on a wide range of AT topics in multiple media forms?
- Facilitate the coordination of AT resources amongst and between State human service programs and private entities?

The services provided by the assistive technology programs should not be taken for granted. The first nine states will be eliminated from funding in FY 2002, and because of the close collaboration and networking between ATP programs, we will all feel the loss. The time is now for everyone that depends upon or values these services to educate their federal congressional delegation, as well as, their state and local decision makers.

### **How do you like your information?**

In today's information saturated world, individuals engaged in material development and dissemination need to create products that are both **available and accessible** to the end-user. There is a clear distinction between the availability of information and the accessibility of information. Available information is readily at hand, while accessible information is useable for individuals with and without disabilities. To assure accessibility, consider a variety of end-users during product development and plan for alternative formats accordingly. The most common alternative formats are briefly described below:

**Large Print** -the production of larger-than standard print. Most word processing and software programs offer a choice of font sizes. A font size of 18 point or larger would be considered large print.

**Audio Tape** - the development of an audio recording of the material. A professional narrator is not required, however, having someone with a clear speaking voice who is very familiar with the material is recommended.

**Braille** - a printing and writing system, consisting of raised dots, developed for those with visual impairments. The creation of material in a Braille format is typically done by contracting for the service.

**Diskette, CD-ROM/DVD** - placing the information on a computer diskette or compact disk. This allows for the ready production of materials in a variety of formats to meet the needs of end-users.

**Descriptive Video** - provides an additional synchronized soundtrack about visual events happening in the video, for example, actions, colors, settings, costumes, physical characteristics and body language. Contracted resources typically assist with the production of descriptive video.

**Video Captions** - provide a written form of the spoken word, allowing individuals to read what they cannot hear or understand through auditory channels. Captioning is a service provided by a contractor.

**World Wide Web** - provides on-line access to a variety of materials. To make this an effective communication medium, information accessibility needs to be incorporated throughout the planning and updating of the website.

Remember, information format is determined by individual need, but decisions about the format(s) of the material being produced are the responsibility of the information developer.

### **Additional On-Line Resource**

The North Dakota Senior Info-Line is pleased to announce the launch of their website. It was developed so seniors, family members, professionals and caregivers could readily find information about services available to help seniors and individuals with disabilities live independently. Log on to [www.seniorinfo.com](http://www.seniorinfo.com) today and learn about in-home services, meal services, legal assistance, senior health insurance and more.

### **508 Final Standards Published**

#### **Information obtained from the Access Board Website-**

Under standards published by the Federal Access Board on December 21, 2000, the Federal government will take the lead in ensuring access to electronic and information technology. These standards cover various means of disseminating information via computers, software, and electronic office equipment. They provide criteria that spell out what makes these products accessible to people with disabilities. The Board developed these standards under section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended by Congress in 1998. The law applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use such technology. Federal agencies must ensure that this technology is accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities to the extent it does not pose an "undue burden." The law directed the Board to develop access standards that are to become part of the Federal government's procurement

regulations. At present, the scope of section 508 and the Board's standards are limited to the Federal sector.

Use the following link to view complete or summarized versions of the Final 508 standards: [www.access-board.gov/news/508-final.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/news/508-final.htm) .

## **CONSUMER CONNECTION**

IPAT Publishes New AT Funding Resource for North Dakota

Revised and updated by popular demand, the new AT funding guide, *Assistive Technology Funding Avenues in North Dakota*, is now available. If you or someone you know are interested in learning about how to access the various funding avenues available for assistive technology devices and services this book is for you!

The current document provides descriptions of North Dakota's major assistive technology funding sources. Each section contains a brief overview of the funding source, eligibility criteria which apply at this time, assistive technology funding potential, the application process, the appeals process, and contact information. The sections include: Vocational Rehabilitation, Education, Medicaid, Medicare and Other Health Insurance, Social Security, Veteran's Administration, Alternative Funding Sources and a Directory. With this information, it is anticipated that consumers and their families will more accurately identify appropriate funding streams, will understand the processes involved, and will have resources identified within each area from which to obtain additional information.

This guide has been designed to assist individuals with disabilities and their families in search of funding for assistive technology devices and services. Service providers, advocates, equipment vendors, and others will also find the information helpful. The IPAT staff invite North Dakota residents to request their copy today by calling Connie at 1-800-265-4728 or Sharon at 1-800-472-2911 ~ alternative formats available.

## **FUNDING NEWS**

### **Alternative Funding Sources**

Many times individuals need assistive technology devices, which are typically not covered by more traditional funding sources. These may include adaptive computer equipment, home and vehicle modifications, or environmental controls. The following are some alternative-funding avenues that may help you along the path to successful AT financing:

**North Dakota Association for the Disabled**

The North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) is a nonprofit, charitable organization founded by concerned citizens for the purpose of assisting the mentally and physically disadvantaged within North Dakota, many of whom are not eligible for services from other agencies. Although unable to grant every request, NDAD provides financial assistance in purchasing medically necessary equipment, treatment, and other services. This type of assistance is usually provided as a last resort when there is no other funding available. Call 1-800-247-0698 for further information.

### **Red River AT Key Fund**

**The AT Key Fund provides funds for assistive technology and services (to include assessments) to individuals with a chronic disability (no age limit).** This type of assistance is usually provided as a last resort when there is no other funding available. **Contact Ruth Soderstrom at 1-(701) 235-0971 for application information.**

### **Muscular Dystrophy Family Foundation**

This foundation is available to assist families when dollars are simply not available or sufficient to cover the costs of needed adaptive equipment. Services are available to individuals having a range of neuromuscular diseases, including muscular dystrophy. Contact **1-800-544-1213 for further information.**

*To be continued in the June AT Key*

### **Equipment Spotlight**



**ChatterVox**

One of the newer acquisitions to IPAT's Equipment Loan Library is the ChatterVox, a portable voice amplification system. This augmentative communication device is a compact "waist-pack" style amplifier designed to elevate the vocal output of people with temporary or permanent voice impairments. The objective is to achieve a speech level that is comfortable and effective for everyday communication while reducing vocal stress and strain.

The ChatterVox can boost vocal output by 15dB using its lightweight headset style microphone; an even greater boost can be achieved for esophageal speakers with the unique "transdermal" neck microphone.

It is available from Siemens Hearing Instruments 800-333-9083, starting at \$250 and can be viewed online at [www.luminaud.com](http://www.luminaud.com).

### **Mark Your Calendar**

IPAT EQUIPMENT EXPO!

#### **April 18, 2001**

Student Memorial Ballroom  
North Dakota State University  
Fargo, ND  
8:00 am - 3:00 pm

#### **April 27, 2001**

Memorial Hall  
Devils Lake, ND  
11:00 am - 5 pm  
Call Mike Bishop for details,  
(800) 265-IPAT (2748)

### **AT RELATED EVENTS**

#### **May 4, 2001**

CAMA - AAC Workshop  
Opportunity for hands-on exploration of augmentative communication devices  
Fargo, ND  
1-800-441-2262

#### **May 18 & 19, 2001**

Annual Laryngectomy Conference  
Ramada Plaza Suites  
Fargo, ND  
Herb Monk: 1-218-965-4862

#### **June 11 - 22, 2001**

Magic Mobility Camp

Opportunity for mobility assessment; equipment to try on-site

Sponsor: HOPE

Audience: Individuals from 2 - 18 years living within a 100 mile radius of the Red River Valley

Moorhead, MN

Toll free: 1-866-225-4673

**August 23, 2001**

Information Technology Training

Discover how to design an accessible website, learn about Section 508 Standards

Seven Seas - Mandan ND

Sharon: 1-800-472-2911