

**Front Page**

**The Network of State AT Projects**

**Judie Lee - IPAT Director**

Did you know that every state and six U.S. territories have an equivalent to the IPAT program? These programs are commonly referred to as the State Assistive Technology (AT) Projects, and are the nation's only programs with the single mandate and mission to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the technology devices and services that they need to be independent and productive members of society. No other agencies or organizations duplicate the range of services and supports offered by the State AT Projects as they work closely together to increase AT resources nationwide by sharing products, expertise, and experiences.

Collectively, the State AT Projects have a wealth of knowledge and experience related to the services, supports, and systems that will determine our country's response to some big questions: How do we address the needs and expectations of an aging population? How will people with disabilities who want to work become employed? How do we ensure all children are getting a quality education? How will we ensure that revolutionary new technologies won't in effect, close doors of opportunity rather than open them for some people? In today's world, technology can be part of the answer to each question, and State AT Projects know how to facilitate technology access in ways that are both consumer-responsive and fiscally responsible.

In an average year, the State AT Projects disseminate information to over 2,500,000 people, provide training for approximately 173,000 individuals, provide direct technical assistance and AT services to approximately 82,000 people with disabilities and 5,800 agencies impacting millions. In addition, they are working with over 3,200 public and private agencies to develop and implement strong policies to support the 53,000,000 children and adults with disabilities in their efforts to find, get and use technology as a routine part of their daily lives. The State AT Projects are the critical infrastructure to insure that the rapid advances in technology are not leaving Americans with disabilities behind.

There remains a need in our nation for a program that can cross all disabilities, age lines, and assist with building public and private partnerships that influence AT policy and support ongoing service improvement. The State AT Projects help assure that individuals with

disabilities have access to AT which enables them to learn, work and live independently.

## **AT in the Workplace: Ideas, Solutions & Resources**

An ongoing challenge for making assistive technology solutions in the workplace is to come up with good ideas that match the needs of the situation, yet stay within the parameters of consumer preference, cost, and employer constraints. This matching process is more of an art than pure science. Each workplace situation is unique, however, there is much to be gained by discovering what others have done. To follow are some resources that will allow the reader to learn from the experiences of others.

### Case Examples of Accommodations:

One of the most popular sessions at the annual RESNA Conference is the 'Show and Tell' session sponsored by the Job Accommodations Special Interest Group. The previous two year's case examples are posted at the Tech Connections website. Check out, <http://www.techconnections.org> and look for 'Case Studies' under the Training section.

### Discussion Group:

RESNA sponsors a listserv where rehabilitation professionals can ask their colleagues questions about making and arranging for accommodations. This discussion can be technical at times, but the topics touch on the full spectrum of AT service delivery and funding, as well as specific accommodations and use of existing and emerging technology. This resource is available to anyone who would like to sign-up. To sign-up for this listserv, send an e-mail message consisting of: SUB RESNA firstname lastname (i.e., SUB RESNA JOE SMITH) to [LISTSERV@MAELSTROM.STJOHNS.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@MAELSTROM.STJOHNS.EDU)

### Discussion Boards:

One current discussion board, 'Challenging the Stigma of Assistive Technology,' looks at common misperceptions that surround the use of AT, and the employer's perspective on job accommodations. Visit <http://www.techconnections.org>

## **AT Illustrated and Captioned**

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) announces the availability of a new AT resource, The AT Traveling Picture Show. This highly portable, easy-to-assemble display, features North Dakota

residents, of all ages utilizing assistive technology at home, work, school, and in the community. (see photo)

There are 18 ~ 8X10 photographs with corresponding captions and informational AT blurbs to choose from. All are ready to Velcro onto the display surface and stand that are provided. The photos and layout can be designed to suit the needs of the intended audiences. IPAT staff hopes these pictures are worth 18,000 words and will provide a means for our citizens to discover the power and availability of assistive technology.

If you or your affiliated agency/entity would like to use the 'AT Picture Show' to kick off a new school year, fire-up staff/work group/IPE meeting, spur scouts on, or assist others to think differently, call Connie at 1-800-265-IPAT. The display will be loaned for a one-month period, some assembly is required, and the cost of return is up to the borrower.

### **The Long Arm of IPAT**

Bob Puyear

The intent of this piece is to inform the newsletter readership how well the work of IPAT is known outside our state borders. Pulling this information together has not been an easy task. Those involved in carrying out the mission of IPAT go about it quietly ~ but with a little sleuthing I've discovered a few things to share, remember, Sherlock Holmes, Bob Woodward or Carl Bernstein I'm not!

IPAT is one of 56 state and territorial AT projects. This spring, IPAT was selected by all the other projects to create a national report on the accomplishments of the 56 AT projects. This decision was made based on the quality of IPAT's annual report, which was sent to all AT project directors. This recognition reflects well on our state.

The IPAT staff is frequently asked to present at many national conferences highlighting assistive technology. They have represented North Dakota at national and international conferences in Washington DC, Minnesota, and California ~ just to name a few. Many of the presentations IPAT staff are asked to do are a direct result of publications they have authored which others have noted at their website [www.ndipat.org](http://www.ndipat.org) As a result of their presentations and publications IPAT is looked to for AT leadership and products nationwide. For a group of six, their arm stretches beyond our borders with regularity, and I wanted you to know.

### **Consumer Connection**

Sorting out disability services within a school setting - one scenario

**Question:**

My daughter, Emily, has been diagnosed as having Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD). The speech and language teacher has diagnosed her at her school. Emily is 7 years old. The neurologist has ruled out any attention problems. I have a two part question: What help should I be seeking for Emily at this point and in what way does the American with Disabilities Act affect her?

**Answer:**

It is rare for a child to have only a central processing disorder. Thus, testing for this problem in isolation is not very helpful. Children with this disorder could have a receptive and/or expressive language disability. Or, they might have a language-based learning disability. Further testing will help determine how the central processing disorder is impacting your daughter at school.

The language disability refers to difficulty processing what is heard and difficulty in organizing one's thoughts and finding the right words when speaking. The learning disability refers to problems with reading, organization, and written language (spelling, grammar, punctuation). If the problems are in the language area, help from a speech-language therapist will be of help. If the problems are in the learning area, special education services will help.

So, step one is to decide with the person who did the testing if a more comprehensive language evaluation or educational evaluation is needed. The type of help will depend on what is found. If she has either a learning or language disability, she might be eligible for services under education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, an 'Individual Education Program (IEP) is developed and services plus accommodations are provided. Under IDEA, assistive technology can be listed as a service or as an accommodation.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil law. It requires individuals with a disability to receive the appropriate accommodations (not necessarily services). In public schools, the ADA leads to a '504 Plan.' In the plan, accommodations are provided. Within a '504 Plan', assistive technology would be identified as an accommodation. Dr. Larry Silver - LD Online

**FUNDING NEWS****Medicare and AAC Devices**

Change in Medicare policy has resulted in funding for alternative/augmentative communication (AAC) devices. Effective January 1, 2001, under the new ruling, Medicare redefines communication devices or "speech generating devices" (SGDs) as "durable medical equipment". Persons who qualify for coverage of SGDs must meet the following criteria:

- The patient must be enrolled in Medicare Part B and must not live in a skilled nursing facility.
- The patient must have a formal evaluation of his/her cognitive and language abilities by a speech-language pathologist (SLP). The SLP must hold a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) from the American Speech and Hearing Association.
- The patient's medical condition results in a severe expressive speech disability where he/she cannot use natural communication to speak.
- Other forms of treatment were considered and ruled out.
- The patient's speech disability will benefit from the device ordered.
- A copy of the SLP's written evaluation and recommendation has been forwarded to the patient's treating physician **prior** to ordering the device.
- The SLP who performs the evaluation may not be an employee or have a financial relationship with the supplier of the device.

Under the new Medicare regulations, coverage will be limited to dedicated devices, and accessories such as wheelchair mounts, used for the sole purpose of communication. Medicare will not pay for a non-dedicated device such as a personal computer. However, they will cover speech generating software programs. Medicare will also subsidize SLP services for AAC assessment and training.

For more information regarding eligibility, covered SGDs, assessment/application protocols, sample reports, and continuing education opportunities, visit

[www.aac-rerc.org/medicare.asp](http://www.aac-rerc.org/medicare.asp) or call 1-800-265-IPAT.

## **EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT**

### **TalkTrac™ Wearable Communicator**

The TalkTrac® is a four message communication aid that worn on the wrist, and is appropriate for individuals with communication needs who can activate a ½" target area. The recorded message plays when the message location activated. The TalkTrac is compatible with the Mayer-Johnson® Boardmaker overlay package. Remember, it is



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important to always pair a symbol with a message.

The TalkTrac® includes an adjustable wristband, AC battery charger (charge overnight once a week), fast start programming overlay, two ready-made symbol overlays and two blank overlays.

The IPAT Equipment Loan Library has the TalkTrac® available for loan 1-800-421-1181. Or, this new item can be purchased from AbleNet, Inc, 1-800-322-0956, [www.ablenetinc.com](http://www.ablenetinc.com), for \$64.99.

## **Mark Your Calendar**

August 23, 2001

### **Accessibility in the Digital Age: Electronic & Information Technology Standards & Website Design**

8AM - 5PM  
Seven Seas - Mandan, ND  
Sharon: 1-800-472-2911

Promoting self-managed human service employees

9:30AM - 3PM  
Sept. 19 Fargo, Expressway Inn  
Sept. 20 Grand Forks, Bremer Bank  
Sept. 21 Minot, Holiday Inn  
Sept. 22 Bismarck, Comfort Inn  
Mary Mercer - (701) 858-3047

October 18-20, 2001

### **Closing the Gap - Computer Technology in Special Education & Rehabilitation**

Radisson Hotel South & Hotel Sofitel  
Mpls, MN  
(507) 2468-3294 or [www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com)

October 21 & 22, 2001

### **Innovation in Practice: The Best of Environmental Access**

Ernst Morial Convention Center  
New Orleans, LA  
[www.primeinc.cc](http://www.primeinc.cc)

**Congratulations to the 25 participants selected to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> AT-Leadership Training Institute (AT-LTI)! See you in Medora, ND, September 25-28, 2001.**