

What AT Challenges Remain

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

North Dakota has made significant progress in efforts to increase knowledge of, access to, and funding for assistive technology for individuals with disabilities in the past five years. As congressional representatives consider future legislation they are not only asking state "Tech Act" projects for outcomes within their states but also to describe what challenges remain to individuals seeking the assistive technology they need to work, learn and participate in their community. It is a good time to inventory "What Challenges Remain" in North Dakota.

Barriers to funding are on-going, there is still a need for increased awareness of AT solutions, and the demand for more trained AT service providers outstrips the supply. Due to the ruralness of North Dakota rigorous outreach activities will always be required to reach the majority of our population.

The increasing number of elderly persons in ND are only beginning to discover the opportunities for home and environmental modifications. The telecommunications and information infrastructure will require ongoing technical assistance to assure that newly evolving technologies and services are integrated, available and accessible to ALL persons, industries, employers and users.

Healthcare systems such as Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance are increasingly shifting and using managed care groups to provide care. Policies must be revisited and revised to assure appropriate selection as well as cost-effective funding of medically related assistive technology devices and services.

Assistive technology has been incorporated into multiple federal disability-related statutes, including: the Tech Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act; the re-authorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Rehabilitation Act. This has increased the need for technical assistance and the provision of accurate, accessible information so individuals with disabilities are able to maximize their educational and employment opportunities.

As technology continues to advance there is an increasing need in North Dakota for a consumer responsive system to keep pace with new technologies and be the radar system to signal potential barriers and/or

remove existing ones to accessing these new technologies. There remains a need in North Dakota for a program that can cross all disabilities, age lines, and assist with building public and private partnerships that influence policy and support ongoing system improvement. This assures that individuals with all types of disabilities and of all ages have access to assistive technology which enables them to learn, work and live independently.

Fishing Is Fun for ALL

Fishing is one of the many recreational activities that can be adapted to meet the needs of an individual with disabilities. There is a variety of alternative fishing equipment available including; rods, reels, rod holders and specialized tackle.

Electric and/or electronic reels can be activated using one-hand fingertip control, remote single-switch or joystick activation. You still set the drag, play the fish and experience the feel of the fight. Used with the proper rod holder and/or mechanical casting device, the person fishing can cast (limited use of one arm is needed), and retrieve by activating a switch.

Special tackle is available including; no-knots fishing hooks, line threaders, fish grapplers, cuffed cutting tools and even a motorized battery operated bobber. The bobber allows an individual to direct the bait to any location without casting.

Getting the fishing equipment is one part of preparing of a fishing trip, finding a spot where the fish are biting is another. The following State Parks are accessible: Lake Metigoshe State Park near Bottineau; Fort Stevenson State Park near Garrison; and Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park near Mandan. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is also compiling a listing of accessible fishing sites.

For more information contact the AT Info-Line at 888-214-2780. To borrow adapted fishing gear call the IPAT Equipment Loan Library at 1-800421-1181.

Planning Accessible Libraries

This article is intended as a practical guide for individuals given the task of making library environments more accessible to people with disabilities. Assistive technology (AT) is the basis of accessibility, but knowing what to choose can be overwhelming. Selecting a broad spectrum of AT accommodations ensures that the needs of the majority are most likely to be met. For this reason, the following eight categories for choosing AT access aids are provided.

- **Alternative Formats:** print materials presented on cassette or on computer disk, in Braille or in large-print, real-time captioning at meetings, captioned videocassettes, and descriptive video.
- **Personal Support:** readers, personal care attendants, sign language and oral interpreters.
- **Transportation Services:** various means to bring people to the library or the library to the people. Book delivery, bookmobile services, bus or taxi service.
- **Environmental Adaptations:** special lighting, desk lamps, quiet zones and air purifiers.
- **Building Modifications:** wheelchair ramps, lowered elevator control panels, automatic doors, accessible bathrooms, and high-visibility signage.
- **Adapted Furniture:** wheelchair accessible stations, adjustable office chairs, keyboard trays and articulating monitor arms.
- **Low-tech Solutions:** book holders, magnifying glass, reacher, tape recorders, easy-grip pens, walker with book basket and in-line telephone amplifiers.
- **High-tech solutions:** usually computer-based. May include text enlarging software, Braille output, text-to-speech software, adapted keyboards and pointing devices and environmental control units.

When planning for all library patrons, it is important to remember that assistive technology is not the goal, the goal is accessibility. The accessibility of your library will not be judged by the sophistication of the assistive technologies you have, but rather the meaningfulness of the assistive technology you offer to the patrons you serve.

from "The Adaptable Approach" Alan Cantor; 1995

Consumer Connection

Dear Karen,

My thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to procure the wonderful Amigo for me!

I am sure that I will travel many more miles of 'adventures' thanks to my new 3-wheeler.

It was truly amazing to see how everything worked out so quickly to bring all the loose ends together. Praise the Lord! (It seemed a true gift from providence. God does state that he knows our needs, Matt. 6:8; and He is supplying answers even before we ask, Phil. 4:19).

Yours Truly,
Ruth Klemz

PS

I plan to ride the Amigo in the Lehr Centennial parade on June 26.

Sometimes plans come together so smoothly that it seems a greater force has assisted in the process. This was truly the case in connecting Ruth Klemz with her Amigo. Ruth has Multiple Sclerosis and tires easily when walking. She called the AT Info-Line in April looking for a walker and verbally dreaming of someday owning a scooter.

Two days later; a scooter was donated to the Easter Seals Society of Mandan. They contacted the AT Info-Line, who then organized repair work for the cost of parts plus freight through Great Plains Rehabilitation of Bismarck, and transport of the scooter to *Jamestown via the Adaptive Equipment Services out of Grafton.*

Through each person/agency giving a little bit, Ruth received a lot. Continued teamwork like this will help meet the AT needs of North Dakotans. If you have used equipment that could be recycled through resale or donation, call the AT Info-Line at 1-888-21~2780. You too *can make a difference in someone's life, someone like Ruth.*

Funding News

AT Financial Loan Program Begins

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) and the North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) are pleased to announce the establishment of North Dakota's Assistive Technology Financial Loan Program. This program, which is modeled after similar programs in other states, makes unsecured personal loans available through First National Bank for the purchase of assistive technology devices needed to increase an individual's independence and level of participation.

There are no minimum or maximum income eligibility requirements, however, applicants must demonstrate their ability to repay the loan. As the loans are repaid, funds will be available to lend to others.

Any North Dakota resident who has or is a family member of someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities is eligible to apply for a loan through this program. Currently, interested individuals may contact the AT Info-Line

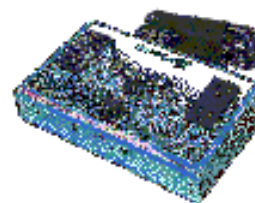
888-214-2780, NDAD 701-775-5577 or the IPAT office 800-2654728 to obtain initial loan application forms.

Equipment Spotlight

PowerLink2

The PowerLink2 offers another way to operate lamps, blenders, fans and other electrical devices. This simple to use control unit allows access to everyday appliances through a single-switch. Just plug the PowerLink2 into an electrical outlet, and the electrical device and single-switch into the PowerLink2.

The PL2 operates in two distinct ways. Direct mode keeps the appliance "on" as long as the switch is activated. This is good for operating devices you do not want left on for long periods of time, blenders, mixers, or electric pencil sharpeners. Latch mode uses one hit of the switch to turn a device "on", and the second hit of the switch turns the device "off." This is effective for appliances you want left on for long periods of time, lamps, fans or radios. Both modes can use the built in timed feature as well, allowing activation from 1 second to 1 hour. The PL2 is available for free trial use through the IPAT Equipment Loan Library and may be purchased from AbleNet, Inc. 1-800-322-0956. Base Cost \$159.



Mark Your Calendar!

June 8-11, 1998
Teaching & Technology
Bismarck, ND
1-800-852-5685

June 23, 1998
Team Approach to Community
Based Services for Young Children
Mandan, ND
Jody (701) 328-1711

June 25-27, 1998
INSITE Training
Minot, ND
Connie 1-800-233-1737

June 25-30, 1998
RESNA

Mpls., MN
(703) 524-6686

July 21 & 22, 1998
Turtle Mt. Wellness Days
Belcourt, ND
Grace (701) 477-6111 ext. 176

July 30, 1998
IPAT Senior Booth
Minot State Fair

Aug. 19-21
Independent Living Conf.
Fargo, ND
Options (218) 773-6100

Thanks to all who participated in the AT Public Forum activities. Your input is appreciated and valued. IPAT Staff