

Public and Private Sectors Link to Advance AT

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

Assistive Technology (AT) has the potential to positively impact every individual with a disability. Various agencies representing populations of all ages and with all types of disabilities recognize their common responsibility for the provision of assistive technology devices and services. They are also finding they have common needs as they prepare to meet this responsibility.

As a proactive response to this common responsibility, a group of individuals representing a number of agencies and organizations have formed an assistive technology coalition. The name of this new alliance is Partnerships for Assistive Technology (PAT). The **mission** of Partnerships for Assistive Technology is to advance the use of assistive technology by developing resources and promoting partnerships within and between public and private sectors in North Dakota.

PAT has identified two major goals:

- To promote awareness of assistive technology throughout the state and
- To promote interagency collaboration to address systems change issues surrounding the advancement of assistive technology.

Activities supporting the PAT goals will be designed and carried out through collaborative efforts of the PAT members. Several exciting possibilities are being investigated at this time and information will be provided as it becomes available.

Broad-based membership representing a large segment of the population is sought. To date membership includes: Vocational Rehabilitation, North Dakota Center for People with Disabilities, Anne Carlsen Center, Adaptive Equipment Lab, Interagency Program for Assistive Technology, Lt. Governor's Office, Independent Living Council, IPAT Consumer Advisory Committee, Aging Services, Protection and Advocacy, ADA Coordinator, and Developmental Disabilities Unit.

Equipment Expo! Update & Invitations

The **IPAT Equipment Expo!** has visited each of the eight human service center regions. It has provided an opportunity for 536 individuals to

explore simple to complex assistive technology devices in the areas of; adaptive living aids/environmental controls, augmentative communication and adaptive computer access. The **Expo!** is designed for everyone interested in gadgets, doodads, computers and other technology used by people with disabilities. Senior citizens, people with disabilities, parents, family members, educators, service providers, advocates and employers are encouraged to consider hosting an **Expo!**

Requests are now being accepted from individuals and/or entities who would like to host the **IPAT Equipment Expo!** in their area. In order to host an **Expo!** the entity must secure an accessible site, guarantee at least 30 participants, publicize the event with flyers supplied by IPAT, identify a contact person, and provide on-site assistance.

If you are interested in hosting an **Equipment Expo!** in partnership with IPAT, call 1-800-265-4728 (-IPAT) and ask for Mike Bishop.

Consumer Connection

Introducing "[Doodads, Gadgets & Thingamajigs](#)" the latest IPAT resource highlighting simple tools for senior citizens. If you or someone you know are interested in making daily tasks easier, this is the book for you!

A few excerpts from the book's introduction to:

Whet your appetite I used to think nothing of opening three cereal boxes every morning as each of our kids had a different favorite. With my arthritis, even one was a chore. Now I have a little plastic doodad that makes opening boxes, even for the first time, easy as pie.

Get you moving Margaret has a new walker with skis on the front legs and wheels on the back so it can go easily from tile to carpet. It also has a basket for carrying her knitting, a tray and cup holder so she's never without her coffee, and it even has a fold out seat when she needs a rest.

Keep you healthy One of Richard's biggest problems is that he forgets to take his medication. We saw a special pillbox with an alarm so we got him one. His healthcare worker fills it each time she visits. Richard has been feeling much better ever since.

Put this book of simple tools at your fingertips: Call 1-800-265-4728 (-IPAT) today and request your **free** copy of "Doodads, Gadgets & Thingamajigs" - alternate formats are available.

Tax Provisions for Assistive Technology

The means to obtain assistive technology for people with disabilities can be improved through the use of tax advantages. The most common and flexible deductions impacting people with disabilities are those available to all taxpayers; deductions for medical, dental or other health care expenses and miscellaneous work expenses. AT is deductible under the definition of medical care which includes amounts paid "for the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of disease or for the purpose of affecting any structure or function of the body." This definition, therefore, has significant potential for people with disabilities who use assistive technology.

Other tax provisions enable individuals with disabilities who are employed to deduct work related expenses, i.e., assistive technology, from their gross incomes when it is needed to maintain employment. Another tax advantage is available as a tax credit when, the expenses incurred by a taxpayer for the care of a dependent who has one or more disabilities, frees the taxpayer to work.

Initial areas to investigate and/or discuss with your tax preparer include:

- Medical Care Expense Deductions
- Credit for Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal
- Targeted Tax Credits
- ADA Credit for Small Businesses
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996

These and other tax advantages are available which may off-set some or all of the costs of assistive technology for people with disabilities, their families, and their employers.

For further information, contact the Internal Revenue Service or discuss these options with your tax preparer. An excellent resource to assist in personal pursuit of tax options is *Tax Options and Strategies for People with Disabilities*, by Steve Mendelsohn. To obtain a copy contact: Demos Publications - 386 Park Avenue South, Suite 101 - New York, NY 10016 (212) 683-0072.

Equipment Spotlight

If you, or someone you know, find cycling difficult or impossible the IPAT Equipment Loan Library may have a cycling solution for you - **STEP 'N GO**. This unique cycle is propelled by two treadles, with flat nonslip

'stepper pads' that the rider stands on. Riders operate the cycle by shifting their weight side to side. The treadles are connected and as one leg pushes down the other is automatically lifted up. The cycle has two wheels up front and one in back for optimal balance and steering. Because the cycle is ridden standing up, everyone's feet reach the treadles eliminating the need for complicated sizing and measuring. The standard steering column and handlebars can be adjusted up and down to fit riders from four to six feet tall. Step 'N Go has been successfully ridden by people with; cerebral palsy, arthrogyrosis, stroke, spine bifida, arthritis and other conditions that limit the range of motion of the lower extremities. So, for fun, fitness and freedom try the Step 'N Go.

Due to the nature of this device, the loan must be overseen by an individual certified to address mobility needs. So have your physical therapist (PT) or occupational therapist (OT) call 1-800-421-1181 to set up a loan.

If you need more information call 1-800-265-4728 (-IPAT) and request the video and literature on the Step 'N Go, or call the company directly 1-800-648-7335.

Used AT Equipment Devices

Looking for an assistive technology device? Make it a habit to check out the IPAT Used Equipment Bulletin Board first the device you are searching for may be as close as your phone! Call 1-888-265-4728 to discover what is for sale, swap or giveaway.