Assistive Technology NEWS

From the Director's Chair - *Jill Pleasant, MA, OTR/L*

The "Rs" of Assistive Technology

Recycled, **r**eused, **r**eutilized, **r**epurposed… all meaningful words in assistive technology jargon, but they apply to people as well as equipment. As the former AzTAP director, I wrote (what I thought would be) my last column for this newsletter in the spring of 2008. As it turns out, it would not be the final one; five years later I am back at my former AzTAP desk. Life presents surprising twists, unexpected roadblocks as well as fresh opportunities. I consider myself very fortunate to be given the opportunity to rejoin AzTAP once again as the program director – **r**ecycled, **r**epurposed and **r**e-energized!

Some things have stayed the same and I am very pleased to be able to work with the AzTAP team. What also remains constant is AzTAP's commitment to providing high quality comprehensive assistive technology services that make a difference for people with disabilities in Arizona. But there have been changes too. Randy Collins retired as Program Director last September and Pamela Self retired in January after more than 20 years of service to NAU. We wish them well in their new chapters of life. Martha Lewis is now a Program Associate and new to the front desk is Adi Kalika as Administrative Assistant (long-term temp). The AzTAP office is larger than it was in 2008 with an AT Lab, dedicated device storage space and a designated training and conference room. We are **r**e-invigorating AzTAP in other ways:

- **Resort Location for the Assistive Technology Conference**

We are hard at work planning our annual summer conference, *Assistive Technology: Catch the Wave.* It will take place July 8-9 at the Arizona Grand Resort in Phoenix (read the complete article).

- **Redesigned Newsletter**

We are planning to publish this newsletter on a **r**egular schedule with a **r**edirected focus on successful consumer outcomes. We want readers to understand how AzTAP's services positively affect persons with disabilities and service providers.

- **Recreating a Better Website**

We have had some serious problems with the AzTAP website, but we are making its **r**epair a priority and expect to have a new look and improved functionality in the next 2 -3 months. Please check the site periodically at www.aztap.org to see the progress we are making.

- **Required Activities**

As you will read in the following articles, we have lots of exciting things going on with our device loan, device demonstration, equipment exchange and training activities. Don't forget - our financial loan programs make purchasing assistive technology more affordable.

AzTAP Client Corner… Meet Mario

Mario sustained a high level Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) in 2009. This injury resulted in Mario being completely paralyzed below the neck and dependent on a ventilator for breathing. After his injury Mario was referred to the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) by his care center Social Worker for a consultation regarding Assistive Technology (AT) for computer and telephone access as well as environmental control capabilities. Mario had limited experience using a computer system and was not familiar with AT that would allow him to independently access and use these electronic devices.

After an initial consultation regarding his needs and goals, AzTAP set up an AT demonstration with Mario where he had an opportunity to try a switch and voice controlled Electronic Aid for Daily Living or EADL system (also known as an ECU system), voice recognition software and eye gaze hardware for computer access. Following this demonstration and a discussion of device features and the pros/cons of each system, AzTAP connected Mario with vendor representatives that were able to provide additional information about their products. As a result of this exploration, Mario chose a laptop computer system equipped with voice recognition

software, an eye gaze component for mouse pointer control, a head positioned switch for mouse clicks, a powerful on screen typing program and a rolling, over the bed/wheelchair mount to position the system for access. For the telephone, Mario opted to use the Internet with Skype as his method of making and receiving phone calls.

AzTAP assisted Mario with investigating, applying for and coordinating funding for the above system from three different sources. While this was being undertaken, AzTAP was able to provide Mario with a basic switch controlled EADL device on long term loan that he could use to control the television in his room. Once his new system was purchased, delivered and implemented, Mario set to work learning how to use it. With support from AzTAP and the vendor reps, he learned and developed the skills to use the system to send and receive emails, browse the web and make/receive phone calls online using Skype, as well as to use it to control his television, his hospital bed and the nurse call button.

Mario is interested in the developments and treatments available to persons with SCI. Specifically; he was most interested in advances being made in technology that would allow him to regain his ability to breathe on his own. Now that he had the ability to access and control a computer, Mario was able to independently do online research on this topic. During his research, Mario came across a YouTube video about a Diaphragmatic Pacemaker. This is an implantable device that allows a person without control of their diaphragm to be able to breathe on their own.   Mario was intrigued by this device and its possible potential for him so he discussed it with his Pulmonologist. His Pulmonologist brought in a cardiothoracic surgeon for a consult and they both agreed that Mario would be a candidate. Last year Mario became the first Arizona recipient of this style of pacemaker. Mario is now able to spend extended time each day off the ventilator breathing on his own.   Mario's computer, and his independent ability to access it, was instrumental in his learning about the pacemaker.

As a final step in the implementation of his computer and EADL system, Mario is preparing to train and learn how to use voice recognition software to enhance his ability to type. As Mario moves forward with his life, he is interested in using his computer system to go back to school and to possibly becoming a peer mentor to other young adults with newly acquired SCI's. AzTAP has been proud to work with Mario to assist and support him in investigating, obtaining and implementing the AT that he has used to improve his independence and quality of life. – *Clayton Guffey, ATP*

Arizona Loan$ for Assistive Technology (AzLAT) and SEED Loan$ - AzTAP's Best Kept Secret

Lending money to qualified individuals with disabilities so that they can purchase assistive technology (AT) is the goal of our two financial loan programs – AzLAT and SEED Loan$. AzLAT financing focuses on AT for mobility, independent living, home or vehicle modifications, education, communication, etc., while SEED Loan$ target assistive technology and other equipment that will support the individual's efforts to get or keep a job or even become self-employed. Both programs have a similar application process and applicants must demonstrate that they can repay the loan in a timely manner. Over the years we have loaned almost $200,000 at very low interest rates to more than 75 people. We have the capacity to make many more loans and we don't want it to be a secret. If you have an interest or know of someone who might want to take advantage of this program, please contact Martha at 602.776.4670 or Martha.lewis@nau.edu. Information is also available on our website at www.aztap.org.

Sharing Our Space

Need space to hold an AT evaluation, product demonstration, small group training or meeting? AzTAP's AT Lab and Conference Room are available by reservation to service providers, vendors of AT products and services and nonprofit groups for assistive technology and/or

disability related needs. Please call 602.728.9534 for more information.

The AzTAP QR Code.

What is a QR code? A Quick Response or QR code is a two dimensional bar code that can be scanned to transmit a variety of information about a topic or item or organization. A number of QR code apps are available for iPhone, Android or Blackberry smartphones. Once installed on your smartphone, use your QR code app to scan the above code to link to AzTAP's home webpage. Bookmark our home page in your web browser's "Favorites" for easy and quick access to info about AzTAP programs and services for you or your clients.

DID YOU KNOW ?

AzTAP provides Assistive Technology Reutilization and *Reuse* services? AzTAP hosts the **Arizona Assistive Technology Exchange** which is an online forum for the community to buy, sell or donate used or pre-owned Assistive Technology (AT) and Durable Medical Equipment (DME) items. As an extension of this program, AzTAP also recently launched a webpage for the Arizona Assistive Technology & Durable Medical Equipment Reuse Coalition. This is a listing of participating Medical Equipment Loan/Reuse programs. Each listing relays the programs' eligibility requirements, services guidelines, type of AT/DME Reuse activities they provide, and the types of equipment they typically manage. Watch as this page grows and develops. Please check out these pages at www.AzATEXchange.org and www.AzATReuse.org.

Training Notes - Assistive Technology Training for Educators

It is important for educators to understand assistive technology products and services because school districts have a legal responsibility to provide such services to students when the need for AT is documented on a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). While we believe it is essential for educators to

have an understanding of the AT services available to assist them as they start their careers, this type of knowledge has often received scant attention in teacher preparation programs.

Assistive technology (AT) training has always

been a service provided by AzTAP anywhere throughout the state. One example of this is an effort that began several years ago as a presentation for one ASU education class and has now evolved into an ongoing introductory training program for pre-service education students. Initially, one professor would borrow equipment from AzTAP to enrich her lecture on assistive technology for her future special education teachers. As time passed, AzTAP staff members would take the equipment to the classroom and present on assistive technology for one hour. The next change happened when AzTAP began collaborating with the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Exceptional Student Services. One of their employees teamed up with AzTAP to provide the training. This is a natural partnership, as ADE also provides AT services to educators.

Content covered in the presentation includes the legal aspects of assistive technology and services available to educators through both AzTAP and ADE. We also explain a framework for AT consideration and the continuum of AT from low to high tech. Presenters give demonstrations of several popular AT products and then a hands-on activity is conducted. During the activity, the students are divided into small groups and receive "AT Kits" containing different examples of assistive technology. After the groups have had a chance to explore the kits, one person reports back to the class on the group's favorite product and answers questions about the how the tool can be used.

As professors began to share information about the trainings with their colleagues, more people began to ask for the presentation. In the past couple of years, AzTAP has had requests from general, as well as special education professors and dual certificate classes. In the fall of 2012, this program was presented to seven classes. In the spring of 2013, nine more presentations are scheduled. While this particular presentation focuses on the pre K-12 educator and is available for any educational institution, the focus can be changed as

needed for the audience. Presentations have also been given to nursing students, engineering students and other service professionals. Please contact AzTAP if you would like more information or want a presentation tailored to your organization's needs. Training can be conducted in our offices or on site at your facility.

Have an Assistive Technology Related Question or Need?
Reach out to an AzTAP AT Specialist by calling 602.728.9534, 1.800.477.9921 or by email at AskAzTAP@nau.edu.
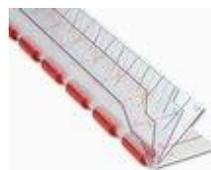
Nice Device(s)

When we have reported about devices in the past, it has typically been about a mid to high tech product. For this issue, we wanted to provide information about some popular lower tech items. All of the products discussed are in the AzTAP inventory and can be checked out for short term loan. Product demonstrations can also be scheduled. More information is available on our website under the AzTAP Demo and Loan Program tab at www.aztap.org. Please contact Mellowdee at 602.776.4667 if you do not have Internet access, would like more information regarding the product, or would like to check it out of our loan library.

With regard to the mechanical process of writing, people tend to forget about low-tech and think more of the high tech products, such as voice recognition. In fact, the no-tech option of different shapes of pencils or pencil grips can be a great place to start. These common and affordable products may help someone use a pen or pencil. When looking at other no-tech solutions for writing, many people like the **Ring Pen** and **Pen Again**.

Math teachers in particular are excited to learn about the **Coin-U-Lator**, **See 'N' Solve Calculato**r and **Master Ruler**, which provide different types of visual learning for students. The Coin-U-Lator is a coin-counting calculator which has buttons realistically

displaying a dollar bill, quarter, dime, nickel and penny. It also has voice output and money learning games. The See "N" Solve is a visual calculator. It uses an over-sized LCD screen to display simple math problems graphically, as one would write it out. The Master Ruler is a product with several rulers in one. Each measurement increment has its own tab and color. An explanation and video of this product can be seen at www.themasterruler.com.

I would like to share a story about a person I was recently able to assist after considering all levels of assistive technology. I was contacted by the mother of a young adult with a developmental disability. She reported that her son does not have a good concept of time management. For his job at a grocery store, he needed to perform a task for a certain amount of time and then be able to independently move on to another task. Using a standard watch was not successful and he was not allowed to have a cell phone on during work. She asked me for a consultation.

During the consultation, I met with the individual and his mother. I knew that an app would not work because he did not have access to a cell phone. I demonstrated three devices ranging in price from $40 to $180. I had accidently left one product - a simple kitchen timer- at home, but discussed how it could be used to support his job skills. The family checked out two of the three items I demonstrated. When I called to see if either of them worked, the mother reported that they had not, but that they decided to go with the $7 kitchen timer from Wal-Mart that I had mentioned and that it worked wonderfully. The moral of this story: assistive technology does not have to be expensive or complicated to be effective.
- Mellowdee Brooks, ATP

Register for AzTAP's 15th Annual Assistive Technology Summer Institute

Assistive Technology: Catch the Wave
July 8 – 9, 2013
Arizona Grand Resort and Spa, Phoenix AZ

AzTAP and its partners – Rehabilitation Services Administration

(RSA) and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) invite you to attend this summer's conference which will focus on integrating assistive technology into all aspects of daily life. Be a part of Arizona's only statewide AT conference offering innovative information on assistive technology applications and products for education, employment and independent living. The "Catch the Wave" theme highlights both the enduring as well as the evolving nature of assistive technology. Our keynote speakers will be the daughter-father team of Shelby Nurse and Tom Nurse. Shelby is a young woman with significant physical disabilities who has been riding the AT wave throughout her life and it has taken her far. Gayl Bowser will be back again as a featured speaker and we are fortunate to have a wealth of AT knowledge and expertise provided by our Arizona-based presenters. We are planning for a robust exhibit hall and there will opportunities to learn more about iPad use.

Whether you are an AT novice or a seasoned provider, there will be new and practical information for you. Come join us at the beautiful Arizona Grand Resort and Spa in Phoenix for a stimulating learning experience in a lovely resort environment. We have taken our theme literally by selecting a conference venue where you can catch the waves in the resort's family-friendly Oasis Waterpark's Gigantic Wave Pool. The early bird conference fee of **$165 if registered by 5/31/13** includes continental breakfasts, Monday's networking reception, lunch each day and all breaks. Continuing education contact hours will be provided.

The hotel rate for a standard suite is **$89 per night if reserved by June 7th**

To register, go to www.aztap.org and click on the conference link. For more information, contact Martha Lewis at 602.776.4670, 800.477.9921, or Martha.lewis@nau.edu.

AzTAP and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) at NAU

AzTAP is located in Phoenix, so people do not automatically make the connection that we are part of Northern Arizona University. AzTAP is a program within the Institute for Human Development. IHD serves the University and the Arizona community through its research, community services, educational programs, training initiatives and program evaluation. IHD has been designated as part of a national network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD).

The IHD mission is to build, and enhance the capacity of, an integrated, statewide service continuum for persons with disabilities. IHD recognizes the central, essential role of consumers and families in the development and evaluation of an informed and educated service system. It strives to ensure individuals with disabilities of all racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds are fully included and valued in society.

IHD operates program sites in Flagstaff, Phoenix (AzTAP) and Tucson and has its own building on campus. It includes an Assistive Technology Center and is the base of operation for AzTAP's K-12 Assistive Technology Loan Program which we operate for the Arizona Department of Education. Learn more about IHD by going to [www.nau.edu/ihd.](http://www.nau.edu/ihd)

NAU is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

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