



The AT Messenger

....bringing technology to you

Published by the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative

Vol. 1, Issue 2, Sept/Oct1993

DATI Annual Conference Registration Underway!

Registrations are now being accepted on a first-come, first-served basis for the annual Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative's conference for consumers, teachers, caregivers, therapists, or *anyone* interested in what's happening in assistive technology. The two-day conference, being held on October 4th & 5th at the John Clayton Conference Center on the University of Delaware's Newark campus, will highlight sessions on the use of AT in recreational and leisure activities. Landscaping and gardening, playing with adapted toys and games, participating in water and racket sports, performing computer-based music, and creating your own adapted home workshop are all interests that are now accessible to individuals with disabilities--sessions on each of these hobbies will tell you how others have used AT to enjoy them!

Other sessions will provide information on funding, telecommunications, AT inclusion in IEP's, and ergonomic modifications in vocational settings. Consumers will also play a large part in presenting their "trials and triumphs" in acquiring and using AT every day.

This year's conference boasts an even larger array of product and information exhibitors than previous DATI conferences. The Exhibit Hall will be open on October 4th from 8:30-5 and on October 5th from 8:30-Noon for browsing through 26 booths containing information on AT products and services. Exhibits Only registrations are available for \$5.

Registration forms must be postmarked to the DATI Central Site office by no later than

September 22, 1993 to be guaranteed accessibility accommodations and the lower registration fees. Please call (302)651-6790 for a complete conference schedule and registration form. *See you in October!*

EXPRESS YOURSELVES

A fundamental focus of the DATI has been to be responsive to the needs and interests of Delawareans with disabilities as they relate to assistive technology. In keeping with this emphasis, our second annual conference, *More Power To You*, will close with a Consumer Advocacy Workshop where consumers can speak out about what they feel are the most pressing issues affecting access to assistive technology in our State. This will be an intensively interactive session in which participants identify specific problem areas that hinder them in getting the technology they want and need. Additionally, participants will recommend potential solutions to these problems that they personally can help implement. The intended outcome is the establishment of a formal action plan that identifies weaknesses in the current service delivery system and proposes strategies to deal with them. The DATI will use this action plan and work with those that have developed it to effect improvements in the service delivery system. Anyone with an ax to grind about poor services and/or limited resources and who has ideas about how to improve access to technology is encouraged to attend this meeting. The Conference is scheduled for October 4-5, and the consumer workshop is slated to begin at 1:30 p.m. on the 5th.



DATI Throughout the State...

Central Site

As of September 1, the DATI begins its third year of federal funding. This will be a pivotal year for the project as we assess our progress and make decisions about directions for the future. This strategic planning process began on July 30 and 31 with a statewide staff retreat. The Statewide Advisory Board will undertake a similar activity later in the year. The DATI will also hold a number of public forums so that consumers and professionals can let us know how to best meet their technology-related needs. All of these planning activities will culminate in a grant proposal for extension funding that will be submitted in the Spring of 1994.

Central Site staff have been very busy working on the establishment of the equipment recycling program, the peer network, two resource directories, various funding and policy initiatives and, of course, THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE. We hope to see you there and at other DATI activities in the coming year!

New Castle County

Delaware Elwyn
321 E. 11th St.
Wilmington, DE 19801-3499
(302)657-5647; (302)658-8860 (TDD)

As we discussed in the previous issue of *The AT Messenger*, we can help you find almost anything related to assistive technology. We are somewhat of a super library of assistive technology resources and information. But who can help you decide exactly which device you need?

Careful consideration of the needs and abilities of a person with a disability is essential before selecting any assistive technology, and in some cases, a whole system of

devices must be integrated so that cost can be reduced and efficiency increased. For the names of individuals who can assist you with an evaluation, you can call your local university, hospital, rehabilitation facility, educational institution, vocational rehabilitation agency, and, of course, the New Castle County Assistive Technology Center. Since evaluations can be a complex process, here are some types of professionals who can help evaluate certain abilities and their role in evaluation:

Audiologists evaluate and treat individuals with hearing impairments.

Manufacturer/Distributors of assistive devices help you understand the possible applications of these devices. They often can suggest sources for funding.

Occupational therapists help understand muscle control of different body parts with and without special equipment.

Optometrists are independent primary healthcare providers who specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye, and associated structures.

Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who can evaluate the structure, functions, and diseases of the eye. They also perform eye surgery and prescribe medication.

Physical therapists help evaluate muscle strength, range of movement, flexibility, balance, and coordination abilities.

Psychologists evaluate an individual's learning potential, as well as the need for individual and family counseling.

Rehabilitation engineers evaluate the usefulness of customized switches and devices. They also suggest modifications of equipment used by the general public so that it can be used by an individual with a disability.

Social workers evaluate an individual's total living situation (family structure, finances, etc.) and suggest additional community resources.

Special educators evaluate classroom and academic performance.

Speech-language pathologists help understand language abilities and interaction patterns, as well as the muscle control necessary for speech. They also provide instruction in how to create the sounds necessary for speech.

Vocational counselors evaluate an individual's potential to hold a job, as well as identify types of jobs which might be available to individuals using assistive technology.

Now that's a giant team and one or more of these professionals can be involved depending on the situation. DATI is developing various resource directories to help locate the best people possible. So if you have a questions regarding evaluation, give us a call. See you at our exhibit at the October DATI conference! Stop by and say hello!

Kent County

*Easter Seal of Del-Mar
Kent County Orthopedic School
Carver Rd.
Dover, DE 19901-2716
(302)739-6885; (302)739-6886 (TDD)*

The Easter Seal TRC in Kent County has been busy providing workshops demonstrating various types of assistive technology. One of the areas of great interest has been computer access. In the last year, a product called Intellikeys has become available and is an alternative to the standard keyboard (and is a great improvement to the Unicorn Board!)

Intellikeys is an adapted keyboard (a keyboard that accommodates physical or cognitive limitations) that has many built-in features that make computers accessible to people with disabilities. The keyboard can be easily adapted to accommodate the physical,

cognitive and visual needs of the user, and essentially can be used by anyone! With the introduction of the new Overlay Maker program which allows an individual to create an adapted keyboard with as few or as many keys as desired, the specific needs of the user can be addressed easily and effectively. (And we do mean easily!) Intellikeys is compatible with the Mac, IBM, and Apple (just make sure you order the right cable).

We used the Intellikeys at the TRC recently, when Sue Ellen Powell, our volunteer/consumer demonstrator had some difficulty using a mouse due to physical reasons. We set up our Mac computer with the Intellikeys and designed a sample overlay. Sue Ellen found the arrows overlay to be very easy to see and to use. She was able to access the computer to look up information for other consumers by using the Hyper-ABLEDATA database, which allows you to search for 17,000 products quickly and conveniently by company name, product name, or type of product. No training in computer or database use is required. Hyper-ABLEDATA contains pictures of over 1,000 products, and sound samples for 50 different synthesized voices. This proved most helpful in responding to people's questions and helped us realize how valuable this piece of equipment can be! Intellikeys facilitated Sue Ellen's eventual use of the mouse!

The next Intellikeys Workshop will be held in September. Please call the TRC for details. Ed Salisbury, Assistive Technology Specialist and Justine Gray, Occupational Therapist for the Easter Seal TRC will be presenting an Intellikeys Workshop at Closing the Gap, a conference on the use of technology in special education and rehabilitation to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota on October 21-23, 1993.

For a preview of the presentation or more information, call the TRC. We'll be happy to answer any questions about Intellikeys or any other type of computer access!

Sussex County

Easter Seal of Del-Mar
 Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center
 600 N. DuPont Highway, Suite 100
 Georgetown, DE 19947
 (302)856-7946 (voice or TDD)

When people first started coming to us for devices, I was worried that we didn't have enough to take care of every need. I was also being asked on a regular basis if we purchase items for individuals in need. It was difficult having to say "no". However, as we move into our second year, it is becoming noticeable that those with real emergencies who have come to us were not turned away, but rather networked with a source that either gave them what they needed, or rented it to them for a very low cost.

As soon as we put the word out that someone is in immediate need of a certain item, the item appears. One case would be Mrs. Isennock who did a little window shopping in our TRC. She then went and purchased a list of items to assist her husband in his daily living. One month later, another woman called, needing a daily living aid for a few months.

She did not have a lot of resources to purchase an item which would not be used permanently. The item she needed was the same item Mrs. Isennock had purchased to replace a slightly used one. Mrs. Isennock was quick to donate the item to the lady and happy to be of service. The second woman was so grateful that she said she would re-donate it when she was through using it. We have one item that has been re-donated 3 times in as many months.

If you have something that may be laying around which may be of assistance to someone else, why not call *The AT Messenger* or your local TRC to post a recycling "want ad" in the next issue.

We're still anxious for you to see our TRC. Don't forget, if you can't come to us, we will come to you. We will also expand our hours to meet your needs. Give us a call, and remember, technology is only a phone call away. By the way, when you do call, there will be a bright new voice answering the phone. The voice belongs to Connie Murray, our new TRC Administrative Assistant. She is full of energy and will take good care of you!

<p>Devices Available</p>	<p>manual. (Item 1-2-04) For Sale: Collins Industries van wheelchair lift. (Item 1-2-05)</p>	<p>Liftomatic Chair with arms for help in getting from seated to standing position. Adult manual wheelchair. Filac industrial electric digital thermometer with 10" readout and 5-year shelf life. Must include operating instructions. Wrist braces (12) for support of weakened hands. One size fits all.</p>
<p>FREE! Life Alert emergency call for help system. (Item 1-2-01) For Sale: Electric van wheelchair lift. Price negotiable. (Item 1-2-02) For Sale: Ablelift van wheelchair lift. Used less than 50 times. (Item 1-2-03) For Sale: Gresham Driving Aid Slim Line Control--auto hand controls for brake and throttle. 2 years old. Includes owner's</p>	<p>Devices Wanted Stair Glides (2) to go up and down steps while seated. Electric wheelchairs (2), adult size, acceptable condition. Hoyer Lift for attendant-assisted transfers to and from wheelchair.</p>	

Call DATI Central Site at (302)651-6790 for further information or to place your ad!

SST's DynaVox: A "Customized" Augmentative Communication Tool

Beth Sinteff, MS CCC-SLP, Customer Support, Sentient Systems Technology, Inc.

The DynaVox is an augmentative communication tool that integrates dynamic screen technology with DECtalk speech synthesis, four access methods, and DynaSyms symbols in a single self-contained device. So! What does this mean?

A "**dynamic screen**" allows people to create and use many pages (think of communication books) and "link" these electronically. Pages can be created from a choice of 36 different layouts. As one would create communication boards or pages in a book, one can create displays on the DynaVox and interconnect these pages using "page link". Pages can be customized and arranged by theme, category, semantic-syntactic order, alphabetically, etc.

The DynaVox provides other choices as well. Abbreviation-expansions can be programmed to have symbol or letter combinations expanded to words, phrases, and sentences. When more power is needed because a person's language and/or augmentative communication skills have increased, "special keys" are available that allow a person more control. (For example: A "Save" key allows a person to save to a key, any novel message they create, so they can use that key to tell someone the same message at a later time.)

DECtalk speech technology allows a person to choose between 9 voices. There is also a limited capability for recording sound on the DynaVox. Speech rate can be adjusted and the DynaVox can sing when programmed to do so! When in auditory scanning, the scan announcement can be spoken in a different voice than the message.

Four "selection" methods are possible.

These are direct selection, visual scanning, auditory scanning or joystick. Each selection method has special "controls" for customizing the touch or scan to meet individual needs. These controls may reduce the need for accessories (e.g. keyguard) or increase speed (e.g. skip blank keys during scanning). Once a selection method is determined, a person can vary how a key will "speak" based on individual needs.

The DynaVox utilizes **DynaSyms** symbols by Faith Carlson, MS CCC-SLP. These symbols are stored on software and are electronically placed on the screen. (All programming is done from the screen--no attachments.) Each symbol is assigned a single meaning but can be re-labeled and re-assigned meanings if desired. The DynaSyms symbols "has a grammar and strategies for expanding the vocabulary as does any language" (Carlson, F., DynaSyms 2000 Handbook, 1992, Pg. 3). A separate handbook, with "learning tips" to assist the user and partner, is included with the purchase of a DynaVox and DynaSyms application card.

For more information about the DynaVox, please call Sentient Systems Technology, Inc. at 1-800-344-1778.

FINANCING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The New Federal Perspective on Vocational Rehabilitation

Ron Sibert, DATI Funding Specialist

You've heard it before... assistive technology (AT) devices and services can be a great help to people of all ages with disabilities... but what about cost? The last issue of *The AT Messenger* contained a discussion of AT financing options for school age children and adolescents with disabilities. There are also programs for working age adults with disabilities. For adults and children alike, technology's promise doesn't have to die with the question of who pays for equipment and services. Since 1986, Congress and federal agencies have been drafting policies and laws that have significantly improved access to AT. One very good example is Public Law 102-569, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. In order to appreciate the importance of this law, one should first understand how state programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation relate to the federal government.

Here's a "quick & dirty" overview. The federal government pays money (called federal matching funds or simply the "federal match") to states for their participation in federal programs such as Medical Assistance, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education. The state agencies that administer these programs must submit a state plan to the feds in order to receive their matching funds. The state plan is a contract that describes the state's version of the program; and that version must meet certain minimum requirements under federal law. Anytime there are changes (amendments) to these laws or the state needs to change the way it operates under existing laws, a new state plan must be developed and approved by the appropriate federal agency. With the passage of the 1992 Amendments, Delaware's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is now in the process of revising its state plan and operating

policies. Public Law 102-569 contains four (4) new state plan requirements related to assistive technology. It also contains provisions that greatly enhance access to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

The new state plan requirements under P.L. 102-569 call for a description of the VR agency's technology-related services and the nature of personnel training in that area. There must also be a description of the role technology will play in determining a person's eligibility for services. The State is now required to:

- 1) Describe how a broad range of rehabilitation technology services will be provided at each stage of the rehabilitation process. [Sec.101(a)(5)(C)(i)]
- 2) Describe how a broad range of such rehabilitation technology services will be provided on a statewide basis. [Sec. 101(a)(5)(C)(ii)]
- 3) Describe the training that will be provided to vocational rehabilitation counselors, client assistance personnel, and other related services personnel. [Sec. 101(a)(5)(C)(iii)]
- 4) Describe the manner in which devices and services will be provided, or worksite assessments will be made as part of the assessment for determining eligibility and/or needs of an individual. [Sec. 101(a)(31)]

The law also calls for a completely new way of looking at people with disabilities and their eligibility status. It used to be that a person with one or more disabilities could only qualify for VR services if the person's evaluation showed that s/he had "rehabilitation potential" and was "employable."

By that measuring stick, people with severe disabilities were considered unemployable

and, for that reason, not qualified to receive services. In contrast, the new law calls for a *presumption of ability*. **DVR must presume that a person with a disability is able to work**--regardless of the severity of disability--**unless the counselor can clearly demonstrate otherwise**. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 make it unlawful for the agency to automatically consider people with severe disabilities unemployable. The counselor must exhaust all options, including assistive technology interventions, before denying eligibility on the basis of a person's inability to work.

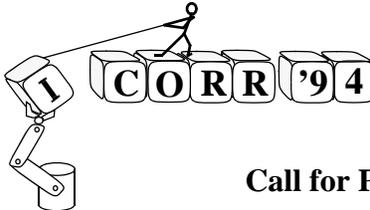
Once a person is considered eligible for VR services and that person needs an assistive technology device in order to meet work-related goals, the equipment and related services should be written into the client's Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP). DVR should then provide or see that the person obtains the necessary equipment and services. Anyone who has difficulty receiving rehabilitation services should contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP). In New Castle County, the numbers are: (302) 764-2400 [Voice] or 764-8708 [TDD]. The Kent and Sussex County office in Milford can be reached at (302) 422-6744 [V/TDD]

In some instances it may be better - or simply more appropriate - for the VR client to obtain equipment through other programs. The VR counselor may recommend and help access any of several alternative funding sources. In the next issue of *The AT Messenger*, we will explore two such alternatives: the VR Independent Living program, and work incentive programs offered by the Social Security Administration--very powerful tools for gaining access to equipment and services. Be sure to keep an eye on future installments of "Funding Assistive Technology" for still other AT funding options for adults with disabilities - such as Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, and workers' compensation insurance.

Strength in Numbers (cont'd from back pg.)

three levels at which people can become involved. The first level is simply a registry of AT users that will be circulated among the respondents. This listing will contain contact and descriptive information, type of AT used, any experience obtaining funding, and some AT-related interests. The second level involves training experienced AT users to be helpers to those unfamiliar with the AT service system and/or the operation of a particular device. Once a pool of helpers (referred to as Peer Mentors) has been recruited and trained, they will be available to meet or talk on the phone with individuals requesting guidance and encouragement in accessing AT. The third level will consist of a series of informational/social events involving AT users. These will be planned and run by volunteers from the AT Peer Support Network with support from the DATI.

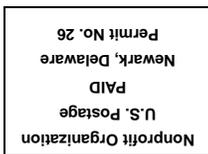
Those interested in more information concerning these three components of the Network are invited to contact the DATI Central Site or the Technology Resource Center in their county. It will take some time to develop the membership in the network, so help out by choosing to get involved and urging others to do so as well. We anticipate that Peer Mentors will be available sometime in the next few months.



**Fourth International
Conference on
Rehabilitation Robotics
June 15 & 16, 1994**

Call for Papers

ICORR '94 is being sponsored by the Applied Science & Engineering Laboratories of the University of Delaware & the A.I. duPont Institute. Abstracts for paper or poster presentations are being accepted until November 15, 1993. Topics can include safety, design for manufacture, technology transfer, teleoperation, modeling & control, human/machine interface, assessment, education, or marketing issues as they relate to rehabilitation robotics. For more information, call ICORR '94, ASEL, (302)651-6830.



Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
Applied Science & Engineering Laboratories
University of Delaware/A.I. duPont Institute
P.O. Box 269
Wilmington, DE 19899



Strength In Numbers

We have begun to see the wonderful things that assistive technology (AT) can do to enhance the abilities of people with disabilities. Many of the devices available are truly amazing and seem more like science fiction than real life. Unfortunately AT is not always easily obtainable. Finding the right device for a specific need can be challenging. Having repairs made to a piece of equipment can be quite involved and frustrating, and obtaining help to pay for an expensive device can seem to take forever. Many times people have expressed feeling all alone in facing these challenges. Being able to talk with others about shared concerns--and joining forces to work for improvements--can be a real source of encouragement. DATI wants to facilitate this communication by establishing a network for AT users to link up with one another.

This AT Peer Support Network will have

cont'd on page 7

The AT Messenger is published bi-monthly by the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative.

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
Applied Science & Engineering Laboratories
University of Delaware/A.I. duPont Institute
P.O. Box 269, 1600 Rockland Rd.
Wilmington, DE 19899
Phone: (302)651-6790
TDD: (302)651-6794
FAX: (302)651-6793

Beth Mineo, Director
Bob Piech, Project Coordinator
Ron Sibert, Funding Specialist
Donna Bacon, Education & Training Coordinator
Sonja Simowitz, Staff Assistant
Gregg Stum, Research Programmer

DATI is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education, Grant #H224A10005. This publication does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NIDRR/ED, and no official endorsement of the materials should be inferred.

The University of Delaware is an equal opportunity employer and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, age, national origin, marital status or disability in conformity with applicable laws.