



# The AT Messenger

....bringing technology to you

Published by the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative

Vol. 2, Issue 2, March/April 1994

## And the Survey Said....

Delaware citizens with disabilities have twice responded to a survey about assistive technology devices and services. In 1990, the survey was conducted to collect information about AT needs for inclusion in the original proposal to the federal government. In 1993, the DATI distributed a modified version of the instrument used in 1990 so that we could determine how the "AT scene" in Delaware has changed in the last three years.

In 1990, approximately 1200 surveys were distributed and 178 (15%) were returned; in 1993, 1800 surveys were distributed and 389 (22%) were returned. There were several differences between the respondent pool in 1990 and that in 1993. In 1990 the mean age of respondents was 27 years, and in 1993 the mean age was 39 years. The proportion of school-age respondents (and those responding on their behalf) fell by 12% from 1990 to 1993, and the proportion of respondents aged 65 and over increased by 16%. This reflects our survey distribution approach; in 1990 the majority of surveys were distributed to schools, and in 1993 there was much more balance across age groups.

By comparing the 1990 responses with those we received in 1993, we can take a look at where Delaware was in regard to technology-related assistance prior to the initiation of the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative and how circumstances have changed in the two years since the grant began. The survey focused on consumers' technology use, their technology needs, and their experiences with various aspects of service delivery. It asked questions about funding and problems with service delivery, and sought consumers' opinions of what has improved or worsened in technology-related assistance in Delaware.

The 1993 survey data indicate that the technology-related climate in Delaware is better now than it was at the time of the initial survey. Comparison of 1990 and 1993 results indicates that:

- technology use has held steady or increased across almost all categories of devices
- consumers are taking advantage of a broader range of technologies
- the overwhelming majority of technology users report realizing benefits from the AT that they have
- the proportion of respondents reporting needing technology that they did not have dropped from half in 1990 to one-third in 1993
- significantly more consumers accessed AT-related services in 1993 than in 1990
- respondents reported fewer problems with AT services in 1993 than in 1990.

Perhaps the most revealing responses came from a question found only in the 1993 survey. Consumers were asked to report on the changes that they had observed in Delaware's technology-related assistance environment in the past two years. The areas cited as having improved most markedly are those that the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative was designed to address! The project's five original goals relate to *Public Access to Information, Public Awareness, Training and Technical Assistance, Funding, and Coordination of Technology-Related Assistance*, with an emphasis on consumer responsiveness and consumer empowerment. The DATI's Technology Resource Centers in each county were designed to provide community-based access to information, referral, funding assistance, and equipment demonstration and loan. The training and technical assistance initiatives at both the

*cont'd on page 5*



## ***DATI Throughout the State...***

### **New Castle County**

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

Commonly, the words assistive technology and disability are almost synonymous! We need to keep in mind a NEW paradigm, and that is, assistive devices are tools that may be used by most everyone! For example, a thick-handled potato peeler is a tool that could be used by a child or an elderly person with their only difficulty being a slightly weaker or less flexible right hand. Or it could be used by a mother with 4 kids who has 2 lbs. of potatoes to peel each night and whose hand gets tired after she finishes peeling the first pound! Using the large handled potato peeler allows her to complete the job more quickly and to avoid having to take a break because her hand has begun to hurt. Or the potato peeler could be used to prevent a hand injury by someone who has had a problem or injury in the past.

We need to reprogram our minds to think of assistive technology as tools--as a solution to a problem that interferes with our independence or quality of life. The fact is, all people, whether or not they have a disability, might wish to work, solve a problem, or enjoy their leisure time. The difference is that a person with a disability or a medical or educational need must have the tool to be able to do these things at all! THEY MUST have this tool to have the same access as all other people. That's why all of us, disabled or not, need to make known to government that assistive technology is a cost-effective necessity, a right, a way of making sure that people with disabilities can access all of the opportunities that come their way! So the next time you see a large-handled potato peeler, or a jar grip, think of how assistive technology is critical to all of us!

### **Kent County**

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

Computer access may be difficult and frustrating for the visually impaired adult if he or she does not have a good orientation to the computer keyboard. If a screen reading program is not available, he or she may be unsure of exactly what has been typed. One solution to this common problem may be the Braille and Speak.

The Braille and Speak is a product developed by Blazie Engineering. The Braille and Speak is basically a compact, lightweight, DOS compatible computer without a monitor and hard disk. Instead of a standard 101-key keyboard, the Braille and Speak uses a seven-key braille keyboard. Each key on this keyboard represents one of the six dots that make up a braille character. The Braille and Speak, as its name implies, also speaks each character that is typed, making it an excellent tool for word processing. If the user finds himself or herself limited by the 640K processor, the Braille and Speak interfaces easily with an IBM or compatible computer. The user now has access to many common word processing packages like WordPerfect, WordStar, and Microsoft Word. Whether interfacing with a computer or not, the user has the ability to save information and have it spoken or printed at a later date. Aside from its word processing capabilities, the Braille and Speak includes a clock and calendar, talking telephone directory, calculator, stopwatch and countdown timer.

Many visually impaired consumers do not know what technology options are available for them to use. They are under the impression that braille is the only option available to them. When they have had unsuccessful experiences with Refreshable Braille, they need other options for word

processing. One client (P.M.), who was seen at the Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center in New Castle, expressed these frustrations to her Occupational Therapist. P.M. found the standard keyboard frustrating and was unsure of what she was typing. When the Braille and Speak was borrowed from the ATRC and demonstrated to her, her word processing became a much easier task. She is now able to print out the poetry she writes, which is something she has wanted to do for some time. Now P.M. is able to share her poetry with her mother.

Along with the Braille and Speak, the Assistive Technology Resource Center in Kent County offers equipment for people with low vision at its satellite site at the Delaware Division of Libraries in the Edgehill Shopping Center. The technology at the library includes the Arkenstone Reader, which allows a person to scan in books, magazine and newspaper articles and have the computer read it back in a pleasant reading voice. Once the book or article has been scanned and read, it may be printed out in braille or large print. This computer also provides screen magnification for people with low vision. One user of this equipment (D.B.) was very excited that she could now read her own mail in privacy. Another user (J.T.) was so impressed with a computer that allowed him to read any printed material that he purchased his own equipment after several weeks of training. For a demonstration of this equipment and other services available at the library, be sure to attend the workshop "Equalizing Access to Information" (see calendar insert).

## Sussex County

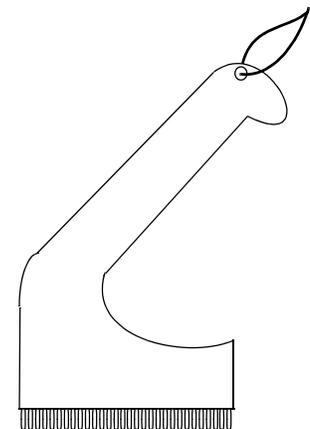
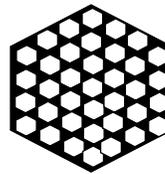
*Easter Seal of Del-Mar  
Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center  
600 N. DuPont Highway, Suite 100  
Georgetown, DE 19947  
(302)856-7946 (voice or TDD)  
Linett Fleetwood, Coordinator*

Have you ever heard of a Uni-Turner? It is a unique device used to increase leverage when operating most irregularly shaped knobs such as faucets, stove, or radiator handles. It is especially helpful if the user has arthritis and has difficulty grasping knobs. Its comfortable handle is approximately four inches long and has an elastic strap

for easy storage or carrying. The head of the Uni-Turner contains numerous hexagon-shaped retractable plastic prongs that conform automatically to grip the knob which is to be turned.

Although the Uni-Turner is primarily used in the kitchen, we have found it also works with keys, both in unlocking doors and in car ignitions. It will not, however, work with a knob that is perfectly round. When we have displayed the turner at health fairs and senior centers, many felt it could also substitute as a back scratcher or scalp massager. Although we do not personally recommend these particular creative uses, we do believe the Uni-Turner is practical, useful and reasonable, with an approximate price of \$15.00.

Face view of head



Retractable pegs

Give us a call if you would like to test drive the Uni-Turner or any of our other devices. Look for our column in the next issue of *The AT Messenger* in which we will help solve the problem of how to pass HEAVY, HOT serving dishes at the dinner table without lifting them off of the table. Houdini would be proud of our solution!

Please note also that we have a new fax number at the Sussex County ATRC--it's now (302)856-7296.

### Words+/ISAAC 1994 Awards Competition Announced

Essay applications are being accepted until March 31, 1994 for the Outstanding Consumer Lecture and Consumer Scholarship Awards given biennially to users of Augmentative/Alternative Communication (AAC). For information, call the DATI Central Site at (302)651-6790.

# FINANCING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

## Health Care Reform - Getting Involved

*Ron Sibert, Funding Specialist, DATI*

Our last issue discussed disability-related issues under President Clinton's Health Security Act (HSA). It described some of the Act's strengths and weaknesses from a disability perspective, and how average citizens can help make the plan more effective.

HSA is being hailed by the national disability-related organizations as the most promising of all of the proposed health care reform packages floating about Capitol Hill today. Why? Because despite its shortcomings, it is still the only plan that guarantees health care benefit coverage regardless of health status or disability. Additional consumer input is still needed to fine-tune the HSA, but there is now another more basic concern. The Clinton plan is not the only one on the table, and the others are much less sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities. Opponents of the HSA's single payer plan in the Senate and House are busily gathering support for less costly, but much less comprehensive plans.

As the cost and coverage battles rage in Congress, many different proposals are being developed. Each proposal has unique features, but to some extent, they all involve one (or some combination) of three basic approaches: Single Payer, Managed Competition, and Insurance Reform. Differences in these three approaches center around the level of government control, who pays for benefits, and the quality of coverage. The following "quick and dirty" overview is based on the findings of health policy researchers in the Washington office of United Cerebral Palsy Associations Inc. (UCPA).

- The **Single Payer** option is a federally-financed, state administered, health care system that would be delivered by private insurers. It would provide comprehensive health care benefits for everyone regardless of income, health status, employment, or age. Costs would be controlled by federal budget-setting, and prices would be determined by

negotiations with hospitals and other state health care providers. The package would include long-term care and mental health services as well as preventative treatments and rehabilitation. It would be financed through corporate and personal taxes placed in an exclusive health care trust fund. The Health Security Act was modeled primarily after this single payer approach but again, it still needs some fine-tuning.

- **Managed Competition** would restructure the marketplace by changing the way insurance carriers do business. Instead of the existing free enterprise approach, this model places state administered health insurance purchasing cooperatives (HPICs) between insurance buyers and sellers. The HPIC, also called a Health Alliance, would collect money from consumers and employers, and distribute that money to health plans based on the number of people who choose to enroll in a particular plan. It would screen plans to assure that each one meets minimum federal requirements for health care, and provide consumers with a report card each year to help them make informed carrier choices. Insurers would compete for business on the basis of price, quality, and the extent of their offerings beyond the minimum package. Cost containment would be achieved through government-imposed price controls, by taxing any premiums that cost more than the lowest price plan, and through increased use of managed care plans (such as HMOs). People with disabilities report difficulty obtaining specialist referrals in managed care settings and their restrictive limits on covered services have also been problematic.
- **Insurance Reform** encourages purchase of private insurance and seeks to make that insurance more "affordable" by various means. One way is to relax state mandates requiring private insurance policies to cover

## Financing AT *(cont'd from previous page)*

certain services or types of providers. Policies could then cover less and cost less. Another way is to provide tax subsidies to small employers or to low income employees to enable them to pay health insurance premiums. Managed care is considered an option under this model as well. Some insurance reform bills only seek to regulate insurance policies of small groups (2-100 employees) by limiting pre-existing condition exclusions and annual premium increases. Generally, insurance reform has limited scope, does not address the issue of rising health care costs, and many of the benefits packages will not cover certain services such as prescription drugs, rehabilitation therapies, and home care.

The DATI, along with several State agency representatives, recently participated in a two-part national teleconference on Health Care Reform. Urgent concerns were raised about limited access to health care by people with disabilities under certain proposed plans. One such plan, the Cooper bill, was sponsored by one of the 18 senators who voted **against** the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). People with disabilities were asked to write to their senators and congresspersons because true health care reform requires consumer input.

The DATI has joined with the Delaware Health Care Commission to convene a Health Care Reform Summit near the end of February. Representatives of several disability-oriented consumer organizations throughout the State will receive updates on disability-related health care reform issues from both local and federal viewpoints. The organizations are likely to soon begin consumer outreach and advocacy training activities to share information and instruction about how to make a difference. There is still time left to act before any final decisions are made in Washington. Every person will experience disability at some point in their lives; this is not just someone else's concern. Do yourself a favor...take the opportunity be heard ....get involved.

## Survey Results *(cont'd from page 1)*

state and county levels have attempted to increase technology-related awareness and skills among both consumers and service providers. Most important, the project's consumer-centered approach reflects our commitment to meaningful consumer involvement.

The respondents to the 1993 survey acknowledged that the technology-related assistance climate in Delaware has improved markedly in regard to availability of information-and-referral, help in learning what technology is needed and how to use it, and opportunities for trying out/borrowing equipment. Consumers also report feeling like a respected part of the AT decision process. **These data validate that the DATI is making meaningful progress toward its goal of comprehensive, statewide technology-related assistance for Delawareans with disabilities.**

-Beth Mineo, Director

## In memoriam

We were saddened to learn of the death of Steve Samuelson from On-Board Computers, Inc. in December, 1993. Steve was not only a reliable vendor of all types of adaptive devices, but also a technology guru and great source of information. His expertise, commitment, and contributions to the field of assistive technology in this region will be missed.

### DATI Kent County ATRC Funding Workshop

*Presented by Ron Sibert, Funding Specialist  
April 18, 1994, 10:00 am-Noon*

- Funding options for assistive technology for children and youth with disabilities
- Developing partnerships and collaboration between parents and education personnel
- How to meaningfully incorporate assistive technology into the IEP

For information, contact:

**DATI Kent County ATRC  
Kent County Community School  
Carver Rd.  
Dover, DE 19901-2716  
(302)739-6885 (V); (302)739-6886 (TDD)**

## Opportunities...

### **New Disability Directory**

*Exceptional Parent* magazine has published a new *Illustrated Directory of Disability Products*. The directory shows hundreds of products, along with names, addresses and phone numbers for more information. To order, send \$12.95, plus \$3.50 for shipping and handling to *Exceptional Parent*, 209 Harvard St., Suite 303, Brookline, MA 02146.

### **American Foundation for the Blind 1994 Products Catalog**

AFB's 1994 edition highlights over 25 new products, expanded ordering hours, more products with instructions in braille or on cassette, an expanded health care section, a new diabetes health care section, magazines on tape and selected AFB Press publications, and overnight shipping availability. The catalog is available in print, braille, audiocassette or diskette. To be placed on the mailing list, call toll-free at 1-800-829-0500.

### **DVI to offer workshop on braille production**

The Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired is sponsoring a workshop on April 14th & 15th from 9:00-3:00 at the Smyrna Rest Stop Conference Room for teachers, volunteers, parents, and anyone else interested in the production of braille materials. Instruction will include the latest technology, word processors, and translation software used to create braille documents. Frank Irzyk, Consultant for Visual Impairments at the Western Pennsylvania Instructional Support Center, is the instructor. For more information or to register, call Lynne Young at DVI at (302)577-3333, ext. 18.

### **Arthritis Foundation to sponsor "Low-tech" Workshop**

In conjunction with "May is Arthritis Month", a free open panel discussion and demonstration on low-tech assistive aids will be held on May 19,

1994 at the Methodist Country House, 4830 Kennett Pike, Wilmington, Delaware. Starting at 11 am and continuing until 1 pm, the aids for daily living will be displayed and demonstrated. Occupational therapists will volunteer their time to encourage "hands-on" participation and to give professional advice. Display categories include aids for grooming, housekeeping, gardening, leisure, and travel. Purchase information for all items will also be available. For information about this workshop, call the Arthritis Foundation office at (302)764-8254.

### **Special Educator of the Year Contest**

Edmark Corporation, publisher of educational software and print materials, has announced a contest for special educators that have developed an innovative instructional program for one or more of their students. Prizes include a Macintosh LCIII or IBM Compatible 486/33 computer and gift certificates for up to \$2,000 for Edmark products. Deadline for entries is May 30, 1994. For information and entry forms, call Edmark at 1-800-362-2890.

#### **DATI New Castle County ATRC and Sentient Systems Technology**

*present*

#### **DynaVox and DigiVox Workshops**

*Presented by James Warren, M.A., S.L.P.  
Delaware Elwyn, Room 220  
321 E. 11th St., Wilmington, DE*

DynaVox: April 18, 1994, 8:30-3:30  
DigiVox: May 20, 1994, 8:30-3:30

Introductory programming and operation of these augmentative communication devices. Registration is limited, so pre-registration is required. Lunch is on your own. For details or to register, call (302)657-5647 (V/TDD).

***Watch for advanced workshops later this  
summer!***

**Be sure that you don't miss a single issue of the AT Messenger. If you're not on the project's mailing list already, clip this form and send it in today!**

## DATI Mailing List Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>I am a:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Person with a disability (please specify): _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family member of a person with a disability</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Friend/advocate/colleague of someone with a disability</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Professional working with people who have disabilities (please specify) _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interested citizen</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Accessibility Needs:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Braille</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Large print</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15/16 Audiotape</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1-7/8 Audiotape</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> ASL Interpreter</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tactile Interpreter</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transportation</p>	<p><b>I would like to be involved in:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Technology users peer network</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Service provider network</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Funding initiatives</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Presenters network</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Project governance (boards &amp; committees)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer work as: _____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Send completed application to: **Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative**  
 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



**Painting Without a Canvas  
(or talent!)**

**May 18, 1994, 2-4 pm**

Learn cartooning the easy "low-tech" way! All you need is a TV, a VCR, and the new Video Painter by V-Tech (which will be demonstrated at this workshop). To pre-register, please contact:

**DATI Sussex County ATRC**  
**600 N. DuPont Highway, Suite 100**  
**Georgetown, DE**  
**(302)856-7946 (V/TDD)**

**Communication Aid Manufacturers Association (CAMA)  
Educational Workshop**

*May 9, 1994, 8:00 am - 3:45 pm*  
*Clayton Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE*

The CAMA "Road Tour" is stopping in Delaware! Be sure you're there to see the latest in augmentative communication technology. Call DATI Central Site for registration info.

**Devices Available**

**FREE!** Powered wheelchairs (2). Adult size. (Item 2-2-01)

**FREE!** Walkers (2). Adult size. One folds up. (Item 2-2-02)

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

To continue receiving *The AT Messenger*, be sure to return the application on page 7.

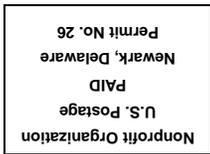
## Free sample issue!

Address Correction Requested

Wilmington, DE 19899

P.O. Box 269

University of Delaware/A.I. duPont Institute  
Applied Science & Engineering Laboratories  
Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative



### DATI Seeks Volunteers

As more people learn about the DATI, we get more and more requests for assistance and information. We can't keep up with the demands in many areas, and are looking for folks who might be willing to give a few volunteer hours a week to the project. We could use help in all three counties and in lots of activities--phone calling, preparing mailings, awareness and training, general clerical activities...the list may be limitless!

There is potential for some of these positions to evolve into paying jobs. If you think you might be interested, call the Central Site Office at (302)651-6790 to explore the possibilities for rewarding activity that's fun, too!

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

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