

WVATS

West Virginia Assistive Technology System Newsletter

A Disability Today...

Life can change in the blink of an eye. One day a person is running up the steps into their home. The next they are returning home from a major surgery wondering how they are going to climb those same steps.

Continued on page 1

...But Not Forever

Employment Success

in Mingo County

Powerful Tools

Chair Lift, Nova Chat 7

Cover Story: A Disability Today

In many cases, the person is going to make a full recovery. However, during the recovery process, the person has a temporary disability.

WVATS recently worked with a woman who had open heart surgery. After the operation, she could not pull or lift. Her legs were weak and swollen, limiting her mobility. She needed help to stand up and needed support while walking. She was concerned about returning to her home.

Obstacle 1: Getting in the house. There were eight steps to enter the front door, three steps to the back door and four steps to the side entrance. The side entrance had a loose handrail going up the steps. Her family secured the handrail she needed for balance, and she was able to get into her home.

Obstacle 2: Getting around the house. To move around her house without the help of another person, she got a rolling walker with a seat. Her throw rugs were removed to keep her from tripping or catching the walker.

Obstacle 3: Standing up from a chair. While regaining the strength in her legs, she needed a way to get out of her living room chair and bed without help from another person. A family member was able to loan her a lift chair. (**See a lift chair in *Powerful Tools***)

Obstacle 4: Standing up from the toilet. The toilet in her bathroom was very low. The location did not allow room for anyone to get behind or beside her to help her rise from the toilet. The family considered an elevated toilet seat (**see in *Powerful Tools***) but decided to update the bathroom by purchasing a new, higher toilet.

With a few temporary supports and a permanent update to her bathroom, this woman was able to return to her home to complete her recovery. For more information about accommodations for temporary disabilities, call WVATS at **800-841-8436**.

Exchange success!

“Telling time when you’re blind from macular degeneration and your wife/caregiver quickly goes to the hospital with a broken hip can be a huge problem! My father experienced confusion around knowing what time of day it was when this happened recently. He had become dependent on my mother’s prompts as well as asking the time in order for him to know events of the day, get himself prepared for those activities, take his medicines, know when a radio show would be available, etc. With the help of WVATS, we were provided a “talking clock” that he could keep on the stand by his chair and at any time, he could independently find out the time! During those three weeks my mother was in the hospital that was a lifesaver! Now that she is back home, he continues to be independent in knowing what time of day it is by using the talking clock. Thanks WVATS!” –Ruth Ann King



New for Loan

Weighted Gel Lap Pad

The rectangular weighted pad is filled with colorful, squeezable, sparkling gel that forms to the body. The device is multi-sensory for eyes and fingers. It can be used as a combination weighted lap/fidget pad in the classroom and as a calming tool. The lap pad wipes clean. It weighs 5 pounds and measures 10 inches x 18 inches.



Wrist Anchor

Anchors are hand grips and portable grab bars for upper body stabilization. These safety hand holds attach with industrial strength suction cups. By stabilizing one arm, many people with disabilities are able to gain functional use of the upper body. The wrist anchor is meant to be used to stabilize one arm on a table or tray.



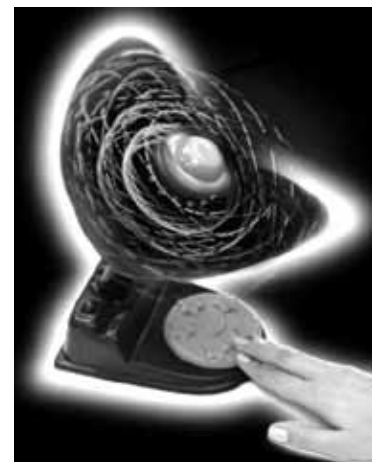
GoTalk 32+

The GoTalk 32+ has five levels. This gives the talker 163 messages for communication. The message keys record for 8 seconds and the core vocabulary keys record for 17 seconds. It also has the following features:

- Quick record
- Volume control
- A built-in handle
- Keyguard
- Overlay storage compartment
- Instructions printed on the back

Cosmos Twirler

The Cosmos Twirler is a sensory light show of the planets. It is activated by pressing the attached orange tactile switch. The user can also connect their favorite switch to the device. When activated, the user can watch the planets spin and create a colorful light show. The colors are brighter when it is used in a darkened room.



To borrow one of these devices from the WVATS loan library, call **800-841-8436**

Lift Chair

Lift chairs are motorized chairs that lift a person to almost standing. A lift chair recliner also lowers the chair completely to a fully reclined position. The chair can be stopped in any position. Lift chairs can help with independence and comfort for a person who has trouble sitting down or getting up in regular furniture. There are many types of lift chairs and they can have many features. This could include heat, massage, memory foam seats, head pillows and many more.

For more information, visit www.liftchair.com or call **800-798-2499**.



Leg Loop Leg Lift

The leg lift helps people with limited strength lift their leg and foot onto a wheelchair footrest, bed, into a car, etc. The foot loop stays open until the strap is pulled. Then it fits to the shape of the foot for a secure grip. This leg lift is 3 feet long and made of 1 inch wide nylon webbing.

For more information, visit www.maddak.com or call **973-628-7600**.

Raised Toilet Seat

A raised toilet seat sits on top of a regular toilet seat. The additional seat can raise the height of the toilet by three to six inches. This can make it easier for people with mobility impairments to get on and off the toilet.

For more information, visit www.elderdepot.com or call **800-910-7790**.



PocketMate Switch Scanning ECU

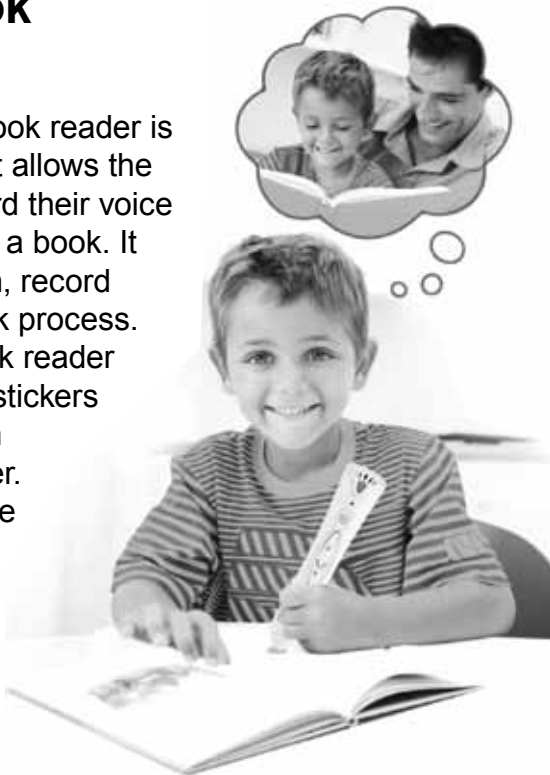
The PocketMate is a portable environmental control unit. It is powered by a long life rechargeable battery. The device is 4.5 inches x 3 inches and has a 2.25 inch display. This ECU can control over 256 functions of lights, appliances, beds, doors, telephone functions and infrared controlled devices. PocketMate does not require additional hardware, software or tools.



For more information, visit www.infogrip.com or call **800-397-0921**.

AnyBook

The AnyBook reader is a device that allows the user to record their voice as they read a book. It uses a touch, record and playback process. The AnyBook reader comes with stickers and a built in optical reader. When a voice recording is associated with a sticker placed on a page, AnyBook reader stores the recording and "remembers" which sticker has been associated with the recording. Touch the sticker again and AnyBook reader plays back the correct recording.



For more information, call **800-266-5626**, or visit www.anybookreader.com.

NOVA Chat 7



NOVA Chat 7 is a communication system that has the Chat software on an Android platform. NOVA chat includes thousands of SymbolStix™ symbols, and PCS™ symbols can be added. The device has a 7 inch screen and weighs 1.44 pounds. The touch screen can be used by finger touch or stylus. The NOVA chat comes in a rubberized protective case.

The standard models are for individuals who will be using mostly symbols for communication. Although these models have keyboard pages for spelling, they do not include word prediction. Standard models are "open" systems, meaning other Android applications can be run on these devices.

The Plus models are for individuals who already have or are learning literacy skills. These models have all of the features of the Standard models, and also come with 10,000, 30,000 and 60,000 word dictionaries. Plus models are also able to load and save text files.

NOVA Chat also has Dedicated Plus Chat Models that are "dedicated" devices. Dedicated devices are devices that can only be used as communication devices and no other applications can be run on them.

For more information, visit www.salttillo.com or call **800-382-8622**.

TSA Helpline For Special Needs Travelers

“TSA Cares” is a hotline for airline passengers with disabilities and medical needs from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Travelers can call for information about screening policies and procedures. They can also call for what to expect at security checkpoints. If the hotline is unable to answer the individual’s question, they can transfer them to a TSA disability expert.

It is suggested travelers call “TSA Cares” at least 72 hours before leaving home. This allows TSA time to talk with local airport security if needed. Travelers can also ask for a supervisor at the airport if they have questions about the screening process.

“TSA Cares” is available weekdays from 9 am to 9 pm by calling **855-787-2227**.



PITA-T Autism Study

Parent-Implemented Training for Autism through Telemedicine (PITA-T) is a project at the Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University. This program will teach parents of children with autism how to use discrete trial teaching (DTT)/ Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). They will do this using written instructions or video.

The program is looking for parents of children with autism to participate. There is no cost to be a part of this study. The families will be trained in ABA therapy. The parents will do the ABA sessions in their home. They only have to travel for pre-training and post-training assessments. Families will be given a video camera to videotape themselves working with their child. Program staff will view the videos and provide feedback to the families individually. The study will take about one year to finish.

Parents may be eligible if they:

- Have a child between 18 and 48 months of age who meets the diagnostic criteria for autism or is suspected of having autism
- Live in the Appalachian Region (West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia or Kentucky)
- Are willing to drive to Morgantown, WV or Big Chimney, WV twice during the course of the study
- Are willing to participate in a year-long research study

For more information, visit www.pitat.cedwvu.org or contact Lashanna Brunson at lbrunson@hsc.wvu.edu or by phone at **304-293-4692, ext. 1144**.

Internet for Education at Home

Comcast Cable Company has a program called "Internet Essentials." It helps families access the Internet at home. An estimated 30 percent of American households do not have Internet access at home.

To be a part of this program a household must:

- Have at least one child who can get free school lunches under the National School Lunch Program
- Live in Comcast service area
- Have not subscribed to Comcast Internet service within 90 days
- Not have an overdue Comcast bill or unreturned equipment

While in the program customers get:

- Residential Internet service for \$9.95 a month + tax
- No price increases, no activation fees or equipment rental fees
- A voucher that can be used to buy a low-cost computer for \$149.99 + tax
- Access to free digital literacy training in print, online and in person

Teachers and partners can get free program materials at

www.InternetEssentials.com/partner.

For more information call **855-846-8376** or visit www.InternetEssentials.com.

Free Government Cell Phone Program

Many people in West Virginia may be eligible for a free government cell phone program. The program gives the user a free cell phone, 250 minutes of call time and free texting. To qualify, the user must be on one of following government assistance programs:

- Food stamps
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Senior Citizen low-income discount plan offered by the local gas or power company
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

For more information on this program, call **800-385-1652, ext. 135** or visit www.yourfreefone.com/135.html.

Employment Success in Mingo County

In early November 2011, a TANF client in Mingo County was told that her lifetime TANF benefits would run out December 31, 2011. She had found very few job opportunities in her area. Sherri Shannon, Employability Outreach Specialist, met with her a few times to do job searches. With time running out on her benefits, Ms. Shannon wanted the client to find employment. Once employed, she would be able to get the extra benefits that come with getting a job while still receiving WV Works.

Ms. Shannon saw an ad for direct care workers needed in several areas including Logan, a manageable commute for the client. Ms. Shannon contacted the company. She learned about the two days of required training and how to sign up. The client enrolled in the class and completed it December 14, 2011. She was put on the hired list but would not be considered “employed” until she had at least one client and worked with them for one day.

The TANF client referred several people from her area that were able to get homemaker services and wanted her to work for them. However, the process for these people to get approval takes a couple of weeks. Ms. Shannon made a call to the supervisor at the homemaker agency. She explained how important it was for the client to be employed before the last day of the month. The agency was able to give her one client immediately. The TANF client worked her first day on December 29, 2011. The agency faxed the needed paperwork to DHHR so she qualified for the benefit package.

The client contacted Ms. Shannon in February 2012 about getting training to help her job options. She wanted to receive training on something in the medical field that could be done online. Ms. Shannon was able to find an online course for her through Kanawha County Community and Tech College. Ms. Shannon met with the client in March to go over a demonstration of the course. She was confident that she could do the work and very determined to succeed and change her life.

Employment Tools

UPEASY Seat Assist Portable Lifting Seat

UPEASY Seat Assist Portable Lifting Seat is a self-powered, lift assist. The device helps users gently seat and raise themselves from a hard surfaced chair. It gives support and lifts up to 70 percent of the user's body weight. This lift assist does not require batteries or electricity. When the user begins to get up, the UPEASY lift assist helps them get to their feet. This portable lifting seat folds flat to store and transport.

For more information, visit www.spinlife.com or call **800-850-0335**.

Scan N Talk

The Scan N Talk comes with software and a scanner. This tool lets the user scan any book or paper into a computer. The scanned text shows up in large highlighted print on the computer screen and can be read aloud.

For more information, visit www.enablemart.com or call **888-640-1999**.

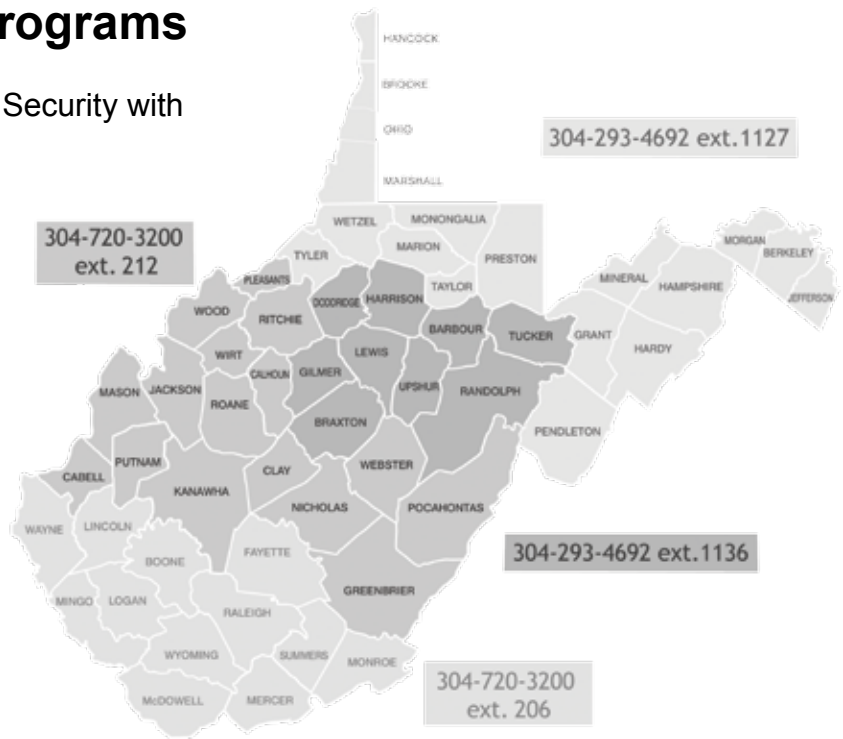


Update on WIPA and PABSS Programs

It is important to provide people who get Social Security with an update on the future of both the WIPA (Work Incentives, Planning and Assistance) and PABSS (Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security) programs. The United States Congress will no longer fund both of these programs. Funding for all 102 WIPA projects nationwide is set to end on June 30, 2012 and funding for the PABSS projects will end on September 30, 2012.

What does this mean to West Virginians getting Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)? Your local Community Work Incentives Coordinators will no longer be able to help with your work incentives questions after June 30, 2012. You will need to contact your local SSA offices starting July 1, 2012 for any questions about work and how working will affect SSA benefits.

However, WIPA will be around through the end of June. If you, or someone you know, wants to go to work or has work incentives questions, please contact one of the Community Work Incentives Coordinators. Remember, do so by June 30, 2012.

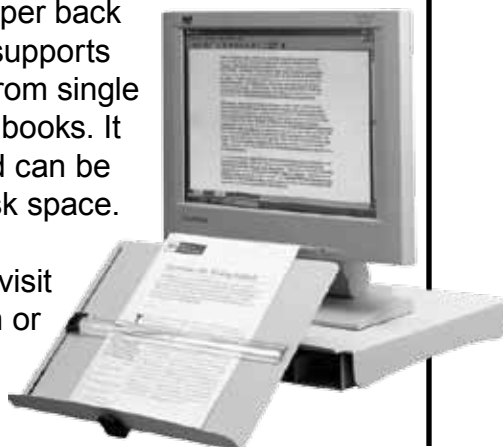


Employment Tools

Copy Holder

This adjustable in-line document holder keeps documents aligned with the keyboard and monitor. This minimizes the user's potential for repetitive head movement. By using a copy stand, the users can reduce neck and upper back stress. The copy stand supports a range of documents, from single sheets of paper to large books. It also collapses down and can be stored away to clear desk space.

For more information, visit www.humanscale.com or call 800-400-0625.



LCD Monitor Magnifier

The Kantek LCD Monitor Magnifier has a high quality lens and adjustable magnification. The monitor magnifier can increase character size by more than double.

The tool is lightweight and is easy to install.



For more information, visit www.kantek.com or call 800-536-3212.

Continued DRS Support in Keeping Farmers Farming

Warm weather brought one West Virginia farmer more than calves and hay to cut. West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) provided him a TommyJohn QuickHitch, an Ag Cam, a platform tractor lift, a Bruno Stow-Away seat and a Bruno Out Rider 1100 Scooter Lift.

Severe arthritis along with nerve and joint problems made operating his several hundred-acre farm very difficult. AgrAbility staff worked with the farmer to look at the operation, management style and layout of the farm. Together they discussed the challenges the farmer had when doing his farm chores. Three major challenges were identified:

- Getting on and off the tractor
- Lining up the tractor with the tractor attachments, like hay wagons and mowers, and securing the attachment pins
- Twisting and turning while on the tractor to monitor the attached equipment

The following devices were suggested for the farmer's tractor to help him do his chores with less pain, more easily and prevent future injuries:

- A hydraulic powered platform lift. In addition to making it safer to get on and off the tractor, the platform lift also helps save the farmer's energy so he can work longer.
- The QuickHitch system. The system connects the tractor to an attachment with a system of hooks.
- The Ag Cam. This is a camera with a magnetic base and a monitor. The camera is attached and aimed at whatever space or image the farmer needs to see. The monitor is placed at eye level wherever it is comfortable for the farmer to see it.

AgrAbility offers free farm assessments to any farmer, or a family member, who has difficulty doing farm work or getting around their farm because of an injury or chronic health condition. If you are interested in a farm assessment, call Inetta Fluharty at **304-771-8747**.



Accessible Gardening: Garden Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the process of looking at the design of tools, machinery and anything else involved in a task to fit how a person naturally moves their body. This match is important because it can lower the risk of injury for the person doing the task. It improves the person's work efficiency. It can also increase the person's satisfaction in doing the task. For gardening, ergonomics focuses on choosing the tool that best fits the gardener and the chore.

Keeping good posture (keeping your back straight) is a quick and easy way to lessen stress on tendons and joints. It also decreases muscle pain and fatigue by keeping the nerves in the back from stretching and stressing the spine.

- Using long-handled tools, such as hoes, rakes, and brooms and handle extenders make it easier to work while keeping the back straight.
- When working close to the ground, for example when weeding, kneel with one knee, not both. Kneeling on both knees can cause the back to round.

Ergonomic tools are designed to make the user work in good posture without extreme leaning or twisting, and without using a lot of force.

- Tools with built-up cushioned grips, or grip handles that clamp onto a standard tool, make handles larger and easier to hold. These handles lessen the impact that work has on your hands and wrists. They prevent the wrists from bending forward or being pushed toward one side.

- Find the right grip by making a circle with your index finger and thumb. That is the size that the grip of your tools should be.
- Choose the tool with the lightest weight possible but that can still get the job done.
- Use tools with grips that are soft and non-slip.

For more on posture and gardening ergonomics for each of the body's parts, visit www.youcanbenefit.com/ergogard.html. If you would like to talk to someone about accessible gardening, call Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints at **800-841-8436**.



Contact WVATS

Center for Excellence in Disabilities
West Virginia University
959 Hartman Run Road
Morgantown, WV 26505
304-293-4692
Hotline: 800-841-8436
TTY: 800-518-1448

Website address: www.wvats.cedwvu.org



P.O. Box 6870
Morgantown, WV 26506-6870
Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Morgantown, WV
Permit Number 34

WVATS Newsletter Editor:

Jessica Wright

(jdwright@hsc.wvu.edu)

Editorial Committee: Melina Danko,

Mary Slabinski, Tatiana Solovieva, Melanie Burge

Layout: Brian Pickens

WVATS is funded by the U.S. Department of
Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration
Contract# H224A100047

All printed materials are available in braille,
electronic format, CD and large print.

WVU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity
Institution.

WVATS Advisory Council - Seeking New Members

The West Virginia Assistive Technology System is looking for new members for its Advisory Council. This Council is made up of individuals who use assistive technology or parents of children who use assistive technology. The Council meets three times a year to discuss important issues about assistive technology services in West Virginia. All travel costs are paid for individuals. The Council is made up of people from around the state so every section is represented. Right now we are looking for individuals in the eastern or northern panhandle areas. If you don't live in these areas, you can still apply.

For more information call WVATS at **800-841-8436**. WVATS staff will answer any questions you have about Council meetings, where we meet and how you can contribute. Everyone can help better assistive technology services in West Virginia.

The WVATS Advisory Council is seeking

NEW MEMBERS

If you are a user of assistive technology, or a family member of a user, call

800-841-8436

to find out about how you can serve.

