

WVATS

West Virginia Assistive Technology System Newsletter

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Exploring the Arts with

Creative Solutions

People find ways to be creative through many art forms—like painting, photography, music, ceramics, sculpture, puppetry, dancing, singing, writing, improvising and acting. Sometimes people with disabilities face challenges that make it harder to actively participate in the arts. There may be ways though to overcome those problems so people can do activities they love. Here are some examples of challenges people face, along with creative assistive technology solutions and strategies that may help.

Assistive technology can help individuals do many activities. For more information on assistive technology and the arts, call WVATS at **800-841-8436**.

Challenge: An actress with a reading disability was having trouble reading play scripts.

Solution: She used screen-reading software so she could listen to the script rather than read it from the page. She recorded her lines so she could listen to them later and memorize them.

Challenge: An actor with a head injury stopped performing because he could not remember his lines.

Solution: Instead of memorizing lines for plays, he learned to use common theatre games through repetition and color flash cards. He joined an improvisation theatre group so that he could make up performances on the spot.

Challenge: A painter with paralysis could not use his hands to hold a paintbrush.

Solution: He used a mouth stick paintbrush to paint on a canvas.

Challenge: A woman with a developmental disability had problems with depression.

Solution: She liked colors and textures, so she started forming objects with different colors of Playdough. Later, she took a pottery class to learn how to mold clay into flower vases.

Challenge: A musician with gradual vision loss was having problems reading music.

Solution: He began using magnified musical scores and later used braille scores to learn new music.

Challenge: A writer with carpal tunnel had difficulty typing. Frustrated with the problem, she sometimes experienced writer's block.

Solution: She used voice recognition software so she could speak into a microphone as the software translated her words into text.



New for Loan

Toby Churchill Mini Voice Amplifier

The Mini Voice Amp is an amplifier for people with low levels of speech. The device is portable, compact and lightweight. It has a volume dial and a battery life of up to six hours. The amplifier also comes with a flexible, lightweight head-worn microphone.



Lightwriter Pocketsize Swift Text-to-Speech Device

The Lightwriter Pocketsize Swift is slightly bigger than a Smartphone. This text-to-speech device allows a person to make words, phrases and sentences to communicate. Other features include a tool for moving documents to and from a computer, nine user-defined phrases, a joystick and a display that can be easier to see in the daylight.



Anybook Keepsake Reader

The Anybook Keepsake Reader allows you to turn a magazine or book into an audio book. You record what you want to say and place encoded stickers on the pages. When you touch a sticker with the pen, it reads back your recording. The Keepsake Reader has 15 hours of recording time.



Sunrise System Light Box SRS 320

The Sunrise Light Box is a portable alarm clock with a blue-spectrum light box and dawn simulator. It mimics the sunrise and sunset by creating a blue spectrum light that gradually brightens a room. You can use the light with or without the alarm. Seven-day alarm programming allows you to set different wake times for each day of the week.

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



Call WVATS Toll Free **800-841-8436**



Blick Egg Handled Brushes

The Blick Egg Handled Brushes have large handles for people with fine motor or grasping needs. One side of the handle is flat to keep the brush head off the table surface and prevent rolling. Brush styles include fan, filbert, flat, round and script.

For more information, visit www.dickblick.com or call 800-723-2787.



Wheelchair Bridge with Chalk Drawer

The Wheelchair Bridge attaches and adjusts to a wide variety of walkers, standers and wheelchairs. The chalk drawer can be pushed by a handle or attached to the bridge for use with a wheelchair. Another option is attaching an adaptive paint roller to the Wheelchair Bridge.

For more information, visit www.zotartz.com or call 715-779-9526.

Tack Tiles Braille System

The Tack Tiles Braille System is a tactile teaching tool based on LEGO type blocks that can help a person learn to read words and music in Braille.

For more information, visit www.tack-tiles.com or call 800-822-5845.



Marlee Signs

Marlee Signs is a mobile app by Academy Award winning actress Marlee Matlin and MEDLMobile. Matlin, who is deaf, teaches users basic sign language through a series of videos in which she demonstrates American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary. The app and a basic sign language lesson pack are free. There is a small cost to buy other lesson packs.

For more information, visit www.medlmobile.com or call 714-617-1991.



The Right Paint Brush

The Right Paint Brush has an ergonomically designed handle to allow your wrist to be in a more neutral position while painting. The brush can be used for precision and broad strokes.



For information, visit www.arthritissupplies.com or call 877-750-0376.



Mobilift CX Portable Stage Lift

The Mobilift CX is a vertical platform lift that is manually powered and portable. The device may be used inside or outside. It can provide access to school stages, outdoor bleachers and elevated platforms for people who use wheelchairs/scooters or have difficulty climbing stairs.

For more information, visit www.adaptivelifts.com or call 800-448-4652.

Tracer Art Projector

The Tracer Art Projector makes full color images larger so you can view, scale and trace them.

You can project an image onto a canvas, wall, wood or another object. The Tracer is available in child and adult models.

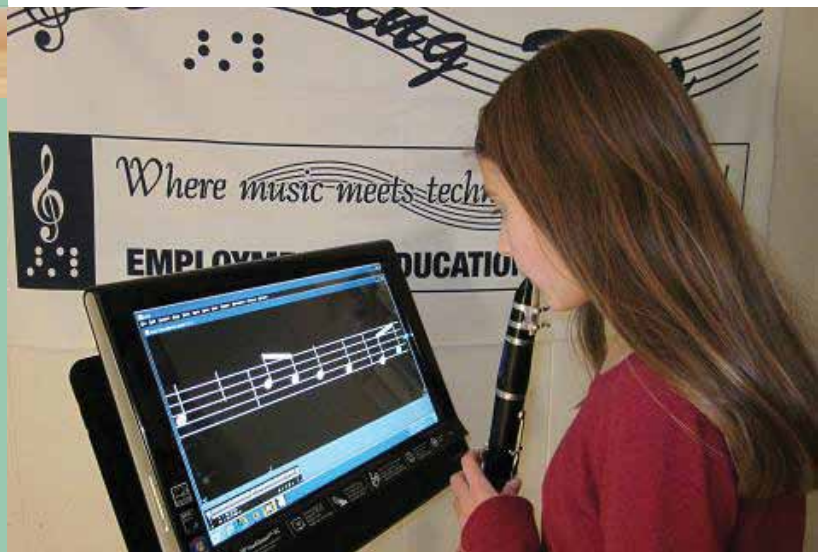


For more information, visit www.artograph.com or call 888-975-9555.

Lime Lighter

The Lime Lighter is a program that magnifies music for people with low vision. The music moves from right to left on the screen to help reduce the need to shift one's eye gaze. Pressing a pedal changes the music on the screen to the next measure. A songwriter can also use the device to enter musical notes and print a piece of music.

For more information, visit www.dancingdots.com or call 610-783-6692.



Agritourism

What is Agritourism in West Virginia?

Agritourism is an agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm, ranch or vineyard. In West Virginia, it is a wonderful way to invite in and out-of-state visitors to show what the state has to offer, while helping agriculture and locally owned businesses. Here are some examples of agritourism:

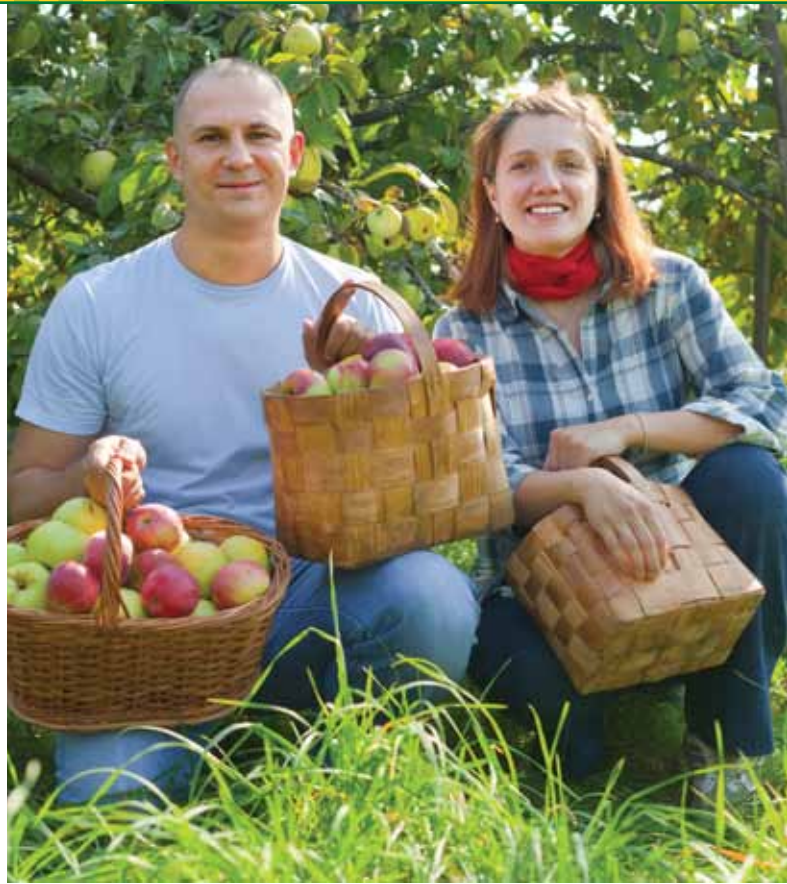
- “Pick your own” produce activities
- Farm vacations
- Bed & Breakfasts
- Horseback riding
- Youth camps
- Music festivals
- Corn mazes
- Haunted houses and hay rides
- Holiday celebrations
- Harvest festivals
- Farmers' markets
- Vendor attractions at state and county fairs
- Roadside produce stands
- Agricultural education tours and demonstrations
- Gift shops for selling canned foods from the farm (e.g., apple butter, wine, honey) and herbal/organic products (e.g., beeswax candles, tea, potpourri, handmade wool sweaters)

Agritourism can be a positive work experience for people with disabilities. It can offer an alternative for a farmer who has a disability or limitation that makes traditional work tasks harder to do.

For example:

Challenge: A farmer with a back injury and chronic pain has limitations in picking large quantities of produce.

Solution: The farmer began a “pick your own” business. The farm invites the public on the weekends so people can pick their own tomatoes, pumpkins, grapes or whatever fruit and vegetables are in season.



Agritourism can also provide equal access to programs and activities for people with disabilities in an inclusive environment.

For example:

Challenge: A farmer and his family wanted to open a corn maze attraction on their property after the harvest. They wanted to make the experience available to as many people as possible.

Solution: They designed a corn maze with smooth walking surfaces and walkways wide enough for people who use wheelchairs and mobility devices to navigate safely through the maze.

Challenge: A rancher wanted to start a horseback riding program for kids.

Solution: The rancher worked with a local nonprofit to offer an educational program for children with and without disabilities.

To learn more about agritourism, visit www.wvfarm2u.org, www.wvagriculture.org, or call **304-558-2210**. Ask about the new resource guide, “Agritourism in West Virginia.”

Let's Grow Together: THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

When neighbors come together and create a community garden, amazing things can happen. Sharing this experience can be helpful in many ways. For example:

- Strengthen cooperation and increase communication
- Promote healthy diets and fight hunger
- Develop an accessible green space
- Encourage an inclusive environment in which people can trade garden tasks that focus on abilities rather than disabilities
- Offer opportunities for exercise and relaxation
- Provide a learning ground for all ages through demonstration and active participation.

Like plants, community gardens come in different varieties:

Enabling Gardens - the focus of the garden is on creating an accessible environment. People with disabilities have equal access to gardening and observation opportunities. Accommodating participants, providing ergonomic tools, and using adaptive gardening techniques are keys to success in enabling gardens.

Communal or Allotment Gardens - community members work together to grow and maintain a variety of plants. Participants might decide to share the resulting food equally or donate some of it.

Donation Gardens - volunteers grow produce for the purpose of donating it to local food pantries, soup kitchens or non-profits.

Youth Gardens - children learn about nutrition and gardening through hands-on activities and demonstrations. Lessons may also include science, math and ecology.

Demonstration Gardens - participants learn about gardening techniques. Demonstrations are often given by master gardeners and other specialists.

Accessible Therapy Gardens - hospitals and senior centers sometimes develop accessible therapy gardens for patients, residents and their families to nurture physical and mental health. The facility may offer therapy sessions by a horticulture therapist.

One example of a local community garden in West Virginia is the Green Wheeling Initiative. This initiative has sparked partnerships between volunteers, farmers, educators and local businesses. According to its members, the initiative has taught people of all ages about gardening and wellness, helped strengthen the local food supply and generated revenue for the city.

For more information on this initiative, call
304-404-3030.



Contact WVATS

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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.

The Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) is
designated as the State's lead agency for assistive
technology services.

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Permit Number 34



Helen Panzironi at a Fine Arts opening

Fine Arts Program

The Fine Arts Program at CED offers a way for people with disabilities to participate in the arts within their communities. The program connects people with art shows, exhibits and educational opportunities.

The program's mission is to support artists who have disabilities so they may reach their goals, whether interested in the arts as a job or just for fun. According to Helen Panzironi, Fine Arts and Community Training Program Manager, "The positive benefit for our program participants is that their involvement in the arts highlights what they can do, not what they can't do. All that matters to the arts community is what you produce, how and why you produce it. No-one cares what your disability is."

If you would like to be on the Fine Arts Program mailing list, listserv, and Calling Tree, please contact Debbie Cain at **304-293-4692, ext. 1159**. The CED Fine Arts Program webpage features the Fine Arts Calendar, Artist Registry, Featured Artist, Poetry Corner, Art Gallery and links to other art resources for people with disabilities. To begin your artistic journey, visit <http://finearts.cedwvu.org>.