

WVATS

West Virginia Assistive Technology System Newsletter

Powerful Tools

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Have an Accessible Holiday

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Have a Happy, Accessible Holiday!

This season, make holiday gatherings accessible for you and your guests. Here are some ideas:

Light the inside, outside and stairs of your home. Use nightlights and stick-on lights in hallways, guest rooms and bathrooms to help overnight guests move safely from room to room.

A reacher can be a useful tool for hanging decorations. Use a timer or remote control switch to turn on/off hard to reach holiday lights. Consider fragrance free and battery operated candles.

Make sure pathways are as wide and clutter-free as possible. Lock wheels on rolling furniture so it does not slide. Use non-skid pads with area rugs. If you have a floor that slopes unexpectedly, use brightly colored duct tape to mark the area. Have a temporary ramp ready to make a raised threshold or sunken living room accessible.



Accessible kitchen gadgets can help with cooking. Examples include ergonomic knives, one handed cutting boards, talking thermometers, scales and microwaves, gripping jar openers and a knob turner for the stove. You can also add raised dots to dials and buttons so people who have low vision can use kitchen gadgets more easily.

Assistive devices can also be helpful for meals. Examples include forks, knives and spoons with ergonomic or weighted handles, plates with a raised lip and adapted cups. A portable seat assist lift may help guests who have difficulty getting in and out of a chair.

You can make your bathroom accessible for overnight guests by including a shower bench, portable accessible shower or temporary grab bars that stick to a tub with suction cups.

Gift bags and adapted scissors can make wrapping presents easier. Looking for gift ideas? Assistive technology can make great presents your loved ones can use.

Do you need to borrow assistive technology for the holidays? To find out about devices WVATS has for loan, visit wvats.cedwvu.org or call **800-841-8436**.

Fair Housing Testing in WV

Sometimes testing is needed to find out if a person is being discriminated against under Fair Housing laws. Testing is when volunteers pose as renters or buyers of apartments or homes. A testing coordinator decides if discrimination is taking place based on race, familial status, disability or other classes of people protected by fair housing laws.

Fair Housing testing has been done for the last two years in several West Virginia cities. Sometimes discrimination is easy to spot. For instance, seven properties owned by four different companies were tested. Every property had multiple violations of the Fair Housing Design and Construction requirements. This makes it hard for a person with a mobility impairment to live there.

Testing was also done to make sure reasonable accommodations were granted to people with hearing loss. These tests showed a high percentage of discrimination.

On the other hand, when testing was done for discrimination based on mental illness, the majority of tests showed no evidence of discrimination. While this finding may be good, it may not really reflect the housing issues of people with mental illness.

Testing for Fair Housing will continue in West Virginia. You can become a volunteer tester and receive a small stipend. Contact the WV Housing Advocate at **304-296-6091** for more information or visit the WV Fair Housing Action Network website at www.wvfairhousing.org.



Halloween Costume Ideas

Coming up with a costume can be tricky. It is quite a treat though when you choose a good one. For accessible costume ideas, check out the article, "Halloween Costumes for People Using a Wheelchair" from the Reeve Foundation at www.christopherreeve.org. For tips on going trick-or-treating with a child who has a disability, you can access "Ten Tips for Halloween and Children with Disabilities" at <http://pioneerthinking.com>.



Photo courtesy of Kasey Tararuj

Adapted Bluetooth iHome

You can use Bluetooth enabled device and listen to your favorite music on the iHome station. Enabling Devices adapted this iHome device with six 2½ inch switches, which control tracks forward and backward, volume up and down, pause and on/off. The iHome has a full range of sounds, dual alarm clocks, backlight LCD with time and an alarm time. Also, the device has an audio input jack for non-Bluetooth devices (e.g. MP3 player) and a USB port for charging your devices. (iPad not included.)



For more information, visit enablingdevices.com or call **800-832-8697**.

Portable Multifold Suitcase Ramp

The Portable Multifold Suitcase Ramp is a lightweight ramp for people who use wheelchairs and scooters. The ramp folds and carries like a suitcase. It separates into two pieces for easy carrying, and has a strap that locks the ramp panels together. This ramp has an anti-slip high traction surface. Prairy View Industries (PVI) has a ramp length calculator on its website to help you decide what ramp length to order.

For more information about a variety of ramps, visit www.pviramps.com or call **800-554-7267**.



Wireless Single Outlet Holiday Light Controller

With the Wireless Single Outlet Holiday Light Controller, you can control outdoor holiday lights or decorations from inside your home. The device has one electrical outlet. You can switch an item on/off within a 50 foot range by using a battery operated keychain transmitter.

For more information, visit www.1000bulbs.com or call **800-624-4488**.



Liftware

Liftware is a utensil that can help make eating easier for people with hand tremors. The device comes with a spoon attachment and has a rechargeable battery. Liftware has tremor sensors in the handle that respond to help steady the device.

For more information, visit www.liftlabsdesign.com or call **877-959-5438**.

Color-Change LED Candle Set

The Color-Change LED Candle Set has three pillar candles (4 inch, 5 inch and 6 inch) and a remote control. These unscented candles come in 12 different colors and are battery powered. They have a timer that automatically turns them off after either 4 or 8 hours. The remote control works within a 20 foot range of the candles.

For more information, visit www.thinkgeek.com or call **888-433-5788**.



My-T-Fine Cutter

The My-T-Fine Cutter is an electronic tool with an ergonomic design. It can cut fabric, cardboard, wrapping paper and more. The tool itself is cordless, and charges while sitting on a base with a corded charger.

For more information, call **888-739-4120** or visit www.joann.com.



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

Learning about Agricultural Safety at the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of America (RESNA)

WVATS staff attended a full-day RESNA instructional course on AT and Safety in Agriculturally-Related Workplaces at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana. To learn more about RESNA, visit www.resna.org or call 703-524-6686.

Bill Field and Steve Swain from the National AgrAbility Project taught the course. Participants learned about conducting assessments with farmers with disabilities, and visited a farm where a farmer with a disability has used assistive technology in order to continue cultivating corn and soy beans.



The group also visited Life Essentials, a company that customizes agricultural vehicle controls and lifts. For example, the company customized a running board lift for a truck. The lift raises and lowers the foot step to make it easier for the driver to climb up into the cab. For more information about Life Essentials, visit www.lifeessentialslifts.com or call 765-563-3158.



Digging in the Dirt with WVATS

This summer, WVATS had fun digging in the dirt to highlight accessible gardening. Carmen Fullmer, a WVATS Assistive Technology Specialist for Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints planted vegetables, herbs and flowers in raised beds, hanging pots and containers outside the Center in Morgantown, West Virginia. Inside, even more plants were cultivated in WVATS's demonstration labs.

Carmen also gave presentations about accessible gardening at the WV Social Work Conference in Charleston and the Robert Jackson Senior Conference in Ripley, West Virginia. To learn about accessible gardening, check out our fact sheet series, blog and Farm and Garden webpage at wvats.cedwvu.org/farm-and-garden or call 800-841-8436.



Palram Plant Inn Compact

The Palram Plant Inn Compact is a small raised garden bed with storage underneath. It can help extend your growing season because it works as a mini greenhouse in warm weather and a cold frame in cool weather. It has polycarbonate panels with a half opening option to control temperature, ventilation and humidity. This compact raised bed is made to fit against a wall on a deck, balcony or other small space. The product also includes a planting tray, internal water drainage and plant hangers for trellising, e.g. cherry tomatoes.

For more information, visit www.accessiblegardeningtools.com.



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Holiday Greetings

Giving and getting greeting cards for holidays, birthdays and other times can be a great way to share occasions with the people in our lives. Finding a card for a friend or family member who has low or no vision can be a bit harder though. One idea would be to send a card with a song or recorded message inside. Another idea is to make your own card, and include tactile features like raised letters and fuzzy shapes. Big greeting card companies may carry a few braille or large print cards. Other companies specialize in making braille or large print cards. For example:

The Braille Bookstore at www.braillebookstore.com or
800-987-1231

Braille Boutique at www.brailleboutique.net or **817-896-2953**

Braille Enterprises at www.brailleenterprises.com or
410-877-5835

CNIB at www.cnib.ca or **866-659-1843**

Fine Arts America at fineartamerica.com or **312-238-9009**

Shadows in the Dark at www.shadowsinthedark.com or
210-376-0017

Zazzle at www.zazzle.com or **888-892-9953**

WVATS wishes you a wonderful — and accessible— holiday season!

