

WWATS

West Virginia Assistive Technology System Newsletter

AT for Mental Health

People with mental health issues can face many difficulties in order to perform activities of daily living or other work. Assistive Technology (AT) may assist a person in finding ways to help with some of the problems that come up. In this newsletter we list some common issues and AT ideas.

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AT for Mental Health

A mental illness can be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when it substantially limits a person's ability to perform a major life activity. A mental health condition is often hidden and others do not notice. For example, a person may have problems with activities like sleeping, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and learning.

Assistive technology can help people with daily living activities. For instance, taking medication can often help an individual remain in their home and community. They must take the medication as prescribed in order for it to be effective, though. For individuals who have problems remembering to take their pills, a medication reminder can be a valuable tool.

The ability to access and use computers, tablets, smart phones and other electronic devices can also help improve their quality of life. Being able to connect to services like counseling and emergency helplines, communication through social media, positive reinforcement and biofeedback apps, paying bills online and other activities are tools to maintain independence.

Some people with a mental health disability may also benefit from using a service animal. A service animal is one which is individually trained to perform tasks to help a person with a disability. A service animal might be trained, for example, to bring medications, provide balance support for standing or walking, carry a message, go get help or push an emergency switch.

To find out about assistive technology devices WVATS has for loan, call **800-841-8436**.

Here are some other common issues and AT ideas that may help:

Trouble waking up or staying awake: bed shaker or alternative alarm clock; doze alert

Memory: reminder watch; paper or electronic organizer; audio recorder

Concentration: sound absorbing panels; personal assistive listening device (ALD); white noise machine or fan

Reading: tablet with audio output; voice output software

Writing: speech recognition software; note-taking software

Lack of sunlight: full spectrum lighting; virtual window or sky panel for a windowless office

Relaxation: environmental sound machine; worry stone; CD's, DVD's and apps for meditation, visualization and progressive muscle relaxation techniques



PATHS gets White House Award

The Partnerships in Assistive Technologies (PATHS), Inc. has been awarded two very important honors from the White House and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The state nonprofit implemented a project designed by the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) in partnership with the Kanawha Putnam Emergency Planning Committee.

PATHS is the recipient of the "Technological Innovation Award" from the White House Individual and Community Champions of Change, and one of the FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards. These awards recognize the outstanding efforts of individuals, programs and organizations throughout the country working to prepare their communities for emergencies.

FEMA received more than 230 applications for the Individual and Community Preparedness Awards from public, private, tribal and nonprofit organizations as well as from individuals. Winners were chosen among applicants from 43 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The 11 recipients of FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Awards were recognized at a ceremony held during National Preparedness Month in Washington, D.C. During the ceremony, recipients shared information on projects with fellow emergency management leaders.

PATHS was awarded these honors for its TapToTalk project.

The project was designed by WVATS staff member Regina Mayolo. Using the TapToTalk app, originally designed as a tool for students in school, PATHS created a picture communication system (album) to provide information to drivers and express the desires of riders. Examples of this would be driver-to-rider, "pull the cord to stop," or from rider-to-driver, "please lower the bus." PATHS members decided that this communication system could also work with other service providers, especially professional emergency responders.

In partnership with the Kanawha Putnam Emergency Planning Committee, PATHS developed a series of albums to help police, fire and emergency service providers communicate with survivors, witnesses or other individuals who may have communication issues. These issues could include individuals with neurological issues, behavioral issues and limited english proficiency. In addition to a basic intake album that is used by all responders, each professional group has an album that is specific to their needs. The albums are available in six languages.

The goal was to create questions that could be answered by a simple "yes" or "no" response. Specific questions for the individual provider albums include "did you see what happened?" or a series of questions describing the perpetrator. But the first three - and most important - questions for any user are "can you hear me?", "can you understand me?" and "do you speak English?" Responses to these questions will let responders know if the TapToTalk album will be an effective form of communication with specific individuals.

For more information about the project or the TapToTalk app, call WVATS at **800-841-8436**.

ARE YOU...

- Being charged a fee for a support animal?
- Having a hard time finding a place to live because everything you look at has steps?
- Thinking that your landlord is being unfair to you because of your disability?

YOU MIGHT BE A VICTIM OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION.

Contact the WV Fair Housing Action Network today at **304-296-6091** or **844-212-3464** (toll-free)

WakeUpLand

WakeUpLand is a call service for people who have trouble waking up or remembering appointments. You can sign up for the service to schedule wake up calls and text reminders. The company currently offers monthly and prepaid plans.

For more information, visit www.wakeupland.com or call 866-399-9253.



MindShift App

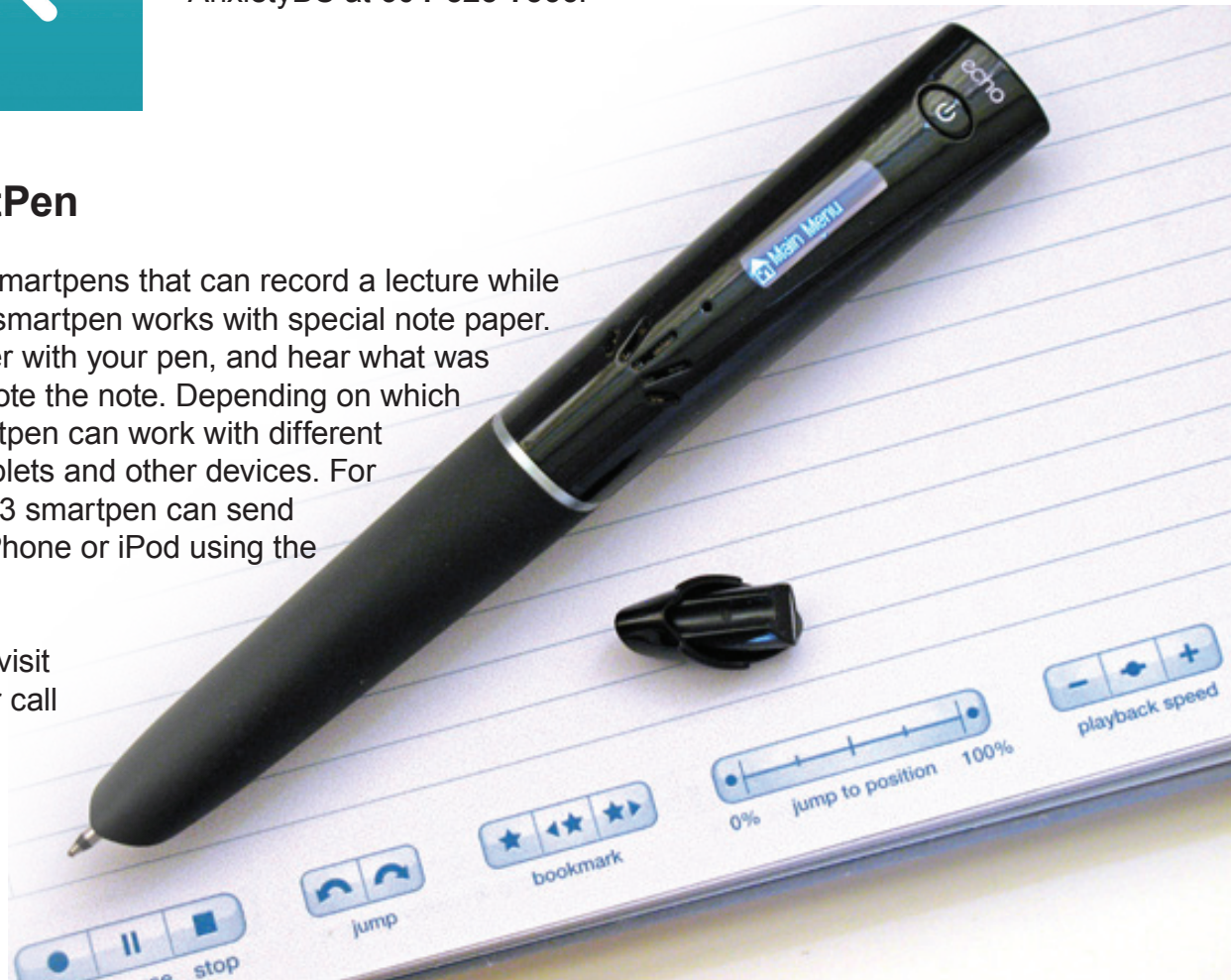
MindShift is an app that may help individuals cope with anxiety. The app has tools to help deal with different types of anxiety, a symptom checklist, an active steps checklist, motivational statements, relaxation exercises and mindfulness strategies. Users can set up a password for privacy. MindShift is available for use with Apple and Android devices.

For more information, visit www.anxietybc.com/mobile-app or call AnxietyBC at 604-525-7566.

Livescribe SmartPen

Livescribe has many smartpens that can record a lecture while you are taking notes. A smartpen works with special note paper. You can tap on the paper with your pen, and hear what was happening when you wrote the note. Depending on which one you choose, a smartpen can work with different software, computers, tablets and other devices. For example, the Livescribe 3 smartpen can send your notes to an iPad, iPhone or iPod using the Livescribe+ mobile app.

For more information, visit www.livescribe.com or call 877-727-4239.





Verilux HappyLight 5000

The Verilux HappyLight 5000 is a light box that provides natural spectrum light similar to daylight. It was designed for people who do not work near a window, or work shift work, or experience the “winter blues” from seasonal affective disorder. People with mood, energy and concentration problems may try the light box as an alternative to fluorescent lights or traditional task lamps.

For more information, visit www.verilux.com or call 800-786-6850.



Sound Soother White Noise Machine

The Sound Soother White Noise Machine is a clock radio that can soothe you with relaxing nature sounds. You can choose between 20 sounds (e.g., ocean waves, birds or wind chimes), white noise, beeping alarm or radio.

For sound samples or more information, visit www.sharperimage.com or call 877-714-7444.

SKYPANELS

SKYPANELS are light diffusers that can reduce glare coming from fluorescent lighting. SKYPANELS replace traditional lighting panels. The panels are available with different images of blue sky and clouds to help create a more relaxing environment.

For more information, visit www.usaskypanel.com or call 888-475-9726.



Four More Years for West Virginia AgrAbility

West Virginia AgrAbility (WVA) has been awarded four more years of funding. WVA, established in 2001, is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded program.

West Virginia AgrAbility helps with independence and success for farmers and family members who have physical or cognitive disabilities from illnesses or injuries. These include developmental disabilities, chronic health conditions and aging. WVA helps with the quality of life for farmers by assisting with solutions to overcome barriers on the farm or home.

WVA helps farmers and farm families become aware of assistive technologies and modified work practices.

Project partners include West Virginia University Cooperative Extension — Safety and Health Extension, West Virginia State University, the Arc of the Mid Ohio Valley (ArcMOV) and West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS).

For more information about WVA, call **800-626-4748** or visit agrability.ext.wvu.edu.

Gorilla Lift Trailer Tailgate Assist

The Gorilla Lift Trailer Tailgate Assist may help make heavy trailer tailgates and ramps easier to control. The device uses counterbalancing to allow a person to use much less effort when raising or lowering the tailgate/ramp. The Gorilla Lift has a 2-sided assist to prevent uneven wear on the trailer. The lifting mechanisms are fully covered to help prevent injury.

For more information, visit www.northerntool.com or call **800-221-0516**.



Branching Out

with Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints

Sharing accessible gardening with others is a great way to learn and grow. It is even better to find ways to branch out, spreading that knowledge and experience further.

One of this year's Green Thumbs awardees, the Mineral County Family Resource Network (MCFRN), branched out in many ways by forming local partnerships. Their project partnered with the Potomac Heights Center to bring "Let's Get Started" sessions and balcony gardening to the residents of an assisted living high-rise. They also partnered with Heartland of Keyser to share "Garden on the Move," a mobile cart of potted plants, with its residents. The group also worked with the Developmental Center to build accessible raised beds of all different sizes and heights. Finally, the MCFRN project partnered with Brookedale Farms to sponsor "Grandparents and Me Day". This interactive day included learning about soil, plants, fruits, vegetables and fall foliage, making "dirt dessert" and touring a local greenhouse.

The Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints program has been sharing accessible gardening with West Virginians since 2007. The program continued to expand its efforts during the 2014 growing season by awarding mini grants to 13 West Virginia organizations. This funding helped the groups to garden with people who have arthritis and joint limitations, while combining community service and accessible gardening practices. Applications for the 2014-15 season are being reviewed.

Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints is funded by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health Osteoporosis and Arthritis Program. For more information on this project, call **800-841-8436** or visit **www.greenthumbs.cedwvu.org**.

GardenEase Kneeler

The GardenEase Kneeler may help reduce back and knee strain while gardening at ground level. The device has round ergonomic "EZ-Grip" handles that may make it easier for you to raise and lower yourself. The kneeler has a contoured foam knee pad that can be used separately.

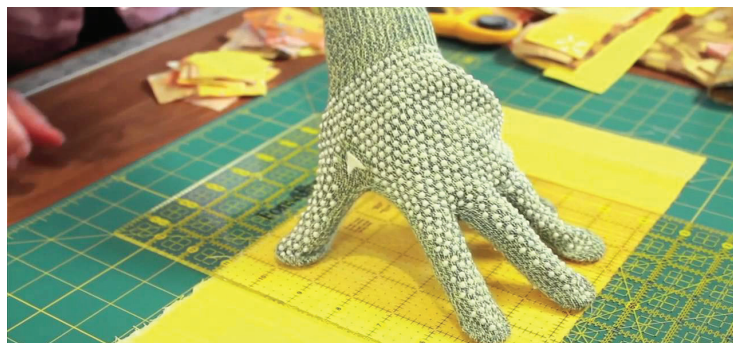
For more information, visit **www.gardeners.com** or call **888-833-1412**.



Klutz Glove

The Klutz Glove is designed to protect your hand from getting nicks and cuts. It is made of stainless steel and has rubber dots for gripping. This cut-resistant glove can be worn on either hand.

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



Contact WVATS

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

WVATS Newsletter Editor:

Carmen Fullmer

(cfullmer@hsc.wvu.edu)

Editorial Committee: Melina Danko,

Carmen Fullmer, 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.

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

WVU CED/WVATS/11-2014

Website address: www.wvats.cedwvu.org



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Horse Assisted Therapy

Horse assisted therapy makes it possible for many people with disabilities to ride and bond with horses. There are different types of horse assisted therapy.

Therapeutic riding is recreational horse riding lessons adapted so people with disabilities can take part. The rider may learn skills like how to ride, direct the horse and use the reins. To find out more, visit oneagleswingswv.org or call **304-288-9748**.

Hippotherapy uses the movement of a horse as a treatment tool. It is typically led by a physical, occupational or speech-language therapist. The therapist might set goals with the person like improving body movement, balance, cognitive function and attention. To learn more, call **317-872-4166** or visit www.childrenstheraplay.org.



Not all horse assisted therapy includes riding. **Equine Assisted Learning** and **Equine Assisted Psychotherapy** focus on ground-based experiences — like petting and grooming — while learning and processing feelings. To learn more, visit www.rctrc.org or call **304-743-5267**.

Horse assisted therapy may use assistive technology like an adaptive saddle, cushions, special belts and cinches, balance vest, helmet, ramp and horse mounting platform. For more information, visit www.adaptiveridinginstitute.org or call **503-743-3890**.