

WVATS

WEST VIRGINIA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM



2016 **ANNUAL REPORT**

MISSION STATEMENT



WVATS is dedicated to increasing access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for West Virginians of all ages and all types of disabilities in the areas of education, health, employment and community living.

MESSAGE FROM WVATS COUNCIL



On behalf of the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) Council, I am honored to introduce this Annual Report for 2015-16.

The staff of WVATS has continued to serve West Virginians with an abundance of high quality and varied programs in the areas of employment, education, information technology, telecommunications, and community living and is continuously working to improve those programs. Whereas “technology” is synonymous with tools, equipment and machinery, the WVATS staff’s enthusiasm and expertise provides a delivery system that brings those devices to life for consumers.

During the past year, WVATS presented **1,594** device demonstrations, **44** trainings, provided **354** device loans to individuals, family members and professionals, generated **21,659** website hits and along with subcontractors, partnerships and collaborations, provided service to over **5,000** Mountaineers. Your tour of this report will reveal many specific examples of assistive

technology at work.

This past year has been both demanding and productive. It is anticipated that 2017 will continue to provide opportunities for WVATS to fulfill its mission of increasing access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services for West Virginians of all ages and with all types of disabilities.

I am delighted to be involved with WVATS and look forward to their continued excellence as they fulfill their mission.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ronald W. Brown', written over a horizontal line.

Ron Brown, Chairman
WVATS Council

WVATS STATE PLAN

Federal funding to each state supports an assistive technology (AT) state plan to increase access to, and acquisition of, assistive technology for individuals with disabilities in the areas of education, employment and community living. West Virginia received **\$423,756** under the Assistive Technology Act Section 4 for the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) to oversee the AT state plan for West Virginia.

Assistive technology devices are used to perform tasks that would otherwise be difficult or impossible. These devices can be as complex as tablets with specialized apps or as simple as Velcro used in place of buttons or shoe laces. Assistive technology services help people learn how to choose and use assistive devices.

Through its many programs and projects, WVATS provided services directly to West Virginians in **41** counties in 2015-16. Many training and technical assistance activities were to organizations with statewide participants and representatives from all 55 counties. The map below indicates the 41 counties where direct services were provided.

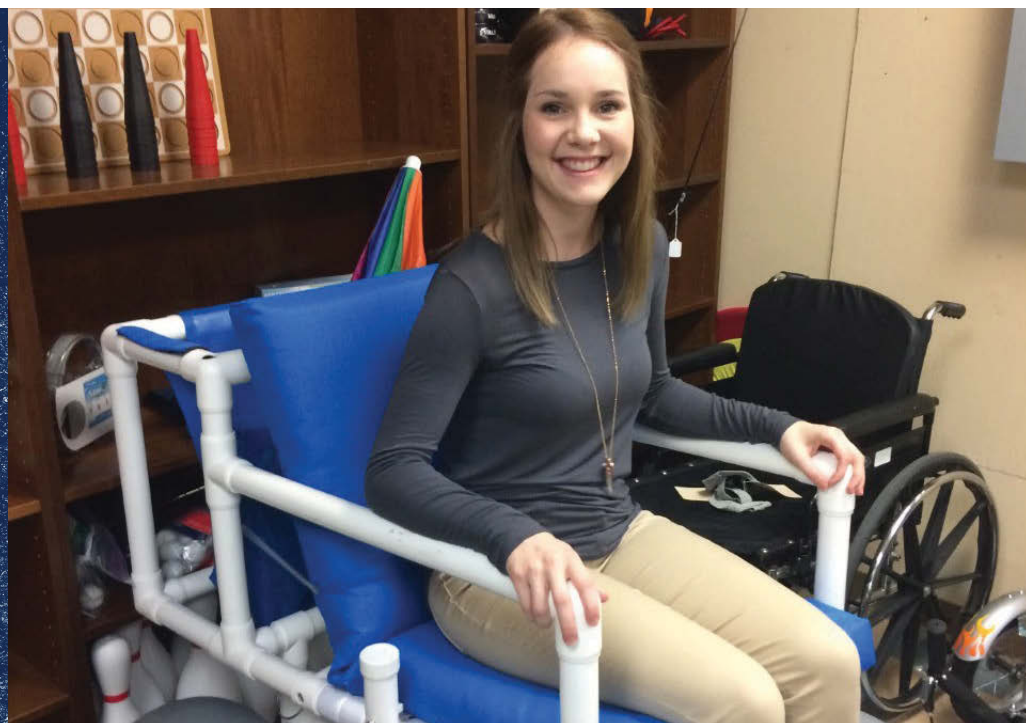




DEMONSTRATION LABS

WVATS has several assistive technology (AT) demonstration labs located at the Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) main office in Morgantown. The labs are comprised of a series of rooms and outdoor seasonal areas featuring different types of AT devices. They include displays of capability switches, office related AT, tablet and computer access, augmentative and alternative (AAC) communication devices, talking products, assisted seating, temporary bathroom assistance, grooming aids, kitchen adaptations, raised garden beds and accessible recreation. Lab tours were provided to professionals, families, students, funders and vendors, as well as individuals with disabilities.

WVATS is committed to providing a comprehensive array of assistive devices to help individuals with disabilities address their interests in all elements of life, including recreation. The beach wheelchair and the recumbent bicycle are two of the newest items now available for demonstration or loan from the WVATS Loan Library.



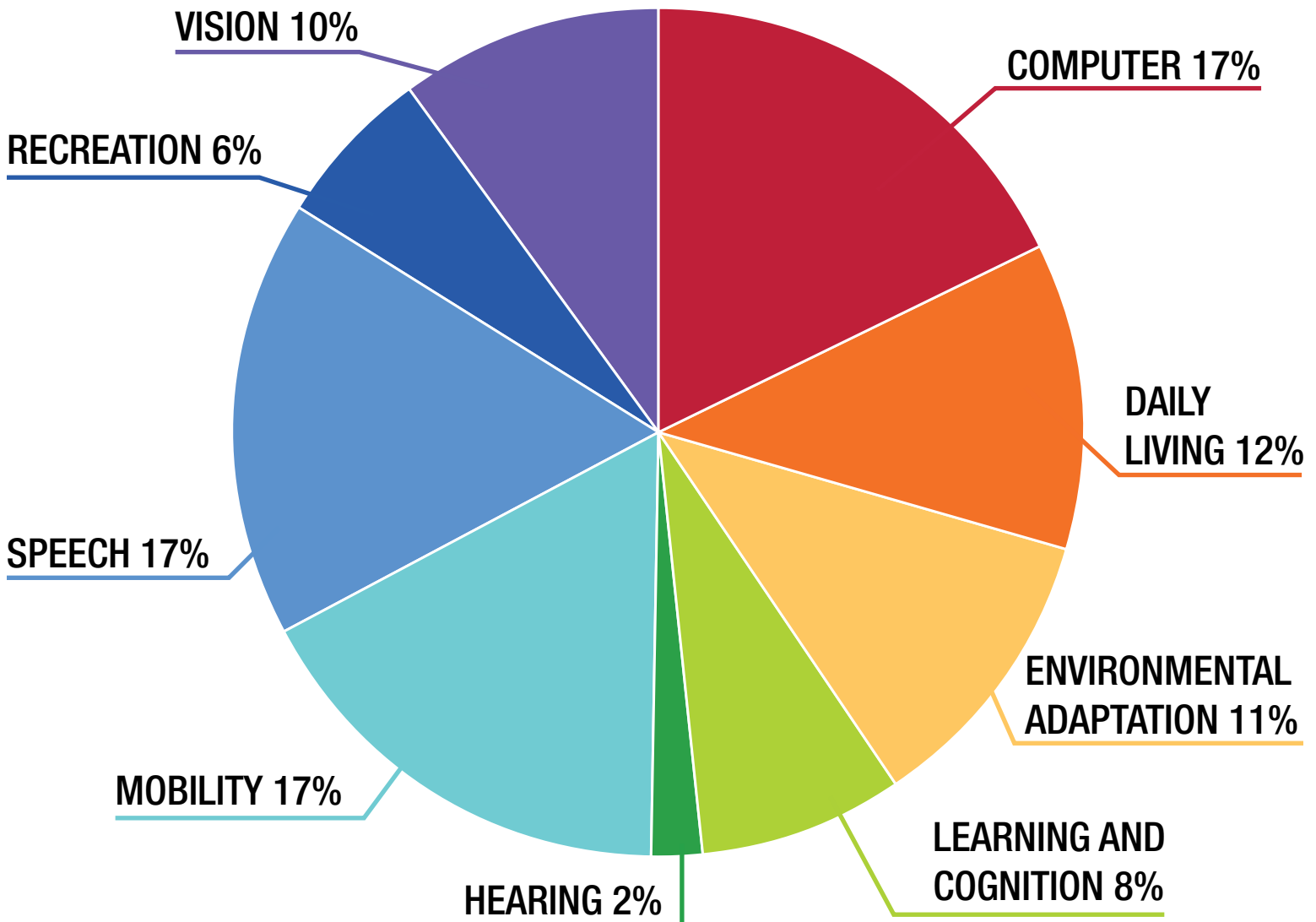
REUTILIZATIONS, LOANS, DEMONSTRATIONS

WVATS total demonstrations, as documented in the federal reporting for 2015-2016, show **1,594** demonstrations. Demonstrations include hands-on use and instruction by a member of the WVATS staff or subcontractor, either in one of our labs or on site at trainings.

WVATS also reported **69** individual reutilizations of assistive devices. This number includes assistive devices that were either donated to WVATS or devices that were in the loan library originally and upgraded to current standards, and have been given to West Virginians to keep. It is estimated that the cost benefit of this program to state residents was over **\$10,000** during the past fiscal year.

The Loan Library is a significant part of the three federally mandated programs at WVATS. The Library loans at least one device nearly every day a year to a West Virginia resident or organization, and tracked **354** loans during the past year. The following shows the most popular loans by overall percentage:

MOST POPULAR LOANS





TRAININGS

WVATS provided **44** trainings in 2015-16 to almost **1,800** participants on general information about WVATS, what assistive technology is and how to get funding for devices. WVATS also provided specific trainings upon request from agencies and organizations including topics such as aging-in-place, accessible meetings, recreation, emergency preparedness, disability etiquette, gardening, housing, service animals, AT for information technology, augmentative and alternative communication, and other AT, ADA and civil rights issues.

Trainings were provided to **13** different agencies or organizations with statewide missions including *Take Me Home, West Virginia*, the state's Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, National Federation of the Blind of West Virginia, the 2016 WVDE Celebrating Connections Conference, the 2016 West Virginia Housing Conference, WVDRS Citizen Advisory Committee Annual Meeting, WV Hospitality Education and Training, People First, WV Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, State Garden Club and the 2015 Governor's Conference on Tourism.

GRANTS & SPECIAL INITIATIVES

WVATS continues to look for new and innovative ways to introduce and support the use of assistive technology to residents throughout the state, in addition to ongoing initiatives. In 2016, two unique opportunities were part of this focus.

WVATS worked in partnership with Disability Rights of WV and the Center for Excellence in Disabilities to try to increase accessibility at voting locations across the state through the use of assistive technology. This assistance included Braille of candidate lists, technical assistance on devices for sensory impairments and physical access, and loans of devices for use at polling locations. In addition, accessible voting was a feature story for the fall issue of the WVATS newsletter. The relationships developed with County Clerk offices will provide a foundation for continued efforts in the use of assistive technology for accessible voting in the future.

Parts of West Virginia were devastated by flooding in the summer of 2016. WVATS responded in many ways, most significantly through efforts to support West Virginia Save the Children. Many of the families impacted included adults and children with disabilities. WVATS staff contacted each family personally to explore ways to replace needed AT but also to look at the overall situation to see if additional devices or services were needed and make the connections to appropriate agencies and organizations.



Tomatoes and Eggplant growing in a raised-bed garden located at the WVU CED in Morgantown.

GREEN THUMBS, HEALTHY JOINTS

The Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints (GTHJs) program brings accessible gardening to West Virginians with arthritis, osteoporosis, musculoskeletal conditions, joint limitations and other challenges. The program is funded by the WV Bureau for Public Health, Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease.

Each year, funding is awarded to nonprofits for accessible gardening projects around the state. There were **15** project awards in 2015 and **9** project awards in 2016. Individual award amounts were provided of up to **\$1,000** to help cover material costs for construction of raised beds, accessible walkways, benches and other adaptive features. Groups were required to spend a portion of the money (\$150-\$275) on assistive technology that can make agricultural tasks easier, like ergonomic tools, kneepads, gloves, garden stools and carts. Rain barrels and drip irrigation are popular watering methods.

Groups have created accessible gardens at senior centers, homeless shelters, low-income housing complexes, public parks and community centers. To date, **80%** of counties have had at least one project.

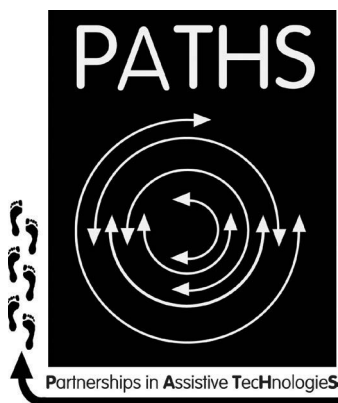
Volunteers are the heart of the program, which encourages participation by gardeners of all abilities. During the 2015-16 growing seasons, GTHJs projects reported that **426** volunteers donated **4,713** hours of community service hours to their accessible gardening projects.



PARTNERSHIPS IN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES (PATHS)

Many people need AT but affording devices can be difficult. In partnership with, and technical assistance from WVATS, PATHS grants offer awards of up to **\$550** worth of equipment/devices to qualified individuals.

Over the years, PATHS has provided thousands of dollars in grants to individuals for devices to assist with activities regarding education, recreation, independent living or just overall quality of life. In 2015-16, PATHS received applications from over a dozen individuals and was happy to be able to provide over **\$3,000** in grants to seven applicants with disabilities.



THE ITEMS PURCHASED THROUGH THE GRANTS INCLUDED:

- Sensory items from hand held magnifiers to mirrors
- Wheelchair cushion
- Daily living aides
- Recreation equipment
- Tablets

In addition, 2016 was an eventful year as PATHS plans for the national Universal Design (UD) conference in 2017. The conference will focus on UD for housing, education and community planning, and will be a co-conference between PATHS, CreateWV and Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development WHATWORKS. The conference will feature many innovative elements including a tour of UD projects in the host city of Charleston, WV; an exhibit hall that will be open to the public, and a schedule of presenters to attract and appeal to a diverse audience.

RESOURCE CENTERS

WVATS contracted with four organizations in West Virginia in 2015-16 to extend its efforts to reach a greater number of West Virginians with disabilities.

NORTHERN WEST VIRGINIA CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (NWVCIL), ELKINS OFFICE

NWVCIL is an advocacy resource center for persons with disabilities and the communities in which they live. The mission of NWVCIL is to educate and empower communities and people with disabilities so everyone has equal opportunity and freedom of choice; and to eliminate housing discrimination to create equal housing opportunity for all regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. As a WVATS subcontractor, NWVCIL Elkins used funds to add assistive technology to its demonstration program that focuses on a wide-range of devices from daily living to recreation.



A doctor from Tucker County called to see where she could borrow a self-propelled gurney for her son. Not only did NWVCIL have a gurney they could borrow, but was also able to deliver it to them. This effort was greatly appreciated as this young man was used to being very active and he had not been out of his apartment for a long time. He was able to use the gurney to go outside and watch the fireworks on the 4th of July. Without this piece of AT, he would not have been able to do that.

ARC OF THE MID OHIO VALLEY (ARC)

WVATS funding helped support the Arc of the Mid Ohio Valley TechLink program that works with individuals and agencies to provide information and assistance in obtaining assistive technology. Techlink provides training on assistive technology issues, promotes the equipment loan program to ensure proper choice before purchasing; and links those in need to used equipment when they may have difficulty affording hands-on access to equipment not readily available to the public.

Ed is 67 years old and has myotonic muscular dystrophy (MD). This is the most common form of MD and causes muscle weakness that makes it difficult for Ed to get around. While waiting for the funding to purchase his own power chair, Ed contacted The Arc of the Mid Ohio Valley. TechLink was able to loan him a power chair for an extended period of three months. During that time, the chair allowed Ed to be independent and able to get to the bus stop so he could go to the grocery store and out into the community. Ed said that without the assistance of TechLink, he would have been unable to go anywhere for weeks at a time until a friend could come and get him. Now Ed has a new apartment and his own power chair so he can continue living out his years.



CAMC PARA-ATHLETIC PROGRAM

As a WVATS subcontractor, CAMC Para-Athletic Program supports demonstrations and promotion of assistive technology for casual and competitive athletics. The program is set up to be welcoming to all athletes that are able to access its Charleston locations. There are two main aspects of this program – to encourage individuals of all ages to be active even if they have never tried recreation sports before, and to help competitive athletes participate in sanctioned events that could propel them to national and international competitions including the U.S. Paralympics.

During the fiscal year 2015-2016 the CAMC Para-Athletic Program adopted the initiative to revitalize the winter wheelchair basketball league, the only one of its kind in the valley. WVATS funds were used to purchase wheelchairs specifically designed for adaptive sporting. This helped to increase participation, participant satisfaction, awareness, and safety. Over 100 demonstrations of this equipment were tracked during this fiscal year.



DISABILITY ACTION CENTER (DAC)

The Disability Action Center's Compass Project incorporates and demonstrates assistive technology in a wide range of classes offered at the center. Through the Compass Project, structured WVATS demonstration classes are offered as well as one-on-one instruction at any time with an appointment.

Specifically with the 2015-16 WVATS funding, the project focused on independence and organization related equipment including the highly popular Simuride Home and Professional Software, a driving simulator/training program that includes beginning driver curriculum and Road Rules Driving Test.



John is a young man who has been practicing on the driving simulator at the DAC. He is a 2016 high school graduate and is currently doing work experience at a local car dealership as a lot attendant. John needs a driver's license to become employed at this dealership so he can continue to work with vehicles which is his real passion. John continues to practice both the hands on driving and book work to obtain his permit and become a licensed driver!

COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

WV AGRABILITY

WVATS is a strategic partner in West Virginia AgrAbility, an accessible agriculture program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA funds more than 20 state programs and has had a presence in the Mountain State since 2001.

West Virginia AgrAbility provides technical assistance, education and information to farmers, farm families and other agricultural workers with disabilities in West Virginia. The program has four partners who work together toward these common goals: West Virginia University Extension Service Safety and Health (its lead organization), West Virginia Assistive Technology System, West Virginia State University and Arc of the Mid-Ohio Valley.



IN 2015-2016 WVATS/ WV AgrAbility staff activities included writing and recording a thirty-second audio Public Service Announcement (PSA) about the WV AgrAbility project, presenting a session on “Caring for the Caregiver” at the 2016 AgrAbility National Training Workshop, and providing an information booth at the National Small Farm Conference in Virginia.

CAMP GIZMO

WVATS was an active participant in Camp Gizmo, which was held from July 9-13 on the campus of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in Romney. Camp Gizmo is a five day retreat where parents of children ages birth to 8 years with significant and multiple developmental needs can learn about available resources and services.

As part of the camp, WVATS had an assistive technology lab that showcased assistive devices ranging from communication devices to assistive computer programs for young children. Parents, children and professionals visited the labs to have one-on-one demonstrations with WVATS staff. Some campers even borrowed equipment from the WVATS loan library.

In addition to the AT lab, WVATS also participated on a panel as well as conducted a training in order to educate parents and professionals on the devices and services that we offer.



STAFF LISTING AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

Advisory Council Members

- Ron Brown, Consumer (Chair)
- Brenda Lamkin, Parent (Vice Chair)
- Ed McDonald, Consumer (Secretary)
- Annette Carey, WV Department of Education
- Jim Cremeans, WV Developmental Disabilities Council
- Jan Derry, Northern WV Center for Independent Living
- Darla Ervin, Consumer
- Herbert Hess, Consumer
- Kathy Hudnell, WV Department of Education
- Cynthia Lokey, WV Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Lauren McCauley, Disability Action Center
- Carol McGhee, Consumer
- Jack McIntire, Consumer
- Randy Pleva, Consumer
- Angie Richardson, WorkForce West Virginia
- Ameer Shah, Consumer
- Kevin Smith, Consumer
- Alvin Wiggins, Parent
- Dena Wildman, Offices of the Insurance Commissioner
- Kathy Knighton, Council Member Emerita

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All printed materials are available in braille, electronic format, CD and large print. WVU is an EEO/Affirmative Action Employer – Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran
The Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) is designated as the State's lead agency for assistive technology services.