



THE FUTURE IS NOW!

PASSION, PURPOSE, PROGRESS...

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

⇒ AT can be low-tech: Communication boards made of cardboard or fuzzy felt.

⇒ AT can be high-tech: Special-purpose computers.

⇒ AT can include hardware: Prosthetics, mounting systems, and positioning devices.

⇒ AT can include computer hardware: Special switches, keyboards, and pointing devices.

⇒ AT can include computer software: Screen readers and myriad communication programs.

⇒ AT can include: Inclusive learning materials and specialized curricular software.

⇒ AT can include much more: Electronic devices, wheelchairs, walkers, braces, educational software, power lifts, pencil holders, eye-gaze and head trackers, and other specialized devices.

Examples of Assistive Technology

No Tech

- Pencil grip
- Post-it-notes
- Slanted surfaces
- Raised lined paper
- Covered overlays
- Tactile letters
- Magnifying bars
- Weighted pencils

Low Tech

- Buzzers
- Portable word processors
- Talking Calculator
- MP3 player
- Electronic organizers
- Switches/Buzzers
- Lights

High Tech

- E-Readers
- Touch screen devices
- Computerized testing
- Speech Recognition Software
- Word Processors
- Text-to-Speech(TTS)
- Progress Monitoring Software



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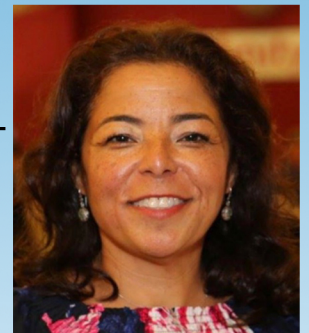
DDS



Assistive Technology Newsletter Congratulations to Patricia Cymbala!

Please congratulate Patricia Cymbala in her new position as a Transition Advisor with a primary focus on Assistive Technology.

Patricia is in the process of becoming a certified AT Specialist, and will be assisting the NR Self-



Determination Division in transforming our supports and services statewide as we endorse and embrace technology as a means to increase independence, safety, mobility, inclusion, productivity, lifelong learning, and more!

For questions about Assistive Technology, please reach out to:

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or

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THE FUTURE IS NOW!

by Patricia Cymbala

In January, I was extremely fortunate to attend the ATIA (Assistive Technology Industry Association) Conference in Orlando, Florida. The conference was a multi-faceted learning opportunity that was both informative and experiential.

Attendees were encouraged to view and test some of the most innovative technology in the world, built to provide individuals with disabilities a better quality of life and level of independence.

I had the opportunity to sample several products at the conference exhibition hall, including a software program called "Smyle". Uday Parshionikar (creator and software developer), created the program to facilitate communication with his son. The program was designed to mimic eyebrow and lip movements.

Once familiar with a face, the user may then control the entire computer by manipulating facial features.

While sampling this product, I was able to smile & select items/icons on the screen. Simply focusing on an item, allowed me to move swiftly and effortlessly through the computer interface.

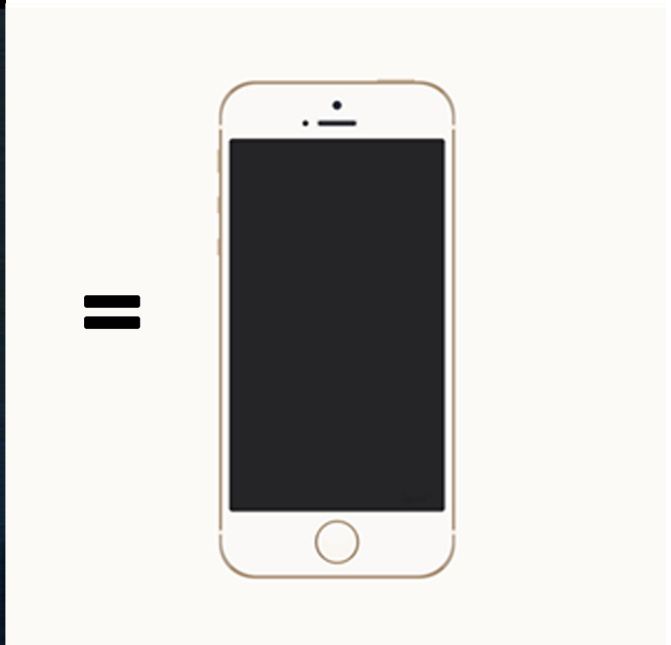
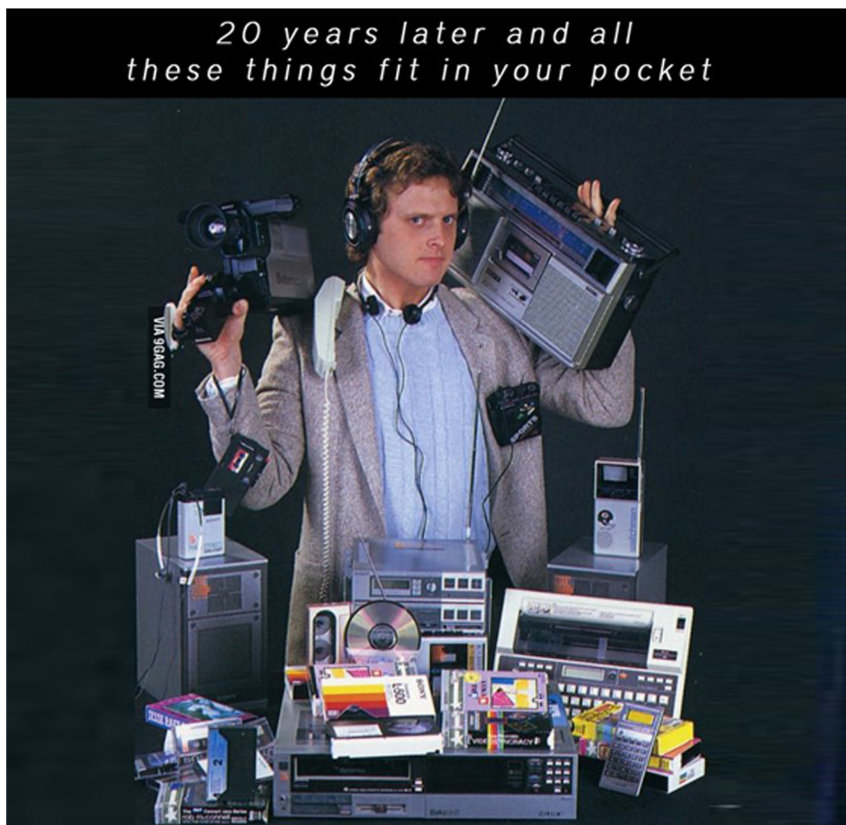
My co-workers (Regional Director, Elisa Velardo, and the Director of Self-Determination, Amy Blazawski), also attended the event. Amy discovered an incredible product that she would not have believed worked if she hadn't tried it herself! She essentially controlled a motorized remote controlled car with nothing other than her thoughts. By willing the car to turn right, the car would go right.



The car would go in any direction her motivated thoughts and cerebral focus willed it to go.

The conference was a tremendous learning experience for all of us. It energized and excited us to come back to Connecticut to share our new insights regarding assistive technology. It challenged us to discover new ways to enable individuals to find their voice, live independently or just help someone live the best life they can with the implementation of our progressive, forward moving, and exciting world of assistive technology.

Yesterdays Technology Vs. Todays Technology



LOCAL MANUFACTURER GIVING NONVERBAL INDIVIDUALS A VOICE

by: Sarah Proto

Glen and Kristi Dobbs' son, Logan, has severe autism and is nonverbal. The professionals told them that Logan will never talk, and that Logan will never be able to use a dynamic screen device. Logan was only going to be able to use a simple picture exchange system for his entire life. The frustration with this answer was evident for both Logan and his parents.

Kristi mused, "What if these [pictures] could talk?"

Glen, an engineer, took that idea as motivation to create the ProxTalker—the first moveable picture communication device that actually talks. Now, instead of handing over a picture of juice to express his want for it, the ProxTalker allowed Logan to verbalize complete sentences. He was able to order a frosty from Wendy's, express "I want to drink juice, please", ask to ride a roller coaster in Epcot, and so much more.

Logan has since moved onto an iPad mini, something his parents and the professionals never imagined him being able to do. The ProxTalker acted as a bridge from picture cards to a dynamic screen device for Logan.

The ProxTalker has helped so many families who were running out of communication solution options:



Zahari is blind and nonverbal. He was orphan in Bulgaria and was adopted by a loving family in Alabama. He had been using a system made by his mom to communicate. The system consisted of tangible picture cards with basic requests—bathroom, play, hungry, thirsty, and a few others.

Zahari is now successfully using the ProxTalker to say "I want to go to McDonalds" and "I want to go outside". He has also been able to communicate an earache to his mom by using the tags "ear", "head", and "hurt". His ProxTalker sound tags have small tactile symbols on them, as well as braille, which he is in the process of learning braille, so Zahari knows which card he is using.

Emily is nonverbal. She was originally taught to use switches to communicate during snack time, but was not effectively communicating using this method. Emily needed a hands-on, tangible way to connect with communicating so she would start initiating her wants on her own.

Emily's ProxTalker is paired with large blank sound tags that have been customized with tangible objects to meet her wants and needs. She uses it to make basic requests. The ProxTalker has helped communication become meaningful for her, which is something that can't be taught.

Tehila is nonverbal and in kindergarten. She favored using her hands to point and show what she wanted. However, once the ProxTalker was introduced, she started using her "words" to communicate what she wants.

AROUND TOWN



Tehila first started using the ProxTalker by pressing one word to express her wants. She would place "drink" on the ProxTalker to share that she wanted juice; she would place "yogurt", which is her favorite thing to request, to indicate that she wanted yogurt. After success with this, her parents affixed the "I want" sound tag to the first square. She would then place "yogurt" on the next square and push down each button to say "I want yogurt". She is now successfully making short sentences.

LoganTech was created with one goal in mind—to make unique, but necessary, communication solutions easily accessible for those in need of it. 30-day product trials as well as free product demonstrations are offered as a way to give potential users an opportunity to see and use the device before making a purchase.

LoganTech manufactures their products locally in Waterbury, CT, primarily using United States suppliers. In addition to the ProxTalker, Logan Tech manufactures the ProxPAD, 6dot Braille Label Maker, and 6dot Braille Coach. They also have AAC iPad, eye-gaze, and low-tech communication solutions.

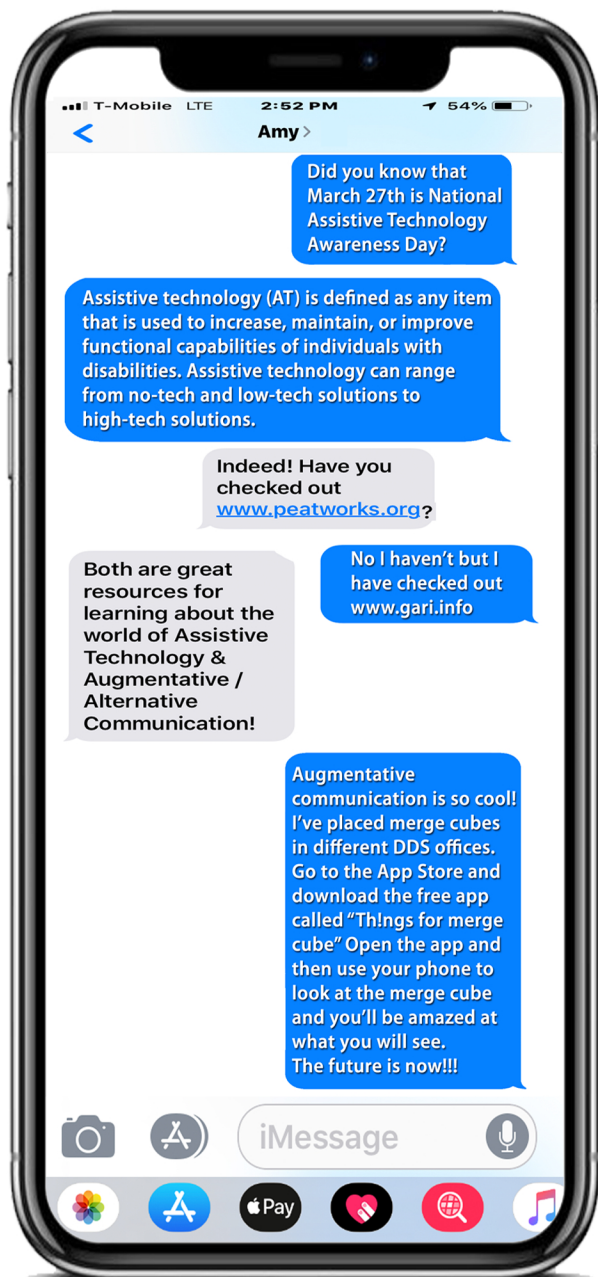
Sarah Proto is the Marketing Associate at LoganTech

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS

NATIONAL AT AWARENESS

On March 11, 2019 the United States Senate declared March 27 as National Assistive Technology Awareness Day. In order to make our department more familiar with assistive technology and to recognize the day, posters were put up in different regional centers and offices to celebrate. On the poster you will find instructions on how to use a merge cube that's near or attached to the poster.

Assistive Technology awareness is not just a day of observation it is everyone's future, it is now. We invite you to go to the Newington Center, East Hartford office, Wallingford office, Willimantic office or Central Office and follow the instructions on the posters and be amazed at what you'll see when you use your cellular phone to view what is on the merge cube.



NATIONAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS DAY



- Download "Th!ngs for Merge Cube" at the app store on your phone. Then open the app.
- You will be instructed that a merge cube is required and you will select the bottom that states "I have one"
- You will then be asked to activate the Merge Cube by entering the activation code number. click "skip" and if you are asked to registrar click "not now"
- Then select **phone mode**
- You will be asked to allow Camera access on your phone click **next**
- You will be asked to allow Photo access on your phone click **skip**, it is not mandatory that you give access to your photos.

Assistive Technology Newsletter Coming Soon

If you would like to know more about Assistive Technology email:
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116th CONGRESS
 1st Session
 S. RES. 103

Designating March 27, 2019, as "National Assistive Technology Awareness Day".

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES
 March 11, 2019
 Mr. Casey (for himself and Mr. Cramer) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION
 Designating March 27, 2019, as "National Assistive Technology Awareness Day".

Whereas assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities and older adults; Whereas the term "assistive technology service" means any service that directly assists a person with a disability or an older adult in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device; Whereas, in 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 1 in 4 people in the United States, or almost 61,000,000 individuals, has a disability; Whereas, in 2017, the Department of Education reported that there were more than 6,700,000 children with disabilities; Whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that, among adults 65 years of age and older, 2 in 5 have a disability; Whereas assistive technology allows people with disabilities and older adults to be included in their communities and in inclusive classrooms and workplaces; Whereas assistive technology devices and services are not luxury items but necessities for millions of people with disabilities and older adults, without which they would be unable to live in their communities, access education, and obtain, retain, and advance gainful, competitive integrated employment; Whereas the availability of assistive technology in the workplace promotes economic self-sufficiency, enhances work participation, and is critical to the employment of people with disabilities and older adults; and Whereas State assistive technology programs support a continuum of services that include—

- (1) the exchange, repair, recycling, and other reutilization of assistive technology devices;
- (2) device loan programs that provide short term loans of assistive technology devices to individuals, employers, public agencies, and others;
- (3) the demonstration of devices to inform decision making; and
- (4) providing State financing activities to help individuals purchase or obtain assistive technology through a variety of initiatives, such as financial loan programs, leasing programs, and other financing alternatives, that give individuals affordable, flexible options to purchase or obtain assistive technology: Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate—

- (1) designates March 27, 2019, as "National Assistive Technology Awareness Day"; and (2) commends—

(A) assistive technology specialists and program coordinators for their hard work and dedication to serving people with disabilities who are in need of finding the proper assistive technology to meet their individual needs; and

(B) professional organizations and researchers who are dedicated to facilitating the access and acquisition of assistive technology for people with disabilities and older adults in need of assistive technology devices.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

BY: AMY BLAZAWSKI

The "AT Demo Series" is in full swing! We have hosted several inventors of some truly amazing AT products to visit our statewide offices to talk about how and why they created their respective products. Our goal has been focused on educating individuals, families, co-workers and stakeholders about the various types of AT products available, and how those products may be used to target the needs of the individuals we assist & support.



Above: West Region Respite Center Staff learn about the "Yeti"

In May, Jarkko Jokelainen (inventor / engineer), flew to CT from Finland to present an innovative and versatile product known as the "Yeti Tablet". The Yeti is the world's largest and most powerful Android tablet in the world.

In June, CT DDS purchased Yeti Tablets for use in each of the statewide family respite centers. CT DDS is official the first state government agency in the nation to embrace the use of this incredible piece of assistive technology!. Several respite center staff in each region have been identified as "AT Champions" and have been engaged in learning the key components of the use and operation of the Yeti. Each center will soon be in receipt of a 65" fully interactive tablet along with additional assistive technology related items to create a true "Smart Home" environment dedicated to teaching, learning, and embracing the holistic benefits of assistive technology!

A big thanks to statewide family respite center staff and administration who are assisting in the effort to promote the quality of life benefits of assistive technology!

In June Dovid Schick the inventor of the of the TAP strap demonstrated how to use his wireless keyboard that converts your hand into a mouse.

The Future is Now!

On June 7, 2019 from 10:30am-12:00pm, the inventor of TAP, a wireless keyboard that allows people to type with or without a surface, will be in the East Hartford office Training Room introducing his invention and talking about why and how he created it.



WHAT'S NEXT?

DDS is making huge strides in ensuring access to technology and information to improve the independence, productivity, and quality of life of people with intellectual disability. Everyone must see that individuals with intellectual disability are educated on current technological advances. Technology is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. Technology is now woven into every aspect of our lives. It is our connection to our community, our society, and our world. There are everyday aspects of our lives that have become so accustomed to and dependent on the use of technology that we have almost forgotten what life was like before. Everyday companies are making greater efforts and investments into moving society away from the use of paper and towards doing business solely on the internet (employment opportunities, banking,



shopping, etc...). As technology continues to evolve it will become increasingly important to educate the individuals we serve about the current and future advances of such technology.

In this new world of technology, DDS stays true and steady to our commitment and mission to partner with individuals we support and their families, to support lifelong planning and to join with others to create and promote meaningful opportunities for individuals to fully participate as valued members of their communities.



The Department is committed to establishing "Smart Home" technology and interactive demonstration sites at the family respite centers, so individuals and families can view and experience a variety of smart home products dedicated to improving quality of life, safety, and independence for everyone who shares the environment. Upon each center receiving AT equipment, the family respite centers will be hubs for interactive learning, discovery, & skill building. Assistive technology is an emerging priority in the planning process for individuals with disabilities, and will remain a necessary focus area within our Department!