



Assistive Technology Plain & Simple

News from the Arizona Technology Access Program

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From Where I Sit



By Randy Collins
AzTAP Program Director

In 2007 Oscar Leonard Carl Pistorius, a double leg amputee, was denied the right to participate in international sprinting competition. Pistorius'

goal was to compete in the 2008 Olympics. The International Association of Athletic Federations met in 2007 to re-write the rules for international competition and, in essence, banned Pistorius - because he was too fast!

The disability community across the world responded, almost in unison,

“Not fair!”

“Boo!”

“Hiss!”

Most of us laughed at the IAAF and at all the naysayers and declared, “You ain’t seen nothing yet! People with disabilities can compete and will compete anywhere and everywhere. Get used to it! We’re just getting started.”

Technology is leveling the playing field. And in some cases it may very well give people with disabilities the advantage. We will have to get used to that. Assistive technology is bringing people with disabilities new power and more power; something we have never had until relatively recently. Along with it we will face new challenges.

Positive self-image is a constant, arduous battle for people with disabilities. Anyone over the age of 35 or 40 can well remember life with limited assistive technology and the negative self-image that came with it. We all remember the days when every disabled person was told that he or she couldn’t compete in anything with the mainstream population because he or she was disabled. What a sweet change it is to begin to hear that people with disabilities now may be too capable. I love it!

Of course we have a long way to go. People with disabilities continue to be denied work, and denied promotions, and denied equal pay. But times are changing and assistive technology is leveling the playing field.

As most of us know, attitudes create disabilities. We are able. Assistive technology has become the tool people with disabilities use to change mainstream attitudes about our capabilities and ultimately about ourselves. One day we will be an acknowledged and an equal part of the mainstream. That day isn’t that far away anymore.

Randy



“Independence is priceless.
We make it affordable.”

C.O.I.N.

The Community Outreach & Information Network (C.O.I.N.) is a community based organization of the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community that provides information, advocacy and resources to meet the needs of people with disabilities and their families within Arizona Native Communities.



In 2003, the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP), a Phoenix-based program of the Institute for Human Development at Northern Arizona University established C.O.I.N. in order to provide better access to assistive technology among underserved populations (Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and African Americans, etc.) In 2007, COIN collaborated with the AZ Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to be able to broaden their scope to broader areas within the disability community.

All C.O.I.N. members are integrally involved with the disability community in Arizona, with many having family members with disabilities. C.O.I.N. members meet quarterly for a potluck lunch to discuss plans for the next outreach, give updates on community activities and to collect or give information regarding disabilities in their respective communities. The food is delicious with diverse cultural dishes and the discussions are equally diverse about disabilities related communities issues. C.O.I.N. members serve as a network for parents and consumers and have participated in a number of outreaches in various underserved communities. Members also attend trainings and presentations offered related to information, services and resources for persons with disabilities at the Disability Empowerment Center.

For more information about C.O.I.N. please contact Lois Evanston, President, at (480) 850-0652.

AzTAP & AzTEDP...What's New?

Since 2004, the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) has managed the device demonstration component for the Arizona Telephone Equipment Distribution Program (AzTEDP) for the Arizona Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ACDHH). Many of you are familiar with this program as the one that provides telecommunication equipment such as TTY's, amplified and Captel phones, phone alerting devices and communication devices on loan to individuals who are hearing impaired, speech impaired and/or Deaf/blind. In March of 2009 the issuance of vouchers for equipment and new devices via the AzTEDP was suspended due to state budget reductions. Since that time individuals that file applications for the AzTEDP are being placed on a "waiting list" and will be contacted when and if more information on the status of the program becomes available. If you want more information on the current status of the AzTEDP, please call (602) 264-6876 or (866) 223-3412.

Despite the suspension of the AzTEDP and our loss of this program AzTAP is committed to continuing on as a resource for individuals and their families to make decisions about Assistive Technology (AT) for their telephone related needs. In our existing AT Demo & Loan program we have a wide variety of all types of AT items that people with disabilities, their families or therapists can access to assist them in making decisions. AzTAP has obtained most of the items available via the AzTEDP and added them to our existing AT or equipment inventory. Because of this an AzTAP AT Specialist is still able to offer a device demonstration to assist a person with making a decision about a piece of telephone related AT. After the demonstration if the person has selected a piece of AT that will work for them AzTAP staff can direct them to either a local or national distributor so that they can purchase the item on their own. Anyone who is interested in pursuing a device demonstration may contact AzTAP at (602) 728-9534 and ask to be connected with an AT Specialist.





Nice Device Proloquo2Go

Maybe this product can be better explained as, “Nice System”. Many people in the AT world have been excited about a new development in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) with the creation of an application program called Proloquo2Go. This is a software application developed by AssistiveWare for the iPhone or iPod touch. I am afraid it may have too many features to explain in this article, so I will “hit the highlights”.

Proloquo2Go is a 250 MB (comparatively small) communication application, which among other places can be downloaded from the App Store through iTunes.



According to the application’s website, it has “natural sounding text-to speech voices, up-to-date symbols, powerful automatic conjugations, a default vocabulary for over 7000 items, full expandability and extreme ease of use.” The website also mentions Proloquo2Go comes with almost 8000 symbols and it is possible to use download photographs.

The software allows pictures and or text to be used to communicate and I would agree, it is extremely easy to use. Although I have programmed AAC devices and software for a long time, I edited one of the pre-programmed communication messages without having to look at the manual within a few moments. It is definitely one of the easiest programs I have used. Although one could communicate without a speaker, it is not recommended unless you are in a quiet room. There are small external speakers commercially available.

Sometimes people come in to AzTAP a little concerned about using technology, because it looks “weird”. This tends to happen with children or young adults who do not want to “look different”. What

could be more common these days than an iPhone or iPod touch? They are great Macintosh devices and very “mainstream”. I should mention this device has no scanning capability, so it would only work with someone who was able to direct select the messages in some way. It would not work with someone who would only be able to use a scanning method for selection.

I still feel this would be a great device for many people, especially considering the price. The price for a basic iPhone is \$199 and the price for a basic iPod touch is \$230. At the time of print for this article, the introductory price of the Proloquo2Go is \$149. According to the website, the price will increase to \$199 after July 31, 2009. This means for approximately \$450, someone can have a handheld, mainstream, picture and text based communication device. This is a contrast to a similar product, which costs approximately \$1600. Once the application is downloaded, all of the iPhone and iPod features still work, so it is not a dedicated device. With this in mind, insurance companies may not pay for the system.

The Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) has an iPod touch with Proloquo2Go available for demonstrations and will soon be obtaining one for our equipment loan program. For a demonstration or other services, please contact AzTAP at 602.728.9534/1.800.477.9921 or by email at AskAzTAP @nau.edu. More information on Proloquo2Go can be accessed online at its website: www.proloquo2go.com.



ATEX

Have you heard about the Arizona Assistive Technology Exchange (ATEX)? The ATEX is a website where Arizona consumers can place and/or review ads to donate, buy, sell or exchange used or new Assistive Technology (AT). What is AT? AT is a broad range of items that



enhance independence and the capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Recently a gentleman from a rural Arizona town was looking for a power wheelchair lift for the family vehicle. With assistance from AzTAP staff he located a gently used lift on the ATEX that met his needs. He contacted the lister here in the Valley and negotiated a deal to purchase the lift for \$200.00. The lift new was valued at over \$2000.00. After coming to the Valley and picking it up he had it installed on his vehicle by a place in his community. At follow up, he was very pleased with the independence with community mobility the lift had brought him. At its heart the ATEX is designed and managed to be a resource to facilitate the reutilization of used AT so that unused items do not go to waste. There are no fees or charges to place or review ads on the ATEX. Start up is easy – just go to the website and click on the “Register” tab to register as a new user. Come and check out the ATEX – you will never know what you will find. www.azATEXchange.org.

Arizona Technology Access Program

Institute For Human Development
Northern Arizona University
2400 N. Central Avenue, Suite 300
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 728-9534 or (800) 477-9921; TTY: (602) 728-9536;
FAX: (602) 728-9535
askaztap@nau.edu
Website: nau.edu/aztap

Randy Collins, Program Director (602) 728-9532
Mellowdee Brooks, Assistive Technology Specialist (602) 776-4667
Clayton Guffey, Assistive Technology Specialist (602) 776-4699
Pamela Alcalá, Program Associate (602) 776-4670
Martha Lewis, Administrative Assistant (602) 728-9534

This document is available in alternative formats by calling (602) 728-9534, and on the World Wide Web at nau.edu/aztap.

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The Arizona Technology Access Program
Institute For Human Development
Northern Arizona University
2400 N. Central Avenue, Suite 300
Phoenix, AZ 85004