



The AT Messenger

bringing technology to you

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) • Volume 16, No. 2 • Spring 2008

Loaner FM Equipment Donated to DATI

Kathleen Riley, MS, CCC-A, FAAA
Educational Audiologist

Hearing aid technology has changed dramatically in the past five years with the inclusion of digital technology. More people with hearing loss have better, more beneficial access to the sounds around them. Multiple microphone arrays and noise suppression algorithms to hear better in noisy backgrounds are included in most mid-level and high-end hearing aids. However, these strategies have not yet conquered the difficult task of separating “noise” (unwanted or unimportant sounds) from the “signal” (speech that you are trying to understand). FM assistive technology remains the most effective way to gain access to speech in a noisy environment.

FM systems are comprised of a transmitter and microphone that are worn by the primary speaker and a receiver that is worn independently or coupled to the listener’s hearing aid. The signal (speech) is sent from the transmitter to the receiver via an FM radio signal. The FCC has assigned and protected certain frequencies for the sole use of FM assistive listening devices.

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FM systems are used by adults in work settings, church assemblies and other group meetings, but the majority of FM systems in use today are used by children in the classroom. Soundfield FM systems use a transmitter worn by the teacher and a speaker on the wall that lets everyone in the classroom hear the amplified voice. Studies have shown these systems to improve attention and academic performance for a large number of students with and without hearing loss. Some students use a desktop receiver, which is about the size of a small lunchbox and is placed on or near the student’s desk. Other students use a personal receiver. That receiver can take the form of a headset, earbud, neckloop with a telecoil, or small “boot” that attaches to the hearing aid. Each configuration has its benefits and drawbacks, depending on the needs of the student and the classroom configuration.

DATI recently received two loaner FM systems from HLADE (Hearing Loss Association of Delaware). HLADE is a support group for persons with hearing loss with ties to the national organization, Hearing Loss Association of America. These systems are available for trial use before purchase by an individual, family, workplace or school system.



Amigo T10 Receiver



Amigo T10 Transmitter

Loaner FM Equipment Donated to DATI (continued)

Audiologists are the trained professionals with expertise in coupling FM systems to existing hearing aids. At this time, DATI does not employ a full-time audiologist, but is working in conjunction with most local audiologists. Persons who are borrowing the loaner systems should contact their private audiologist to verify compatibility and configuration. Families with children ages 0-21 can also contact the itinerant teacher of deaf and hard-of-hearing

students in their local school district to assist with understanding and using the system optimally. Additionally, families or school systems can contact the Statewide Coordinator of Services for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students for support. These new loaner FM systems are manufactured by a leader in amplification, Oticon Corporation. The regional representative is also available for assistance as needed. ■

Places to Go & Things to Do In & Around Delaware

Eileen M. Mapes

DATI Information and Outreach Coordinator

Well, it seems that summer is just around the corner, and many of us will be looking for places to go and things to do. I've put together a list of groups, organizations, and websites that you may find helpful in your quest for ideas in and around our First State. Now, I didn't focus all of my attention on disability specific sites, which means you may need to take a bit of time making sure that your destination will meet all your needs. I also need to tell you that these resources are not presented in any particular order and their inclusion should not be interpreted as an endorsement. In other words, please make sure to do your own investigation into the services, products, and information presented below.

The Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation (www.destateparks.com) is a great resource for finding "places to go," "things to do," and "things to know" in and around our state. If you don't have a computer you can call 302-739-9200 to ask about parks near your home or planned destination. Most state parks are accessible, but it is a good idea to check before visiting to make sure you have a truly enjoyable outing.

Visit Delaware (www.visitdelaware.com or toll free: 866-284-7483) is a source of information for the entire state. A paper copy of the **Visitor Guide** can



be downloaded from the website or requested by phone. The

website provides access to an events calendar, as well as information regarding many areas of interest—arts and culture, history and heritage, sports and gaming, outdoor recreation, and shopping and leisure.



The Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce site (www.beach-fun.com, toll free: 800-441-1329, or email: rehoboth@beach-fun.com) covers the gamut when it comes to the area—accommodations, real estate, services, dining, shopping, events, activities, and attractions.

Curious Parents: Local Resources for Inspired Parents (www.curiousparents.com, toll free: 877-370-8800, or email: Info@CuriousParents.com) provides **Get Up & Go**—activities, places to go, events, and a wide range of family-centered information—all focused in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

Bay Weekly (www.bayweekly.com or toll free: 800-579-0304), the Chesapeake's Independent Newspaper, is your access to things going on in and around the Chesapeake Bay. Make sure to search out the article titled **101 Ways to Have Fun on the Bay**. In addition, I suggest searching for past editions of the article, as each has wonderful ideas for fun on the bay.



Places to Go & Things to Do (continued)

The Sunny Day Guide (<http://www.sunnydayguide.com/rehoboth/index.php>) focuses on the Delaware



Coast. This resource offers access to a calendar of events, area maps, coupons, weather information, and much more.

Holiday Junction (<http://holidayjunction.com/state/delaware>) offers links to Chamber of Commerce websites throughout the state. You'll need to scroll to the bottom of the page and click



on **Tourism Resources** to access the information. Most of the other links take you to lists of lodgings—hotels, motels, inns, and bed-and-breakfast sites. Once you get to the list of Chambers of Commerce, you can access area-specific information in the location of your choice—events calendars, visitor information, and much more. I didn't find a toll free number for **Holiday Junction**, and their office is located in Ontario, Canada. But, just in case you prefer to call them, their number is 613-729-5002.

The **Philly Fun Guide** (www.phillyfunguide.com, email: site_admin@phillyfunguide.com, or 215-557-7811) covers a seemingly endless array of events—



outdoors, sports, and kid-friendly, to name just a few—in the Philadelphia region. What really got my attention on this site was the link titled **Accessible Events** where you can find out about “upcoming arts and cultural events open to the general public that are accessible to people with disabilities and economic disadvantages.”

Clicking on this link will take you to the **Online Arts Accessibility Guide** (http://www.art-reach.org/ARR_AccGu.html, 215-568-2115, or email: info@art-reach.org), then you'll need to click on the **Online Accessibility Guide** link.

This link will take you to a page where you can search events by the type of venue, accessibility feature, and location that meets your needs.



Emerging Horizons: Accessible Travel News (www.emerginghorizons.com, 209-599-9409, or

e-mail: horizons@EmergingHorizons.com) is a subscription based website, \$16.95 per year, though it offers some information online at no charge. The resources found there are focused on people with mobility limitations—



wheelers and slow walkers, as they put it. You can also order several travel publications that could prepare you for and/or enhance your travels. There isn't any travel information about Delaware, or the tri-state area for that matter, but you'll find information about travel in 16 other states as well as international destinations.

Wilderness Inquiry (www.wildernessinquiry.org, toll free at 800-728-0719, email: info@wildernessinquiry.org) is a non-profit organization that makes adventure travel accessible to everyone, regardless of age, background, or ability. There don't



Wilderness Inquiry

seem to be any trips in Delaware or the surrounding states, but there are many opportunities around the country and abroad.

The **National Park Service** (https://pwrCMS.nps.gov/pwr/fees_passes.htm or 202-208-4747) offers a variety of passes. Two passes that may be of particular interest are the **Access Pass** and the **Senior Pass**. The **Access Pass** is free when purchased in a park office by a person with a disability and with qualifying documentation: statement by a licensed physician; document issued by a Federal agency such as the Veteran's Administration, Social Security Disability Income or Supplemental Security Income; or document issued by a State agency such as a vocational rehabilitation agency. The **Senior Pass** is available for \$10 to people 62 years of age and older.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Lastly, I'd like to expand my list and would appreciate your help. Please email me at mapes@asel.udel.edu if you have a contribution you would like to share with me and our readers. Stories about your travel are also welcome!

Thanks, and happy trails! ■

The AT Bargain Basement

Marvin Williams, AT Specialist
New Castle County ATRC

Friends! Delawareans! Countrymen! Welcome to another installment of the *AT Bargain Basement*, your home for assistive technology bargains. I am Marvin Williams, your guide through this world of bargains. To those of you 'Basement regulars, welcome back! For those of you who are new to our little party, welcome and what took you so long? Since not everyone knows just what assistive technology, or AT, is, let's start there. Assistive technology is anything that helps folks improve or maintain their functionality. It can be made, purchased, or customized. Also, it doesn't have to be just one thing. It can be a system of devices that help someone. So now that we know that, just what makes something an *AT Bargain* or "*Basement worthy*?" Well, it's a piece of AT that can be purchased for \$100 or less. I suggest that you check the prices because they are subject to change. Sometimes the bargains can be found in local stores, but in the interest of finding as many bargains as I can, I also include deals from the Internet. So now that the rules of engagement are in place, let's go to the bargains!

Our first bargain comes from Sussex County AT Specialist, Dan Fendler, and it is a doozie. Dan told me about a great little website loaded with AT bargains for those with vision loss. The site is called **Blind Bargains**, and it is a treasure trove. The web address is www.blindbargains.com. The site has a lot of features including browsing by merchant, active searches of the bargains in their database, portals to low vision bargains on **Amazon.com**, and the "Ask Bargain Bob" feature which allows you to access their guru of low-vision bargains. Some of their listings include the VOX 3000 talking kitchen/office scale for \$39.50, Dragon Naturally Speaking Standard v.9.0 for \$39.99 (shipping included), a GeoSafari Talking Globe for \$70.48, and a Hamilton Beach Talking Microwave for \$89.96. Now, the products don't come from **Blind Bargains**. They come from various places. **Blind Bargains** has just set up a neat and easy approach to finding them.

The next bargain on tap is the **One Touch Jar**

Opener. You may have seen the commercials for this nifty little gadget. This product is unlike other automatic jar openers that may be constrained to a particular jar size for operation. Because this unit does not have a chamber into which the jar



One Touch Jar Opener

is placed, it is not limited by the size of the jar. To use it, all you do is place the **One Touch** on top of the jar you want to open, press the start button, and it opens the jar by itself. Now, you can buy the **One Touch** from the manufacturer's website (www.onetouchjar.com) for \$19.95 + shipping. I also found it listed at **Wal-Mart's** web site for \$18.44 with free ship-to-store delivery (the product gets shipped to your local **Wal-Mart** where you pick it up). However, the best deal I found was through a company called **AmeriMark**. I found it there for \$11.99 with \$1.95 shipping and handling. So ordering it through **AmeriMark**, you can get it for \$13.98! You can reach **AmeriMark** on the Internet at www.amerimark.com, or by phone at 877-268-9594. I was recently made aware that **Happy Harry's** has the **One Touch** for \$14.00; however, do note that not all stores share the same pricing, and not all stores will have the same availability. For the price, that's a heck of a bargain, and soon, the **One Touch Jar Opener** will be available to try out free-of-charge in our ATRC's.

The next bargain is actually a hint from a *Basement* regular who wished to remain anonymous. Her tip was for making house hallways a little easier to navigate for folks with a balance or mobility problem. Her simple tip was to add a hand rail to both sides of the hallway. Having handrails down both sides of the hall takes a pretty wide hallway since the minimum distance between handrails is supposed to be 36 inches. So you may only be able to put up handrails on one side of the hall. Still, for those folks who have difficulty navigating a long hallway, handrails can be a godsend. If you are a do-it-yourselfer or you know one, this simple proj-

The AT Bargain Basement (continued)

ect can be completed for less than \$100, depending on how fancy you want to get with your handrails. Now, handrails, like most everything else in a house or building, have design and building specifications that must be followed. Those can be found online, at your local library, or by contacting your county regarding specifications for handrails. As with any home modification or improvement project, never proceed unassisted if you do not know what you are doing.

My last bargain is the **Olympus VN-4100** digital voice recorder. It's a great little digital recorder for the price. It features 144 hours of recording time, timer recording, fast and slow playback, 4 folders for storing recordings, and 4 variable speed and quality playback modes. The unit is a nice piece of technology. It's very compact and light weight. The buttons are very streamlined, which may or may not be a problem for a user with visual difficulties. We

have these available in our inventory for a free two-week trial, and it is available through our **BOLD** program for our low-vision consumers. While our unit cost is \$61, I have seen them for \$40.99 at **Circuit City** and, for those of you willing to order via the Internet or telephone, you can get it for as little as \$32 from **Newegg.com** online or 800-390-1119.



*Olympus
VN-4100
digital voice
recorder*

And thus we come to the end of another *AT Bargain Basement*. I would like to thank Dan and the other folks who have sent in their ideas. If you have an idea or bargain you would like to share with the group, don't hesitate to send them to me and I'll make sure your contribution is preserved in *Bargain Basement* history! So until next time, remember: just because it's a bargain doesn't mean it's cheap! ■

The First State AIMS for Student Achievement

Beth Mineo
DATI Director

Children cannot learn if they cannot access the curriculum. Most schools depend heavily on print materials such as textbooks, leaving many students—such as those with vision loss, dyslexia, language learning disabilities, attention difficulties, or motor limitations—at a disadvantage. Federal special education law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004) now mandates that **students with print disabilities must have alternative ways to access the information contained in textbooks and other print materials.**

There are essentially two approaches to overcoming print barriers: delivery of content in entirely different formats, or modifying the delivery of print to increase students' ability to access the information it contains. Using the first approach, we might convert print content into audio files or Braille documents. In the second approach, we might alter the appearance of the print to enhance its uptake: make it larger; change the font; increase the "white

space" between lines or in the margins; or decrease the distractions on the page that compete for student attention. We might provide an audio supplement to the text so that the students have access to the information in two complementary modes. We might deliver print content with the support of a text reader such as **Kurzweil** or **Read: OutLoud** so that students have additional supports such as highlighting, supported horizontal tracking, and embedded content assists such as word definitions and comprehension prompts.

The key to efficient production of print access alternatives and supports is having the content available in digital format. Once content exists in a digital file, it can be easily transformed: enlarged, enhanced, converted to audio files, and so on. Enhancements are also digital, so they are easily saved for use by other educators or with new students in subsequent years.

As most instructional materials in today's class-

The First State AIMS for Student Achievement (continued)

rooms are print-based (textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, trade books), how are educators supposed to get their hands on digital content? In many cases, they—or people working on their behalf—will have to convert print materials to digital materials by typing them or scanning them into a computer. There are some sources of no-cost digital text in repositories on the web. And some publishers either routinely sell CD versions of their textbooks or are willing to provide textbook content in digital form upon request to accommodate a student with print disabilities.

There are also organizations that make content in alternate formats available for a fee. Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) offers over 43,000 titles in its AudioCD format that, combined with a specially-designed player, allow students to navigate audio content as they would print content. Bookshare.org is a subscription service that offers books in digital format; a recent federal award enables Bookshare.org to make its services available to all U.S. schools and any qualifying student with a print disability at no cost!

Finally, IDEA 2004 established a new mechanism by which publishers of core instructional materials may submit those materials in a standardized digital format (the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard, or NIMAS) to a centralized repository (the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center, or NIMAC). Ideally, schools eventually will have one-stop access to core instructional materials in digital format if they are not able to purchase them directly from publishers.

With so much focus on the Response to Intervention (RTI) and discipline provisions in IDEA 2004, the very enabling “print access” component of the new legislation often gets overlooked. Recent conversations with a group of school principals revealed that more information is needed in order for everyone to understand the new print access provisions. There is no question, however, that accessible instructional materials will level the educational playing field and make it possible for more students to achieve.

While it is easy to understand the benefits of accessible instructional materials, it is not always easy to ensure access to them. Right now Delaware

does not have an infrastructure in place to help schools get efficient access to materials in a variety of formats, so each school is on its own. But this will soon change. Delaware was recently awarded federal funding to support its involvement in the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Consortium, an initiative to facilitate availability of accessible instructional materials for K-12 students in the Consortium states. The U.S. Department of Education awarded funding to CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology) in Massachusetts for the leadership of the AIM Consortium, and CAST in turn contracted with 15 states committed to furthering curricular access for students with print disabilities. Leading Delaware’s effort are Karen Jones from the Delaware Department of Education (kjones@doe.k12.de.us) and Beth Mineo from the DATI (mineo@asel.udel.edu).

Delaware’s AIM project has three major goals. The first is to ensure that all stakeholders—students, families, teachers, and administrators—are aware of their rights and responsibilities relative to print access. In addition to offering training throughout the state for these constituencies, the project will establish a Print Access Cadre, which will serve as the primary implementation workgroup. We plan to invite all districts to participate in the Cadre. Some of the benefits of participation will include access to a wide range of supports, including training, technical assistance, technology, materials, and the services of the statewide print access center once it becomes operational. The other project goals relate to the establishment of the infrastructure: determining data management and tracking systems, securing the ability to transform print into a variety of formats, and creating and implementing processes and procedures for the identification of students with print access disabilities and the appropriate accommodation of their needs.

To learn more about options for accommodating print disabilities, the AIM Consortium, or for demonstrations of useful print access technologies, contact the DATI at 800-870-DATI (3284), 302-651-6790, or www.dati.org. The DATI Assistive Technology Resource Centers in each county can provide demonstrations, arrange training, and lend equipment for trial-use periods. ■



Homegrown in DELAWARE

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The **ModelTalker Speech Synthesis System** is a revolutionary software package designed to benefit people who are losing or who have already lost their ability to speak. It allows people with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) or other conditions to create a synthetic version of their own voice for communication, or to choose a voice best suited to represent them. The system uses representative segments of recorded speech (either from an individual who is losing the ability to speak or from a person chosen by someone who can no longer speak) to create a unique personalized synthetic voice. This synthetic voice is virtually unlimited, meaning it can be used to express almost anything, including words and phrases not previously recorded. The voice “banking” process is guided by computer-assisted voice recording software called **InvTool**. Once this process is finished, an individual will be able to create a synthetic voice by uploading their recordings to a voice generation site. The voice, when combined with the **ModelTalker** speech engine, can then be used with any communication system that is SAPI 5.0 compatible.

The **ModelTalker** project is a collaborative effort between **AgoraNet, Inc.** and the **Nemours Speech Research Laboratory**. **AgoraNet, Inc.** is a custom software and web development company located in Newark, Delaware. Established in 1996, they have been significantly involved with numerous assistive technology and multimedia development projects. In addition, their staff has expertise in the areas of augmentative communication, human-computer interfaces, natural language processing, and accessibility issues. The **Speech Research Laboratory** is one of the laboratories within the **Nemours Center for Pediatric Auditory and Speech Sciences (CPASS)** at the **Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children** in Wilmington, Delaware. The **Speech Research Laboratory** conducts research to develop, evaluate and refine speech analysis, synthesis, and recognition technology for children and others with speech and hearing disorders.

Currently, the complete **ModelTalker System** is in the early stages of commercial development and the developers are actively seeking beta testers both in and outside of the ALS and AAC communities—anyone can be a beta tester. Beta testing software is a great way to experience and help shape the development of new software programs. It often gives you access to tools you may need months before they are available to the general public, and it gives you a way to influence the development of that software by having direct access to the developers during the creation process. With this opportunity, however, comes some responsibilities. First, you must remember that this software is under development. The software is stable, but there is the possibility that not all functionality is intact and that it may even crash. The developers don't think so, but that is where they need your input, ideas, and the diversity of your experience and equipment. Second, you must realize that there is no telephone technical support for these products. Once the products are commercially released, of course, full support services will become available. If you would like to be a beta tester, the software can be downloaded for free from www.modeltalker.com. There you can learn more about a short inventory of about 14 words and phrases for review. The **InvTool** program and accompanying tutorial guide you through the entire process. Once the test speech files are uploaded, personnel at the speech lab will look them over and possibly make additional suggestions for creating better recordings. If all is well, the lab will send you a full inventory of 1650 words and phrases to record. You should expect that recording the full inventory will take at least 8 to 10 hours distributed over 3 or 4 days; for some people it can take a lot longer. When all of the phrases are recorded, you will upload the speech files to the speech lab for conversion to a synthetic voice. You will receive a web link to download your voice once it has been created.

For more information, please visit www.modeltalker.com. ■

Assistive Technology Services via DVR and DVI

Lexie S. McFassel, Esq.

Disabilities Law Program

Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.

The **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation** (DVR) provides assistive technology services as part of its vocational program and its independent living program. First, looking at DVR's vocational program, eligibility criteria require that the individual have a significant disability that is a barrier to employment, the individual must want to seek employment, and must be of working age. The disability must be a substantial impediment to employability, 39 U.S.C. §705(20)(A), and any adult receiving SSI or SSDI is presumptively eligible for VR services, provided they are looking toward an employment goal, 29 U.S.C. §722(a)(3). Vocational Rehabilitation services are those necessary to assist an individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, or regaining employment, 29 U.S.C. §723(a). Currently, all eligible applicants for DVR's vocational program receive services as there is no waiting list or order of selection for services.

The Independent Living Program administered by DVR does not require an employment goal, but provides assistive technology and other independent living services to individuals who have a significant disability that interferes with their ability to live independently. This program has a financial needs test applied for eligibility, and recipients of Social Security's SSI and SSDI automatically meet this test. The Independent Living Program currently has a waiting list for services, and service requests, including those for assistive technology, are processed in the order in which they are received.

The **Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired** provides assistive technology to people with visual impairments, and is required to provide items to individuals who are legally blind. This agency operates in a manner similar to DVR, providing vocational rehabilitation and independent living assistance.

Assistive technology services are exempt from the comparable services and benefits test of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. Comparable



services and benefits are services which are provided or paid for, in whole or in part, by other federal, state, or local public agencies, by health insurance, or by employee benefits which are available to an individual with a disability. Exemption from the "comparable benefits test" means that individuals do not

have to exhaust all of these other potential funding options before DVR/DVI will consider paying for the AT device and/or service.

Both DVR and DVI provide consumers with a wide range of assistive technology including, but not limited to, the following items: screen readers, magnifiers, Braille embossers, ramps, computers, hearing and listening devices, prosthetics, vehicle modifications, home and bathroom modifications, wheelchairs, transfer boards, and door openers. Almost any assistive technology need would be considered for purchase by DVR or DVI as long as the item maintains independent living in the community and/or supports a work goal. Once the equipment is purchased for the individual, it becomes the individual's personal property. The individual is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the equipment as needed and recommended by the manufacturer, unless the agreement between the agency and the individual specifies something different.

In conclusion, the Division for the Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation both provide very important services to individuals with disabilities who want to work or who want to maintain or improve their independence in the community. Assistive technology is often an integral part of the services they provide. For more information about DVR or DVI, contact your local office or check out their websites at <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dvi/index.html> and <http://www.delawareworks.com/dvr/welcome.shtml>. ■

Coast to Coast: Readers Share Tips to Make Home Life Easier

When you have vision loss, or live with someone who does, there are adjustments for everyone involved. Following are ideas shared by *Sharing Solutions* readers regarding changes they made to feel more secure and comfortable in their homes.

Getting—And Staying—Organized

The key is getting rid of clutter. And it's often easier said than done. If you need help, ask a family member or friend. Start by going through your closets, cabinets and drawers to remove items you no longer use or need. Once that's done, it's a lot easier to organize what you have. And whatever system you choose, keep it simple so you can find an item when you need it—"a place for everything, and everything in its place." Make sure to share your plan with family members, housekeepers or house guests.

Here are some things you suggested:

- Designate pantry and refrigerator shelves for specific items by using raised markings or large-print labels
- Differentiate canned goods by using magnetic reusable labels or rubber bands
- Find items more easily by storing them on rotating tiered shelving
- Separate socks, jewelry or paperwork in plastic sealable bags or containers

Using All Your Senses

Don't forget to use your other senses to identify items. For example, jewelry often can be differentiated by feel—shape, stones (smooth vs. faceted), length, etc. Use tactile raised bumps or dots to mark appliance settings. And take advantage of talking products. Other ideas include:

- Place wind chimes or a radio on your patio/porch to keep you oriented outside
- Turn prescription bottles upside down after you've taken your daily dose

Color and Contrast

Many people improve visibility by enhancing color and/or contrast. For example, dining is more comfortable when place settings contrast with tablecloths. And you're less likely to knock over colored glasses than clear ones. Here are some additional

tips:

- Outline the plug area of switch plates with a bold marker
- Set off furniture against a contrasting carpet or wall, or make it stand out with contrasting pillows
- Highlight doors by painting frames to contrast with the wall
- Distinguish your keys with the help of different colored nail polish or key covers

Safety

Safety is a top priority for everyone. We received a great deal of feedback regarding throw rugs—some people feel they're a hazard and have discarded them; others find them helpful as landmarks and secure them with tape. Stairways are another hot spot. Readers mark the edges of the top and bottom steps, install handrails and ensure sufficient lighting. One woman feels a lot safer after alternating two different contrasting carpets on her stairway steps. For additional safety tips, order our free "Living Better at Home" kit, by calling 212-821-9200 ext. 551 or emailing bbendl@lighthouse.org.

Popular Products

Readers shared a variety of adaptive products and electronic devices that they find useful:

- Large-print calendar
- CCTV to magnify reading material
- Large-button telephone
- Computer with adaptive software
- Talking caller ID and answering machine
- Voice-activated cell phone
- Large-screen TV
- Talking appliances

This article was reprinted with permission from *Lighthouse International* (www.lighthouse.org) and appeared in the Spring 2007 issue of their *Sharing Solutions* newsletter. The contents of this article are based on feedback from *Sharing Solutions* readers from around the country. The Spring 2007 issue is available in its entirety at <http://www.lighthouse.org/aboutus/newsletters/>. You may also receive the free newsletter on a regular basis by emailing sharingolutions@lighthouse.org. The newsletter is available in multiple formats—large print, Braille, audiocassette, and online. ■

21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Act

*Jenifer Simpson, Senior Director
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American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)*

In December 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives released a draft bill, the “Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act.” Publication of this draft legislation kicked off much action by the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT), the disability coalition behind the agenda in this draft bill. As a comprehensive proposal covering telephone services—wire-line, wireless, and Internet—as well as television distributed over the Internet, in addition to some universal service funds initiatives, the provisions have elicited considerable interest by industry and consumer stakeholders.

Since the draft bill was published, COAT's steering committee has met with numerous industry representatives who would be affected by the legislation, were it enacted. The intent of these meetings was to brief the companies on the intent of the legislation and to uncover concerns and issues any companies might have on specific provisions. These were not negotiation meetings. These industry groups included: AT&T, Verizon, the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA), the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI), and the U.S. Telecommunications Association (USTelecom). Upcoming meetings will include the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) and likely the National Cable & Television Association (NCTA) as well as other entities impacted by the video programming provisions in the proposal. Along the way COAT has garnished the support of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners for the overall legislation and, specifically, a resolution supporting the provisions that would impact the Universal Service Funds. See their resolution at <http://www.aapd.com/News/tech/downloads/NARUCres.doc>.

Also, since December, member representatives of COAT have met with congressional representatives to brief them on the proposal and to ask for their support of the measure.



COAT encourages concerned individuals with disabilities to contact members of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet to ask them for support of the measure and to co-sponsor it when introduced. We expect to have a hearing on the issues and a bill later this spring.

For further information, please contact Jenifer Simpson at AAPD, email aapdjenifer@aol.com. AAPD is a founding and steering committee member of the COAT coalition. ■

To Contact DATI's Central Site office or the ATRC closest to you, call 1-800-870-DATI (3284)

Press
#1 for English or
#2 for Spanish,

then press
#3 for the Central Site office
#4 for the New Castle County ATRC
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#6 for the Sussex County ATRC

TDD callers: Do not press #1 or #2 and your call will be answered on a TDD line at the Central Site office.

DATI Equipment Loan Policy

DATI has a wide variety of equipment at the Assistive Technology Resource Centers for the primary purpose of demonstration and short-term loan. The policy for equipment loans is as follows:

The standard loan period is two weeks, defined as the day borrowed (e.g., Monday the 10th) to the same day two weeks later (e.g., Monday the 24th). Loans may be extended providing there are no names on the waiting list and/or that an extension will not interfere with an existing reservation. The maximum loan period is four weeks.

A maximum of four devices may be borrowed during any single loan period. However, combinations of devices may be treated as a single device if the components are interdependent—either operationally, or because one component is required for the user to access another. Equipment loans across state lines are not permitted. Equipment must also remain in Delaware throughout the loan period. ■



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