

# A Closer Look

Increasing Access and Acquisition  
of Assistive Technology for Georgians with disabilities

An Assistive Technology Publication of Tools for Life, The Georgia Assistive Technology Act Program

Summer 2007

## Credit-Able at Work



*Sometimes the best way to describe what we do at Tools for Life is through the words of those who have worked with us. Credit-Able is a service that provides guarantees to enable loans for assistive technology, home and vehicle modifications. The following letter is from a customer of Credit-Able.*

Dear Ms. Wilks-Weathers:

We're writing to let you know how much we appreciate the guaranteed low interest rates made possible through Credit-Able. With the backing of Credit-Able we were able to purchase two stair lifts and a wheel chair accessible mini van for my son Kevin Simmons. The equipment we purchased has changed the manner in which I am able to care for Kevin.

Kevin and I live alone in our Ellenwood, Georgia home. He was critically injured by a gunshot wound on May 15, 2006. The violent episode lead to a number of medical complications that left Kevin totally disabled. He was discharged from Children's Healthcare at Scottish Rite, on June 12, 2006, and we brought him home to care for him. Two people had to physically lift and carry him up and down the stairs to his bedroom and bathroom. When family members and friends were not visiting, Kevin was basically stuck in his bedroom as I do not have the physical strength to move him up and down the stairs alone. With the addition of the stair lifts, I am able to single-handedly get Kevin up and down the stairs. He can now move about the house in his wheel chair and enjoy our entire home with dignity, and, without fear of someone dropping him on the stairs and causing further injury to his body.

Before we purchased the van I had to transfer Kevin from his wheelchair to the front seat of our car. Kevin was experiencing quite a bit of nerve pain in his legs, making transfers and the car ride very uncomfortable for him. With the purchase of the van, Kevin is able to roll his wheelchair on board and ride comfortably to therapy, medical appointments, basketball games, shopping malls and other places in the community. Thanks to his new transportation he's getting back to his active life. I'm enclosing pictures of Kevin on his stair lift and next to the van so that you and others can also share our joy and excitement.

The loans backed by Credit-Able are God sends. We prayed for a miracle and God responded through your organization. If there is ever anything we can do as advocates for Credit-Able, please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks again for gap between insurance benefits and out-of-pocket expenses for medically necessary durable medical equipment.

Sincerely,  
Karen B. Simmons Parent and Advocate



Kevin Simmons

## Director's Notes by Carolyn Phillips

**"Assistive Technology gives me hope...and I need a lot of hope!"**

— Ernestine,  
one of an estimated over  
985,000 Georgians living  
with a disability.

Ernestine has expressed well what many people with disabilities feel. Assistive Technology (AT) offers hope and practical solutions for many people to accomplish their educational, employment and independent living goals. Tools for Life is committed to assisting Ernestine and every Georgian with finding the AT you need and navigating the streams to find funding to acquire these solutions.

In this edition of *A Closer Look* we have turn the spotlight on a few of our programs that are designed to assist you.

We are proud to announce that the Rehabilitation Services Administration funded the Southeastern Technology Access and Reuse (STAR) Network. This is a three-year grant that is focused on establishing a network of community centers and building more capacity to increase acquisition of AT! South

## Director's Notes by Carolyn Phillips

*Continued from page 1*

Carolina and Florida have joined us in this important initiative. There is a lot of positive energy being poured into this program and we are already seeing positive results. (See page 4 for more details.)

Credit-Able is making a huge difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. We are excited about the many successes of this powerful program and wanted to share with you a letter from Karen Simmons.

Martha Rust has discovered some grants to make dreams of obtaining AT a reality for individuals. She has shared just a few with you and has many more to share with you on our Dollars & Sense website at [gatfl.org](http://gatfl.org).

Liz Persaud and Doris Chadwell have also discovered some simple solutions for making environments a little more accessible.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *A Closer Look*! Please, let us know your thoughts about this newsletter, our programs and Tools for Life in general. We are here to assist you!

Carolyn Phillips

### Mark Your Calendar

October, 2008  
The SERID and  
Touch the Future  
Transition Conference

## Looking For a Few Good Grants by Martha Rust

You have gone through the evaluations, tried multiple devices, and are ready to purchase that assistive technology device. However when you see the price, you are not sure how you are going to be able to afford it.

This scenario is all way too familiar to many individuals when it comes to buying the device. Depending on situations, some items can be purchased with assistance from public service agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, and Veterans Affairs. But for those that do not have the assistance from these services and/or still need some more help, grants are a way to assist in getting that much needed item.

Searching for a grant may take a while if you are not sure where to start. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Ask service providers, therapists, vendors, family, friends, anyone that you can think of and you might be amazed of what grants they may know about. One of the most efficient ways of finding information fast is the Internet. You can search by grant categories or by disabilities.

Once you have found a grant, read it carefully to make sure it is appropriate for you. Be sure to complete the entire application. Applications might not be reviewed if there are some items missing. Make sure that you have all the documents that you need for the grant and make copies for your files before you put it in the mail.

The column below points you in the right direction on your path to finding funding for AT. Check out some of these grants that might be of assistance to you.

## Finding a Few Good Grants

### Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund:

This is a direct grant to Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries of up to \$5,000 a year and up to \$15,000 once in a three year period home modifications or adapted vehicles. You can contact the BSITF at:

Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund  
Commission  
2 Peachtree St NW, Suite 26-426  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
404-651-5112  
888-233-5760  
[www.bsitf.state.ga.us](http://www.bsitf.state.ga.us)

### The Association of Blind Citizens:

ATF will provide funds to cover 50% of the retail price of adaptive devices or software. Deadlines: June 30th and Dec 31st  
[www.blindcitizens.org/assistive\\_tech.htm](http://www.blindcitizens.org/assistive_tech.htm)

### Joni and Friends,

### Christian Fund for the Disabled:

Funds for AT, rehabilitation, special treatment, educational opportunities CFD up to \$2,500 [www.joniandfriends.org/outreach/fund.shtml](http://www.joniandfriends.org/outreach/fund.shtml)

### Travis Roy Foundation:

Grants for specific modifications or AT awarded to paraplegic and quadriplegics due to *injury*. Grants typically range from \$4,000-\$7,000 [www.travisroyfoundation.org](http://www.travisroyfoundation.org)

### Kate Kimberly Foundation:

Grants for individuals with SCI for the purchase of adaptive sports, recreation and exercise equipment. Grants typically range from \$1,000 to \$4,000  
[www.katekimberlyfoundation.org](http://www.katekimberlyfoundation.org)

### First Hand Foundation:

Grants for Children 18 yrs and younger (sometimes up to age 21) for DME, AT, vehicle modifications and more  
[www.cerner.com/firsthand/default.aspx](http://www.cerner.com/firsthand/default.aspx)

**For any assistance finding  
grants please contact**

**Martha E. Rust  
AT Funding Specialist with TFL  
1-800-497-8665**

## AT Spotlight

by Doris Chadwell and Liz Persaud

### Tango! ...the next generation of AAC

Words can emotionally affect us as powerfully as physical actions. We communicate in many different ways such as telling jokes and story telling. Language is an important building block of our existence, language builds relationships. It is powerful.

Blink Twice has released their first product, the Tango!; an alternative augmentative communication (AAC) device. The Tango!'s innovative design displays six buttons at a time that can be used to access over 2,000 phrases and an integrated keyboard for specific communication. It allows the user to choose which emotions to tell someone. So when they're mad and want to shout, they can.

The Tango! is also the first AAC device with a built in digital camera and voice-morphing capabilities. Pictures can also be stored as an option and an adult can record a word or phrase to go with the picture. The adult's voice is then transformed into the voice of a child. Just imagine visiting wonderful places and not only being able to talk about them but take photos as well!

The Tango! is liked amongst many parents because the communication from their child becomes more descriptive. Not only can their child quickly and easily tell their parent that they are not ready for bed, but they can also say why bedtime is not presently a good idea! With its sleek design, the Tango! looks like a cool electronic device helping children to not feel so "different".

For more information visit [www.blink-twice.com](http://www.blink-twice.com) or call 1-877-BLINK-11.



## AT On The Road

During Exceptional Children's Week, the students at Holcomb Bridge Middle School were treated to a presentation by Carolyn Phillips and Liz Persaud. Carolyn and Liz were there to contribute to the school's Disability Awareness Campaign. All of the students were interactive, energetic and shared stories on how we can all make a difference in our school and community. Many topics were discussed including:

***Famous People with Disabilities***  
***Kindness and Respect to Everyone***  
***Celebrating Differences***

**Thank you to everyone at Holcomb Bridge Middle School!**



Carolyn Phillips, Liz Persaud  
and students from Holcomb Bridge Middle School.



Tools for Life data and resources are made available to everyone on the web at [www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org) or call 404-638-0390 for more information. Individuals and groups advocate for funding that is needed to increase availability of additional state-of-the-art assistive technology equipment that would greatly increase daily living for persons with disabilities.

## What's in your Junk Drawer?

by Doris Chadwell  
and Liz Persaud

### ??? Rugs ???

Sometimes something as simple as a floor mat can alter the feel of a surface under your feet to make an environment more accessible.

For someone with vision loss who works in a large room, it is difficult to know when you have reached the spot in the room that you need to work. Placing floor mats in areas you need to work in can help you identify the correct place to stand or work.

Example: a teacher who is blind needs to go to different areas of a classroom to perform certain tasks. He needs to stand at the front of the classroom for lecture, to the left side to talk about a chart on the wall, to the back of the classroom when there is a guest speaker, or to the right of the room where his desk is located. Finding the perfect spot to stand can be a challenge. By placing mats of different textures and sizes at the place the teacher needs to stand he can now identify that spot easily.

### The TFL Team

Joy Kniskern - AT Services Director  
Carolyn Phillips - Program Director  
Doris Chadwell - AT Specialist  
Connie Freier - Administrative  
Operations Coordinator  
Liz Persaud - AT Information and  
Assistance Specialist  
Martha Rust - AT Funding  
Specialist  
Tom Patterson - Program  
Associate  
Valerie Wiley - Graphics





Georgia Department of Labor  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program  
1700 Century Circle, Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-638-0390 Office  
1-800-497-8665 GA Only  
404-486-0218 Fax  
404-486-6333 ATL. Metro TTY  
1-866-373-7778 Toll Free TTY

[www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org)  
[info@gatfl.org](mailto:info@gatfl.org)

## **Assistive Technology Resource Centers**

### **Tech-Able**

1114 Brett Drive, Suite 100  
Conyers, GA 30094  
770-922-6768 Phone/TTY  
770-922-6769 Fax  
[techable@techable.org](mailto:techable@techable.org)  
[www.techable.org](http://www.techable.org)

### **ReBoot- ATRC**

4508 Bibb Blvd., Suite B10  
Tucker, GA 30084  
770-934-8432 Phone/TTY  
770-934-8433 Fax  
[joanne\\_willis@reboot-atrc.org](mailto:joanne_willis@reboot-atrc.org)  
[www.reboot-atrc.org](http://www.reboot-atrc.org)

### **Walton Options for Independent Living, Inc.**

948 Walton Way  
Augusta, GA 30901  
706-724-6262 Phone/TTY  
706-724-6729 Fax  
[Tjohnston@waltonoptions.org](mailto:Tjohnston@waltonoptions.org)  
[www.waltonoptions.org](http://www.waltonoptions.org)

### **Disability Connections The Middle Georgia Center for Independent Living, Inc.**

170 College Street  
Macon, GA 31201  
478-741-1425 Phone/TTY  
1-800-743-2117 Phone/TTY  
478-755-1571 Fax  
[Laneml@aol.com](mailto:Laneml@aol.com)  
[www.disabilityconnections.com](http://www.disabilityconnections.com)

### **FODAC**

4900 Lewis Road  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
770-491-9014 Phone  
770-491-0026 Fax  
[www.fodac.org](http://www.fodac.org)

## **What Is the STAR Network? by Joanne Willis**

It is the **Southeastern Technology Access & Reuse (STAR) Network**. The goal is to create a sustainable network that serves individuals with disAbilities by increasing access to and acquisition of AT/DME in underserved regions of Georgia and the Southeast. Capacity and services will be increased through STAR Network reuse resources, equipment, skill training and partnering with others.

This newest service to come to Georgia is made possible through a 3 year grant from the U.S. Department of Education awarded to DOL/Tools for Life. This grant will be used for the reutilization of AT/DME (assistive technology and durable medical equipment). This is in response to Georgia's disAbility community requests and expression of needs over the years and at last year's town hall meetings.

**STAR Equipment Depots** with the support of TFL staff and the Assistive Technology Resource Centers will develop a network of **STAR Outreach Centers** and **STAR Donation Sites** over the next three years. The STAR Outreach Centers for the first year are Disability Connections, DisAbility Link NW, Tech-Able, and Walton Options; STAR Donation Sites are Life and Multiple Choices.



Left to right are Andy L, Diana Mason, Brooke Heard, and Mike Leverett.

The STAR Equipment Depots -ReBoot™ and FODAC, as a team, will spear head and be the center for initiation of operations. They will develop, implement and grow reuse activities at STAR Outreach Centers and STAR Donation Sites.

Grant roll out activities began February 1: Equipment Depot Coordinators are Bob Rust for ReBoot™ and Andy Laubscher for FODAC. They have made introductory visits to all four year one Outreach Centers with the kick off visit being to Disability Connections in Macon. This first visit included delivery of a "Going My Way" ReBoot™ computer system.

***Excitement is growing. You will be hearing more from us!***

Those not in the first year plan can call Tools for Life STAR Network Director Doris Chadwell @ (404)638-0374 for further information.



## **Data Corner by Connie Freier**

Another successful year for The Georgia Assistive Technology Act Program, Tools for Life (TFL) and the Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRCs)! Data was collected by an extensive data program developed several years ago and revised to reflect current data collected as required by the National Information System for Assistive Technology (NISAT). A Data Collection Instrument and Performance Report for Statewide AT Programs. Data collection procedures continue to be updated with information that allows TFL to grow and develop new projects. The following statistics were taken from the data.

### **Data Details from January 2006 through December 2006**

|                                                              |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| New Persons Assisted -                                       | 2,481      |
| Information and Referral -                                   | 1,266      |
| Training/Tech Assist Classes Workshops -                     | 512        |
| Volunteer persons -                                          | 426        |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Clients Assisted -                 | 311        |
| Volunteer hours donated to ATRCs -                           | 5,433      |
| Donated to Reboot Recycle Project -                          | 5,356      |
| <u>Loaned Equipment</u>                                      |            |
| Pieces of equipment checked out -                            | 320        |
| <u>Recycled Computer Project</u>                             |            |
| Number computers place from inception of project 1994 – 2006 | Over 6,300 |