

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

Winter 2008

TFI-TV

There's the FBI and then there's TFI. It's a name, a movement and oh yeah, it's also a TV show, Tools for Independence Television. It's a mouthful, so just call it TFI-TV. It is a television program by people with disabilities for everyone.



- Episode #1 - is a program about transitioning people with disabilities from nursing homes.
- Episode #2 - is about housing, home accessibility modifications and visitability.
- Episode #3 - is about assistive technology.

Much of the video was shot by people with various types of disabilities who were trained on how to use professional video equipment. Assistive technology played a big role in production of the shows. Wheelchair users used specialized tripod systems to conduct shoots. One individual operated all of the primary functions of the professional video camera using only a mouth stick. The tripod devices are available for loan and will expand your imagination on how people with disabilities can get involved in multimedia opportunities.

Disability Connections, The Middle Georgia Center for Independent Living, Inc., produced these three pilot episodes with funding assistance from the Georgia Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Georgia Department of Labor Division of Rehabilitation Services Tools for Life Program.

The programs ran numerous times on a local government access channel in Macon, GA. Those of you fortunate enough to be reading this article can preview the shows on www.disabilityconnections.tv or otherwise called DCTV. In the near future, it will be made known to everyone and will be a place not only to watch videos, but to contribute your own material, interact with others and discuss many of the issues facing the disability community today. **So check out a sneak preview of TFI-TV!**

Michael Leverett, Disability Connections



Episode #2 Housing "ADA Celebration"

Director's Notes by Carolyn Phillips

"We must Think, Act, Work and Live from a place of Abundance. We have enough time, money, and resources."

This is one of Tools for Life's Guiding Principles. We have seen amazing programs, projects and solutions develop again and again when we apply this philosophy to our work of creating effective approaches to increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology for all Georgians. When people stop focusing on barriers, whether real or perceived, and start thinking of the possibilities, then conversations change, and dreams begin to be realized. This edition of **A Closer Look** focuses on an innovative project, two powerful programs, and several solutions that were born from this Guiding Principle of Abundance.

A few years ago, I was doing work at Disability Connections (DC) in Macon and had the opportunity to go to lunch with Mike and Jerilyn Leverett. We discussed many of the wonderful activities going on at DC as well as some of the challenges their center was facing. Our conversation then turned to an innovative idea Mike and Jerilyn had that would reach out to more Georgians and raise awareness about independence, transition, *Continued on page 2*

Director's Notes by Carolyn Phillips

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home modifications and the power of assistive technology (AT). Mike is multitalented and has excellent skills in the area of video production. These skills combined with the passion of Jerilyn, Mike and the DC Staff lead to the idea of developing a TV show. They shared their vision with me and many other people, developed a plan, created strategic partners and their dream of TFI-TV has now become a reality.

Tools for Life (TFL) is a proud partner in the development of TFI-TV. TFI-TV is a creative and effective approach to reaching more Georgians. I would encourage you to read more about TFI-TV and check out their first three Episodes.

In 2006, a group of leaders from TFL, the Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRCs), Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC), the SILC and the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) gathered to discuss how we

can get more AT in to the hands and homes of Georgians with disabilities. We looked at the problems we faced without considering lack of time, money and resources and after two days of discussions and creating solutions, the concept of the Southeastern Technology Access & Reuse (STAR) Network was born. We developed this concept further and submitted a grant to RSA to fund the STAR Network under their AT Reuse Demonstration RFP. It was funded for three years and the STAR Network started their work immediately. This Network is exceeding their original goals and has grown significantly. (See the article on page 3 for more details.) TFL, Touch the Future/ReBoot, FODAC, the ATRCs and participating ILCs have done an exceptional job through their collaboration and creative solutions to increase the acquisition of AT for Georgians with disabilities throughout the Southeast.

In 2007, the Center for Financial Independence & Innovation, Inc. (CFII) was created. CFII is one more powerful example of going where the dream makes sense. Jackie Wilks-Weathers and her CFII staff have built upon the success of Credit-Able – Georgia's Alternative Financing Program (AFP) and grown CFII into a progressive, innovative nonprofit focused on assisting Georgians with disabilities to gain financial independence. (See the article on page 4 for more details.) TFL is excited about our partnership with CFII and look forward to our continued collaboration.

These are just three of many examples of successful projects and programs developed when leaders with a passion focus their vision, develop their ideas, build strategic partnerships and work from a place of abundance. We have accomplished a lot in the area of AT access and acquisition in Georgia for people with disabilities. However, our work is far from done. We need to continue to refine programs and create innovative solutions that are effective and efficient. As budgets get tighter and people start putting up barriers, I encourage you to continue to create, focus your vision, build collaborations, and work from a place of Abundance. With this approach, you, too, will soon see your dreams being realized!

Did You Get Everything You Wanted?

By Martha Rust

With the holiday season behind us, you may still be looking for the perfect present. Don't worry, it can still be found and it should not empty your wallet any more than it already did.

If you are still shopping for a child, there are many educational toys as well as play toys in the mainstream that assist children with disabilities too. Some of these items include talking calculators and books, children's laptops, educational video games, and puzzles. Electronic toys that light up or move can be easily adapted for accessibility.



Puzzle with Knobs
for Easier Grasp

If you would like do-it-yourself advice; there are a few websites that can give a step-by-step on how to make a switch using a battery interrupter. www.ataccess.org/resources/wcp/enswitches/enadaptingtoy.html
www.scienceshareware.com/toys.html

Online auctions and classifieds such as eBay and craigslist, can be searched to buy anything from everyday electronics to those hard to find items at an inexpensive price. Of course as the buyer you need to beware that all transactions are directly between you and the seller and you will need obtain information regarding user guides and warranties.

Did you know that you could search for a piece of assistive technology on specific

websites? gTrade, Georgia's Assistive Technology Online Equipment Exchange Program, can be accessed at www.gtradeonline.org. For a complete list of assistive technology online exchange programs across the country, please visit the Pass It On Center website at www.passitoncenter.org.

So now you have a general idea of what you are looking for. Here are a few websites that may assist you in searching for the perfect gift:



Teddy Bear
Adapted Switch

**HAPPY
SHOPPING!**

www.disability-resource.com/toys.html
www.fisher-price.com/us/default.asp
www.enablingdevices.com/catalog
www.leapfrog.com/en/shop.html

A Successful First Year!

The STAR Network (Southeastern Technology Access & Reuse Network) has finished its first year with great accomplishments and even greater approval ratings (results of a survey sent out in September)! Since the start of the STAR Network in January 2007, it has added four Outreach Centers located in Macon, Rome, Augusta and Conyers, Georgia. It is in the process of adding several more Outreach Centers throughout the state to serve the under served areas with refurbished computer, AT and DME equipment.

STAR Success

Behind every reused AT device, there is a story to be told, a dream being realized, a goal being met.

Disability Connections Macon, GA: Two consumers received laptop computers so they could go back to school and be more productive. A school also received two wheelchairs for emergency purposes.

Disability Link NW, Rome, GA: Ms. C. lives downtown and is used to being able to walk everywhere. She has bi-polar disorder and after several surgeries due to cancer she has severe back trouble. Through the STAR Network she was able to get a scooter and a shower bench. She is now comfortable and able to be downtown using her scooter.

Tech-Able, Conyers, GA: Although it is in the beginning stages – the STAR Network program is providing an opportunity for Tech-Able to assist Emory Life Long program to establish a computer distribution program.

Walton Options, Augusta, GA: A wheelchair was delivered to a consumer who did not have insurance. He can now be more active and independent.

To date the STAR Depot Center Coordinators, Bob Rust with Touch the Future/ReBoot™, and Andy Laubscher with FODAC, have accomplished many goals. Just take a look at the numbers:

- * 24 visits to Outreach Centers or Candidates for Outreach Centers
- * 26 Training sessions on STAR Modules
- * 15 Consumer referrals to Outreach Centers
- * 138 DME requested deliveries
- * 65 Computer and AT requested deliveries
- * Picked up 111 DME, 194 computer and AT donated items.

The most important accomplishment has been the many success stories from the Outreach Centers that were able to service their consumers better by being part of the STAR Network. Read some of those stories under the box, STAR Success.

These and many other success stories associated with the STAR Network have given both Andy Laubscher and myself the greatest satisfaction in our jobs and a reason to expand the Network even further.

Bob Rust, PMP, C.P.M.,
Touch the Future, Inc.



Volunteers in action
at the Star Network Equipment Depot

Need a Ride?

*Checker Cab Adds
Accessible Vehicles*

Atlantans with disabilities now have a new transportation option. Checker Cab has added three wheelchair accessible vehicles to its fleet of taxis. The fare is the same as a regular taxi.

For reservations,
call 404-351-1111.



Wheelchair Accessible Cab



Touch the Future/Transition
and SERID
2008

Mark Your Calendar
October 22-26, 2008
Atlanta Hilton Hotel



The TFL Team

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AT Specialist

Connie Freier
Administrative Operations
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Credit-Able has Moved to...

The Center for Financial Independence & Innovation, Inc. This new organization formed to promote financial independence among Georgians with disabilities.
Services/programs under CFII

- Credit-Able – Georgia's Alternative Financing Program for Assistive Technology, Home and/or Vehicle Modifications
- Home Buying Education Seminar
- Financial Education Workshops, including:
 - money management/budgeting,
 - financing for AT, and
 - understanding your credit

Any disability organization can request the home buying education seminar and the financial education workshops. For more information please contact Natalie Wilkins at 404-541-9005 or natalie@thecfii.org



The Center for Financial Independence & Innovation (CFII)
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Touch the Future/Transition
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2008

Touch the Future/Transition will be collaborating with SERID (Southeastern Regional Institute on Deafness) to share best practices and solutions as well as showcase the latest in assistive technology for people with disabilities.
More details coming soon!

Data Corner by Connie Freier

Tools for Life and the Assistive Technology Resource Centers have just wrapped up another successful year!

Data collected is 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.

Data Details from October 2006 through September 2007

New Persons Assisted (Direct Service) -	3,641
Information and Referral -	3,860
Training and Technical Assistance	
Groups -	173
Individuals -	520
Vocational Rehabilitation Clients Assisted -	580
<u>Loaned Equipment</u>	
Pieces of equipment checked out -	430
<u>Recycled Computer Project</u>	
Number computers place from inception of project 1994 – 2007	Over 7,000



Tools for Life data and resources are made available to everyone on the web at 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.

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These contents, however, do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Georgia Department of Labor, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government or the State of Georgia.