

The Monitor

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From the Interim Director

By: Jill Gierach, MSE, ATP.

This issue of the Monitor will focus on the AT Across the Lifespan Conference. The conference was attended by over 300 parents, consumers, pre-school teachers, school-based practitioners, community workers, DPI consultants, university personnel, adult educators, and DVR counselors. All who work on behalf of those persons who utilize assistive technology or are consumers of the products themselves. It was an exciting two days. The next conference date will be in December of 2009. We look forward to seeing you there. As you read through this issue of the Monitor, you will get a flavor for the variety and quality of the experiences available through the

presentations, exhibitor hall, and opportunities for sharing and networking. It was suggested for those of you who were unable to attend, that I share my conference opening remarks to begin this issue of the Monitor.



“Welcome to the second annual AT Across the Lifespan Conference. I am glad to be here with all of you. With people who understand how using technology can assist young children, school age students and adults to live lives of independence and function. Before I introduce our speaker I want to share some thoughts about change, unemployment and prepositions.

Change

We need to share with you some challenges

that the state AT project is facing. Due to new federal regulations the DPI has to change the focus of how they are spending their discretionary dollars. WATI is one of the grants experiencing a significant cut next year. WATI funding will decrease by half. This will mean we will need to be prepared that the services provided across the state for the past years will look different. We will not be able to provide the same level of services and most likely the kinds of services we will provide will also change. Change can open the door to opportunity.



(Continued on page 2)

- **SAVE THE DATE!**
The Annual AT Across the Lifespan Conference, December 3 & 4, 2009 in Wisconsin Dells!
- **REMINDER—All Lending Library items are due back no later than May 30, 2008!**

From the Interim Director (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Opportunity to create more targeted and braided services.

Unemployment

Many of you have heard me say that my goal in life was to work myself out of a job. Of course meaning that if I was unemployed it would mean all students in classrooms and children in community settings were able to access their environments, be successful in school, communicate about things important to them and feel good about themselves. This dream is the focus of all of our work.

If you feel that WATI has been beneficial to the children or students you work with you may wish to share those examples with DPI and thank them for providing the grant to Wisconsin for the past 15 years.

This change also creates a challenge for everyone in this room. How will you support the children and students you work with? How will you adjust and fill the need that may occur as the state services diminish? Technology is changing and improving— are we? Have each of us created that change we want to see and grown in our ability to assess what people need and

match those needs to the supports and then provide services? Let's all work towards being unemployed..... for the right reasons and create environments and systems that work for and support all people.

Prepositions:

At WATI we often say it is not about the assistive technology or *stuff* it is about what you want to do with the stuff. Think about technology and assistive technology as prepositions not nouns. As you listen to Nick and the other presenters, the focus won't be on the *stuff*. It is how they used it to provide access **TO** curriculum or helping individuals **use** alternative methods to communicate **through** a device. There will be examples of how to access text **with** special software. Listen for how appropriate instruction along **WITH** assistive technology, helps people to understand and demonstrate knowledge and perform meaningful life tasks.

See how they incorporated AT **IN** the environment so it was readily available and nearly invisible. So recapping; Change can be good, Work towards that unemployment dream and remember AT is not a noun it is a preposition.

Nick Hanford

We are thankful to have Nick Hanford with us this evening to kickoff our conference. He is Manager of Educational Sales & Training For Adaptive Technology Resources and is currently a graduate student at UW-Oshkosh. He was part of the Project Success initiative there as an undergraduate. He worked with students who were challenged by dyslexia. He supported them in many ways. He worked with the professors on test adaptations, and in managing the computer lab in the evening to support and train project success students. He is the voice we need to hear. Someone who has experienced AT from **within as a user and also as a trainer **OF** it. We will let Nick tell you his story and represent the voice of folks who utilize assistive technology tools and our assistive technology services. Wherever Nick goes he uses enthusiasm, knowledge and energy to encourage and instruct. Please join me in welcoming Nick Hanford.**



Come to the Exhibit Hall!

By: Sue Loesl, Adaptive Art Specialist, MPS.

This year's Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference offered a wonderful opportunity to see and hear exhibitors of your favorite AT solutions! From hands-on opportunities to try new technologies to discussing particular needs of your students/clients/residents, there was MORE than enough to do in the hall! With social tables between the exhibitors, there were places to network with old and new friends, and then go and seek out solutions just a few feet away.

Highlights in the Exhibit Hall included the Thursday Evening Reception, with food, music, and a Keynote Presentation by Nick Hanford of Assistive Technology Resources. It was a chance for some quality time with the exhibitors (who were also handing out great giveaways to the attendees!). Throughout the day on Friday, the Exhibit Hall was again open for attendees to browse for information and see the future of assistive technology supports in equipment and software. Non-profit organizations were also in attendance, they represented the recycling of AT equipment, AT supports at the universities, suppliers of lifelong

funding. These opportunities to share information were in high demand for many attendees.

After lunch, Exhibitors donated many items for the attendees to "win" in the raffle! From printers to tee shirts, from software to hardware, LOTS of people received incredible prizes! A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU goes out to all the Exhibitors that contributed to this year's raffle! If you were the lucky recipient of a prize, be sure to thank the Exhibitor that contributed it to the Conference. In case you need contact information for a particular exhibitor, please contact Sue Loesl at loeslsd@milwaukee.k12.wi.us.

The Exhibitor Hall at any conference is a vital part of the overall learning and sharing experience of the conference. It is an opportunity for both the attendees and the exhibitors to discuss face-to-face the successes and challenges of the products or services that they are needing or supplying. The Exhibitors LOVE hearing about the success stories and always ask about HOW they can do more for the customers....they thrive on the interaction of the attendees with them, as the attendees are the hands-on implementers in the field. A product can be designed, developed, field tested and ready

for the public, but without feedback (positive and negative), it can become stagnant and consumers may lose interest in its functions and features. Input of support or challenges is a way to keep it continuing to be useful for others. Even now, a few weeks after the conference, consider contacting an exhibitor or two to give them feedback about how you are using their products or services in your facility, or if you have any ideas about improvements. You might be very surprised at what your input can do for the future of assistive technology and the Exhibitor Hall!

We invite exhibitors that represent a variety of areas of AT, and are always looking for more suggestions of exhibitors that you would like to see and hear. They are also invited to prepare presentations, and show new products, give hands-on opportunities, or share success stories from throughout their network of consumers. If you have ideas about other exhibitors that you would like to see at the next conference, please let Sue Loesl know. A special thank-you goes out to this year's Exhibitor Committee comprised of Linda Baldwin of LAB Resources, Sue Loesl and Mary Beth Werner from Milwaukee Public Schools and Shelly Weingarten of CESA 1.

2008 At Across the Lifespan Conference

**By: Cindy Nankee, CESA 3
WATI Consultant**

Editor's note: During our transition year, Cindy Nankee was asked to represent WATI and chair the conference planning committee. She did a remarkable job. We recognize her efforts along with all members of the committee to make this years conference the best yet!

This years Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference held at the Steven Point Holiday Inn and Convention Center had over 300 participants attending 32 sessions with more than 34 exhibitors. It is amazing what goes into putting something like this together, so many deadlines, so much paper work, so many people to contact, so many committee meetings and so many people to thank. I would like to point out that many of our participants also volunteered as session proctors helping to make sure the presenters had everything they needed and the participants were comfortable, so I would like to thank our volunteers for helping to make things run smoothly. Our volunteers were exceptional this year due in part to our new volunteer coordinator, Lilly Rider, talk about organized, thank you Lilly. Next, a super huge thank you to our presenters, without our

presenters there would be no conference and again, the majority of our presenters do this for free or the cost of the conference registration. So future conference goers, keep in mind when the call for proposals comes out next year that you too, could present and receive free registration. Please be sure to read Sue's article "Come to the Exhibit Hall". Now to thank our AV technicians Paula Walser and her son Doc, they are the brain center that makes all the technology click and keep on clicking. Last but certainly not least, I would like to recognize and thank all of the conference committee members who helped make this conference a success: Linda Baldwin, Judi Cumley, Sarah Lincoln, Sue Loesl, Shelly Lund, Ralph Pelke, Laura Plummer, Lilly Rider, Paula Walser, Mary Chapin and our awesome staff in the WATI office Kelly Brodhagen and Sharon Rhode. Thank you also to WATI staff, members of leadership, presenters, and exhibitors for making this conference a success. One more thank you and I promise

I'm done, I would like to thank Jill Gierach for handing me the opportunity to work with this fine group of folks, it was a wonderful experience.

We had some very constructive feedback from our survey which will help shape our 2009 conference. Some things we know for our 2009 conference include the date and location change. The

conference will be Thursday and Friday December 3 & 4, 2009. In reviewing the surveys, we have decided to rotate the conference location between Wisconsin Dells and Stevens Point with the 2009 location being Wisconsin

Dells. We are still awaiting hotel proposals and the specific location in Wisconsin Dells will be set at our next committee meeting. There were many comments about the schedule of the conference including: sessions too long, sessions too short, time between sessions too short. We have decided to run the 2009 conference on a 2 day conference schedule with slightly longer sessions, maybe 90 minute

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**Ralph Pelkey, WisTech and Jill Gierach, WATI.
Photo courtesy of David Hahn**

Wal-Mart May Have Dropping Prices But The Best Stuff on the Web is Free!

By Sue Loesl, Adaptive Art Specialist, MPS. Printed with permission by Kristine Leonard.

If you missed this session by Kristine M. Leonard, CD/ Autism Specialist from Watertown Unified School District, you missed a wealth of resources (**over 250 annotated websites!**) appropriate for early childhood through high school! She handpicked a selection of about 20 of them to show the attendees, which just made everyone eager to go home and check out the rest! As she stated, the sites range from switch activation to teaching materials that are all free- accessed on the Internet! Here is a taste of what she shared:

www.hiyah.net/index.html This site offers free software



downloads which offers high interest subjects to keep children engaged and actively learning. The materials are for children aged 18 months through 4 years, but is appropriate for many of our special needs populations. It uses the spacebar as the mouse or can be set up to use a switch.

[www.northerngrid.org/sen/Menu L.htm](http://www.northerngrid.org/sen/Menu_L.htm): Senswitcher is a suite of programs designed to help teach early ICT skills to people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, those who need to develop skills with assistive input devices and very young children new to computers. It is the first time anyone has developed an online switch enable application which targets ICT skills from purely experiential

through cause and effect, switch building, timed activation, targeting and row scanning. FREE FREE FREE!! (www.onlineconferencingsystems.com/at.htm) Over 200 links to free AT which allows students accessibility at home, community, and in post school settings. This site is a ONE STOP for Free Assistive Technology.

<http://goodnightstories.com/index.html>: Stories to read, see, hear, fill in and finish. Activities include the games of Connect 4, Ants, Dots, Hit the Dot, Break Out, Memory and PEG.

Kristine has also started a Yahoo group for sharing sites and ideas about AT. To join the group visit: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/> in the search area **type:** AT_Wisconsin group

AT Lifespan Conference

(Continued from page 4)

sessions, with a longer break between sessions to allow presenters enough time to reset and start on time. We also felt this would benefit our exhibitors with a bit more relaxed atmosphere for browsing exhibits between sessions. One other consideration may include repeating of the most

popular sessions on both days to assure space for all to attend.

We really want this conference to do as the name implies – meet the needs "across the lifespan". In partnering with WisTech, the sessions move beyond the educational focus to meet the technology needs of individuals as they enter higher education, employment, and promote full

participation in the community. We are also able to share the experiences and expertise of the Independent Living Centers, UW-Stout, and other providers of AT services.

So one final thank you to all for a successful 2008 conference and we look forward to seeing you all December 3 & 4, 2009, at Wisconsin Dells.

Trainings

From CESA 3

Incorporating Technology Into the Classroom - Creating Access on the Fly. Presenter: Dan Herlihey, founder of Connective Technology Solutions

Friday, May 2, 2008 8:30 am - 3:30, CESA 3, Fennimore
Cost: \$125

Learn how to make the most from scanners, digital cameras, digital microscopes and the Internet to make your lessons exciting and accessible. Use Co:Writer together with Inspiration, accessing it all from an IntelliKeys keyboard. Learn how to use products from IntelliTools, Don Johnston, Inspiration, Vcom3D, Mandentec and more along with a mix of tech tools to bring it all together for your students. For more information contact Cindy Nankee at (608)822-3276 X 268 or email

cnankee@cesa3.k12.wi.us

From CESA 6

BUGS (Boardmaker User Group and Support Meetings).

Karen Stindt, WATI AT Consultant and Peggy Bartman, CESA 6 Autism Consultant are pairing up to provide a Boardmaker User Group. Meetings will consist of sharing time, hands-on-time, and a lesson. The group is meeting on the first Monday of each month. Meetings will consist of sharing time, hands-on-time, and a lesson. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Computers will be provided but RSVP's are required. All meetings are from 3:30-5:00

May 7 will focus on creating templates for schedules, mini-schedules, etc.

Location: CESA 6, 2300 Hwy 44, Oshkosh.

For more information contact Paula Starr at pstarr@cesa6.k12.wi.us or phone (920) 236-0567.

Boardmaker

Date: May 22, 2008

Time 8:00-3:00 pm

Location: CESA 6, Oshkosh

Are you amazed at all the uses for pictures and symbols to communicate, as well as label and organize your students' world? This workshop will provide a hands-on lab experience in using the software Boardmaker to create communication displays, labels, games, classroom materials and schedules. For more information contact Paula Starr at pstarr@cesa6.k12.wi.us or phone (920) 236-0567.

Special Buys!

Get them while you can!

WATI has worked with LAB Resources to offer special pricing for Wisconsin schools! But hurry, the offers will be ending soon!

Dragon NaturallySpeaking Preferred 9 Education Bundle:

- 7 Dragon Licenses (install on 7 computers, no limit on student users); 7 microphones;

License Certificate; Single CD, One Manual)

- Workshop in a Box for Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9
- LAB Lesson Plans for Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9

Bundle Price: \$ 749.95 (If purchased separately \$ 1,394.55)



LAB Resources is also including a special quantity discounts on *Boardmaker 6, LAB Lessons, 2000-2008 Addendum libraries, iPod video, and Workshop in a Box.*

For more information on pricing visit our website at <http://www.wati.org/> then click on "Special Buys"

AT Resources for Young Children

By Judi Cumley, CESA 5 AT Consultant

At the AT Across the Lifespan Conference, I attended one of the sessions for Birth-Three practitioners by Pip Campbell from Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA. What impressed me most were the resources she sited. Most of them had information not only for families and practitioners of children birth to six, but also ideas and tip sheets that could be modified for older early communicators and students with significant disabilities. I was familiar with some of the websites, but others were new to me and full of low tech information and resources for families and their supporters. Many of the tips and ideas came from the parents who used them and found them helpful

TotsNTech- <http://tnt.asu.edu> - This website is a collaborative project between two universities. Go to "Ideas to Share" to see a number of low tech ideas in the areas of communication, mobility/positioning or play. One page "Tip Sheets" with color pictures make them easy to share.



Child & Family Studies Research Project- (<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/cfsrp>)

This site is part of the Occupational Therapy department at Thomas Jefferson University. It offers training modules for child care providers with information about students with disabilities (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder) adaptations and accommodations, individualizing for families and more. Some of their modules are specific to Pennsylvania, but most are general enough to be worth sharing. The training modules can be found under *Professional Development*, then *modules*, and finally *Materials for Child Care Providers*. I also found lots of information in the *Products* section

(<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/cfsrp/products/>) including power point presentations, publications and newsletters.

The Let's Play project from Buffalo University Center for Assistive Technology has been in existence

for years (<http://letsplay.buffalo.edu/index.html>). If you haven't been there for awhile, it's worth going back. A look at the heading titles; *Play, Selecting Toys, Universal Design, Assistive Technology and Resources*, gives you an idea of the types of resources available on this site. Further exploration provides simple information with opportunities for a more in-depth focus ("Getting



Resources for Young Children

Ready for Play Guidelines" is a .pdf that helps adult caregivers with positioning, communication strategies and tips for toy selection). Each page also has links specific to that topic. The *Adapting Toys* handout has low tech ideas for stabilizing toys, confining them with a child's reach, safely attaching them and other ideas. The *Resources* section is full of one-page play sheets and full documents about topics such as *Playing with Switches, Computer Play with Young Children with Disabilities* and others.

Be certain to explore those other links which will take you to places like Lekotek, toy guides for children with disabilities, the Toys 'R Us differently-abled website and many more.

2007-2008 Monitor Schedule

October 15
December 15
February 15
April 15

Articles are due the 15th of the prior month.

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We're on the web!

<http://www.wati.org>

Our Mission ...



WATI assists school districts and Birth to Three programs in their responsibility to ensure that every child in Wisconsin who may need assistive technology (AT) has equal and timely access to appropriate assessment and the provision and implementation of needed AT devices and services.



The Mission of the Milwaukee Public Schools is to ensure that maximum educational opportunities are provided for all students to reach their highest potential so that:

1. Students achieve their educational and employment goals, and
2. Parents choose the Milwaukee Public Schools to educate their children.

UW-Stout Offers Online Courses

Inclusion—Strategies for Special Needs/ESL Learners begins June 11, 2008

Topics include:

- Successful teaching strategies and classroom management techniques for teachers working in inclusive classrooms
- Principles of differentiated instruction
- Assistive technologies and software for special needs students
- Benefits/challenges of the

team planning process

- Action plans to assist one or more learners through differentiation, assistive technologies and classroom management

The class is highly interactive with a significant discussion component. All projects/assignments will be submitted via e-mail or presented via the www. Instructor/peer comments will be available

through discussion groups or sent by e-mail.



For detailed information visit (<http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/inclusion.shtml>)