

Minnesota STAR
Program
A System of
Technology to
Achieve Results



*Minnesota's Assistive Technology
Act Program*

Constellations

Summer 2009

Assistive Technology (AT) Works!

Device Loans Deliver Transforming Technology

Over the past three years, STAR has worked with its device loan partners to provide Minnesotans with statewide access to assistive technology through short-term device loans. During this time, we have received many testimonials telling us how a device loan allowed a borrower to use technology to transform barriers into accomplishments. We would like to share a few of these stories with you.

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Appearing in court is difficult for most people, for a young student with a physical and speech disability, however, testifying in court proved to be especially challenging. During the student's first court appearance, he requested that a family member be allowed to verbally interpret on his behalf. His request was denied and a second appearance was scheduled. Before his next court date, the student borrowed a communication device from the statewide loan program. Using this device, he was able to testify on his own behalf. This experience was so empowering that the student and his family decided to explore options for purchasing a communication device.

Imagine what it would feel like to go on a job interview but not be able to speak. Thanks to one of our loan partners, a young worker was able to borrow a small wristwatch-style communication device that she used to answer questions during a job interview. Being able to independently participate in the job interview alleviated some of the stress associated with the interview and had a positive impact on this worker's self-esteem.

Spending recreational time with family strengthens family bonds, as well as, muscles and eye-hand coordination. It's also fun, especially when it involves video gaming. We heard from a woman diagnosed with multiple sclerosis who told us how much she used to enjoy fishing with her family but now she was unable to get on a boat. She decided it was a good idea when her therapist suggested she borrow a Wii console. At first, she admitted, her eye-hand coordination was off and she had difficulty using the game controller. However, after some practice, she rediscovered the joy she once felt when casting her line into the water. Soon, much to her delight, she was out-fishing family members. Another family wrote to tell us of the fun they had using the Wii to help their son who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Practicing ski jumping proved to be good exercise and increased his sense of accomplishment once he mastered the skills needed to play the game.





STAR Spotlight

Discover what activities STAR and its partners are working on around the state.

Device Reutilization

In July of this year contracts were awarded to five different agencies in Minnesota to provide device reutilization services. Each agency was awarded \$5,000.00 for these services. The agencies and their projects are as follows:

- **Computers for Schools** – Support of the Special Kids program, which will place at least 50 computers in the homes of children with disabilities.
- **State Services for the Blind** – Purchase parts in order to refurbish and distribute 20-25 computers for students with visual impairments.
- **National Multiple Sclerosis Society/ Minnesota Chapter** – Use funds to purchase parts, supplies, and labor for the refurbishment of durable medical equipment to be loaned to people living with multiple sclerosis in Minnesota. Some salaries and travel costs for staff involved in the refurbishment and the movement of this refurbished equipment will also be paid.
- **Goodwill Easter Seals Minnesota** – Purchase parts for the repair and refurbishing of approximately 85 wheelchairs.
- **Project HERO** – Support wages for additional warehouse staff to prepare incoming donations of durable medical equipment, as well as, support the hiring of one new position that will also provide improved customer assistance with securing appropriate devices in a timely manner.
- **United Cerebral Palsy of Central Minnesota** – Support and enrich the Computers Go Round Program and to open a satellite distribution center in the Twin Cities Metro area. This program will also refurbish approximately 50 computers and make them available to people with disabilities throughout Minnesota.

All of these reutilization projects will be completed by September 15, 2009.

Transition

In July of this year the STAR Program also awarded a contract in the amount of \$1,750.00 to Arc Greater Twin Cities for a transition conference. The staff of **Arc Greater Twin Cities and the Minnesota Disability Law Center** will explore how assistive technology can be a unifying thread for transition aged students with disabilities as they prepare to enter community living and employment. This conference will be held in an east metro location sometime in September, 2009.



AT a Glance

Here is a quick glance at some assistive technology (AT) that can help lifelong learners of all ages.

- **Pulse Smartpen** (Livescribe) – Capture handwritten notes, drawings, and audio using the Smartpen with specialized paper. Notes and audio can be shared and archived using Livescribe Desktop software.
- **Speaking Language Master** (Franklin) – Portable handheld device provides spelling and grammar support including a talking dictionary with phonetic spell correction.
- **NEO** (Alphasmart) – Lightweight portable notetaker contains built-in keyboard and LCD screen for viewing typed text. Features include text-to-speech, Co:Writer applet to help struggling writers and built-in dictionary and thesaurus.
- **iPod Touch with Proloquo2Go** (Apple/ Assistiveware) – Handheld multimedia device with communication software. Create customizable pre-programmed messages or spontaneous typed conversations.

To learn more or to borrow these items contact STAR or one of our loan program partners.

Regional Updates

Assistive Technology of Minnesota (ATMn) has changed its name to **EquipALife**. This nonprofit organization provides assistive technology related services and administers Minnesota's micro loan and telework programs. You can learn more about Equipalife by visiting www.equipalife.org.

People Achieving Change Through Technology (PACTT) recently appointed Malachi Bjorngaard as its new technology resource specialist. As one of STAR's partners, PACTT provides device demonstrations and maintains a statewide device loan program. You can view PACTT's online device loan catalog and learn more about its services at www.abc-pactt.org.

Minnesota State Services for the Blind recently announced that Dave Andrews, its chief technology officer, will serve as a consultant to China Charity Foundation and TCL Electronics to help establish a nationwide radio reading service for the blind in China. This service will be modeled after Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB) Radio Talking Book (RTB) program. It is anticipated that upwards of three million blind or visually impaired persons in China will benefit from the new nationwide service.

Mark Your Calendar

October

St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference, October 5-6, 2009, Duluth, MN.
(www.co.st-louis.mn.us)

Minnesota State Council on Disability 2009 Annual Awards Event, October 12, 2009, Duluth, MN.

Closing the Gap, Assistive Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation Conference, October 15-17, 2009, Minneapolis, MN. (www.closingthegap.com)

STAR Advisory Council Meeting, October 20, 2009, location to be determined. For more information, contact STAR. (www.starprogram.state.mn.us)

Arc of Minnesota, 2009 Arc Convention, October 23-24, 2009, Plymouth, MN. (www.thearcofminnesota.org)

Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference, October 23-24, 2009, Bloomington, MN.
(www.motafunctionfirst.org)

Assistive Technology Industry Association Conference, October 29-31, 2009, Chicago, IL. (www.atia.org)

November

12th Annual Accessing Higher Ground: Accessible Media, Web & Technology Conference, November 10-14, 2009, Boulder, CO. (<http://www.colorado.edu/ATconference>)

2009 Technology Innovators Conference, November 16-17, 2009, Washington, D.C.
(www.nationaltechcenter.org)

December

Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference, December 3-4, 2009, Wisconsin Dells, WI.
(www.atacrosslifespan.org)

STARTE

Reusing Assistive
Technology!

Visit STAR Technology
Exchange

www.mnstarte.org





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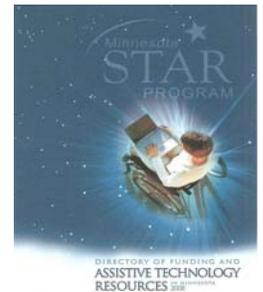
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Did You Know?

The history of assistive technology is a vibrant tale full of passionate innovators, visionaries, and advocates. Learn all about these remarkable people at the **AT Oral History** Web site <http://atoralhistory.uconn.edu>.

Let STAR Help You Stay Informed!

- Request a free copy of our 2008-2009 Funding and Assistive Technology Directory
- Subscribe to STAR Point and receive emails on assistive technology news and events
- Subscribe to Constellations, our quarterly newsletter
- Visit our Web site www.starprogram.state.mn.us
- Become a registered user of STAR Technology Exchange at www.mnstarte.org



For more information, contact STAR by calling 651-201-2640, 888-234-1267 (toll-free) or send an email to star.program@state.mn.us. Minnesotans with a hearing or speech disability may call us through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 800-627-3529.

When you are done reading this newsletter, please share with others or recycle. Thank you!

All STAR materials are available in alternative formats

This document can be made available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, audio tape or disk by calling 651-201-2640 or 888-234-1267 (toll free). Consumers with a hearing or speech disability may call us through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 800-627-3529, or by sending an email to star.program@state.mn.us.

¡FOLLETOS EN ESPAÑOL! STAR ha empezado traducir folletos en Inglés a Español. Actualmente, STAR tiene dos folletos en Español: "Directorio de Recursos de Financiamiento para Tecnología Asistiva en Minnesota" y "El Programa STAR: Un Sistema de Tecnología para Lograr Resultados."

The System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) program is Minnesota's Assistive Technology Act Program, located within the Minnesota Department of Administration. STAR receives funds from the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. The contents of this newsletter are educational in nature. It should not be assumed that the identification of any product, individual, or agency implies endorsement by the State of Minnesota, STAR, or the U.S. Department of Education. This newsletter was financed with federal money.