



Family Center
on Technology
and Disability

AT Recycling: Everything Old is New Again

Don't throw the past away
You might need it some rainy day
Dreams can come true again
When ev'ry thing old is new again

From the Broadway musical, *The Boy from Oz*

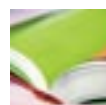
For too many children with disabilities and their financially hard-pressed families obtaining assistive technology is a dream deferred. Recycled AT, however, can make those dreams of AT ownership come true sooner rather than later. Tech Act projects, local business organizations, engineering clubs and other groups nationwide, are bringing those dreams to life by refurbishing low and high tech AT devices, from wheelchairs to sophisticated computers. Recycling has proved to be a reliable, cost-efficient way to achieve two objectives: providing quality AT to those who need it while aiding communities seeking ways to avoid packing local landfills with toxic computer trash. Significantly, many recycling programs also enable children with disabilities to take direct ownership of AT devices rather than remaining dependant on school districts for AT acquisition and use. This issue examines AT recycling and the resources currently available to facilitate it.

Dave Grass Speaks

When Dave Grass was an undergraduate at Northern Illinois University more than three decades ago, his best friend, his teammate on high school athletic teams and a lifelong hunting and fishing partner, severed his spinal cord in an auto accident. Recalls, Mr. Grass: "I was in an engineering program at NIU and became interested in how my budding engineering skills would help individuals like my friend." At the same time, he says, "I was beginning to realize that my double-Type A personality was not going to be happy sitting in a design cubicle."

Soon he went to his father, an engineer, as was Grass's grandfather, to inform him that he was not going to pursue an engineering career but instead was going to devote himself to working with individuals with disabilities. After a year, he says, with tongue only partly in cheek, "My father started talking to me again when he became aware that I was using my education for a good cause." His father's conversion was accelerated, Mr. Grass remembers, "when he saw me redesign equipment for AT use at a time when

there were no lifts or vans for use by people who were disabled." Later, as universal computer usage accelerated, "I could see the power of computers and became increasingly involved with them as I continued to firm up what I really wanted to do." Eighteen years ago he encountered the Alliance for Technology Access and has been affiliated with ATA ever since.



An engineering graduate of Northern Illinois University with a Masters degree in education earned from the same institution, Dave Grass is founder and director of the Northern Illinois Center for Adaptive technology in Rockford, IL, an organization that serves nine counties in northern Illinois. He has taught children with disabilities for 32 years and has an extensive background in computers and adaptive technology. An instructor at NIU, he's a past member of the ATA Board of Directors and from 1992 through 2000 served as training and equipment coordinator for the Mattel Family Computer Learning Program.

In this issue we also feature members of our **Knowledge Network**. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of AT recycling. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.

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Tinkers for the Millennium: AT Recycling Takes Center Stage

An Interview with Dave Grass, AT Recycling Pioneer

They resemble the trailblazers of the computer age in the 1950s and 60s, engineering geeks puttering in garages, looking at a device and then attempting to improve it or to make it work in ways never intended. Today, their linear descendants are using those tinkering skills to refurbish computers and other assistive technology or, like their predecessors, to refit existing devices for entirely new purposes. These geeks are the cutting edge of AT recycling, enhancing AT accessibility and saving the environment from the toxic scourge of computer trash.



Dave Grass, with an academic background in mechanical engineering, was one of those geeks. He began applying his skill and passion to the recycling field 22 years ago, when the field barely existed. Yet, despite the passage of decades and the ever accelerating pace of technological evolution, the challenges families face now in their quest for affordable AT have changed little since the beginning and since the organization he founded, the Northern Illinois Center for Adaptive technology, opened shop back in 1989. Then and now, he says, the lack of parental expertise with technology is a major obstacle.

“Our Kids Are the Digital Natives”



“Nowadays, parents certainly understand technology better than in the past, but older Americans remain digital immigrants,” he declares. “Our kids are the digital natives. I often tell teachers, when they can’t get a device set up for

one of their students, ‘Go find a sixth grader to help you.’ These kids grew up on computers whereas most adults got into computers relatively late in life.”

Sometimes, he insists, parents not only don’t know the answers, they don’t know the right questions to ask in order to obtain the answers. Some parents, he adds, have more than enough difficulty just emailing. “For them to try to find out what more sophisticated equipment can do for their child is very difficult. Many parents don’t even know where to start.”

Then there’s the cost, and wondering where the money is going to come from, he notes. “With communication devices, for instance, the insurance process is full of hoops that families need to jump through.” One of the problems with communication devices and insurance companies, he explains, is that a communication device can’t be called a communication device. “In order to get funding, the device must be called a speech prosthesis or the latest term sga, speech generation device. The device must be shown to be a medical necessity. There are subtleties that parents have to know and understand in order to obtain funding.”

The other important item for parents to understand is that insurers almost always deny the first claim, he alleges. “Parents need to know that they are entitled to request an appeal. Once parents enter the appeal process by filing for an appeal, insurers quickly come to understand that parents are onto the game. When that happens the insurers put the case into a different pile.”

Finding an Information Guide

What parents need throughout the AT acquisition process, he emphasizes, “is information, and someone to guide them.” The question is, where do they find that guide?

Sometimes school systems can act as the guide. However, if the school system turns out to be an unsatisfactory guide, where do parents turn for the advice they need?

“Many of the tech projects have that information,” he explains. “In Illinois, for example, these projects can provide information and also advocate.”

Every state has a decent information referral system in place, Mr. Grass says. There are individuals who can answer parent questions and provide guidance. “The Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) centers are very effective in this regard.” If there’s no ATA center in their area, then parents can use the national system, which then refers questions to the other centers around the nation, he adds.

He emphasizes that referral systems differ from state to state. “In Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI) is a great model for states to look at.” There, he explains, the integration of state agencies and the state school system is truly remarkable. “The AT support for the transition from school to work has been well thought out. WATI is also very effective at sharing information, which is not always the case with similar organizations elsewhere.”

Information sharing between states and between intrastate AT-related entities is often difficult “because the grant money that’s available sometimes creates competitors instead of collaborators.

Mr. Grass, however, believes that there is a way to enhance information sharing by extracting the competitive gene from the process. “The way the Request for Proposals (RFPs) are written now is quite different than in the past. Achieving an outcome is no longer sufficient. A project has to show that there has been collaboration.” Project directors, he claims, “are smart enough to see that information sharing is part of that collaboration process. Multiple points of view ought to produce better, more useful outcomes.”



How to Match Child with AT: Involve Parents

Mr. Grass’s organization employs a checklist to match children’s needs with AT. The checklist, he notes, is similar to many assessment tools.

“We have a team, of course, and an indispensable part of that team is the parents. For us, it’s a given that the parents will be involved in the assessment and in any training that’s necessary.”

Such strong parental involvement is an integral part of the Alliance for Technology philosophy, he explains. “The ATA, after all, was started by parents, teachers and educators who wanted to make a difference. We have remained true to that philosophy, which is a grass roots method of working a non-medical model.” What a child needs today, he adds, might not be what is needed tomorrow, so parents – and children who grow to adulthood -- need to develop the necessary skills to advocate for themselves.

His center’s level of parental involvement may be more intense than parental involvement at other similar facilities, he concedes.

“In some organizations parental involvement consists of notifying the parents if their child is going to have an AT evaluation and then notifying the parents of the results of that evaluation when it is completed.” His organization’s involvement with parents is much more comprehensive than that, he says.

“Our way is not the perfect way, but we believe that there is so much information that has to be sorted through by parents.” Parents need to be informed, he adds, that assistive technology is more than computers, “although many parents only associate AT with computers.” A child, he comments, might need a communication device, or perhaps a ramp to help with mobility concerns, both of which are categorized as assistive technology.

“I Want Every Child to Have Opportunities”

“There may be transportation issues we can help with, or maybe social issues. Maybe we



can come up with devices that make it possible for a student to be more included in family activities, that gets a child out more so that the child’s experience base is expanded. We look at all these factors for any child. Looking at my own children and all the things they’re involved with helps me make judgments about the AT that can be used to help kids with disabilities enjoy some of those activities. I want every child to have those opportunities.” Mr. Grass declares.

“When we go through these lists of activities and needs with parents, we look at everything.” Sometimes, he says, there are hidden issues, like vision problems, for instance, that will impact a child’s needs.

“Once we thought an AlphaSmart would be perfect for a particular child. But the child was struggling with it. He did fine on the computer at home, but not the AlphaSmart at school. We found out that he had glasses but was not wearing them at school. He couldn’t see the screen on the AlphaSmart! We were about to eliminate the AlphaSmart as a possibility because of his struggles, but it wasn’t the AlphaSmart. After he started wearing his glasses, he and his AlphaSmart got along fine.”

Such ironies, he admits, don’t occur often, “just enough to remind us that we need to look at the entire picture before we make a decision about AT, whether it’s a physical limitation or behavioral, especially when we’re working autistic children, about whom we understand so little.”

“We need to know that they are going to use the device that’s selected. We had a young man the other day who was on the verge of making a decision about an AT device. We asked him, ‘Are you going to use this device or are you going to throw it in your locker at school?’ The young man replied, ‘I’m not going to use it.’ He was in a pretty tough school, and he didn’t want to stand out. At that point we negotiated with him. We said, ‘You know this device is going to help you.’ He agreed that it would. Then we asked, ‘How about if you used it at home?’ He agreed. There was no point in investing in expensive equipment if he was not going to use it in a way that he was willing to be a part of. After all, it’s his life.”

AT ABANDONMENT, WHETHER DEVICES ARE NEW OR RECYCLED, PLAGUES ALL PARTIES IN THE AT FIELD. MR. GRASS’S STRATEGY FOR REDUCING THE RATE OF AT ABANDONMENT: “TRAINING. TRAINING. TRAINING. TRAINING.”

Reducing AT Abandonment: Training. Training. Training.

AT abandonment, whether devices are new or recycled, plagues all parties in the AT field. Mr. Grass’s strategy for reducing the

rate of AT abandonment: "Training. Training. Training. Training."

It's ironic, he remarks, considering its importance, that training is something that the field does not do a very good job of. "We spend money on these expensive devices but we don't spend the money to do a good job of training everyone in a school system who's involved with the AT process, particularly teachers." Part of the problem, he explains, is finding expert trainers. "It's not that the school does not want to do the training. Schools come to me and ask, 'Dave, who can I get to train these teachers?'"

Is there a solution to the training problem? According to Mr. Grass, the solution lies in making AT classes, like those he teaches at Northern Illinois University, required for all teacher candidates nationwide.

"My class is a required class now," he points out. "It had not been required until two years ago. Before that, we had been sending teachers out to teach who had no background in AT." Now, at the front end, "we teach an overview course that includes communication and vision concerns and mobility concerns, for example, and breaking all this down to 'What can assistive technology do for me?' We at least do that much, teaching those teachers how to find more training to help."

In many universities, he observes, AT remains an elective. "What's happening – and we've been called on by other universities – is that when teacher training curriculums are updated, usually every 3-4 years, universities are now choosing to making AT a required course. "Until the most recent go-around here at NIU, making the AT training course required was not even considered. Finally, though, there was recognition that there were just not enough teachers who understood AT well enough."

PARENTS, HE EMPHASIZES, ARE A CRUCIAL COMPONENT IN THE TRAINING EQUATION AT THE SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVEL. "MAKE SURE THAT PARENTS ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN WHATEVER AT TRAINING IS GOING ON AT THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL."

Invite the Parents

Parents, he emphasizes, are a crucial component in the training equation at the school district level. "Make sure that parents are invited to participate in whatever AT training is going on at their child's school." The benefits of parent training, he notes, are reflected in the programming of communication devices. "We've got moms who do the programming on the communications devices because they've participated in these training sessions. The teacher has enough to do already, so the mom takes that programming task on as her responsibility. We've actually had mothers train teachers."

Such an approach is effective, he says, because, "although teachers may move on, a mother will always be the mother of that child." As the child migrates from grade to grade, the child's parent migrates as well. "This makes parents feel as if they're part of the AT team and that they can make even more of a difference in their child's life."

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements occasionally act as an impetus for teacher AT training, he says. NCLB's teacher recertification requirements, he adds, have encouraged teachers to get AT training because they need the Certification Education Units (CEUs)s for recertification purposes. "Consequently, we've been putting together more and more after-school training programs for teachers. The teachers who are really interested in technology take those courses."

Teachers preparing to enter inclusion classroom environments also want AT training, he says. As more and more students are being included, teachers are looking at AT as being very supportive in making inclusion successful, he adds.

"I had an inclusion student who had suffered a traumatic brain injury. He was older than the children who were in his class, but not by a lot. He was struggling with relearning to read. We programmed a communications device to help him. The teacher was a little reserved about it at first. She thought it was going to be disruptive. Later, when I returned to the class, the teacher asked me, 'The kids in my class don't have special ed eligibility, but do you think we could somehow get them signed up to use this program?' The benefits of this young man's program were very evident to her and she knew that it would help her other struggling students."

Creating Recycling Programs: Follow the Leader

Mr. Grass has some advice for organizations that are considering implementing an AT recycling program. At the top of his to-do list: Remember that AT is more than computers.

"Often when we hear about AT recycling programs we automatically think of computers. There's nothing wrong with that, but we also look at recycling other non-computer AT."

Mr. Grass refers to communication devices, aids for daily living, wheelchairs, seating inserts and recreational tools – "we actually had some bowling ramps that were donated to us" – and transportation devices like stands and lifts under the non-computer AT umbrella along with environmental controls.

"We've recycled several scooters. We had one young man with neuromuscular disease who was really struggling to keep up



with his peers. The last thing he wanted to do was to go into a wheelchair. So we found him a cool little three-wheeled scooter that was donated to us by an older couple. The young man was ecstatic.”

He lauds the Simon Technology Center’s AT product and equipment referral service that connects equipment owners with individuals seeking equipment.

In Illinois, he says, the Illinois AT Project has a recycling program component, as do similar organizations in other states. In addition, the state has the Illinois AT Exchange Network (ATEN), a collaboration between the State Board of Education, United Cerebral Palsy in Chicago and Infinitec. “This has been a very effective network for [recycling]. As schools no longer need older AT, they donate it to this network.”

Let the Media Know

His center, he notes, does similar work on a smaller basis. “There is no reason why a center like ours can’t be started in a local community. We let the local media know about what we are doing and the media are very cooperative in spreading the word. Not only do we look for equipment, we look for people. Engineers have volunteered, and they fix some of the AT that bounces back to us because it’s broken. These engineers take a look at the equipment to see if it can be salvaged. For the engineers, this kind of work is fun, a challenge. They are indispensable to the recycling process.”

ATEN, he adds, has established a collaboration with DeVry University, a technical institution. DeVry, he explains, was seeking intern activities that would allow its students to gain hands-on experience working with AT equipment. For ATEN, he declares, the collaboration was a perfect match. “We also work with a junior college near us. If the kids at the JC can’t fix our equipment, it’s no loss because there’s no cost factor.”

Local banks can play a role in establishing a recycling center, he points out. “Banks have been a big help to us. Their turnover of equipment is huge because speed is everything in banking and obsolescence comes fast. One bank gave us automated banking centers, which use standard monitors that were touch-sensitive. The monitors worked on standard equipment. When we removed the monitors from the bank systems and put them on a standard computer we had touch sensitive screens.”

This arrangement, Mr. Grass recalls, took shape soon after he was interviewed on-air by a local TV station on the 6 o’clock

news. In the interview he reiterated his assertion that AT can range from a computer to a walker to a doorknob, from the highest of high tech to the lowest of low tech. “Every time we get coverage, we get a couple of wheelchairs as a donation that we might not ordinarily get because people often don’t connect that kind of AT with what we offer,” he says.

Lower Cost Crossover Technology Minimizes Costs

What continues to amaze him, he declares, is how expensive a piece of equipment becomes as soon as it is identified as special needs equipment. “A floating monitor is real important for kids in wheelchairs. If you buy one from vendors it can cost more than \$200. A monitor arm purchased from a mainstream computer vendor may be only \$69. A recycled monitor is \$69. We are constantly making parents aware of these price differentials, because they are significant – and parents need all the help available to keep these equipment costs to a minimum. Schools, too.”



Among the trends impacting AT recycling, he says, is the proliferation of non-AT technology with AT utility, like text messaging, for example. “When text messaging first appeared, I said to my partner, Cathy, whose son, Troy, is deaf, ‘Troy could text message you. If he’s going to be late, for instance, he can text message you.’ She was so excited at the possibilities.”

Back then, he points out, text messaging wasn’t categorized as AT, but for Cathy, for Troy, it was AT. Best of all, Mr. Grass notes, “the cost for technology that’s not classified as ‘special needs’ is much less. It’s not a TTY.”

Text messaging, or any other crossover technology, is technology that anyone can use, he emphasizes. “Crossover technology like text messaging doesn’t require sign language or someone to do transcription. We’re seeing the appearance of more and more of this technology.”

Microsoft, for example, through its Accessibility Resource Centers, is identifying built-in tools and vendors developing tools devices that benefit everyone, not just individuals with disabilities, he says. “The aging population is going to be a huge market for this multi-purpose technology. When Microsoft demonstrates that there is a market for this technology, others will jump in.”

Universal design, he notes, also plays a role in the development of the technology. “I remember doing functional learning with our students and having difficulty figuring out the symbols that went with various words. Now, with the different languages that are being spoken in this country, everything has symbols with it. Those symbols, then, will be on devices so that our students, and even students with cognitive impairments, will be able to access them.



An added benefit in the rise of crossover technology and its role in AT recycling is the solution it presents to the growing problem of “computer trash,” the discarded parts of computers that turn toxic in a community’s landfill. Recycling, Mr. Grass explains, “means this equipment remains useful to people who need it and who might not otherwise be able to afford it new.”

He’s joined forces with Community Technology Centers across the nation to make sure older computers are refurbished and remain in circulation. “We’re using those centers as portals where individuals with disabilities in these communities can go and receive services, just like anyone else.”

Engineering Geeks and Business Organizations Spearhead Recycling

With their involvement in AT recycling, engineering clubs, he says, carry on the spirit that launched the computer age.

“The old Bell system used to have organizations called Telephone Pioneers. Those groups are still around. They are very useful for AT work. They build switches for young children and adapt battery-operated toys. These groups get very excited about their work and have helped us for years doing our Christmas programs, making sure that the children had usable toys. A couple of these fellows had children or grandchildren with disabilities.” Rather than settling for giving their children stuffed animals as gifts, he explains, “they wanted their children to have toys that could be activated with a switch.”

AMBUCS, the American Businessmen’s Clubs, has also been very active in the recycling effort. “It’s an organization similar to Rotary or Kiwanis but not as large and is very, very active with children with physical disabilities. A couple of their programs are very efficient at providing fundraising support for AT recycling efforts. Several of the AMBUCs members own their own businesses.” Most AMBUCS members are the decision makers for their companies, Mr. Grass explains, and they have arranged to direct the computers that are being recycled out of their businesses to go straight to recycling programs.

Taking Their AT Home

“The cool thing about donated equipment like this is that the student can have the equipment in the home,” he notes. Use is not limited to in-school. The device belongs to the student, not to the school district.



“That’s also the cool thing about ATEN. Equipment recycled by ATEN doesn’t necessarily have to go to the school, even though ATEN is an Illinois Board of Education program. The equipment can belong to the student and be placed

in the student’s possession.”

The engineering clubs at the colleges in his region also place the equipment they refurbish into the hands of students and families. “The clubs love the work they do for us. Their background is like mine – they’re engineering geeks and enjoy the challenge. This is something they want to do, not have to do. If you want them to give a speech, they won’t show up. But if you want them to take a piece of equipment apart, figure out how it works and make it work, or make it do something different from what it was intended to do, they’re your guys. All you have to do is provide materials for them and then turn them loose to do what they do best.”

The Role of the Tech Act Projects

Most of the Tech Act projects have a recycling component, Mr. Grass points out. “The Tech Acts talk to each other. They share information. They share successes. They realize that they are sunsetting. The money’s not going to be there and they must show capabilities that are going to be invaluable to their respective states, because the states are going to be footing the bill, not the feds. I think, when it comes to the Tech Act’s recycling capabilities, that the states see the value of recycling computers that are no longer valuable to the original owners.” Recycling is effective at reducing equipment cost, he adds, and the Tech Act projects’ central location in each state makes recycling a convenient option.

“When we refer to assistive technology, we’re not talking about a large number of devices,” he asserts. “By making the recycling activities centrally located in one area of the state, there’s no duplication of services. It makes sense that the Tech Acts would be ideal at meeting this need.”

Mediation Works

Across the nation, he notes, organizations act as mediators, encouraging social services agencies and schools to work together to efficiently provide recycled equipment to children and families that need it. .

“In our region there’s an agency called Access Services of Northern Illinois. The agency helps a school realize that a specific device may meet a particular need for one child and then comes up with a plan with the help of NICAT so that the school can obtain that device.” The agency and others like it, he adds, serve as mediators between vendors and schools. “The idea is to get the clubs, the social services agencies and the schools to work together for a common goal. We’ve been pretty successful in doing that.”

Business leaders, he notes, like the arrangement “because they can see the business sense in it.” Social services agencies, he adds, are best at providing access to recycled equipment past school age.

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The Future: Recycling Has an Environmental Role

Recycled AT, Mr. Grass hopes, may play an important future role in helping avert an environmental crisis. “We’re seeing companies like Dell and the companies that manufacture printers already anticipating ways to design products so that those products will not end up in the landfill. I think we can be part of that. I think we can be part of their solution.”

Other programs already exist, he says, in which individuals with severe developmental disabilities are dismantling printers and saving parts that can be recycled back into other printers. Plastics are being recycled as well, he notes.

“If it’s a good product, it can be used by someone who needs it and doesn’t have the money to purchase new equipment.” If the device can be recycled only for its parts, “then give that opportunity to individuals with severe developmental disabilities to disassemble those devices. That’s what I’d like to see happen. I think it’s doable. From a financial standpoint, it makes sense. The equipment can’t go into the landfill, for sure, or we’ll be buried by the stuff.”

In the future, as in the past, he concludes, the technological evolution of AT – its convergence with crossover technology – will be driven by men and women who have a passion for learning how things work, who enjoy tinkering with equipment for the benefit of those who need that equipment as an equalizer, as a way to realize a dream of a better and richer life.



RESOURCES

ARTICLES

The Benefits of Recycling and Reusing Assistive Technology RESNA 2000

RESNA research revealed that approximately 20%-40% of assistive technology goes unused for various reasons, including change of medical need, users outgrowing the equipment and inappropriate selection of devices. RESNA found that recycling (or re-using) AT devices benefits AT suppliers, students and consumers. Recycling, the study found, helps consumers control costs, allows students to have access to computers and helps suppliers provide equipment to people who cannot afford to purchase new equipment or who only need to rent equipment for a short period of time.

<http://www.resna.org/taproject/library/pubs/recycling/RMchptr1.htm>

WEBSITES

New Horizons Unlimited, Inc.

This site provides information on community and Internet resources, as well as on adaptive technology, computers, hardware and software donations and AT refurbishers. It is a very comprehensive compendium of national and statewide AT recycling organizations.

<http://www.new-horizons.org/adpcpr.html>

PROGRAMS

Illinois Assistive Technology Exchange Network (ATEN)

Since 1995, ATEN has accepted used AT from private donors for transfer to Illinois schools. The organization is administered by Chicago United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) and the Illinois State Board of Education. It is affiliated with the National Cristina Foundation (NCF), a national non-profit that distributes donated computer equipment to individuals with disabilities or who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. NCF transfers AT devices to ATEN for distribution throughout Illinois. Much of the technology recycled by ATEN is donated by corporations looking to replace old equipment. As of March 2005, more than 9,315 businesses and individuals had donated equipment to ATEN, which donated 28,228 computer systems, along with several thousand printers, touch screens, software packages and other items to 1,823 public schools in 642 Illinois communities. Every computer distributed by ATEN is loaded with the Windows operating system and a non-current version of WordPerfect. ATEN-distributed computers are guaranteed to work.

For more information, contact ATEN at:

(708) 444-2836; (800) 476-2836, Fax: (708) 429-3981

Email: ggrill@ucpnet.org

<http://www.ucpnet.org/aten.html>

Computers for Schools Program (CFSP)

The program helps redirect prematurely retired computers to schools and assists in teaching children how to use the technology. In creating and maintaining partnerships to assist schools in attaining needed technology, CFSP is aided by the Computers for Schools Association, an association of refurbishers. For more information, contact:

Computers for Schools
3642 N. Springfield Avenue
Chicago, IL 60618

Phone: (800) 939-6000

Contact: Michelle Werkle

Email: Michelle@pcsforschools.org

<http://www.pcsforschools.org/cfs/intro.html>

The Computer Redistribution Team (CRT)

The CRT consists of private sector, education and civic leaders who collect computers and computer equipment donated by businesses and individuals. The team:

- Provides free equipment to needy individuals so they are able to access information technology
- Works with schools and local mentors to train high school students for a career in computer repair and A+ certification
- Is a source for businesses and individuals to dispose of unwanted computers, peripherals, and software while receiving tax credit

For more information, contact:

Computer Redistribution Team

601 Shenandoah Village Drive, Suite 7D

Waynesboro, VA 22980-9264

Phone: (540) 949-8616

Email: info@computer-recycle.org

<http://www.computer-recycle.org/index.html>

Carolina Computer Access Center (CCAC)

The center provides the following services:

- Demonstration of assistive technology devices and programs
- AT information and referral services
- Software, book and videotape lending library
- Short-term loans of equipment and augmentative communication devices
- JAWS screen reader training
- AT and augmentative communication assessments
- Service contracts and group training
- Workshops and vendor demonstrations on adaptive technologies and inclusion strategies
- Presentation of an annual technology fair
- Publication of a semi-annual newsletter
- Maintenance of a website with AT resources

For further information, contact:

Carolina Computer Access Center (CCAC)

401 East Ninth Street

Charlotte, NC 28202

Phone: (704) 342-3004

Fax: (704) 342-1513

Email: ccacnc@bellsouth.net

http://ccac.ataccess.org/contact_us.shtml

DATABASES

Louisiana Assistive Technology Network's (LATAN) AT Recycling Database Project

The database features a listing of AT lending sources, as well as resources for the exchange, purchase and/or donation of previously used AT. The listings are linked to the LATAN's web site for ready access. <http://www.latan.org/recycling.html>

AT Used Equipment Services, Loan Closets and Rental Agencies

Affiliated with the University of Iowa, the site is a nationwide and international database of recycling sources.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/infotech/Otherusehtm.htm>

Share the Technology

Since 1996 this free, public-service database has helped computer equipment donors connect with nonprofit organizations and individuals with disabilities seeking equipment donations.

For more information, contact:

Share the Technology

P.O. Box 548

Rancocas, NJ 08073

<http://www.sharetechnology.org/>

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP)

The Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) belongs to a national network of technology-related assistance programs. The mission of AzTAP is to increase access to assistive technology (AT) devices and services for individuals with disabilities and their families, and to facilitate the development of a consumer-responsive AT service delivery system. Program staff work with consumers, service providers, state agencies, private industries, legislators, and other interested individuals to facilitate the development of a statewide system to provide AT services. AzTAP addresses changes in laws, regulations and practices, such as the passage of a state assistive device warranty bill.

AzTAP works to overcome barriers of funding by co-sponsoring a used computer recycling program. The organization also collaborates with state agencies, co-sponsoring training events designed to inform consumers of their rights and to make them aware of available AT resources. They strive to empower individuals to advocate for themselves by networking with other disability groups for legislative advocacy, information sharing, and developing/improving services. Finally, AzTAP works to improve the timeliness of services by developing Regional AT Resource Centers.

For further information on the Arizona Technology Access Program, please contact:

Institute for Human Development
Northern Arizona University
2400 N. Central Avenue, Suite 300
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 728-9534
TTY: (602) 728-9536
Toll-free: (800) 477-9921
Fax: (602) 728-9353

<http://www.nau.edu/ihd/aztap>

Contact: Jill Sherman, Project Director

Email: Jill.Oberstein@nau.edu

Disability Resources of Nevada



DISABILITY
RESOURCES

Founded in 1993, Disability Resources of Nevada (DRN) serves individuals with disabilities in Washoe County, Nevada. New-To-You Computers is DRN's computer-recycling program, in which the organization accepts donations of computers, monitors, printers and other related equipment, refurbishes the equipment and makes it available to people with disabilities at little or no cost. The program also offers low-cost computer repairs and sales of computers and accessories to the public. In addition, DRN operates the following programs:

Center brochure and semi-annual newsletter

- *Job Development*, which aids people with disabilities in obtaining and retaining appropriate and gainful employment.
- *Supportive Living Arrangements*, which teaches basic living skills, such as cooking, hygiene, money management and medication management to individuals with disabilities.
- *Respite*, which provides short-term relief for 24-hour caregivers of people with disabilities.
- *Behavior Management*, which trains parents, family members and the teachers of children with disabilities how to replace a specific unacceptable behavior with a more acceptable one.

For more information on DRN, please contact:

Disability Resources Network of Nevada
155 Glendale Ave., Ste. 11
Sparks, NV 89431
Phone: (775) 329-1126
Fax: (775) 329-8911

Rhode Island Assistive Technology Act Project

ATAP, the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Act Project, is a statewide partnership of organizations and agencies, each with a targeted assistive technology focus. They collaborate to provide information and improved access to AT. ATAP offers workshops and trainings, provides AT advocacy, and works with other state organizations to recycle AT devices. They work to remove barriers and increase funding so that assistive technology can be obtained more easily.

For more information on the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Act Project, please contact:

40 Fountain Street
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 421-7005; TDD: (401) 421-7016;
Spanish: (401) 272-8090; Fax: (401) 222-3574

<http://www.atap.state.ri.us/>

Contact: Regina Connor, Project Director

Email: reginac@ors.ri.gov

TechConnectors



TechConnectors is Nebraska's Recycling Service for computers and assistive technology (AT). It is a one-stop resource which, in addition to giving away AT, includes items for sale, loan, demonstration and evaluation. They

have set up a website where individuals, schools, and agencies can look for or list used AT. It serves as an exchange area, linking people who have AT they are no longer using with those in need of a device. There is not a charge to list items or to log-in.

A new website feature enables loan programs to list equipment, which can be checked out online.

For more information on TechConnectors, please contact:

1910 Meridian Avenue
Cozad, NE 69130

or

1313 Farnam on the Mall
Omaha, NE 68102

Phone: 1-(800) 652-0033 (Cozad)

1-(877) 201-4141 (Omaha)

<https://www.techconnectors.net/welcome.aspx>

Contact: Patti Neill

Email: techconnectors@techconnectors.net

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)



FAAST envisions a seamless, supportive partnership between Florida businesses

and government to provide AT products and services to people with disabilities. FAAST works with consumers, family members, caregivers, providers and agencies to ensure that individuals continue to benefit from assistive technology as they move between home, school, work and community.

Through its Equipment Lending and Recycling Programs, FAAST offers refurbished computers and adaptive devices to new users. Other programs include:

Alternative Financing Program, Access to Telework, Community Outreach, Regional Demonstration Centers, and the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program.

For more information on the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST), please contact:

325 John Knox Road, Building 400; Suite 402
Tallahessee, FL 32303

Phone: (850) 487-3278; Toll-free: 1-(888) 788-9216

Fax: (850) 487-2805

<http://www.faastrg.org>

Email: faast@faast.org

National Cristina Foundation

The National Cristina Foundation is a non-profit public charity that distributes donations of previously used hardware and software to



organizations that train people with disabilities, at risk students, and economically disadvantaged persons. Across America and around the world, the National Cristina Foundation is working to ensure that used computer technology resources that no longer meet an enterprise's or individual's needs are given a second productive life as a tool for developing human potential. There is no charge for any of their work.

NCF matches the donated computer technology to one or more of its partner organizations in the geographic area where the equipment is located. NCF grassroots partners are located throughout the United States, in all 50 states, and internationally.

For more information on the National Cristina Foundation, please contact:

500 West Putnam Avenue

Greenwich, CT 06830

Phone: (203) 863-9100; Fax: (203) 863-9230

<http://www.cristina.org>

Email: ncf@cristina.org Contact: Yvette Marrin

Northern Illinois Center for Adaptive Technology

The Northern Illinois Center for Adaptive Technology is a local partnership between the United Cerebral Palsy Blackhawk Region, the Rockford Public Schools, and persons with disabilities and their families. They are committed to the Alliance for Technology Access and believe they are offering much needed services to the local community. The mission of the Northern Illinois Center for Adaptive Technology is to help people with disabilities reach their full potential by providing information on the latest technology and by matching adaptive devices to their disabilities empowering them to more effectively interface with their environment.

One of their on-going projects is the Equipment Recycling and Repair Project. Through this project, they have been able to find, salvage and upgrade a number of computers for use with children who cannot write in a conventional manner. For this program, they are always accepting a variety of hardware and software.

For more information on the Northern Illinois Center for Adaptive Technology, please contact:

3615 Louisiana Road

Rockford, IL 61108

Phone: (815) 229-2163; Fax: (815) 229-2135

<http://nicat.ataccess.org/>

Email: davegrass@earthlink.net, Contact: Dave Grass

Georgia's Assistive Technology Exchange Program: GTrade

gTRADE

Georgia's Assistive Technology Equipment Exchange Program

GTrade is an online database where people may list AT items for sale,

donation, or things they need. They believe that AT recycling provides an opportunity for those in need to access AT items no longer needed by others. GTrade is the place for individuals to either advertise used equipment for sale, donation, or express a need for a specific item. The program is available to Georgians with disabilities and their families.

Their computer recycling program, Reboot, recycles computers for Georgians with disabilities. This program has recycled almost 6,000 computers to date! Having a computer allows for access to the "outside world." This can be vital for someone who has transportation or mobility difficulties.

For more information on GTrade, please contact:

Georgia's Assistive Technology Exchange Program
Georgia Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation
Tools for Life Program
1700 Century Circle; Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30345
Toll-free: 1-(800) 497-8665
<http://www.gtradeonline.org/>
Contact: Liz Persaud, AT Information and Referral Specialist
Email: info@gatfl.org



Family Center on Technology and Disability

1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone 202-884-8068
Fax (202) 884-8441
fctd@aed.org
www.fctd.info

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Are you looking for a place to see all of the latest assistive technologies? This January, the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) will present its seventh annual AT Conference and Trade Show at the Caribe Royale All-Suites Resort in Orlando.

Taking place **January 18-21**, the **ATIA Conference** will present more than 250 sessions and hands-on labs. Learn about the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) that is improving accessibility in schools around the country.

The best part of all – on Saturday, January 21, the ATIA Trade Show is open to the public, free of charge! Come and explore nearly 100 quality AT vendors, showcasing new products and services.

Want to Learn More?

For full details, visit http://www.atia.org/conf_2006.html or contact ATIA Headquarters and request an Advance Program.

Register today for ATIA 2006. Online registration and a form you can download are both available at http://www.atia.org/conf_2006.html#RegForm.

Assistive Technology Industry Association
877-OUR-ATIA (687-2842)
E-mail: Info@ATIA.org
www.ATIA.org

The Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) and the Toy Industry Foundation are about to release their **2006 Let's Play Toy Guide**. The guide helps families of children with disabilities select toys that are appropriate and fun.

For a copy of the guide, contact Libbie Butler at libbiebutler@ataccess.org.