

AT Success Stories

37-47 minutes

Welcome to Assistive Technology Success Stories!

Are you interested in learning more about the Michigan Assistive Technology Program (MATP)? We also have an email newsletter that is published roughly quarterly throughout the year. To sign up for the newsletter, please send a message to us using our [Contact Us page](#) and include "AT News" in your message asking to subscribe. In addition, the program has an active twitter feed MIAssistTech: [Follow the program on Twitter](#) and on our [Michigan Assistive Technology Program \(MATP\) Blog!](#)

Low Tech, High Impact



Tokoya came to [The Disability Network](#) (TDN) in Flint for the Home Repair Grant Workshop they hosted with Metro Community Development. After the workshop, she expressed to TDN staff the difficulties she was having getting around due to her long-term ankle injury. She also noted that she had limited movement in both hands due to neuropathy. Opening doors in her home

proved difficult. TDN's Assistive Technology Coordinator demonstrated the [door knob lever](#), part of the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program's](#) kit of devices for community living. It worked great for her! A simple, small change of turning her door knobs into levers made a big difference. She can now easily and independently open all of the doors in her home

Jaylen: A "small changes, Big Differences" Success Story



Meet Jaylen: 17-years old, 2016 graduate of Southwestern Academy, attending [Gallaudet University](#) in Washington D.C. this summer majoring in management and marketing, future Gallaudet Bison baseball player, and he's Deaf.

In a society where people like to attach labels and stereotypes, Jaylen has many labels - each label shapes him, but no single one defines him. He visited [The Disability Network](#) to meet with Carrie Baugher, Assistive Technology Professional. Carrie provided a [device demonstration](#) where Jaylen could try out a variety of items that could benefit him while away at college from the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program's](#) "small changes Big Differences" kit. Classes will no longer be at 7:25 a.m. Monday through Friday like his high school classes. His class schedule will change throughout the day. A barrier existed in alerting him in waking up in the morning and alerting him throughout the day when he needs to go to class.

The solution? Jaylen will use a [vibrating alarm clock](#) to wake up each morning and use the alarm clock's strobe light adaptation during the afternoon to alert him when he needs to leave for class. Obstacles? Pfft. There are zero obstacles that can't be overcome. Everything is achievable - ask Jaylen!





More Than Just Words

Marilyn is a woman who had a stroke more than three years ago and has had the inability to speak any words, other than the word “No” since her stroke. This word was used to communicate every response, including affirmative responses. She and her husband have been working with a community health worker for quite some time; this is how they became aware of the assistive technology program at the [Capital Area Center for Independent Living](#) (CACIL.)

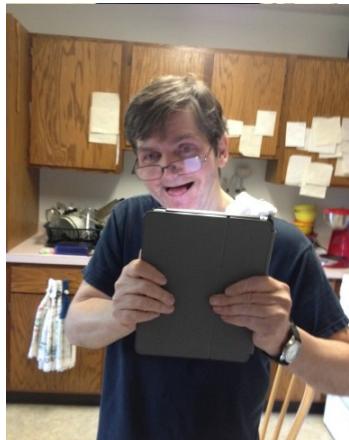
Once the CACIL staff member spoke with her husband and explained the AT program, plans were made to travel to their home for a demonstration of devices. Marilyn, as explained by her husband, had experience in working with a speech therapist, however at the time of this therapy, Marilyn was still unable to speak and use other types of technology. Both Marilyn and her husband were excited to see what types of everyday devices were now available that may assist with communication.

While at their home, Marilyn was shown a few devices to assist with communication; some of these devices include the talking photo album, the Go Talk One, and the iPad with its various communication apps. Once the iPad was demonstrated, it became clear that Marilyn was interested in pursuing this to assist her with communication.

As apps from [Lingraphica](#) were demonstrated, Marilyn was able to master some of the basic icons and phrases; she began using them immediately. It was during this time that Marilyn was able to communicate the phrase “I love you” to her husband for the first time in more than three years. This was the moment in which they decided to pursue purchasing an iPad.

Since the demonstration, Marilyn and her husband have purchased the iPad and are using the Lingraphica apps as a means to communicate with each other. Marilyn’s husband has explained that it has been a slow process, but she seems to be using the apps more and more. It is their hope that she will begin using the apps more frequently and in other types of situations. However, they are so very thankful for the opportunity to be able to better communicate with one another.

Giving and Receiving: The Heart of Assistive Technology



Ken Cunningham understands the importance of effective communication. Ken survived a Traumatic Brain Injury several years before leaving him unable to speak, as well as limited mobility. His fine motor skills were affected however he was able to maintain his ability to communicate through writing. He was given a [Dynavox](#), palm size several years ago to aid him with his speech, but the device was heavy, small and difficult for him to use because of his impaired fine motor skills. Mr. Cunningham was looking for an updated communication device with which he could use more fluently. He wanted to see the text to speech devices and applications on tablets. He contacted Carolyn Boyle at the [Superior Alliance for Independent Living](#) for a [device demonstration](#) to explore his options.

On their first visit, Carolyn showed him the Nexus tablet and iPad, which had both had text to speech applications. Ken quickly got the hang of how the devices worked and was trying them all out to see which one would best suit him. He was excited by the potential of using a tablet and speech application, and immediately went to work to try to find funding.

Later, while on a demonstration at the same apartment complex Ken lives in, Carolyn let him try out the iPad he was most interested in to give him more time to see if it would work for him. After her demonstration, she went to pick up the device from Ken and was greeted with a big smile. With the device he told her, “I just got a call from [UPCAP](#) and they (insurance) are going to purchase the device and application!” He was so excited and for very good reason. As she was leaving he asked her to wait and proceeded to get his Dynavox, showing her the broken cord. He wanted to donate his Dynavox to someone who did not have insurance and needed such a device. Having a true understanding of the importance of effective communication and the funding barriers that often exist, Ken was receiving the assistive technology and now wanted to give back.

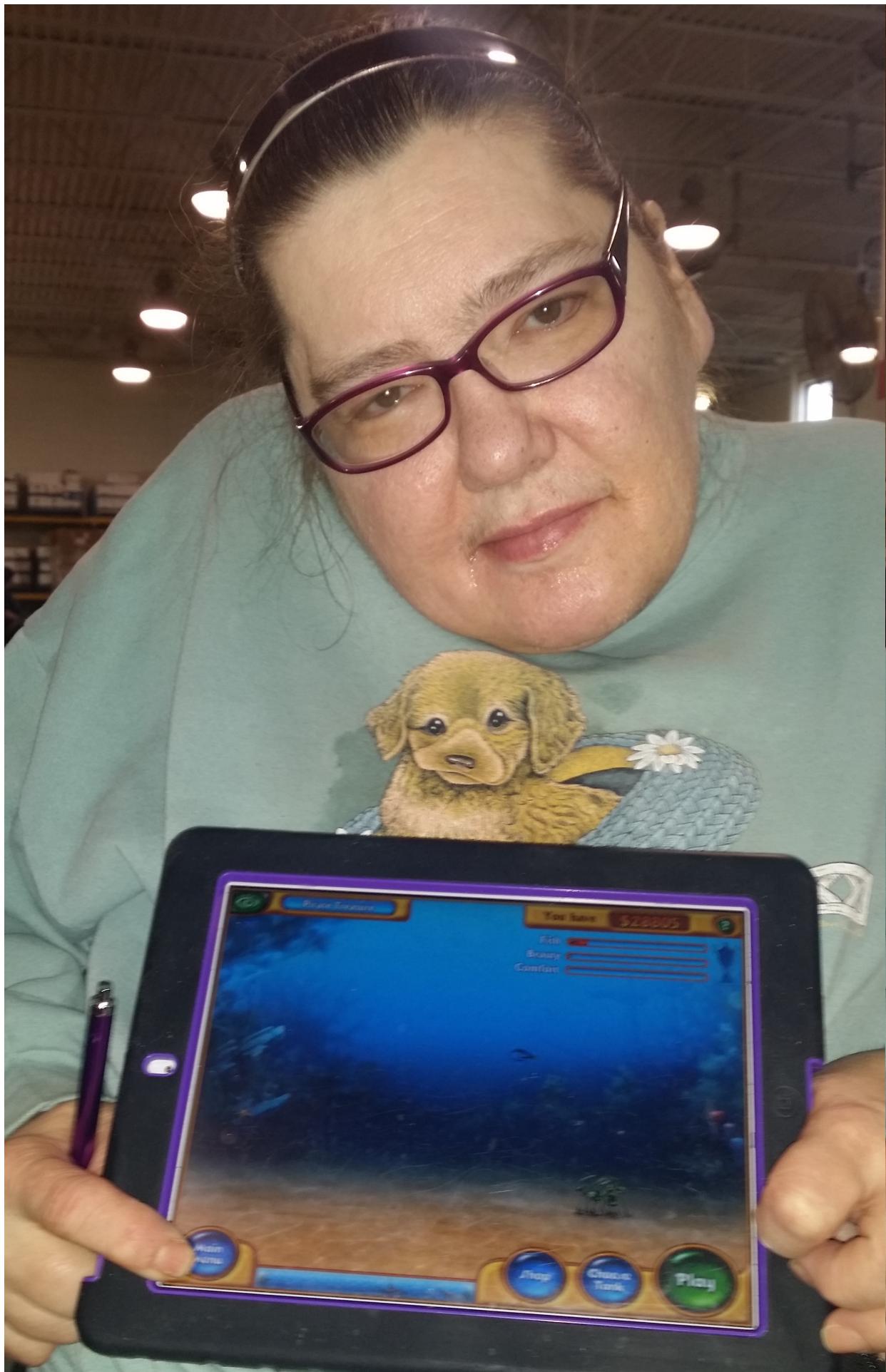
Ken now has his iPad with the [Assistive Express](#) application on his tablet. He is able to communicate much more efficiently with people in his building, his friends and those he is around. His device was purchased by insurance, and he has donated his Dynavox to someone in need. Ken is a wonderful and caring man with a heart of gold!

A Gift that Keeps on Giving

Shirley is a very independent woman – She is her own guardian, living in her own home with support services from her local Community Mental Health. She is also always up for a challenge and relishes learning and developing new independent living skills. She had always enjoyed working primary workbooks. She found them to be entertaining and helped her learn new skills like budgeting, word recognition and counting.

However, Shirley was finding the workbooks harder to complete due to increasing arthritis in her hands, and back and limited dexterity from Cerebral

Palsy. She was looking for assistive technology that she could easily hold and manipulate that would allow her to continue learning and enjoying these types of activities. She contacted Traci Comer at [The Arc of Macomb County](#) for a free device demonstration through the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program](#).





On the day of the demonstration Shirley and her sister Kathy (a great support person in Shirley's life) were shown the iPad, second generation, in the Otterbox Defender case and a few applications. The iPad and apps are part of the MATP's [neurodiversity](#) kit. Shirley was quickly able to open the iPad, navigate the screen and open applications, despite limited dexterity in her hands. She was presented with some word search applications, sight word applications, budgeting applications, and money counting applications.

Shirley became elated with these applications and was "in love" with them and the iPad. Kathy wanted to get Shirley an iPad that day; however, due to Shirley's limited budget; she wasn't sure how to make that possible. Traci provided them with the [ATXchange.org](#) website as an option and encouraged them to contact her local CMH for assistance.

As though it was meant to be, a few months later, an email came across Traci's desk. It was an email stating that [Michigan Disability Rights Coalition](#) was updating their Assistive Technology (AT) kits and selling off some older, slightly used equipment. The profit from which would be used to purchase new equipment. One of the items for sale was an iPad, second generation, and a case!

Shirley was the first person to come to Traci's mind and a phone call was made to her sister Kathy. Kathy was thrilled! She said Shirley would love to have the iPad, and arrangements were made for purchase and delivery. As it happened, the iPad arrived on Shirley's birthday. Shirley continues to use her iPad every day. She is the 'tech expert' at home and at her workshop. She loves to access her workbook applications and enjoys her word searches. She is truly grateful for the iPad and still "loves it".

Words from the Heart

Being the Maid of Honor in a wedding is a role that can be one of great trust, love and fun. Yet the duty of delivering the traditional speech or toast to the bride and groom can be absolutely terrifying. Over a year ago, 23-year old Sarah was asked to be the Maid of Honor at her sister's wedding. At first, she was happy and excited, but doubt set in when she realized that it involved giving the toast in front of everyone.

Sarah told her sister that she could not be her Maid of Honor. She had a developmental disability and difficulty with her hearing and speech, which made her feel as though she couldn't deliver such a meaningful and important speech.



Gloria Henry, an independent contractor with [Disability Network Oakland and Macomb](#), who works with the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program](#), had the idea of using the iPad's video features to practice and record the speech. The toast would then be played on a video screen at the wedding. Gloria encouraged Sarah to practice and record her speech as many times as necessary. Practice she did...the scripted version had 26 attempted versions, yet it still didn't seem to convey what she wanted to say. Gloria and Sarah decided to try a new approach. They attached her sister's picture to the iPad and she was encouraged to look at her sister and pretend the wedding vows had just been recited. Sarah was then able to record a speech in her own words from the heart. She expressed her love for her sister, congratulations to the couple and the new members of her extended family, and reminded her new brother-in-law (a fisherman) that he "just caught the best catch of his life".

The Simple Things



Kathleen is a single woman in her seventies who is living alone after the death of her husband several years ago. She has low vision that causes severe sensitivity to light. She was looking for low tech options that would help her to read printed material and to keep track of appointments and phone numbers. By contacting Sharon Lotoczky, at [Work/Life Solutions, LLC](#), a subcontractor with the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program](#), she was able to receive a [device demonstration](#) and explore large print address books and calendars. Her most exciting discovery was the simple use of color to enhance contrast. She was able to see a difference in reading printed material on yellow paper which reduces glare. She believes that using the yellow shields outdoors and using the yellow reading guide would help her to locate and read a specific address in a large print address book.

She also found the writing guide kit to be most helpful for addressing envelopes and check writing. Using something as simple as a visor cuts out overhead glare and helps her to see a little better. Because she is not comfortable with the higher technologies, she is delighted to find that these simple, low tech tools could still be very helpful to her.

A Whole New World

Tonya is a woman open to challenges and always willing to try new things. As a mother of six, with Cerebral Palsy, diabetes, COPD and seizures she wanted to remain as independent as possible without relying on her grown children.

Tonya contacted Kathy Tourneur at [United Cerebral Palsy of Metro Detroit](#) and expressed an interest in seeing if assistive technology could help her remain independent. Specifically, she wanted to see if an iPod or iPad could be of use to her. She wanted something not too complicated to keep in touch with family members and look for employment. It had to be light and easy for her to handle and move around, as she used a wheelchair to get from room to room.



Tonya first tried the iPod but quickly said it was too small and hard for her to see and use. When she tried it, she became frustrated with it. It was not easy for her fingers to touch the screen. Next she tried the iPad and found the size perfect, easy to hold and read. She quickly was able to use it without any problems. Kathy also showed Tonya some apps. and Tonya felt that the Dragon Dictation app would be most beneficial to help her create letters to family and potential employers. She felt it would also benefit her because she said she is very forgetful and when she thinks of something she could dictate it to Dragon. "Wow, I wouldn't have to try to find paper and pencil. I never knew something like this existed", she remarked.

Tonya said that she was worried that she would not grasp how to use it and become frustrated, because, at age 53 she did not grow up with a computer, Yet she found this to be very easy. "It was well worth taking the time to learn and try it out, before buying it... technology can open a whole new world if you just take the time to investigate and try."

Peaceful Independence with Assistive Technology

Margaret Hudson grew up as the oldest of 8 children, raised 4 children of her own and taught for 30 years so is no stranger to finding solutions where sometimes they weren't easy to find. Now, at the age of 72, she is hard of hearing and has some mobility issues. She finds herself living in what she

thought would be her forever dream apartment. The complex where she lives is in a quiet area with security entrances where each building had 12 apartments and many nice areas for socialization and gatherings. Her apartment is upstairs at the back corner of the building with large window that overlook a beautiful wooded area where she can watch wildlife wander by in the mornings and evenings. She felt she was totally set to be quietly content for years to come.

Reality set in when a new neighbor who moved in next door who is extremely s



ensitive to sounds, especially those that come through the adjoining bedroom and living room walls. Problems seemed to be mounting quickly. It seemed that every time Margaret's phone would ring it was disturbing for her new neighbor. The TV volume was also a daily annoyance for the neighbor. Margaret stated that her neighbor would then bang on the wall with a broom handle to tell Margaret that there was too much noise thereby causing Margaret to feel like she couldn't reasonably live in her own apartment.

Margaret's peaceful life had become challenged daily.

Margaret's sister Mickey, saw a public service announcement on TV for UPCAP's U.P. 2-1-1 Call Center saying that they could refer people to appropriate UP agencies for assistance with knowing about and using assistive devices aimed to promote peoples independence and quality of life. Mickey was referred to Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL) and gave us a call and made an appointment to meet with the AT Specialist at Margaret's home. When Mickey called in to make the appointment she explained the noise problem and what activities of Margaret's created the most problem for the neighbor. Mickey said that the cost of soundproofing was much too high to even consider but that she would really like to find a way to de-escalate the problems and help Margaret regain the peace and calm at her home.

We first addressed the TV sound/hearing issue. I showed Margaret a couple of devices that would make it possible for her to hear what was being said without sound traveling through the walls and disturbing her neighbor. She chose the simple [TV Ears](#) device because it was very user friendly and inexpensive to purchase.

The second issue we addressed was the noise from the alarm clock and telephone calls that were meant to be sure that Margaret had indeed gotten up to get ready for her day. She had a telephone with an incredibly loud ringer that worked well as a backup to her alarm clock with Mickey's daily morning call. Margaret was reluctant to try an alarm clock with a shaker because she enjoyed the telephone calls from Mickey in the mornings. Margaret was hoping for a phone that would wake her up but would not be a nuisance to her neighbor. Through the demonstration of several possible solutions, Margaret decided that the [Clarity cordless phone](#) would work best. This phone vibrates and has lights that quickly flash when the phone rings and the actual ringer can be set on silent. This phone would actually allow her much more freedom because she could travel down the hall to a friend's apartment and still know when she had an incoming phone call thereby not having to stay home to receive important calls.

Margaret and Mickey were provided with catalogs from a couple of reputable vendors so they would have providers who were easy to access and trustworthy to deal with. Before the day was out they ordered both the telephone and TV Ears. By the middle of the following week Mickey called SAIL saying that the items had arrived and were both installed, working great and perfect solutions.

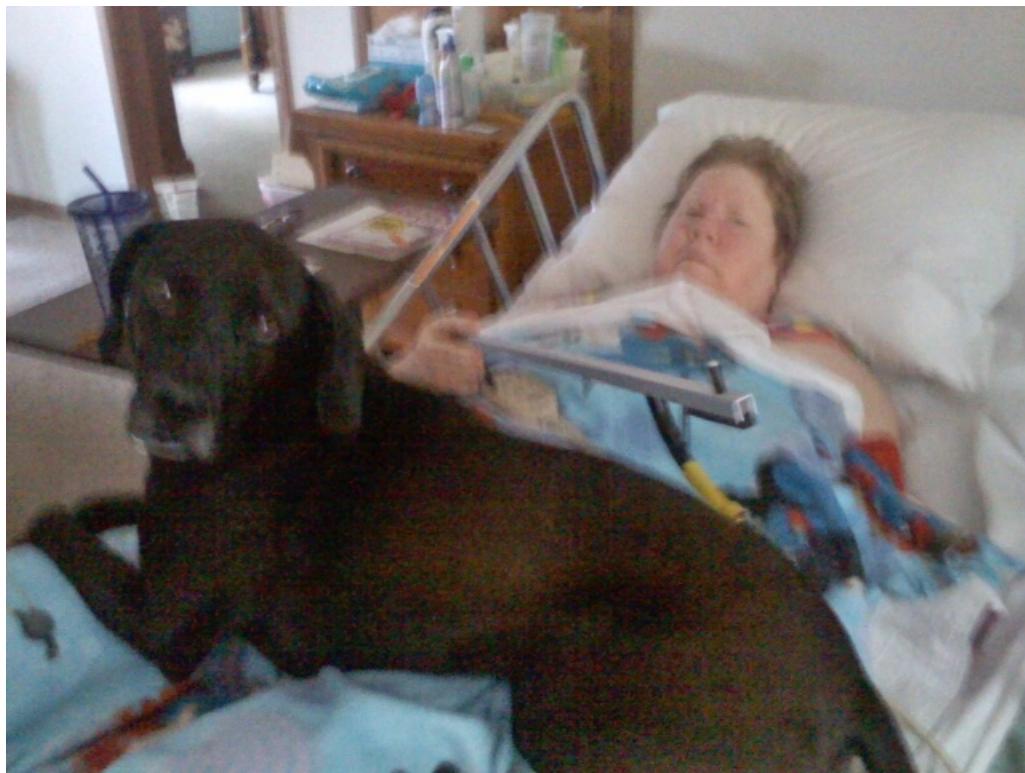
Life for Margaret had returned to peaceful while she enjoyed her daily routines. This story is an excellent example of how UPCAP and SAIL continue to collaborate with the outcome of alleviating barriers for a very deserving senior citizen to live an independent and peaceful life.

Assistive Technology: Bringing Life Back Into Balance

For Cheryl Houtz, life might have felt as though it were suddenly thrown off

balance. At 57, she had recently quit working after a diagnosis of Fibromyalgia. She applied and was denied for Social Security Disability and shortly after, experienced a stroke that resulted in an inability to walk or use her left arm and hand. Her insurance company, claiming the stroke was due to a pre-existing condition, left her without health insurance, and she was released from the hospital without any outpatient therapy, supports, or assistance.

Cheryl and her family became involved with [Disability Network/Southwest Michigan \(DN/SWM\), a Center for Independent Living](#). Through their connections in the community, DN/SWM was able to connect her with a local home health agency, who offered to complete an assessment and provide some therapy at no cost. These therapy sessions and some extra support from her daughter, allowed Cheryl to begin sitting up, talking, and even standing for the first time in month. She was



working hard to regain her strength by stretching and reaching, but still found many things beyond her limits. Assistive technology came into the picture when she received some [device demonstrations](#) of items in the Michigan Assistive Technology Program's Small Changes, Big Differences kit, which include devices to enhance community living. She was shown items like a [dressing stick](#), a zipper pull and a [car slide](#) (transfer aid) but was most impacted by the

reacher.

For Cheryl, the ability to reach a magazine off the floor, get something off the end table, or even pull the covers pull her covers up over herself meant a great deal in terms of her independence and her ability to control her environment during a time when so much seemed out of her control. She purchased a reacher shortly after the demonstration and is contemplating getting the other devices she tried as well. She still faces a long journey on her road to recovery. Yet, in many ways, assistive technology was a major factor in bringing her life back in balance.

Creating Clarity for the Classics

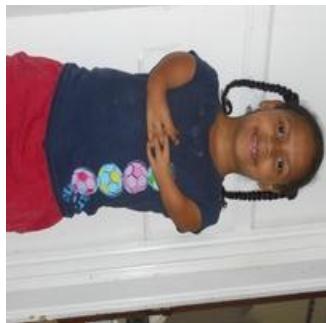
There is something about classic literature that makes it enjoyable and timeless no matter how many times you read the book. Whether it's nostalgia, or writing and creativity that is different from today's popular fiction, it never gets old. The New Chapter Book Club, a reading group for adults with disabilities, enjoys reading classic chapter books like Alice in Wonderland, aloud in a group, together. They meet in Marquette at the public library and are sponsored by the Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL), a Center for Independent Living in the Upper Peninsula. During one meeting a SAIL staff member who worked with the group, began noticing some members had a difficult time seeing the print on the pages even though many of them wore glasses.



Consequently, Lisa Bucher, an Assistive Technology Specialist at SAIL was invited to the next meeting to demonstrate low-tech magnifiers. Funding and training through the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program \(MATP\)](#) allowed her to demonstrate a number of magnifying devices for the group, including a [LED Lighted Desk Magnifier](#), a [Bar Magnifier](#), [six inch and nine inch long](#), [a dome magnifier](#), and a large [full page size magnifier](#) with a black border. The participants enjoyed trying out and passing around the

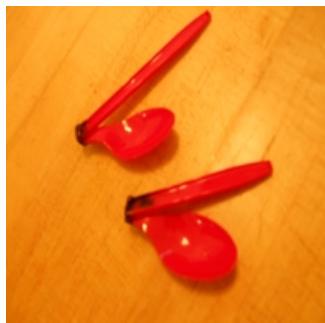
magnifiers as they read aloud. The bar magnifiers were especially helpful in assisting those in the group with keeping their place while reading as they could be slid easily from one line to the next. Now able to clearly and crisply read the words of Lewis Carroll, the group wanted the magnifiers available for all club meetings, and used their own funding to purchase them. Through the joint efforts of the MDRC AT Device Demonstration program at SAIL and the Next Chapter Book Club, participants will be able to enjoy reading together even more in the future with their own collection of magnifiers!

Within Arm's Reach



Gwen, like many 9 year old girls, is fearless. She skateboards, rides a scooter, plays soccer, and performs back bends with ease. She is happy and ready to take on the world. Diagnosed with Holt-Oram Syndrome, Gwen has cardiac issues and skeletal differences in her upper limbs. She has three fingers on one hand that extend away from her body and four fingers on the other hand that extend inward toward her body, and has become adept at using her body and assistive technology in creative ways to become independent.

Her parents have supported her and encouraged her to be independent in any way that works for her no matter how unconventional. For example, they broke a plastic spoon from the Dairy Queen and glued it back together at an angle so that she could feed herself. They purchased a [rocker knife](#) that Gwen uses with the chin to cut up her food and help prepare meals. In addition, between the ages of 5 and 6 they involved her in occupational therapy (OT). While OT was helpful, many of the AT devices the family was shown were designed for adults, not children, and not for people who have no thumbs or wrist movement, like Gwen. Her therapy focused mainly upon arthritis issues, not joint issues.



Fortunately, the family found their way to Jenell Williams at [Disability Network Oakland/Macomb](#), a Center for Independent Living. Jenell is an Independent Living Specialist, and with training and funding from the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program \(MATP\)](#), was able to work with Gwen and her family to [demonstrate AT devices](#) that were targeted specifically for her needs.

During their time together, Jenell demonstrated various items to help with community living from the "small Changes, Big Differences" kit, including the [One Touch can opener](#). The family could see that this particular can opener, designed for people with limited dexterity, would allow Gwen to open cans independently and add to her already growing independence with feeding and cooking . Jenell also learned that Gwen had the most difficulty with toileting due to her limited reach, and demonstrated the [Bottom Buddy](#), a device that holds a wipe and extends the reach in a variety of directions for personal hygiene. Her parents are looking into a bidet as she gets older, but it seemed like a good fit in the meantime, and for this reason they purchased both the One Touch can opener and the Bottom Buddy.

As Gwen begins to grow in height her arms will grow in length as well. She looks forward to pursing her other interests that include gymnastics, cartwheels, riding a bike and swimming. She believes that as long as things are within her reach, anything is possible. Here is to assistive technology...for putting life within arm's reach!

Welcome Home, Hank!

Hank Raby was a resident of a nursing facility for four years. He found ways to occupy his time and talents while living there by volunteering for bingo, attending pizza parties, etc. However, for many nursing home residents, living and having a community in the facility is not the same as living in your own

home and community. For Hank, the opportunity to return to his own home and community came by way Angie of the Nursing Facility Transition (NFT) Program at the [Capital Area Center for Independent Living](#).

In talking with Angie, it became clear that remembering to take his medication was difficult for Hank and it was a task that the nursing home was currently helping him with. It is a common challenge for many older adults, one that CACIL is experienced in working with. Angie had found that many people had success managing their medication with the [Med Center 31-Day Reminder system](#), and having a good understanding of his needs, suspected it would work well for him too.

Her hunch was more correct than anyone could have expected. Hank was able to receive the Med Center through the Nursing Facility Transition Program, and for more than four months, he has lived independently back in his own home. So successful was his transition, that Visiting Nurses have reduced his home visits from monthly to every other month, due in part to how well he is now able to manage his medication.



Hank, with his medication reminder, ignited what we like to call the “Assistive Technology Spark”. Having first recognized the impact that assistive technology could have on his independence, he took part in demonstrations of other items from CACIL’s neurodiversity kit, which helps people who process information differently with tasks involving remembering, locating, orientation, symptom management and safety. The [device demonstrations](#), provided with funding from the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program \(MATP\)](#), enabled Hank to identify several items that would help him continue to increase his independence at home, including a large button remote, a wall-mounted light switch, and a modified telephone.

Welcome home, Hank! May your home be filled with assistive technology,

enabling you to live in your own home on your own terms for as long as you wish!

Age 91+iPad = Independence

Many of us sometimes feel overwhelmed with all of the new technology options available. For some however, no matter what their age, it means gaining a greater sense of independence. Walter had heard about the different devices available for demonstration at the [Capital Area Center for Independent Living\(CACIL\)](#) by having a conversation with staff at the [Braille and Talking Book Library](#) in Lansing, Michigan.

Walter expressed his need to become familiar with an easier way to communicate with family and friends. He had mentioned feeling left out of the loop for so long, and at the age of 91 years old, he felt it was finally time to do something about it. Due to his progressive decrease in vision, he wanted to make sure he chose the option that would best meet his needs.

Walter was not thrilled about the Windows based screen reading programs he had tried in the past; his typing skills were not what he would have liked them to be. He decided to try out the built in [Voice Over](#) feature, along



with the [dictation](#) capabilities of the new iPad. This proved to be the best fit for him.

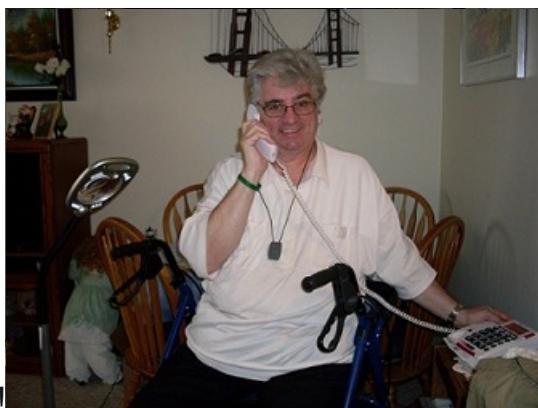
In addition to using the dictation feature for sending e-mails, Walter was amazed at the applications that are available through the App Store that could assist him in every-day tasks such as; identifying paper money, being able to see what food labels are, and getting up-to-date news on his own.

After having a hands-on experience with the iPad, Walter decided to purchase this device. With some assistance from his daughter, Walter is now the proud owner of the new iPad. He is still learning more about the tablet every day, but loves the idea of eventually knowing he can send an e-mail with little difficulty and most importantly, on his own.

The Assistive Technology Spark

One of the greatest joys of working for the [Michigan Assistive Technology Program \(MATP\)](#) is witnessing “the spark moments”, those moments when you can see on someone’s face that a light bulb has just turned on and they first recognize the power that and impact assistive technology can have in their lives.

For Warren Glass, the spark moment first occurred in September 2012 after a group presentation on Assistive Technology for People who are Neurodiverse that was held by Lisa Bucher of the [Superior Alliance for Independent Living \(SAIL\)](#), a Center for Independent Living in the Upper Peninsula. Warren was having difficulty using his landline phone due to a hearing loss, and contacted SAIL looking for devices that could help. Through a device demonstration, he was able to try out several amplified phones and found that the [Clear Sounds Talk 500](#) best met his needs. SAIL was then able to order the phone for Warren as United Way funding was available for residents of Marquette County. He was delighted with the program and the opportunity to finally have a phone he



could hear!

For Warren, the assistive technology spark didn’t end there. In January 2013, he contact SAIL again requesting another device demonstration with magnifiers as he reported that even though he wore glasses, he was still having difficulty with reading the newspaper and the phone book. Lisa went to Warren’s home taking along a variety of magnifiers for him to try out. He was especially pleased with the LED floor lamp style magnifier that he tried. It was very easy for him to be able to use hands free while sitting in his walker. Fortunately, there was United Way funding still available, so the magnifier was acquired with that funding for a very pleased Warren!



Having experienced the freedom and independence that the amplified phone and magnified floor lamp afforded him, Warren again began reflecting upon how technology could help with everyday tasks. It was difficult for him to get out into the community to take care of personal business especially during the winter months, as he used a walker. He had realized that more and more tasks could be done online more efficiently, and in February 2013 contacted SAIL again interested in laptop computers. He was shown a variety of laptops and notebooks and was able to find a larger laptop that enabled him to see clearly. Again, the United Way came through for Warren as a laptop was available in the loan closet that he could use.

The [United Way Assistive Technology \(AT\) program](#) for adults in Marquette County is administered by [United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan \(UCPMI\)](#). This program loans AT devices to adults for as long as they need them. Individuals sign a loan agreement in which they promise to return the item to the loan closet when they no longer need it. This program has made it possible for many adults to obtain needed AT devices who reside in Marquette County. SAIL's AT program partners with the UCPMI United Way program to assist individuals needing AT devices.

The help that SAIL and UCPMI/United Way provided has greatly assisted Warren in being able to live more independently. He is very thankful and appreciative of the help he has received from these programs, and now able to better experience the world around him and participate in activities of importance to him through the use of assistive technology.

We hope that “the spark” will only continue for Warren. Technology, by nature is always improving and evolving and has infinite potential for changing the lives and independence of people with disabilities. Has your assistive technology

spark been ignited yet? If not, contact the Michigan Assistive Technology Program (MATP) for a [device demonstration](#) and let us show you how AT can help!

Success Story: Freedom at Home

For



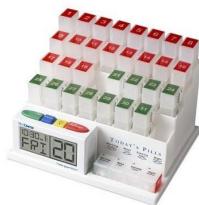
many people, assistive technology means time saved, a job done better, more efficiently, communication with the click of a button, and information in the blink of an eye. And, for Sharon and Colleen, assistive technology helped pave the way back to independence.

Sharon and Colleen both have physical and visual disabilities and were living in nursing facilities until becoming involved with the Nursing Facility Transition Program. As part of their transition back to their own apartments, they received demonstrations of equipment and devices that would help them with daily living tasks from staff at the [Capital Area Center for Independent Living \(CACIL\)](#) in Lansing. These demonstrations are made possible through [Michigan's Assistive Technology Program at the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition](#).

Coleen expressed that it was the “simple things” that she missed doing independently; reading the newspaper, her mail, and prescription bottles. She also was taking many medications and finding it hard to manage them all. With these needs in mind, staff demonstrated the MedCenter Monthly Reminder System, a 31-day pill alarm system that allows you to set up to four daily medication reminders. This system had a large print display that more easily allowed Colleen to see the time, date, and pills for the day as well as have it announced audibly. In addition, she tried several magnifiers and found the Optelec Power Mag to be the best fit for her needs because it added light. Both

of the devices were funded through the Nursing Facility Transition Program. In addition, since Colleen had just bought a new iPhone, CACIL staff helped her identify several useful applications. Up until that point, she had no idea that her phone had these capabilities. Today, Colleen is back in her apartment, living independently with the help of assistive technology. She remained so pleased with her medication reminder system that she demonstrated it for the nursing facility staff.

In a similar situation,



Sharon sought assistance from CACIL staff for help with medication management, magnification for reading, cooking, and help to organize her daily schedule. She was shown a large print address book, different types of magnifiers, assistive cooking utensils, as well as other household management tools. Again, these items were funded through the Nursing Facility Transition Program. Sharon too is now back in her apartment, reading with ease, and thrilled by her new-found independence.

These success stories demonstrate that it's not always the latest, shiniest, or fastest technologies that make a difference in life. With the help of knowledgeable staff and few relatively low-tech, inexpensive devices, Sharon and Colleen have regained the freedom to do some of the things that we so often take for granted.

Assistive Technology Program Helps History Professor



You likely know the feeling – your heart starts beating fast, your stomach clenches, you begin to sweat, and suddenly it becomes hard to concentrate and focus. We've all likely had an experience like this, and for many of us, it occurs at the least opportune time – often while taking a test. For Suzan Travis-Robyns, the stakes were high. As a history professor, she needed a math score of 500 or better to be accepted into a Ph.D. program.; Yet, in addition to retaining all of the material, and dealing with typical test anxiety, Suzan faced another challenge. As a result of a genetic, degenerative eye condition, Suzan had difficulty completing math problems on paper. She had a hard time seeing the numbers, and the longer the problem got the more the numbers tended to jump around on the page making it difficult for her compute the correct answer.

She was referred to the [Superior Alliance for Independent Living \(SAIL\)](#), the Center for Independent Living in her area, by United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan. After talking with them about her needs, staff demonstrated a standard talking calculator that is in the inventory of items from MDRC's Assistive Technology Program. Suzan realized that the auditory feedback provided by the calculator could help her ensure she was inputting numbers in the correct places to solve the problems.



After identifying the type of technology that best suited her, SAIL staff then worked to find the exact calculator that would meet her needs in taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). They researched online and browsed through catalogs and were able to find a talking scientific calculator with a high contrast display and large buttons capable of handling the complex math problems that she would encounter on her test. Perhaps best of all, SAIL was able to connect Suzan with funding from the United Way, allowing her to obtain the calculator at no cost to her. When she takes the GRE, she will be able to use a paper copy of the test rather than having to take it on a computer. She will also be allowed

to use her large button, talking scientific calculator to help her keep her answers straight.

Suzan's story is a great example of the way that assistive technology can open up doors and allow people with disabilities to pursue their future goals. It also shows the powerful impact that collaboration among organizations can have, as her journey began with a referral from United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan, which led to working with AT staff at SAIL, then to trying out a device provided by MDRC and finally obtaining the needed device funded through the United Way.

Good Luck, Suzan. We are glad we were able to have a part in helping you find the assistive technology you needed, and look forward to the day we can call you Dr. Suzan Travis-Robyns, Ph.D.!