TTAP News Letter
Vol 11  Fall 2011

In this Issue

- Abilities Expo 2011
- New OS for Mac
- Education Grants for Individuals with Disabilities
- Latest News from the Device Loan Program
- Assistive Technology Q&A
- Robots and iPad
- Spotlight on TTAP Demonstration Centers
- Tech Corner
- What’s on “TTAP” for Fall
- Just for Laughs

We Shine Again at Abilities Expo in Houston

The Texas Technology Access Program was the AT Showcase exhibit for the AT Pavilion at the 2011 Abilities Expo held at the Houston Reliant Center on August 26-28. As in 2010, we provided unique hands-on AT experiences and demonstrations for Expo attendees. Our visitors used and evaluated a variety of devices and computer applications, available in our equipment loan program, to enhance day-to-day living and improve their ability to function independently.

This year’s successful Expo enjoyed an increase in attendance by 40% over the same show introduced to Houston just last year. In addition, exhibitor participation was also increased by 21% over last year. Admission was free.

By the end of the final day, 2,865 unique adult visitors had registered to see the latest products and services, learn from dynamic workshops, and engage in fun events and activities.

Counting non-registered children under the age of 18, (estimated at an additional 25%) the total number of visitors to the Expo was more than 3,500.
“Everyone was thrilled with the experience,” said President and CEO David Korse. “It was our pleasure to bring so many members of the community of people with disabilities together and we look forward to coming back to Houston next summer.”

In the vein of a superstore, the Expo featured a wide variety of products to appeal to people of all ages encompassing the full spectrum of disabilities. There were wheelchairs that look like tanks, adaptive clothing, home modification devices, daily living aids, medical equipment, products for people with sensory disabilities, devices to help those with communication impairments, and much more from the nearly 140 exhibitors.

In case you missed Abilities Expo Houston this year, we’re making plans to accept another invitation to exhibit next year. See you in Houston next August!

Photos: 3

1. TTAP staff, John Morris, Roger Levy, Darlene West, Steve Thomas
2. View of attendees around the TTAP display area
3. View of display area

Mac OS X Lion Includes New Accessibility Features
From: Assistive Technology Blog

Lion brings some features of the iPad and iPhone to Mac computers. The new operation system includes 250 new features including a number of new accessibility features. Some of Lion’s new accessibility features include VoiceOver improvements, improved support for refreshable Braille displays and a new zoom features for people with low vision.

Some of the VoiceOver improvements include better built-in voices and the ability to add your own high-quality voices. Lion also improves better drag and drop support for VoiceOver users. Yet another feature called “VoiceOver Activities” allows you to set custom voices and voice speeds for different tasks. “For example, you can create an activity to use a certain voice and faster speaking rate when you’re shopping online catalogs. Create a second activity to use a different voice and slower speaking rate when you’re reading online newspapers.” Quote taken from Apple.com.

Lion also includes a new setting that allows users to control the verbosity setting for their Braille display. Lion with its new accessibility features and other new features is a worthy upgrade for any Mac user. Mac OS X 10.7 and is available on the Mac App Store for $30.

OS X Lion Minimum Requirements:

Intel Core 2 Duo processor or better: Lion is a 64-bit OS. Unlike Snow Leopard, which could run on the very first Intel processors that Apple used - the Intel Core
Duo in the 2006 iMac, and the Intel Core Solo and Core Duo in the Mac mini - the Lion OS won't support 32-bit Intel processors.

2 GB RAM: It's likely that Lion will run with just 1 GB of RAM, but Apple has been shipping Macs with at least 2 GB of installed RAM since 2009. Most Macs since 2007 can be updated to at least 3 GB of RAM.

8 GB drive space: Lion will be delivered via download from the Mac App Store. The download size will be a bit larger than 4 GB, but this is probably a compressed size. You should plan on at least 8 GB of drive space for installation.

DVD drive: Because of the new distribution method, a DVD drive isn't required to download and install Lion.

Internet access: Apple will provide the OS as a download from the Mac App Store, which means you'll need an Internet connection to purchase and download OS X Lion.

Snow Leopard: Because the Lion OS can only be purchased from the Mac App Store, you'll need to have Snow Leopard running on your Mac. Snow Leopard is the minimum requirement for running the Mac App Store application. If you haven't upgraded to Snow Leopard, you should do so now, while the product is still readily available.

**Education Grants for Individuals with Disabilities in Texas**

Information provided by: TTAP Advisory Council Member, Catherine Gorham

Updated July 22, 2011

Texas has several grant programs for the disabled. The government's education code provides fee waivers for state residents, while other programs are limited to those living with a specific disability or attending a particular institution. Applying for grants and scholarships from both general and specific programs will maximize funding chances. http://www.ehow.com/list_6758404_education-grants-disabled-texas.html#ixzz1SaRlSVqm

- **Texas State University at San Marcos**

TSU San Marcos offers disabled students a chance to include their disability-related expenses in the cost of tuition. Examples include special transportation, equipment, services and general assistance. Allowing students to estimate these needs and add them to the cost of attending TSU San Marcos can make their eligibility for financial aid rise. Students can only add expenses that are not covered by another grant or scholarship program. TSU San Marcos has a broad definition of what it considers a disability, so check guidelines to assess eligibility. http://www.ehow.com/list_6758404_education-grants-disabled-texas.html#ixzz1SaRlSVqm
Margaret Nosek Scholarship

The Margaret Nosek scholarship is for students who are attending the University of Texas at Austin. Candidates must be rising seniors, master's or doctoral students at the time of application, and must provide certified evidence of a disability that causes severe limitations in day to day activities. Applicants must also demonstrate their desire and ability to enter a career field after they have graduated. UT Austin's policy is to give preference to groups who have not traditionally been represented. http://www.ehow.com/list_6758404_education-grants-disabled-texas.html#ixzz1SaRISVqm

American Council of the Blind of Texas

The Texas chapter of the American Council of the Blind aims to improve the quality of life for those who are blind or visually impaired. It allocates funding based on the number of recipients. Candidates must have obtained a 3.0 or higher GPA in either high school or college. Letters of reference and an autobiographical letter are required. Decisions are based on achievements in academia, commitment to the community and financial need. Read more: Education Grants for the Disabled in Texas | eHow.com http://www.ehow.com/list_6758404_education-grants-disabled-texas.html#ixzz1SaRISVqm

Educational Grants for the Disabled

Having a disability should not stand in the way of achieving educational goals. That is widely acknowledged, and there's a wide variety of grants and scholarships to help disabled students gain access to college. http://www.ehow.com/facts_5509015_educational-grants-disabled.html

AAA Scholarships

The American Academy of Allergy provides scholarships to pay for tuition, fees and books for college students who suffer from allergies. http://www.ehow.com/facts_5509015_educational-grants-disabled.html

ACB Scholarships

Scholarships ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 are awarded by the American Council of the Blind to legally blind U.S. citizens each year to assist them in paying college expenses. http://www.ehow.com/facts_5509015_educational-grants-disabled.html
TPA Scholarships

The Travelers Protective Association of America provides grants to assist deaf or nearly deaf individuals with attaining specialized education or help with paying for note takers or medical devices. http://www.ehow.com/facts_5509015_educational-grants-disabled.html

USA Funds

United Student Aid Funds provides grant money through the Access to Education Scholarship program. The grant amount is $1,500 per award for students who have disabilities. http://www.ehow.com/facts_5509015_educational-grants-disabled.html

MS Society

The National MS Society Scholarship Program provides educational scholarships to students with multiple sclerosis or students whose parents have multiple sclerosis. http://www.ehow.com/facts_5509015_educational-grants-disabled.html

Latest News from the Loan Program

We have added new Assistive Listening Devices to the Loan Program!

PowerTel 601

The PowerTel 601 can act as a phone ring alert or remote answering device for all PowerTel phones. Worn on the wrist, you are notified by incoming calls through a vibration of the device. Whether in the home or out in the yard, you will never miss the incoming signal of a phone call. The splash proof wrist device can even remotely answer calls by activating the speakerphone on the base of PowerTel phone with the touch of a button.

Alertmaster AM-6000 ™

Alertmaster 6000 notifies household of up to six events including telephone or doorbell ringing, baby crying, audio alarms, and more via flashing lamp, a bed shaker and vibrating personal signaler. Designed for people with profound hearing loss.

Motiva Personal FM 360

Motiva is designed to mix and broadcast a speakers voice PLUS an audio program, simultaneously, in one room. This sleek, lightweight system provides hearing assistance when background noise or distance from the sound source makes listening difficult. Motiva is ideal for small groups, classrooms, employee training and consultation. The Motiva system features 16 selectable channels on 72-76MHz and has an operating range of up to 150 feet. The T36 transmitter for the speaker
has a flexible 3.5mm mic jack, push-button on-off-mute controls and adjustable compression and channel lock. Includes microphone. Requires two AA batteries for each receiver.

TV Ears ProLinK

Not only a powerful and versatile TV listening system, The Professional is also a portable assistive listening system that you can take anywhere and utilize in any situation. It can be used as a wired or wireless headset to connect to an IPod, computer, or other music and electronic devices. It also has an expansion slot that accepts optional accessories such as the “telephone cord” which connects to home, business, and mobile telephones.

Please contact John Morris at (512) 232-0753 for further information.

Assistive Technology Q&A

Q: Is there a “Dragon Naturally Speaking” app for the iPhone?

A: Yes, Dragon Go from Nuance: So what is Dragon Go!?

The Dragon Go app from Nuance basically takes your average voice search and gives you seven relevant paths to choose from. With Nuance’s natural language processing technology, Dragon Go can understand what it is you’re trying to get out of the search, Based on your search, Dragon Go chooses the best possible sites to match your request, complete with social network integration.

Features:

- Voice search with relevant results
- Social network integration
- Price: Free at iTunes app store

For further information: http://techcrunch.com/2011/07/14app-review-nuance-dragon-g/o-ios-app/

Robots and iPad to Help Children with Autism

From the Autism Center of Pittsburgh: Interbots, Inc., a high-tech spin-off company associated with the Carnegie Mellon University Entertainment Technology Center has teamed up with the Autism Center of Pittsburgh to provide innovative robot-based therapy for children with autism.
The program, "Character Therapy," through the use of the Interbot robot "Popchilla" will test the ability of children with autism with limited or no verbal skills.

According to Seema Patel, CEO and co-founder of Interbots, "We've had numerous individuals tell us our robots could be tremendous tools for Autism therapy. We're excited to be working with the Autism Center of Pittsburgh and the Sprout Foundation to take this first step. We're going to learn a lot from the next few months."

"The premise behind the program is that children with autism are sometimes more likely to communicate with a non-human entity," said Cindy Waeltermann, Founder and Director of the Autism Centers of Pittsburgh. "When you have a child with autism, you use whatever interests them to gain access into their world. The idea is to bridge the gap between their word and ours.

Popchilla will be used in the first phase of the program with a trained therapist. Programmers and developers at Interbots have created an iPad application that will allow the therapist to direct sessions, which will eventually be transitioned to allow the child to control the robot through an iPad application to identify emotions.

According to Waeltermann, "By using Popchilla as an intermediary, we hope to increase the understanding of the child's internal feelings, thus reducing behavioral frustrations. If they are able to identify that they are 'angry' and what 'angry' means, it can significantly help them understand what they are feeling, reducing behavioral ramifications."

The program is funded by Spark. Spark is an initiative of The Sprout Fund catalyzing projects and programs that engage children ages birth to eight through the creative use of technology and media. Spark challenges individuals, organizations, and communities to generate inventive technology-based solutions to the issues and opportunities facing today's young child. Through its funding opportunities and extensive network of support, Spark is unleashing the innovative potential of Southwestern Pennsylvania and transforming our region into one of the best places on earth to be a kid.

"Our emphasis has always been making the use and control of our robots as simple and flexible as possible. You don't need to have a technical background to control our characters. You can control them with a variety of other familiar devices. So that opens a lot of interesting applications - like having a therapist or a parent use our robots as a tool to interact with children - even the possibility of kids using the robot to express themselves and explore emotions on their own," according to Sabrina Haskell, Interbots, Designer & Co-Founder. The iPad application is currently in production and the program is slated to begin this fall.

"Nobody is more excited than the parents of the children with autism who have the potential to gain great strides from this program," said Cindy Waelttermann. "That's what this is all about -- thinking outside the box to reach these kids."
Spotlight on TTAP Demonstration Centers

Paso Del Norte Children's Development Center
1101 East Schuster Avenue
El Paso, Texas 79902
(915) 544-8484

Mission Statement: The Paso Del Norte Children’s Development Center is dedicated to helping children with disabilities reach their fullest potential by providing comprehensive therapeutic, educational, and day care services.

Vision Statement: To provide comprehensive and innovative high quality services for children with special health care needs designed to help children, and their families, in our community, achieve their fullest potential.

Organizational Goals:

- To provide children with special health care needs with high quality services in a sensitive, professional and competent manner;
- To maintain a professional, qualified staff by providing a competitive compensation package and a safe work environment;
- To provide cost efficient and/or cost effective services that ensure all clients have equal access to services regardless of ability to pay.

Tech Corner:

Monitor Height and position

The monitor should never be so high that you have to lift your chin to see any part of the screen. Therefore, the top ¼ of the screen should be equal with your straight-ahead vision, unless most of your work is done in the lower ¼ of the screen (then the monitor can be higher) OR if you wear bifocals (then the monitor needs to be lower). Do not place the monitor on the hard drive/docking station if it sets it too high. The monitor should be close enough for you to see your work without holding your head forward.

Monitor Placement

- The monitor should be placed on the back half of the desk, about an arm’s length from your face, and directly in front of you -- not to the side, which forces you to twist your upper body to work. They monitor should be aligned
squarely with the keyboard. Pointing at the screen should not involve leaning too far forward.

Monitor Height

- Monitor height should be set so that your eyes are level with the top of screen. This usually means setting the monitor on top of the desk, and not on top of the computer. Craning your neck upward to look into a monitor will stress your cervical spine and the muscles in the back of your neck.

Glasses

- If you wear bifocals and need them to work on the computer, place the monitor in a lower position so that you can look at it through the bottom half of your glasses without tilting your head. If this is difficult, buy a pair of single-vision glasses that allow you to focus on the screen.

Glare and Fatigue

- Position your chair so that you are not facing a window. Bright light from outside causes glare and makes it difficult to see the screen. To reduce reflection on the monitor, position it so that it's facing an inside wall, and not an exterior or interior window. Rest your eyes so that you are not staring into a monitor for extended periods of time. This causes headaches, eyestrain, and fatigue.

Read more: Ergonomics & the Ideal Height for a PC Monitor | eHow.com
http://www.ehow.com/about_6458508_ergonomics-ideal-height-pc-monitor.html#ixzz1S50qshCT

What’s on TTAP for Fall

October 12-14
29th Annual Closing The Gap Conference – Assistive Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation
Minneapolis, MN

Contact: Jan Latzke
Closing The Gap
P.O. Box 68
Henderson, MN 56044
Tel: 507-248-3294
FAX: 507-248-3810
E-mail: info<at>closingthegap.com
www.closingthegap.com/conference/faqs.lasso
November 14-18
14th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference
Contact: Howard Kramer
Westin Hotel
Westminster, CO
(303) 492-8672
www.colorado.edu/ATconference/

November 30 - December 3
2011 TASH Conference
Atlanta, GA
Contact: Haley Kimmet
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 235
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 540-9015
FAX: (202) 540-9019
E-mail: conference<at>tash.org
www.tash.org/2011TASH

Just for Laughs:

Cartoon of a snake family (mother, father, two children). Father is trying to hit the control-alt-delete keys on his computer. The mother tells the children to go over and help him press the keys. (Being a snake family, it takes three of them to hit the correct keys)

Any suggestions, comments or article you would like to have included in the newsletter, please let us know at:

(512) 232-0750 or dwest@mail.utexas.edu

The University of Texas at Austin
Texas Center for Disability Studies
Commons Learning Center
10100 Burnet Road
Austin, Texas 78758-4445
http://techaccess.edb.utexas.edu

TTAP Demonstration Centers

Full Demonstration Centers

- Easter Seals, Fort Worth
- Paso Del Norte Children’s Development Center, El Paso
- United Cerebral Palsy, Dallas
- Easter Seals of Houston (formerly UCP of Houston)
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living, Corpus Christi

**Computer Access Demonstration Centers**

- RISE Center for Independent Living, Beaumont
- East Texas Center for Independent Living, Tyler
- Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center, Bryan
- Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, Austin
- Brazoria County Center for Independent Living, Angleton
- Helping Hands, Amarillo
- Not Without Us, Abilene

**Portable Computer Demonstration Centers**

- REACH Center for Independent Living, Plano
- Houston Center for Independent Living, Houston
- Heart of Central Texas Independent Living Center, Belton
- VAIL – Valley Association for Independent Living, McAllen