



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

For more information on Assistive Technology, please visit one of the following:

Utah State University
Assistive Technology Program~AT Lab
6855 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-6855
(435) 797-0699
<http://www.uatpat.org>
Center for Persons with Disabilities

Utah State University Center for Persons
with Disabilities
6855 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-6855
(435) 797-3824
<http://www.cpd.usu.edu>

Utah Assistive Technology Foundation
6835 Old Main Hill
Logan, Utah 84322-6835
1-800-524-5152
<http://www.uatf.org>

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Adventures in Assistive Technology

By Linda Jorgensen

What is Assistive Technology? By definition Assistive Technology, or "AT", is any tool or resource used by individuals with disabilities to help improve their quality of life and increase their independence. AT tools may be as small as a piece of clear colored plastic used in reading or as large as elevators. The list is almost endless.

In 2004 an amendment to the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 was passed by congress that continued funding and gave specific guidelines for Assistive Technology Programs for the disabled in all 50 states and U.S. Territories. While programs may vary, every state does have at least one AT program. In Utah the AT program is administered through the Utah Assistive Technologies Program located on campus at Utah State University (USU), Logan.

Last Spring we purchased a standing power wheelchair for our daughter. We found over time that the footplate was constantly in the way. The manufacturer attempted to make several adjustments to the footplate to ease the problem but it quickly became apparent she needed a specialized footplate for the chair to work the way she needed it to. After lengthy discussions with both the equipment dealer and the manufacturer's representative it was clear they could make no further changes. We needed a custom made footplate. Since this type of construction is beyond what both the equipment dealer and manufacturer could do, the manufacturer's representative made arrangements for us to take the wheelchair to the AT Lab at Utah State University for modification. This would be a new adventure for us.

At first glance the AT lab is an average workshop. Parts and pieces stored in bins and on shelves around the room with a clear workspace surrounding several large



Utah State University AT Lab

pieces of heavy machinery in the middle. This is where all similarities to “average” end. Stan Clelland, USU’s AT Lab Coordinator, is no ordinary shop foreman and the projects produced in this workshop are not ordinary. Projects produced here are highly specialized “one of a kind” modifications made specifically for medical equipment and the individual user.

According to Mr. Clelland, the AT lab is a “last ditch” resource for individuals unable to find needed technology in the “real world”. “If you can’t find it, fix it or modify it yourself THEN you come to us. We’ll try to make a modification to fit”, Clelland said

The purpose of this workshop is to teach students basic skills and technology needed in their field of learning while benefiting the community. Mr. Clelland oversees students in every phase of operations in the AT Lab. They need to be familiar with how assistive technology works, whether it’s an adaptive toy used in occupational therapy play or a wheelchair modification to increase individual accessibility. Students need to know how to use those same tools themselves and be able to use lower cost materials when constructing tools or making technical modifications to various types of durable medical equipment. The end result should be an affordable tool that will make some facet of someone’s everyday life a bit easier.



Scott Ingraham (PerMobile) and Stanford Clelland, AT Lab Coordinator

One look at our daughter’s footplate and Mr. Clelland began taking measurements, sketching and taking notes.

After consulting with everyone involved it was decided we would need to leave the chair at the lab and they would make a modification to fit. After a few weeks of modification and ‘tweaking’ Mr. Clelland and his students produced a prototype footplate for our daughter’s chair that does exactly what she needs and continues to do exactly what Mr. Clelland and his students designed it to do.

Under Mr. Clelland’s direction the AT Lab staff and students provide a wide variety of technology related services. These services include but are not limited to:

- Equipment lending and demonstration. A loan bank is available.
- Training on construction of simple, low cost devices
- Maintenance and repair of various assistive devices
- Development of prototype devices
- Wheelchair evaluation

Charges for services provided by the lab vary depending upon the service provided. Outside funding is available through a variety of resources including, but not limited to, State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, Independent Living Services, Telework loans, and the Utah Assistive Technology Foundation. Private resources may also be used.

For further information regarding services and eligibility contact Utah State University AT Lab Coordinator, Stan Clelland, at (435) 797-0699.



Finished Product