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SSN 1018-2071

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Inter face

&
 Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication
CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Interface National Newsletter



At the heart of the matter....

The soccer world cup has come and gone, but it seems that it has left South Africans standing a little taller, a little prouder and smiling a little broader than usual. And with good reason – the world cup was a resounding success. Visitors were not only impressed by the infrastructure and the technical and logistical organisation of the event, but maybe even more by the warmth and friendliness of the rainbow nation. It’s the people factor. South Africans hosted the world with heart.

This made me think of AAC – so often we narrow it down to technology, or a device, and those do help, no doubt... But it is so much more than that. So much of it is the people factor – the dedication and passion of individuals to make their voices heard and helping others to speak up and speak out.

At the time of going to press, a South African team is attending the Conference of the International Society for AAC

(ISAAC) in Barcelona, Spain. Just like the Spanish team inspired us during the world cup in South Africa, our South African team is sure to inspire when sharing some of the South African AAC stories and projects with people from around the world. And, of course we look forward to them coming back and sharing new ideas, insights and inspirations with us.

As always, we bring you news from the KZN Interface branch who are having a very busy year! Keep up the good work! News from some of our regular contributors in our ‘School News’ column is supplemented by news from New Beginnings Montessori School, an integrated pre-school. Look out for some ISAAC feedback in the CAAC news section, as well as some amazing news on new technology in the Tech Talk section.

So enjoy this issue of the newsletter and keep the AAC flame burning brightly!

*Kerstin Tönsing
 Editor*



isaac

Interface promotes communication for people with little or no functional speech by supplementing existing communication with gestures, communication boards and assistive technology (thus, augmentative & alternative communication)

Interface Branch News

News from KZN

Following on from the Interface KZN and Khulani Special School Project, a number of isiZulu simple symbol stories and song and rhyme boards have been posted to our webpage (www.interface-kzn.co.za). These are all downloadable – simply look under isiZulu resources. A copy of Margi’s paper has been posted on Interface KZN’s webpage should anyone wish to download or read it! Those visiting our webpage will also note that we have been able to add a Paypal account and button for direct donations. Our website is now being managed by Chris Engels.

As a result of our efforts to raise funds for members to attend the ISAAC 2010 conference, we now also have a Facebook page that will highlight special projects. Helen Millar has coordinated this so far. The final closing total on our ISAAC 2010 fund was R18 500. Unfortunately our funds were insufficient to support both Dan Ngcobo and Paul Burdett’s efforts to attend the conference. The money was awarded to Paul, who had also been able to raise some funds of his own. Interface KZN was however ecstatic to be able to support at least one of our adult AAC users and Paul and his mom Sharon are currently in Barcelona, Spain at the conference. We have no doubt that he will have much to share with Interface about his experiences on his return to South Africa. Margi Lilienfeld traveled to the conference on her own account, and presented a paper titled “Inclusion is a necessity. It is not a privilege! A unique model of educator training to promote the inclusion of learners requiring AAC.”

So far this year our committee members have been invited to give talks and presentations at various events. Elaine Byrne and Felicity Jonck addressed the Occupational Therapy and Speech Language and Audiology students at UKZN, on the topic of their experiences as mothers of children who use AAC and have special needs. In April, Margi Lilienfeld presented “Empowering Children with Autism to communicate” at Action in Autism’s information morning. In May, Margi spoke on “Interface and the Role of the Occupational Therapist in AAC and AAC with the visually impaired” to the Speech Language Pathology and Audiology students at UKZN. Another exciting presentation that raised awareness about AAC and Interface was a talk at the OHASA KZN Branch Seminar (Oral Hygienist Association of SA) in May 2010. Margi introduced the topic of AAC to Oral Hygienists and suggested practical strategies for them to imple-

ment. Handouts were provided, as well as Interface brochures, and a 40 cell communication board template. Future collaboration will focus on the development of a pack of materials for use in dental and orthodontic practices.

Our AAC Action Labs are currently on hold and did not proceed during the second term of school as a result of inadequate numbers. We are in the process of brainstorming and planning for a new set of training workshops. Our resource library continues to grow.....Interface now has a copy of the book “Believe That All Can Achieve” by Juan Bornman and Jill Rose. We have also recently added an Appel iPad with Proloquo2Go software and a Plectalk Pocket PTP1 to our resources.

Most recently, we held our AGM on the evening of Tuesday the 27th July. Our invited speaker was Jill Rose, who co-authored “Believe That All Can Achieve” with Juan Bornman. The topic of Jill’s talk was “Promoting Inclusion”. Our AGM was well attended by parents, adult AAC users, therapists and educators. Jill spoke passionately about her experiences as the founder of Pathways Kloof; as a therapist over the years; and with the Centre for AAC. Her insights and accumulated experience and knowledge left us all inspired and with ‘much food for thought’.

*Felicity Jonck
Interface KZN*

School News

Pathways Roodepoort

Pathways Roodepoort attended its third 702 Walk the Talk on 25 July and we had a lot of fun as a team. Some of our parents and volunteers brought their dogs, some of our kids were wheeled along the route in their buggies and we made sure that there was Pathways Roodepoort participation in almost every event. It was very easy to notice us because we wore shiny pink wigs and were waving Pathways Roodepoort flags in front of anything that looked like a camera flashing in our direction. Our new focus is Casual Day with a fun theme of “Dress for Laughs”. We are rallying hard for companies and individuals to order Casual Day stickers through us. Last year we did so well that we were awarded a “Helping Hands” award for ‘the first time most successful participant. Naturally, this year we are trying to sell even more stickers and need all the help we can get. We’re a small Centre, always trying to widen our circle of friends who enjoy supporting our cause.

*Julie Botha
Founder: Pathways Roodepoort
Email: Julie.Botha@premierfoods.com*

New Beginnings Montessori School



New Beginnings Montessori School was established in March 2001, in Saxonwold, Johannesburg. We are an inclusive, early intervention school. We accept children from 18 months of age, we work developmentally and not chronologically, our aim is to establish a solid foundation, the building blocks on which formal schooling can take place. Our school upholds a Montessori approach, a philosophy of education with the fundamental belief that a child learns best within a social environment that supports each individual’s unique development. There are 10 children in our school who would traditionally have been described as having ‘disabilities’. Amongst them are children who are blind, have apraxia of speech or have cerebral palsy, However, any child, on any given day has learning and functioning differences and/or difficulties. The influences and dynamics of our children’s lives impact their ability to learn, all children have special needs. For every child there are activities and tasks they may find easy and ones they may find challenging. Children are individuals; to us each child is unique and special.

Montessori compliments AAC because we always work from very concrete to abstract. All the teachers and children use sign language, this remains a work in progress.

We have opted for South African Sign Language (SASL) and gestures. In September all teachers are being trained in Tiny Hands signing simply because it is an established program that parents can attend as well.

Picture schedules are used with many of our special needs children. We have found that all the children,



Learners having fun during a dress-up activity

particularly the younger children who’s language skills are still developing, benefit enormously from the signing and schedules. We have two children on GoTalk 20’s at school. Getting

parents actively involved in the use of the above at home remains challenging. We believe individual differences between children are a source of richness and diversity, not a reason to exclude or isolate. We need to stop looking at labels both negative and positive and see only the child who has a right and an intrinsic love of learning.

*Jessica Vivier
New Beginnings Montessori School
newbeginningsschool@telkomsa.net*

Pathways Kloof

Halala South Africa!

This year has been a positive one for Pathways-Kloof. We continue to have three groups in the centre, the house group who focus on communication and academic development; the cottage group who work on life skills and Pathways College who focus on equipping our young men with skills for the future. Each class has its own aims and goals with building friendships and community at their core.

The first term ended with a bang as we hosted the Bridge School and attended their workshop at Ethembeni. What fun and what a special occasion for Pathways!

The second term has been full of fun as every class has learnt about the world through soccer. Our children have learnt the rules of the game, about sharing and turn taking, about the skills required to be a soccer player. They can tell you where many of the other teams are from and what is special about those countries. They all know ALL of Nkosi Sikelela and Shoshaloza and don’t forget the vuvuzela – yes, we all know how to blow it!

Our children have been caught up in the wonder of the world cup, as have we and what a wonderful learning experience it has been.

*Kirsty Nourse
Head: Pathways Kloof
Email: kirstynourse@mweb.co.za*



Soccer rules!



CAAC news

An evening at the theatre...

...and a rather unusual one too! The guests attending the soiree entitled 'The silence that surrounds us' might have been slightly surprised at the fact that half of them were gagged upon entrance to Die Masker theatre on UP campus. It was probably also the first time that the theatre hall saw so many guests in wheelchairs. The production by the Drama students had the audience riveted, as the challenges of not being able to speak were grippingly portrayed. Lack of control, being spoken down to, the insane frustration as well as victimisation and abuse were some of the issues explored. This so-called 'Theatre for Development' is meant to shock, raise awareness and stir the audience to action rather than entertain. Judging by the comments from the audience, it definitely did just that. 'I never knew of the gravity of the situation wherein people who are unable to speak find themselves.' 'We need to get our learners communication devices.' 'They portrayed my life – exactly as it is' (by a person using AAC) – these were some of the comments which were heard by members of the audience.

After the production, the first public screening of the short film 'Memories' took place. This film briefly captured the stories of four young adults using AAC who have been part of the Fofa project. The film focussed on the positive change that access to AAC brought about in the lives of these individuals. During the cheese-and-wine reception afterwards, there was a chance to meet some of the individuals whose life had been captured on screen, as well as other persons using AAC, and some active networking took place. A collection



The frustration and isolation experienced by people who are unable to communicate was also portrayed.

was also held in aid of the Fofa project, and we would like to sincerely thank all the generous donors. The evening definitely served to raise awareness of the issues facing persons who cannot communicate and the important role of AAC. We are very grateful to Johan

Visser (lecturer from the Drama department and co-ordinator of the theatre for development), Grant Towers and Delia Da Silva (producers and 4th year drama students) as well as the cast, who put the amazing production together. This evening at the theatre was definitely a memorable one!

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC



Theatergoers experienced inability to speak first hand.



Abuse – the ugly reality for many people with disabilities

AAC project

The CAAC team will finish with the AAC project they have been conducting for the Gauteng Department of Education on the 12th August 2010. The team is currently doing the last support visit to the participating schools.

The project started in February 2010 and 15 learners with little or no functional speech from 3 special schools participated in this project. Learners were provided with different communication devices based on their communication needs. Each of the participating schools received several facilitation boards, communication aprons and Boardmaker program for the teachers. The detailed feedback and reflection on the project will be in the next newsletter.

Gloria Ledwaba
Centre for AAC



One of the participating learners practicing the GoTalk 9 option



Barcelona, Spain, July 2010. What a wonderful time to visit Spain just after they won the Soccer World Cup in our country, just one month before. Eighteen South Africans attended the ISAAC (International Society for AAC) conference and our presence was apparent in the

content of the numerous papers that were delivered. It was so clear that AAC in South Africa is not in its baby shoes any more and that we are equal partners with our international colleagues and friends. Not only were we active in the conference programme, but ISAAC will be steered by a South African as Erna Alant is now ISAAC president for the next two years and she knows that we support her fully. Although Erna, as you know, has moved to University of Illinois in Bloomington, USA, she still is a South African at heart.

There was a record attendance of more than 3000 people over the four days and the Conference Centre that is situated on the beach front accommodated everyone easily. The whole area around the Conference Centre was rebuilt for the 1992 Olympics which were presented in Barcelona and therefore state of the art developments were visible everywhere. I have never seen so many babies in prams, people on bicycles and skates, and people in wheelchairs walking around on broad pavements and the numerous play parks.

Mary Blake Huer, the outgoing president of ISAAC, opened her welcoming address by referring us to the lyrics of the song “When you wish upon a star” from Disney’s Pinocchio, where the first few lines are:

When you wish upon a star
 Makes no difference who you are
 Anything your heart desires
 Will come to you.
 If your heart is in your dreams
 No request is too extreme
 When you wish upon a star
 As dreamers do.

A conference like the ISAAC conference takes a lot of wishing and dreaming and we were part of the culmination of everybody’s efforts to plan, organize and make it come true.

During the opening ceremony we also met Marius Serra, who told us a story of his own child that had a severe disability and passed away a year before. Marius is the author of the book, “Still”, which explains the impact that a child with a disability has on the family. He calls himself a “Verbivor” – a person who eats verbs. Indeed, he showed great skill in telling the story of his son with a lot of humour in spite of the pain he experienced.

After his son was born, he and his wife had to spend many hours in hospital, assisting with his son while he was in

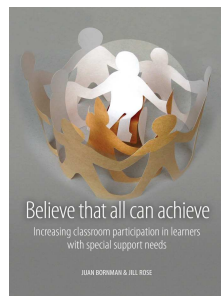
ICU. Here Marius had to spend many hours sitting or sleeping in the hospital chair next to his son’s bed. He viewed this chair as not well designed and uncomfortable. One day he was walking through the 1st class compartment of the aeroplane where he observed the big comfortable chairs. His dream was to sit and sleep in one of those chairs one day.

However, after many hours of research on the dimensions of chairs, he discovered that the dimensions of the chair next to his son’s bed and the chair in the 1st class compartment were very similar. Then he realized that it is the way you view the chair that is important. You cannot change the chair, but you can change your viewpoint. This is so true of situations or events in our everyday life and a real moral lesson that I took away from the conference.

I am sure many of the other people who attended the conference will also have lots of stories to share. Keep a look out for more contributions from the ISAAC conference in future newsletters.

*Kitty Uys
 Centre for AAC*

Believe that all can achieve



This is the title of an exciting new book authored by Juan Bornman, AAC specialist, and Jill Rose, physiotherapist. In his review of the book, Archbishop Desmond Tutu comments as follows:

“Freedom, dignity and equality – the core values of the South African Constitution (1996) – provide the foundation for developing inclusive societies. “Inclusive education” is the term used to describe an education system in which

all learners, including those with disabilities, are accepted and fully integrated not only educationally, but socially as well. Participation lies at the heart of inclusive education and cannot be restricted to one area of life. What is taught has to be reinforced in all the child’s natural environments – the home, the school and the community.

Believe that all can achieve looks at the child’s participation patterns in terms of unique abilities, health status and environmental and personal factors, thus moving the focus

- from disability to ability
- from the child in isolation to the child in the community
- from the medical model of health care to the social model of health care.

Believe that all can achieve is aimed at practising classroom-based teachers who want to improve their ability to support the increasingly diverse learners in their classrooms, schools and communities. Education students interested in special needs will also find this text particularly beneficial. What excites me about this book is that the destination of inclusive education is rooted in an unwavering belief that all children, given the right opportunities, will achieve their God-given potential.”

Congratulations to Juan and Jill on this wonderful publication, which is sure to impact on the lives of many teachers and learners alike.

Herewith some further details of the book:

ISBN: 978 0 627 02796 3

Price: R344.95

To purchase, you can

- Go to your nearest academic bookstore
- Buy online at <http://www.kalahari.net>
- Contact On the Dot at direct.sales@onthedot.co.za or phone 0861 668 368•

*Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC*

From Liza to Liezl!



The friendly voice greeting you at the end of the telephone line on behalf of the Centre for AAC may sound a little bit unfamiliar to you. Meet Liezl Maasdorp who has taken over the office administrative duties of the centre from Liza Siefe who immigrated in May to New Zealand. Liezl, who originally hails from

Wellington in the Western Cape, has lived in Pretoria for approximately 21 years already which practically makes her a local (although she does not admit to cheering for the Blue Bulls!).

Married to Edwin, this mother of two boys aged 15 and 11 comes to the Centre having worked for many years in the private sector as well as the executive office of the University of Pretoria. Liezl loves getting involved and serves her community through various outreach projects but also takes time out for herself by doing regular 5 and 10km walks! One can see therefore that she is an ideal candidate for working at the Centre.

We hope Liezl will have many happy years working with us and that when you get the chance to meet her will make her feel welcome in the AAC community.

*Alecia Samuels
Centre for AAC*

Interested in further studies

.....in the field of early intervention, disability and/or AAC?

The Centre for AAC offers the following post-graduate courses:

Honours degree in AAC: This is a 2-year part-time distance learning degree. It is aimed at therapists and teachers who are interested in specializing in the field of communication intervention for individuals with severe disabilities. Students need to have a relevant 3 year bachelors degree. Additional admission requirements have to be met by prospective students. For more information, please contact the coordinator Ms Gloria Ledwaba: gloria.ledwaba@up.ac.za

Master's degree in AAC: This is also a 2-year part time distance learning degree, with web-based teaching. The degree offers advanced skills in the application of AAC strategies to facilitate communication and literacy development of people with varying disabilities. Students need to have a relevant Honours degree. An admission examination might be required. For more information, please contact the coordinator Dr Michal Harty: michal.harty@up.ac.za.

Master's degree in Early Childhood Intervention: This degree is a 2-year, web-based, distance education degree. It aims at equipping multi-professionals with specialised knowledge and skills in the field of early childhood intervention to function optimally in a changing and challenging social context. Prospective students need to have a relevant Honours or other 4-year degree. For more information, please email the 1st year coordinator Miss Alecia Samuels: alecia.samuels@up.ac.za.

PhD in AAC, Severe Disabilities and Early Childhood Intervention: This degree is multi-professional in nature and welcomes students from disciplines such as special education, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and psychology. The training approach is collaborative and students and lecturers engage in ongoing interaction on the Web as well as during on-campus visits at the University of Pretoria. For more information regarding the PhD programme please e-mail Prof Juan Bornman: juan.bornman@up.ac.za

Please visit our website at www.caac.up.ac.za or phone our office at 012 420 2001 for more information on our courses.

Skillshops

The skillshops at the CAAC have been lots of fun for all involved. These 2 hour CPD accredited afternoon sessions give therapists and teachers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with specific AAC related topics and gain practical skills.

The previous two skillshops focussed on vocabulary selection – activity-specific vocabulary and also core vocabulary. Vocabulary selection remains one of the great challenges in AAC intervention, and this process always needs input from all relevant role players. However, having some basic principles up one's sleeve certainly helps! Participants are given opportunity to brainstorm solutions for children on their caseload/in their class, and the input from the group is valuable for everyone.

The last two skillshops for the year focus on simple switch technology. Hope to see you there!

*Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC*

Luvuyo Tyulu – In Memoriam

I still remember the first I saw Luvuyo getting out of the taxi at the University of Pretoria. He seemed so frightened that I wondered if he would be able to participate during the coming week at the FOFA project. Luvuyo and his friend came all the way from Cape Town – it was the first time they flew in an aeroplane. We all know the rigmarole of getting on and off a plane, and can only imagine what it must be like for a person with a disability!

However, Luvuyo came with the rest of the group the following morning and arrived at CAAC for his first day at FOFA. Here he was, well positioned and mounted on his wheelchair his new tablet device with the Grid software and with two head switches for access. He just received the device as a donation before he came to Pretoria and did not really know how to use it. With a lot of assistance and training from the staff at the CAAC, Luvuyo blossomed when he started to access pre-stored messages.

On day two the participants were asked to select a specific bird whose characteristics they see in themselves and the first words he spoke in the classroom were “I am a peacock, because I am just as beautiful”. What is amazing about this sentence was that this was the first words that he had spoken since his birth 21 years ago. An emotional moment that all of us still remember to this day.

Over the following three years Luvuyo grew into a more confident person and he even requested the bank to come to FOFA so that they could assist him in opening a bank account – an activity indicating that he was taking control over his life and making important decisions that would impact on his life.

Luvuyo knew the pro’s and con’s of Assistive Technology. After learning how to use his device independently it broke and was sent to three countries in an attempt to try to fix it. It was broken for longer than 6 months. He really felt the lack of having a communication device when he was admitted to hospital. He could not tell the health workers about the health problems he experienced.

It was sad therefore that we learnt that Luvuyo had passed away after he was discharged from hospital for a second time. Luvuyo, who was as beautiful as a peacock, is not with us anymore and he will leave a huge gap in the FOFA project and in the hearts of those who worked with him. We can only thank Luvuyo and his mother, Pascaline, for all the life lessons that they taught us over the past 4 years.



Goodbye dear friend!!

Kitty Uys
CAAC

Workshops at the Centre for AAC.

We presented an Early Childhood Assessment and Intervention Workshop at the Centre for AAC during March this year. We were fortunate enough to have around forty professionals from various disciplines that spent the day with us. The presenters discussed topics such as how to facilitate teamwork between families and professionals and how to use routine family activities in therapy.

The Centre for AAC decided to move our longer workshops to Saturdays in order to accommodate professionals who are not always able to get time off work during the week. We are an accredited service provider, and therefore all our courses have CPD accreditation.

Our next workshop will be on the 11th of September. It will be on the topic of challenging behaviour and will be presented by Prof. Juan Bornman. Please contact Liezl Maasdorp at 012 420 2001 if you are interested. Hope to see you all there!

Karen van Niekerk
Centre for AAC

USER FORUM

New SARS regulations around disability

The Income Tax Act (1962) was amended in 2008 to allow people with disabilities to claim expenses that they incur in order to enable themselves to function more adequately and independently in their daily lives. The list of qualifying expenses was published in April 2010.

In a media statement on April 20, 2010, SARS commented as follows:

“Previously a person with disabilities could only claim their total medical expenses that were not covered by their medical aid if they were 65 years and older or if the Income Tax Act No 58, 1962 regarded them as handicapped. These limitations in the law were restrictive for people with a disability who were not handicapped. For example this meant a person would have to be deaf to the point that they relied on sign language to claim all expenses whereas a person requiring a hearing aid could not claim the expense incurred in full. Recognising this, the Income Tax Act, 1962, was amended in 2008 (a change that came into effect on 1 March 2009) so that people with disabilities can claim all expenses, medical or otherwise, that enable them to function more fully in their daily lives. These new deductions apply if the taxpayer concerned, a child or spouse of the taxpayer has a disability.

The amendment also clarified which expenses SARS would allow as a deduction. However, for the aims of the law to be fully realised, the Commissioner is required to prescribe the qualifying expenses and the criteria for diagnosing a disability. This announcement provides for the list and the diagnostic criteria following extensive discussions with the representative bodies for people with disabilities, health professionals and other government departments.”

I think this represents a breakthrough in tax legislation, and believe that it will help many families who have family members with disabilities. A registered health practitioner must confirm the person's disability before deductions can be claimed. This confirmation must be done on the appropriate form (ITR-DD) available from the SARS website (www.sars.gov.za) or from any SARS office.

These forms should not be submitted together with a tax return but need to be kept for audit purposes.

Anybody in need of the list of qualifying expenses is welcome to contact me. My email is kerstin.tonsing@up.ac.za.

*Kerstin Tonsing
Centre for AAC*

(Sincere thanks to Mr Konraad Burger, legal advisor, who sent though the information upon which this contribution is based.)

Gordon's own voice

Gordon came into our life as our second child just after midnight on 24th May 2002. The only out of the ordinary part was that his mother had a very short period of labour that took us by surprise and he was born at home before we could get to the hospital. There were absolutely no complications with his birth. His sister Emily was 3 years older than himself and progressed well without any out any problems. She proved to be very bright for her age and took her brother under her wing right from the start.

Gordon developed well and was a well-coordinated energetic child. The only problem we picked up was his very slow or non-verbal communication. At 3 years he relied on his sister to speak for him. He could communicate only in single monosyllable basic words (badly pronounced). This he only did if absolutely necessary and we would have to, in most cases ask him to repeat himself as we could not understand him. He became frustrated and resorted to pointing to what he wanted, or his sister would chip in and explain what he wanted. The feedback we got was that he saw no need to talk as his sister spoke for him and he could get by with non verbal communication.

At 4 we took him to a speech therapist. After a few appointments he displayed that he understood all communication but he refused to cooperate with any verbal requests. The speech therapist gave up and recommended that we send him to a play group to try and force communication with other children. This we did. He made friends with other children in his play group and they seemed to communicate in the playground. In class he refused to communicate with his teacher, or talk to his peers even though he could say basic words.

At 5 we took him to an Educational Psychologist who diagnosed "Apraxia of Speech". Her recommendation was that we have intensive Speech Therapy and that we look for an appropriate school for him as he would not cope in a normal government school. We made negligible to very slow progress during the year 2008. He still would not verbally communicate with any adults outside of immediate family.

Beginning 2009 Gordon entered Grade 1 at Hartwell Private School in Edenvale. He bonded with his teacher, but after the 1st semester he was having problems and refused to participate in any verbal class activities. The principal referred us to the Centre for AAC at the University of Pretoria. At the same time, part of the way through the 1st term Gordon started additional speech therapy focusing on apraxia. With hard practice at home we started to get results slowly.

On the day of the assessment at CAAC the whole team went, including his present teacher, his head mistress, and his potential 2010 teacher as well as us parents. It was recommended that we look at a "speech generating device" for him. This was to help him communicate with strangers and help with learning new words or phrases. While looking at various different devices and suppliers, Gordon seemed to suddenly make strong progress. We discussed this progress with Professor Bornman and it was decided to hold back a bit with the purchase of the speech device.

Professor Bornman mentioned that it could be a "Bifurcation Point" and that we should give it time to progress. Gordon made an intense effort and started to practice what he was taught and concentrated hard on his breakdown of words to pronounce them properly. At age 7 he started to make progress with talking. A milestone was when he gave a short 5 sentence speech in class about his favourite toy (after much practice at home).

He did well at school in 2009 and was age appropriate in everything except verbal subjects. It was recommended he do Grade 1 over in a Smart Start class with only 8 other pupils. This has done wonders and he has come into his own. We are told he has become quite a chatterbox in class. His school work has progressed well. With speech he has become functional and has started to speak to strangers albeit very shyly if need be. Now that a start has been made we are confident he will continue to progress.

*Ian Whitfield
Gordon's father*

AAC Consultations

The Centre for AAC offers **consultations** to persons with little or no functional speech and their intervention teams (family and service providers).

In order to schedule a consultation, please contact **Priscilla Kershaw (012 420 2035)** or phone our office at **(012 420 2001)**.

Devon's new voice



My son, Devon has an undiagnosed syndrome. As such, he is developmentally delayed. Speech and language have been of his most challenging areas of development.

Devon has been in speech therapy since he was 11 months old and at a time even used sign language to be able to communicate. While he is able to communicate quite effectively in his own way with those close to him, it is always a concern that his world is all the smaller because of his limited ability to express himself verbally.

A whole team of us (which included Devon's school teacher, speech therapist, school psychologist, facilitator as well as family members) attended a very thorough assessment at the Centre for AAC earlier this year. During this session, Kerstin and Priscilla showed us various augmentative and alternative communication devices that would be suitable for Devon's needs. There were some wonderful options available. But, at the time, I have to admit, the cost of some of the options especially the high tech devices, was out of our reach.

I was aware that many of the devices are imported from the USA, which is what adds to the expense. Devon's uncles live in New York, so I asked them to put their feelers out for some of the recommendations.

Well, the uncles took this task to heart and before we knew it, they had actually purchased an i-Pod Touch as well as speaker casings (iMainGo) and furthermore bought and loaded the Proloquo2Go application. This incredible device arrived by courier last week.

We need to customise some of the icons on the device to make it relevant to Devon, and we all need to learn how to operate it. I guess it's like learning a whole new language, but there is no doubt in my mind that, when we are fully up to speed with how to operate Devons' "voice", he'll be able to communicate at a new level. And who knows? It might just be the key to unlocking all sorts of other things for him.

*Alison Kroeger
Devon's mother*

AAC Awareness Month October 2010 MANY CULTURES, ONE DREAM: COMMUNICATION WITHOUT BARRIERS

All people wish to communicate, to understand, and to be understood. Many barriers can make that difficult. People may not know each other or may use different languages, come from different cultures, have difficulty speaking, need access to AAC, or may not understand how AAC works. Once the barriers to real communication are gone, people from different worlds of experience can get to know and understand each other. Tell the world your story of communicating using AAC and overcoming barriers to communication.

Yes, it's almost that special time of the year when we can help bring information and advocacy for AAC to all parts of the globe. October 2010 marks the fourth international AAC awareness month. So start thinking about what you can do within your community or workplace to raise awareness about AAC. You can go to <http://www.aacawareness.org/> to read more about ISAAC's (International Society for Augmentative & Alternative Communication) awareness campaign or to look at the video which was developed. You may also follow International AAC Month on Facebook and Twitter or go to [Events around the world for International AAC Month](#) to get updates about events.

Awareness only happens when you share a story with someone, so come let the world know what you have to say. Help to spread the word about AAC!

"If I had a VOCA"



In celebration of October's International AAC Month, the TASH Communications Committee and Snoopi Botten and friends have just released on YouTube an advocacy song for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC): "If I Had a VOCA". The adapted lyrics for this song were written to teach the world that everyone needs a way to communicate. People who have little or no speech can communicate with the right technology, training, and support. Sadly, many people spend months, years, and sometimes a lifetime without functional communication. We are working to change that. Everyone has something to say. Our goal is effective communication for all . . . in our lifetime! The unique musical performance is a remarkable trio of computer-generated singing voices. These computerized voices are used by people who have little or no effective speech. It is rare to hear them sing and rarer still to hear them harmonize.

The tune is an old and familiar one which reminds us about justice, freedom, and love. The song is paced for an audience sing-along. We hope you will enjoy the video, sing along with the lyrics as they are displayed on a wide range of VOCA's, and tell others around the world about it so they can join us in song and advocacy. The song was adapted from the classic song "If I Had a Hammer", by Hays and Seeger which was also popularized by Peter, Paul, and Mary. This video is dedicated to the memory of Mary Travers, whose voice for justice and freedom and love still rings in our ears and in our hearts. YouTube invites you to watch and share it: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJi_Si_jTHk

*Enid Moolman
Centre for AAC*

The.Sponge Project update



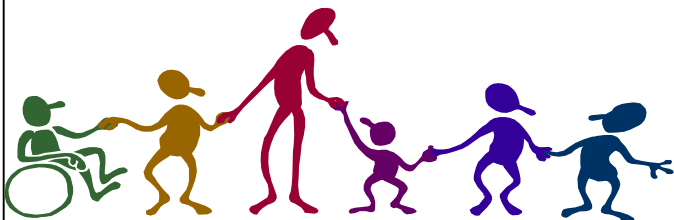
The.Sponge project is a privately funded initiative to advocate for better rehabilitation for people with disabilities. That includes awareness about rights, access to medical treatment and therapy, assistive devices, accessible buildings and transport, housing, education, skills development, employment and travel. Our prime mission is to make information about resources for all the above services available to any disabled person with access to a cell phone. We therefore established an SMS Information Service (072-172 2623) in November 2009, to enable people with disabilities to locate their nearest rehabilitation resource. We have recently also posted our Excel database of resources onto our website (<http://thespongeproject.yolasite.com/>). Individuals and organizations are free to download it (about 2MB), save it and manipulate it for their own non-commercial purposes. To register a new resource or update details, individuals and organizations can complete and return the registration form downloadable also from our website.



Our secondary mission is to try to sensitise people about disability issues and assist them to network with each other. We send a regular newsletter to everyone on our database of resources (currently nearly 4000 contacts) to improve their awareness of disability issues and let them know how they can get more information. You can download the newsletter from the website. We also encourage people to subscribe to one or more disability electronic mailing list(s). See our August Newsletter for some examples of mailing lists. So, visit our website for these and many more interesting pieces of information and resources.



**Tony and Tim Webb,
The.Sponge Project Team, Port Elizabeth**



TECH TALK

New AAC applications...

...for Apple  **Ipod touch, Iphone and Ipad**

One marvels at how much can change in a year. That is so true especially when we think about technology! What was innovative and amazing yesterday can be old news the very next morning! Take for instance AAC software for the Apple



range of smart media. A year ago Proloquo2go™ was the app (cool speak for application) which transformed the way we think about AAC devices. For less than R5000.00 - give or take

(hardware and software together) one was presented with a viable non-dedicated AAC voice output system. However some might still find the price of this innovative app out of their reach—\$189 ie +/- R1400 has the



potential to put a serious dent in many of our pockets especially in these hard economic times. Therefore I got really excited when recently surfing the Itunes store I saw some new AAC apps which

really look quite promising and seem to do as good a job. What would you say if I said you could pay less than R15.00 (\$1.99) for a “text to speech” app! Well you can if you download SpeakIt <http://itunes.apple.com/za/app/speak-it-text-to-speech/id308629295?mt=8#>!

SpeakIt allows you to enter text into an easy to use interface and the programme then does what it is called, thus it speaks it with one of the 4 high quality voices which come free with the download.



The 4 voices are American Male, American Female, British Male and British Female. If you don't like any of these voices there are 20 more to download at a cost of \$0.99 (+/- R7.50) each. These voices are quite clear and sound very natural and I would even go as far as to say that they are better than the DEC talk voices which are used on some dedicated AAC devices! Unfortunately there are as yet no Afrikaans or African language voices but they are updated on a regular basis. So maybe with a bit of emailing and advocacy, voices for our local languages could be developed.

As an AAC user you have the ability to use this software to make a voice phone call if you have an Iphone. The program also allows you to save text and come back to it at a later stage which is great for users who need to give long speeches. Additionally for users who like to use "quick talk" you can save often used phrases as a sound file which has the potential to speed up rate of communication. So there you have it! Watch this space for some more ideas in follow-up editions of software and products which can benefit the AAC community and people with disability.

*Alecia Samuels
Centre for AAC*

SKILLSHOP DATES

22 September: How to make a battery interrupter to use with battery operated toys

20 October: How to make a simple pressure switch to be used with the battery interrupter

Book your place by phoning Liezl Maasdorp (012 420 2001) or emailing her at liezl.maasdorp@up.ac.za

FOR YOUR DIARY...

Challenging Behaviour 1 Day Workshop

Do you often find yourself asking the following questions....

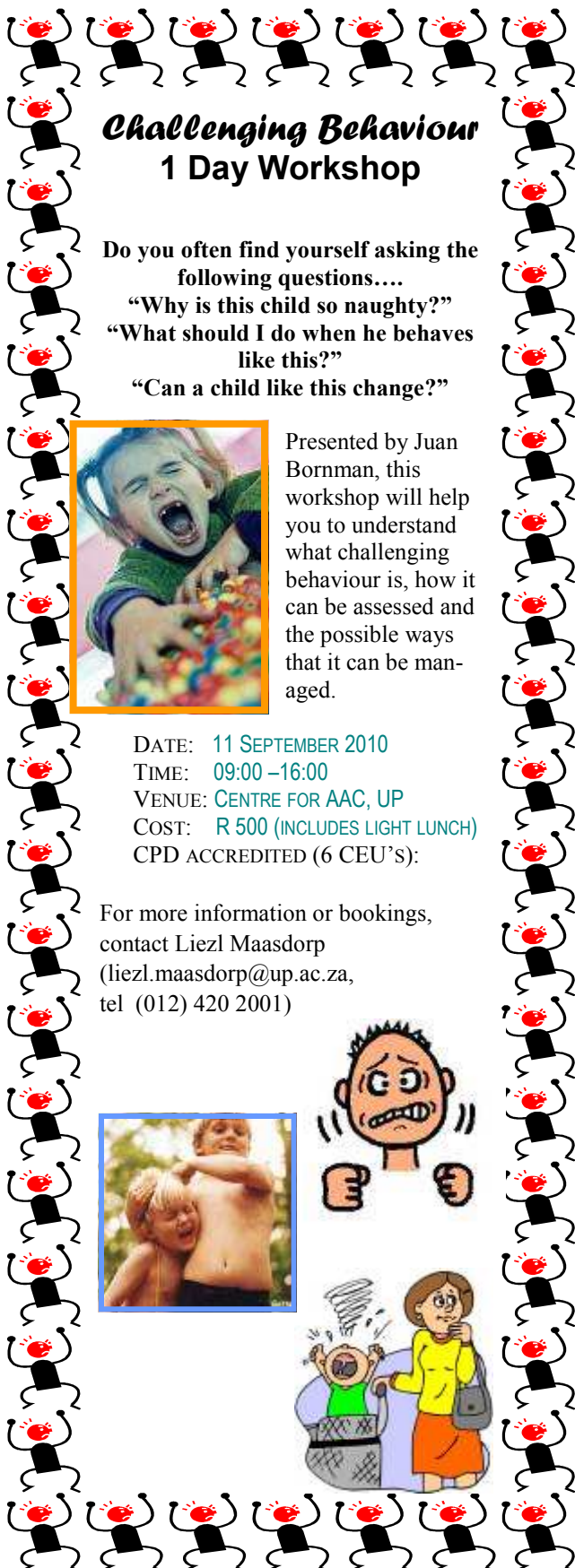
- “Why is this child so naughty?”
- “What should I do when he behaves like this?”
- “Can a child like this change?”



Presented by Juan Bornman, this workshop will help you to understand what challenging behaviour is, how it can be assessed and the possible ways that it can be managed.

DATE: 11 SEPTEMBER 2010
 TIME: 09:00 –16:00
 VENUE: CENTRE FOR AAC, UP
 COST: R 500 (INCLUDES LIGHT LUNCH)
 CPD ACCREDITED (6 CEU'S)

For more information or bookings, contact Liezl Maasdorp (liezl.maasdorp@up.ac.za, tel (012) 420 2001)



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Centre for AAC (Training in AAC)

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Your gift is tax deductible
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 the Income Tax Act of
 1962

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Interface Western Cape	Cheques/deposit slips can be sent, together with this form, to:
Account Name: Interface Total Communication Bank: Standard Bank, Rondebosch Branch Code: 02-05-09-11 Account No: 071439269	Private Bag X18/ #39 Rondebosch 7701 Or fax deposit slip to: 021-8550582

Your contribution will assist Interface and the CAAC in helping parents, children and other AAC users to face the great many challenges encountered on a daily basis

Let's work together to make a difference.