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**Editor:**

Kerstin Tönsing  
**Lay-out and design:**  
Ensa Johnson



**Centre for Augmentative  
and Alternative  
Communication**

**CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

**National Newsletter**

**Editorial**

Welcome to the last edition of the Interface/CAAC newsletter of 2012. Yes, the year is almost over! It has been a busy and eventful one for the AAC community – and probably still is, as schools and therapists busy themselves with assessments, reports, Christmas concerts and year-end functions, CAAC students finish off exams and assignments, lecturers are frantically marking, and parents try to juggle the general year-end hustle and bustle.

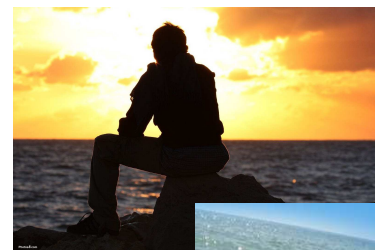
The year end is often a time to look back and assess our progress—to determine what we have achieved in all the different spheres of our life and with what success we have played our roles – be it teacher, therapist, parent, spouse or lecturer. While this is often a necessary process to help us align goals and future plans, I hope that the year end will also provide a chance to slip out of all these roles for a bit, and just be. To exhale, and enjoy some of the simple things of life. To watch a sunset, read a book, enjoy a glass of fresh water or a cup of coffee, to smell the rain or look at a flower. To be with another person just to enjoy his/her company, without having to achieve anything specific, and without having to use words. Hey, as people active in the field of AAC this should be easy for us! The truth of the matter is that it often isn't that easy, as we live in a

world defined by roles and driven by measurable achievements. Our roles seem to define our identities, and to let them go can be quite threatening! So, this is a challenge to all our readers to take some time out to BE.



As a first step, sit back, relax and enjoy the contents of the CAAC/Interface newsletter. Thank you for your dedication and support in promoting the field of AAC and making a difference in the lives of persons with limited speech. Wishing you all a great December, and a very blessed beginning of 2013. See you in the new year!

**Kerstin Tönsing  
Editor, Centre for AAC**



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



# Interface Branch News

## News from KZN

It's hard to believe that Christmas is almost here and that 2013 is just around the corner. At Interface KZN, we have been busy with various projects, training and fundraising efforts. We welcomed Pree Parumaul to our team recently. Pree is an Educator who has her Honours in AAC.

On the 25th August, Kirsty Nourse presented a Boardmaker workshop. This was attended by staff from RP Moodley School, HS Ebrahim School, Inanda Special School, Ethembeni School, Vulekani School, and from the Department of Education. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to share resources and to come up with ideas for functional resources to use in their classrooms.

Kirsty has set up a drop box to enable participants to save any boards that they make in the future for all to share and use. If anyone wishes to access the drop box to share resources, please email Kirsty at [knourse@mweb.co.za](mailto:knourse@mweb.co.za)



On Casual Day on the 7th September, we were able to increase our sticker sales and monies raised. This was an improvement on our 2011 effort. Thanks to everyone who supported us by selling and buying stickers!

On the 19th September, we hosted Lisa Ellis, of Inclusive Solutions, who demonstrated the Tobii C eye unit / PC Eye unit technology to Avishana Sewrajan, Speech and Language Therapist. Lisa then assisted Avishana with the assessment of two Interface KZN clients, using this eye control technology. We were subsequently very grateful to receive funding from the Grace Baumann Trust for the purchase of the Tobii C / PC Eye Unit. Now that we have been able to acquire this very

valuable technology for our resource library, we will be able to offer demonstrations and training. The Interface KZN intervention team look forward to becoming skilled in eye control assessments.

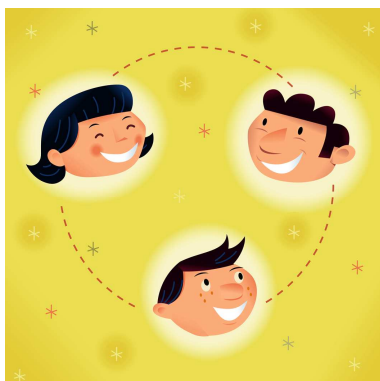
Margi Lilienfeld and Jocelyn Mngomezulu implemented the Introductory training in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) at Sisizakele Special School during the week of the 11th to 14th September. The school is based at Bhambhanane approximately 30km from Ingwavuma in Northern KZN. Of the 110 learners, approximately 30 have little or no functional speech. Most of these children are integrated into the classes with the other learners with the exception of seven learners who are accommodated in a specialised unit for children who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The school does not employ any therapists and receives intermittent assistance from the community service OT and SLT departments at Manguzi Hospital. The main need identified by the school prior to the training was "to know how to use the skills of the learners to make ways in which to communicate". The teacher aids and the educators had reported that they felt they lacked the skills to meet the special needs of the children at the school who had little or no functional speech.

The introductory workshop on AAC included topics such as Aided AAC, Unaided AAC, Total Communication strategy, Aided Language Stimulation and Access to AAC. In addition, some strategies specifically for learners with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), such as Social Stories and Visual Scheduling systems, were included. Theoretical training sessions that included practical hands-on skill training activities were interspersed with observations and brief interactions with the six children, identified as being most in need of AAC. Following a brief introduction to AAC and the workshop contents, the educators were given the opportunity to identify any additional children on whom they wanted more intensive input. Over the four days Margi and Jocelyn made observations, interacted with and gave feedback and suggestions on nine individual children and provided the school with brief typed reports with recommendations for each of these children that detailed recommendations. They provided knowledge and skills training and led discussion and practice sessions on the development and use of a range of early literacy materials including noisy stories, symbol stories as well as on generic topic specific communication boards, eye gaze frames, commu-

## News from KZN (cont.)

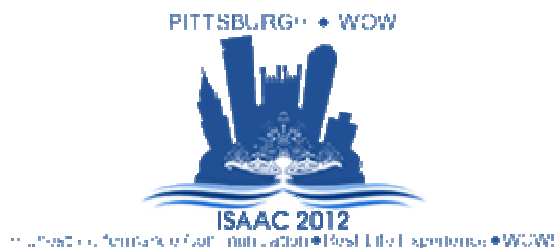
education fans, song and rhyme boards and word and alphabet boards. Copies of all the literacy materials in isiZulu and multiple copies of all the other resources were provided to the school. Two copies of each resource had the vocabulary printed above the Boardmaker™ in isiZulu and one copy of each had the vocabulary represented by the symbols printed in English.

The Communication Circle has been eagerly attended by a number of teenagers this year. Dan Ngcobo and France Mgenge are the mentors and the group is facilitated by Kirsty. As the year draws to an end, the group is enthusiastically discussing ideas for their last get together for 2012..... which will take the form of an outing. Watch this space for feedback!



**Felicity Jonck**  
*Acting  
Chairperson  
Interface KZN*

## ISAAC 2012 Wonderful... Outstanding... Worldwide ... Wow!



It's a really long way to America!! Thank you to Interface KZN for sponsoring this trip. I think that all the projects will benefit from this experience. I was able to attend a pre-conference as well as the main conference.

The pre-conference was on “core vocabulary in 5 languages” and it was a day-long study led by Bruce Baker and his team from various countries

reporting the research and use of the Minspeak system in German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and English. From this seminar I learnt a lot about the linguistics behind the system which make it such an expedient method for speeding up AAC conversations. I took the opportunity to speak to Carol Tenny as well as Bruce regarding research on Zulu. Bruce had indicated that it is of great interest to him to see if the ideas of Minspeak can be applied to all languages regardless of the type. He did indicate that it may be possible for us to collaborate so we are to be in touch.



The conference itself was such an eye opener and I do think that I learnt a lot from this. Particularly in the areas of PODD which will (and has already) guided my development of low-tech AAC. I listened to Gayle Porter on the topic as well as a team from Denmark, who had applied the concept to Danish. I attended a lecture by Caroline Musselwhite which although geared toward those in education rather than therapy, was very memorable. I have since been on various websites which have a bounty of resources and ideas applicable to teachers and therapists.

**Jocelyn Mngomezulu**  
*Interface KZN*



*Jocelyn Mngomezulu from Interface KZN*

## CAAC news

### Research project: Collaboration with Georgia State University

Dr MaryAnn Romski from Georgia State University (USA) visited the CAAC in September for 11 days in connection with the Collaborative Research Project by the Centre for AAC and Georgia State University, entitled, "Speech and Language Delays in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders in South Africa".

Dr MaryAnn Romski is the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies. She holds joint appointments in the Departments of Communication, Psychology and Educational Psychology and Special Education and is the Director of Georgia State University Centre for Research on Atypical Development and Learning (CRADL). Dr Romski has a prolific research and publication record in the field of AAC. Her most recent work has focussed on intervention with toddlers with neurodevelopmental delays and their families.

The aim of the collaborative project is to identify and characterize speech and language delays in children with neurodevelopmental disorders across language backgrounds in South Africa. The identification of speech and language delays in this group of children will permit the researchers to identify commonalties and differences across languages so that they can implement interventions specific to receptive and expressive language needs and ameliorate the impact of these difficulties on the child's long-term development and functioning. The researchers will further their understanding of neurodevelopmental disorders by specifying how language background influences the child's growth and development. The four language groups that will be assessed will be English, Afrikaans, Setswana and isiZulu.

The participants in the above-mentioned research proposal will be recruited from three hospitals in the Gauteng area, Dr George Mukhari Hospital, Steve Biko Hospital and Chris Hana Baragwanath Hospital. During Dr Romski's stay, each hospital was visited and Dr Romski gave

an Expert Seminar entitled, "Outcomes of Augmented Language Intervention and Parent Coaching with Toddlers who have Developmental Delays". A short description of the collaborative research proposal was also given to the hospitals by Prof. Bornman and prospective plans were made regarding the next phase of the study.

It was great to have Dr Romski visit us here at the Centre for AAC, and we were enriched by her knowledge and experience regarding AAC! We look forward to our continued collaboration with her.

**Robyn White**  
Centre for AAC



*Dr Romski (middle) with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities (second from left) and staff from the Centre for AAC*

### Visiting scholar from the University of South Australia

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, Dr Kobie Boshoff, a lecturer from the School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia, visited the Centre for AAC. Kobie is an occupational therapist and obtained her PhD in AAC at the Centre in 2003. Since then, she has worked clinically as well as academically in Canada and Australia. Her interests lie, amongst others, in service delivery models, paediatrics and early intervention, employment services for people with disabilities, augmentative and alternative communication and assistive technology and program evaluation. With these interests and her previous involvement at the Centre, it is easy to see that we have lots of common ground! During

her visit, Kobie presented seminars to staff and students on a variety of topics, including the service delivery models in early intervention in rural and underserved South Australian communities, changing practices in student training for a new generation (Gen Y), as well as the value and process of writing systematic reviews. We benefitted greatly from Kobie's expertise and look forward to further collaboration!

**Kerstin Tönsing**  
Centre for AAC



*Dr Kobie Boshoff from the University of South Australia and Prof. Juan Bornman, Director of the Centre for AAC, posing in front of the CAAC's new mural – the Blissymbol for 'communicate'.*

## Welcome back, Liza!



Liza Rosetti-Siefe is back at the Centre for AAC! Liza and her husband returned from New Zealand a while ago and after holding a temporary position at the Department of English at UP, Liza is now permanently back at the Centre for AAC. We are very grateful that things worked out this way—since Liza worked at the CAAC for many

years before her stay in New Zealand she was able to step in and take up the reigns with ease and flair! We would also like to express our sincere thanks to both Hannie Pretorius and Tania Myers who helped out as temporary staff members during the course of the past months. We would furthermore also like to thank Sandy Kloppe who helped out for three months during Prof. Kitty Uys' sabbatical. We truly appreciate the dedication and support from all three these ladies and wish them very well with their future endeavours.

**Kerstin Tönsing**  
Centre for AAC

## AAC Research Seminar 12 October 2012

On October 12<sup>th</sup>, the Centre for AAC hosted its annual research seminar, with the purpose of disseminating local and international research in the disability field.

Joining the seminar from Indiana University in the USA, Professor Erna Alant and her doctoral student Mr. Michael Verde, presented their current research that focuses on how to foster communication with people with dementia. Their tenet is that cognitive decline is a natural part of the aging process, and that empathy and acceptance can facilitate a healthy communicative relationship between partners.

Two current PhD students at the Centre for AAC, Ms. Alecia Samuels and Ms. Kerstin Tönsing, also presented the results of their doctoral research. Ms. Alecia Samuels' research examined the phenomena of teenage pregnancy and co-parenting in residents of a Cape Flats community. The results suggested that nearly all of the adolescent mothers had someone who they considered a co-parent of their child; most often this was the child's biological father or the child's maternal grandmother. Surprisingly, the adolescents who reported the least degree of co-parenting support were the most likely to become pregnant again in the next couple of years.

Ms. Kerstin Tönsing, who recently successfully defended her research, presented her study examining the facilitative effects of shared story-book reading on the use of AAC, in children with little to no functional speech and moderate

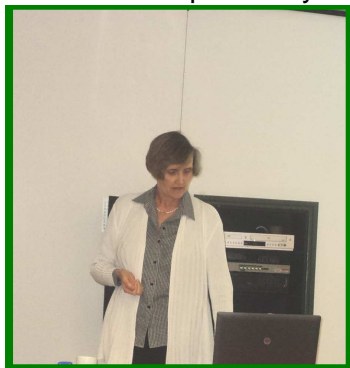


*Prof. Erna Alant (Indiana University), Prof. Kitty Uys (CAAC) and Mr Michael Verde (Indiana University)*

intellectual impairments. Ms. Tönsing found that, on average, the participants in her study quickly learned how to use the AAC board during the joint reading activity. These findings may provide methods to help children with disabilities quickly and efficiently learn how to communicate.

The seminar was concluded with a presentation by Dr Marina Herald, a recent PhD graduate from the Centre for AAC. Dr Harold presented her doctoral research that compared and contrasted the usefulness of different grid displays for AAC devices. She examined the performance of typically developing children in grades 1-3 to determine whether they were quicker at finding symbols that were grouped semantically or alphabetically. The results suggested that while children in Grade 1 were significantly quicker to locate semantically grouped symbols, children in Grades 2 and 3 were increasingly proficient at finding symbols alphabetically. Dr Harold's study provides important insight into how display grids should be formatted for chil-

The research provided by these presenters was diverse, informative, and interesting. Thank you to all of the presenters and participants. We also would like to specifically congratulate Dr Herold



on her recent graduation and Ms. Samuels and Ms. Tönsing on their upcoming graduations. Excellent work ladies!

**Dana Donohue  
Centre for AAC**

*Dr Herold presenting her study*

## NW Department of Education Training workshop

dren of different ages. The CAAC presented a training workshop to 80 district officials from the North West Education Department. The training was conducted in Pretoria at the Burgers Park Hotel. The theme was:



*Active participation during the workshop*

"Early learning and intervention"

The following units were presented:

- Unit 1: Introducing the tiers of instruction
- Unit 2: Screening, assessment and progress monitoring
- Unit 3: Curriculum adaptation, instruction and focused intervention
- Unit 4: Career planning and transition from school to work

It was a wonderful meaningful interaction. We enjoyed learning together, actively participating, demonstration, simulations, singing and dancing together.

**Conny Simelane  
tre  
AAC**

**Center**



*Ms Lucy Tong (Deputy Chief Education Specialist, North West) and Ms Conny Simelane (CAAC)*

## Swedish-South African Collaboration

George Bernard Shaw (26 July 1856 – 2 November 1950) was an Irish essayist, novelist and playwright, and the only person to have won both a Nobel Prize in Literature (1925) and an Oscar (1938).

One of his many famous quotes related to the importance of collaboration and he proclaimed: "If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas."



Another interesting fact is that at first he wanted to refuse his Nobel Prize because he had no desire for public honours, but his wife encouraged him to accept as she considered it a tribute to Ireland. He did reject the monetary award, requesting it be used to finance translation of Swedish books into English. Therefore, who could be a more apt person to quote when discussing the exciting collaboration between South African and Swedish researchers?

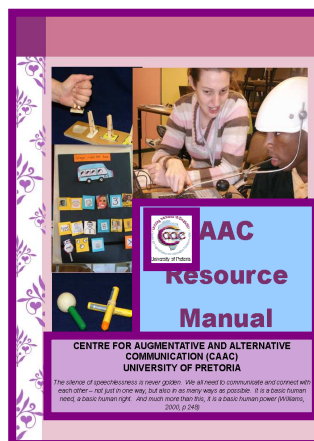
In the previous newsletter we gave feedback about the exciting 3-week long course that eight Ph.D. students and two staff members participated in when they visited Jönköping University in Sweden in June. In January 2013 we have the opportunity to host Prof. Mats Granlund and 10 Swedish students for a week. During this time we plan to hold a 3-day seminar from 30 January – 1 February 2013, which will be open to all interested persons. The preliminary title for this seminar is: Environmental Assessment and Intervention in Early Childhood. A number of interesting topics will be included under this broader umbrella title, including the ICF-CY, Risk and resilience factors, Human Rights and disability; family support issues, understanding different child environments and using a sociocultural model to understand child functioning.

So please be sure to mark your diaries – this is really an opportunity that you don't want to miss! Join this collaborative team and see where your own research in the disability or early childhood intervention fields fit in. After all, as human beings

we all are "social animals", and the progress we've made as a society is the result of pooled effort. Therefore, it pays to figure out what got us here, and how we can continue to join forces going forward.

**Juan Bornman**  
Centre for AAC

## AAC Resource Manual



The Centre for AAC proudly launched its very first AAC Resource Manual in August 2011, as part of its 21-year celebration as a centre. It was then envisaged that the Resource Manual will become a "living document" and that new chapters or sections of chapters will be added annually. Therefore, we also decided to not publish it in book format but rather in a file, to easily add sections, or to remove and/or adapt certain strategies as new research becomes available. In this way we are able to ensure that intervention remains embedded within evidence-based practice. We are delighted to announce that we now have 17 new contributions to add to last year's edition. Very relevant and practical topics are covered, such as iPads and their use with persons who use AAC, how to do a switch assessment and choose the right switch for your client, and how to teach graphic symbol combinations, to name just a few of these new contributions.

Those who bought the AAC Resource Manual last year will be happy to know that you can exchange last year's CD for a brand new one at no extra cost. Simply hand in your old CD at the CAAC and you will receive the new updated 2012 version. Those who haven't bought a copy of the Resource Manual yet, will however, have the opportunity to buy this updated edition with the addendum as a whole.

The manual is divided into the following chapters, with related contributions in each chapter:

- Getting going: all about the learners who use, this and that.....
- Screening and assessment of a potential AAC candidate
- The use of AAC strategies in various settings
- Various AAC tools and intervention strategies
- Communication books and boards
- In the classroom (literacy, numeracy, storybooks etc.)
- Let us play
- Access
- Assistive technology
- Challenging behaviour
- The use of AAC in specific populations
- Useful websites and contacts
- AAC terminology
- Examples of communication boards

The AAC Resource Manual is available on CD at R 250.00. The price includes postage and handling. For more information please contact our office at [saak@up.ac.za](mailto:saak@up.ac.za) or phone (012) 420 2001.

**Enid Moolman**  
Centre for AAC

## 11th World Down Syndrome Congress 2012 – Cape Town, South Africa

11th World Down Syndrome Congress took place from 15-17 August 2012 in Cape Town South Africa. The congress including the post-congress workshops had an attendance of 680 people (professionals in the field, parents as well as people with Down Syndrome) of which 85 people attended the INDABA (a one day pre-congress on the 14th of August for people with Down Syndrome) and the programme for people with Down Syndrome. During the congress regular updates were made to the Congress Facebook and Twitter pages and video footage was uploaded to the YouTube channel. Should you take a moment to have a look at these videos, you need to search "World Down Syndrome Congress 2012".

The organisers received very positive feedback from the delegates who reported that they en-



joyed the congress and found the programme to be informative and diverse. The theme for the sessions by the keynote speakers on the first day was about the rights of persons with disabilities. The second day, the focus was on employment issues and how people with Down Syndrome are included in vocational settings. Personal experiences were also shared by Shona Robertson (an administrative assistant for God Coast City Council, Australia), Ephraim Mohlokane (a sports coach at a private school for boys in South Africa) and Jaspreet Sekhon (a teacher assistant in Singapore). The last day of the congress addressed the importance of inclusive education as well as early intervention.

All the speaker presentations that were made available to the organisers were uploaded onto a website and you are welcome to view or download these at <http://docs.sbs.co.za>. You can also download the workshop on book adaptations for literacy by Ensa Johnson from the CAAC website: [www.caac.up.ac.za](http://www.caac.up.ac.za).

We are all looking forward to the next World Down Syndrome Congress which will be held in India in 2015.

**Ensa Johnson**  
Centre for AAC



Ensa Johnson presenting a workshop on book adaptations at the 11th World Down Syndrome Congress



## Using Teaching and Learning Technology to Connect to Expert Knowledge

We live in a connected world—even more so when it comes to teaching and learning. We therefore tried something new at the CAAC this past month. We decided to make maximum use of the University of Pretoria's online teaching and learning resources to conduct our first transcontinental Early Intervention webinar between South Africa and Portugal using UP's web conferencing platform Blackboard Collaborate. Blackboard Collaborate is an easy-to-use system that enables instructors, researchers, administrators and others to create virtual classrooms and meeting spaces that occur over the web in real time. What is webinar? A webinar is a seminar or workshop that is presented over the web in real time. You can think of it as a way to attend a workshop in the comfort of your own home. All you need is a computer and an active internet connection.

Fourty-two participants (including postgraduate students and early intervention professionals from all around South Africa, Portugal, the Netherlands and even Saudi Arabia) eagerly logged in to an interactive webinar conducted by Ms Susana Castro from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at Porto University in Portugal. Following an Early Intervention seminar in Sweden earlier this year attended by staff and PhD students from the Centre for AAC, Ms Alecia Samuels and Ms Castro hatched the plan to start the collaboration between the two countries. Ms Castro is fast becoming known as an expert on the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY), a framework for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels. Over the past 4 years she has published extensively on the subject and has recently submitted her doctoral thesis on the ICF-CY as a framework to document core functioning features for assessment and intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The webinar was aimed at helping participants to understand the ICF-CY and how it could be incorporated into Early Intervention research and practices. Due to the interactive style used by the presenter, the webinar participants were kept engaged throughout with very few technological difficulties experienced to interfere with participa-

tion. From the overwhelmingly positive feedback received thus far, it is clear that this was an important learning opportunity for all who took part and that it whet the appetite for more such events.



"It was very informative and made me think of how I could improve the way in which I provide intervention to my patients. The webinar made me realize how the utilization of the ICF-CY would improve service delivery."

"Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity. I can really foresee this technology being utilized more in the future. It was awesome!"

This tool has therefore proved favourable in fostering the Centre's collaborations with international scholars and opening up knowledge to a wider audience who would otherwise not be able to attend out workshops. The opportunities presented by these new technologies are endless and can, for example, be used to conduct online workshops or just to disseminate the latest developments in the field. Connecting to this is therefore just one internet click away.

If you would like us to conduct more webinars and think this is a good way to earn CPD points or just to increase your knowledge on early intervention and AAC, please send your suggestions on possible topics to [alecia.samuels@up.ac.za](mailto:alecia.samuels@up.ac.za) or [saak@up.ac.za](mailto:saak@up.ac.za).

**Alecia Samuels**  
Centre for AAC

*Ms Susana Castro from Porto University presenting the webinar on the ICF-CY from her office in Portugal to students and early intervention professionals in South Africa, Portugal, the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia.*

## M-Net TAG Awards

On 4 December staff of the Centre for AAC along with two FOFA participants (Tsolofelo Phiri and Caral van Nieuwenhuizen) attended the glitzy M-Net Television Awards for Good (TAG) at the Theatre on the Track in Kyalami. Three students from the Visual Arts Department of the University of Pretoria chose to support the Centre by creating a public service announcement (PSA) promoting our work. The students were nominated for a M-Net Tag award for best direction of their PSA and as part of the top 25 entries for this competition, the PSA will be screened on various M-Net channels in 2013. Tsolofelo Phiri, one of our FOFA participants is starred in the PSA – Go Tsolo!

We are very proud of and grateful to the three students – Luci Badenhorst, Renate van Rensburg and Estie Labuschagne, whose hard work has created an invaluable opportunity for public exposure. The message of the PSA is clear: “Just because you cannot speak, it doesn’t mean that you have nothing to say”. Look out for the PSA on M-Net next year or take a look at [www.caac.up.ac.za](http://www.caac.up.ac.za).

**Karin van Niekerk**  
Centre for AAC



Left: Tsolofelo at the M-Net TAG awards

Below: Back row: Staff from the CAAC  
Middle row: Luci, Estie and Renate (information design students) and Carla (person using AAC)  
Front row: Tsolofelo and personal care worker



## User forum

### *We lost a hero*

By Dr Cival Mills,  
in memory of his mother, Ria Mills

*The broken path left in the wilderness,  
with only her footprints,  
Is the legacy she left with such  
tenderness.*

*My heart is broken.  
She led the way with such ease and  
grace,  
The poise has never had an equal.  
Now which giant can fill the void left  
by her absence.  
The silence of her absent laughter rings  
loud.*

*My heart is broken.  
Her smile and laughter has left an  
everlasting impression seared into the  
depth.*

*We have lost a hero.  
Draw the curtain, lock the door.  
Tomorrow the sun won't rise ,  
He will mourn the loss of his beaming  
golden lioness.  
The plains are empty, her beaming  
presence is not there.*

*My heart is broken.  
But God has received his living angel  
The legions of the almighty rejoice.*

Dr Mills is a well known motivational speaker using AAC. His mother was tragically murdered in September this year. Our thoughts and prayers are with Dr Mills and his family.

# Special report

## Information Design students take on the cause of people with limited speech

During the month of September the third year Information Design students at the University of Pretoria were given the task to become involved with a non-profit organization of their choice. Our project required us to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to be submitted for the M-Net TAG Awards to shed light on a good cause.

A PSA is a message in the public's interest disseminated by the media without charge, with the objective of raising awareness, changing public attitudes and behavior towards a pertinent social issue. As a group, we chose the NPO on campus called the CAAC, which stands for Center for Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

On our arrival on Wednesday, 22 August, we met with director Juan Bornman and occupational therapist Karin van Niekerk. They quickly introduced us to the Centre and all its activities. We became aware about how vital communication is to an individual to express what you need and feel. On Thursday we were invited to sit in during a therapy consultation with a young 3-year-old boy with cerebral palsy. Immediately we noticed the enthusiasm and commitment these therapists bring to every case. They focus and reflect on every individual and strain all their resources available to help the patient and everyone involved.

Some individuals with disabilities become silent victims, underestimated in a society where it is seen as "not normal" to not be able to express yourself verbally, but the CAAC feels strongly about the fact that their clients are all individuals, with ideas, dreams and (a lot) of personality. The staff at the CAAC all believe in the power of communication, how it reveals the poets, artists, visionaries and activists within which is exactly what



## University of Pretoria

we focused on during the making of our animation.

The animation/film we created focuses on a young lady, Tsholofelo Phiri, whom we met during the FOFA week at CAAC. She is an ambitious writer, poet, dreamer and visionary, creative and driven. We first got to know her through spending time together, conversing and playing. The four of us quickly became friends and still exchange SMS's regularly.

The focal point of our PSA is to create awareness concerning CAAC and the importance of communication- knowing that silence is not always golden and that it is the person within the imperfect body that counts.

**Estie Labuschagne, Luci Badenhorst, Renate van Rensburg**  
**Information Design students**  
**University of Pretoria**



*Lebogang Sehako (Fofa coach), Estie and Luci (information design students) and Tsolofelo Phiri (Fofa participant)*

# School news

## Pathways—Polokwane

The school has had a busy quarter with many different activities. Herewith some highlights from the Pathways Quarterly Newsletter:

The Juniors, Seniors and Life Skills Classes all made their way down to the Farmyard’s bowling alley for our excursion this term. We used a half-pipe for the children in wheelchairs so they could aim and roll their balls down the alley, and their sheer excitement was heartwarming as the ball hit the pins at the other end. We had milkshakes



as well as a whole lot of fun! Thank you Lizzy for making the pipe for us! Thank you to John Knott and the Bowling Alley for sponsoring some of the children’s games.



Thanks to Michelle Mostert, the children got the chance to make their very own Olympic medals during our much valued pottery sessions. The Juniors painted

theirs with their chosen colours and the Seniors received them during their own medal award ceremony. It was a proud moment for all.

The Life Skill pupils joined in the fun at the College Amazing Race! We participated in obstacle courses, tug of war, relays and Suzan and Kamo were even brave enough to raft and swim!



Professor Juan Bornman from the University of Pretoria came to present an invaluable workshop on challenging behavior to parents, teachers, therapists and the like. She gave some fantastic tips and advice for dealing with children

who present with challenging behavior. After lunch she did a one-on-one session with a few of the parents here at the Enrichment Centre, and we are so excited to get started and try out some of the strategies she has suggested to us. Thank you Prof. Bornman. It is a workshop we will not quickly forget!

**Renate Wieffering**  
*Pathways Polokwane*

## Pathways—Pretoria

Christmas is just around the corner and at Pathways Pretoria rehearsals for the end-of-year concert are underway. This year, the concert is about a lonely Brussels’ sprout that everybody rejects in



favour of tasty junk food. The sprout is quite heartbroken until he finds out that he is loved after all - and by a very special someone. It is bound to be a delightful evening full of sparkling ballerinas, spirited dancers and a host of enthusiastic performers!

2012 has seen many changes at Pathways, one of them being our new life-skills centre, which has been a great success. A large classroom on the top floor of the school was converted into a life-skills centre, where learners engage in cooking, cleaning and other household activities.

Self-care and grooming classes are also conducted in the centre – recently with the expert help of Jansie Koekemoer, who has volunteered her services as beauty consultant. The lives of many of our young adults have also changed considerably this year as several of them are working now. Just two examples are Shaun, who is now cleaning lawnmowers three times a week and Evan, who has a job at a library. Way to go boys! This is a triumph for Pathways because getting our young adults into the open labour market whenever possible is one of our key goals.

However, not all the changes that have taken place this year have been easy. The passing of



22-year-old Mandisa in October this year has left gaping hole in the lives of her family as well as her peers and teachers at Pathways Studio. Despite the obstacles in her way, Mandisa led an exceptionally full and colourful life, and nobody will ever forget her. She was an exceptional young lady.

*Elizabeth Steward  
Pathways Pretoria*

## Conversational skills for learners who use AAC at Pretoria School



Our learners who use AAC at the school use a low tech communication board or communication file with different boards to communicate. Or do they? Can they initiate conversation? Are they active members of a conversation? Sadly we have to say no. They use the board when

prompted, or interact by using a friend as interpreter, or by using their gestures or some approximated sounds or other non-linguistic ways which they feel comfortable with. They are more successful in the respondent role than in the initiator role.

How to address this? Two speech therapists at the school decided to start with a group of 5 learners who use non-electronic AAC from two neighbouring classes (these learners know each other, interact daily and are comfortable with each other) and to teach them the “rules of conversation”, providing practice and opportunity to use these rules in conversation. We call it the AAC Conversation group. They meet for an hour weekly.

We realize that daily practice would be better but in an imperfect world this is a start. We started off by using some principles from the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). Thus the first communicative function addressed was requesting. We introduced the activity for the day, e.g. building a picture with different coloured

shapes, making an autumn tree with the different coloured leaves, etc.; thus using a structured activity. At first the learner was physically assisted to request the required object/picture with verbal rewards when successful, and as he/she became more confident physical assistance was faded. Verbal rewards continued until the learner became successful in requests. One learner in the group became very successful and needed no prompting in making requests. Two learners needed little prompting and two learners needed more assistance in requesting. All learners used cards with PCS symbols which were physically handed over to the “friend” he/she requested. The therapist would provide the verbal model of these actions, e.g. “you gave the red square to .....” . Opportunity for spontaneous requests and comments was given near the end of each session, such as “what do you see?/what do you have?”, etc. Again one learner was more proficient than the others.

In conclusion: this is only a start, but all the learners learned to interact to some extent. Conversational rules such as turn taking, requesting, correcting a partner and using some rules of greeting were learned. Of course they need more practice and all the staff involved with these learners need to be included in more interactive conversations with them.

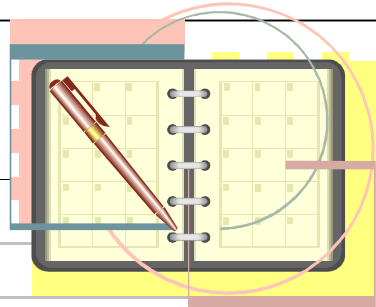
What do we plan for next year? We hope to involve all the staff and class mates, and to teach and provide opportunities for skills such as response to greetings, information exchange and commenting.

We would love comments and suggestions on helping our learners to be successful communicators.



Nolette Maré and Christa Bell  
Speech-Language Therapists at  
Pretoria School





# For your diary...

**Seminar: Environmental Assessment and Intervention in Early Childhood (CPD accredited)**

## *Pixon training*

A picture-based communication system can be wonderful – and a real frustration due to the limited vocabulary! The Pixon Language Project from the Prentke Romich Company focuses on the use of a small set of high-frequency words (core words) represented on manual communication boards to encourage not only communication, but also language development in persons with little or no functional speech.

Maureen Casey, an AAC specialist and Pixon trainer will present a Pixon workshop on the 14th of April 2012 at the CAAC to introduce the use of the system. A Pixon kit consisting of CD's and other material will be included for each attendant.

Don't miss this amazing opportunity!



## Notes:

### JANUARY 2012

**21 January:** Closing date for applications for BAHons (AAC), MA (AAC) and M (ECI)

**28 January—1 February:** PhD (AAC) onsite visit

**31 January-1 February:** Seminar: Environmental Assessment and Intervention in Early Childhood (CPD accredited)

### FEBRUARY

**4—8 February:** M (ECI) 2nd year onsite visit

**11-15 February:** MA (AAC) 2nd year onsite visit

**22 February:** Pixon Training workshop at the centre for AAC

**25 February—1 March:** M (ECI) 1st year onsite visit  
MA (AAC) 1st year onsite visit

**28 February:** Registration for BAHons (AAC), MA (AAC) and M (ECI) closes

### MARCH

**4—8 March:** BAHons (AAC) 1st year onsite visit

**11—15 March:** BAHons (AAC) 2nd year onsite visit

## APPLICATIONS FOR POST GRADUATE DEGREE STUDIES

Should you be interested in studying for the BA Hons (AAC), MA (AAC) or M (ECI) or Ph.D (AAC) degrees at the Centre for AAC, University of Pretoria, please contact us for further details at [saak@up.ac.za](mailto:saak@up.ac.za), or tel 012 420 2001.