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# Interface

&  
 Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication  
**CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

## Interface National Newsletter

### Looking back, and looking forward

2010 has come and (nearly) gone... and what a year it has been! While every South African will probably associate the soccer world cup with this year henceforth, there have also been many AAC highlights in 2010. The ISAAC conference in Barcelona will be well-remembered by the twenty-odd South African delegates – probably one of the biggest SA contingents yet to attend. Read more feedback on this event on p. 5. The schools implementing AAC are growing from strength to strength as can be seen from their contributions to the newsletter throughout this year. We want to especially welcome Pathways Atteridgeville – which was established in September this year with six learners enrolled. We wish them much joy and reward in their efforts to make a difference in the lives of children with severe disabilities.

Interface KZN has had a busy year with many training projects (including the very successful Khulani School training), fundraising events and the continued support and assistive technology lending library services they provide. As you will see on p. 2, their committee has also grown. After 4 years of dedicated service, Felicity Jonck is resigning as chairperson – thank you for all your hard work, Felicity! She will be staying on as vice chair, with Leandra Hinds as the new chairperson.

Inclusive Solutions, the company importing assistive communication technology for persons with disabilities, is under new management – read all about it on p. 4. We wish Liza and Ed Ellis the best of success and want to express our gratitude for their commitment to uphold the vision and

mission of this company, which has served many of us well in the past.

Here at the Centre for AAC we look back, amongst others, on a successful assistive technology tender in schools around Gauteng, a drama evening/awareness-campaign-with-a-difference, the memorial lecture by Dr Vicky Casella, and the start of a research collaboration with Märadalen University in Sweden.

However, the year end is not only an opportunity to look back, but also to look ahead, and 2011 promises some very exciting developments! For one, we are planning the second Regional African AAC conference (entitled “Beginning a new chapter”) in August 2011 – so mark those dates in your diary. This will provide a wonderful opportunity to share on a national level all the developments and happenings around AAC, while also providing the opportunity to receive international inputs. We trust that this will further strengthen AAC in South Africa and enhance networking and collaboration. We hope to launch the South African ISAAC chapter concurrent with the conference.

So... rest well and take time to recuperate during December, to be back in full swing in 2011! Till then – may you have a wonderful, peace-filled Christmas season together with your loved ones.



**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 & alternative communication)**

## Interface Branch News

### News from KZN

Well, it is unbelievable to think that 2010 is almost over. Just 4 weeks left of the year, which means 4 Mondays and then 2010 will be but a memory.....and 2011 will be racing towards us! After 4 years as Interface KZN Chair, I have decided to resign. Our new Chairperson, Leandra Hinds, has been on our committee for the past 2 years. Leandra is a Junior Primary School teacher and mom to Chloe and Zara-Lee, who is a child with special needs using AAC. It is exciting to have another parent taking the reins, as this fits with our vision that the Chairperson should either be a parent or an AAC user themselves. I wish Leandra all the best and am certain that Interface KZN will continue to grow from strength to strength in the year ahead with the committee's efforts.

Our new committee is as follows: Chairperson: Leandra Hinds; Vice-Chairperson: Felicity Jonck; Treasurer: Elaine Byrne; Honorary Secretary: Tarryn O'Brien; Membership: Paul Burdett; Liaison / Networking and Resources: Margi Lilienfeld; Newsletter: Pree Parumaul; Web page: Pat Frow. Our web page design and updates continue to be managed by Chris Engels. It is wonderful to continue to have a committee with diverse backgrounds, knowledge and

experience, which includes teachers, therapists, AAC specialists, parents, and AAC users.

Our follow-up visit to Khulani Special School, as part of the Interface KZN and Khulani Special School Project, will take place from Monday the 15<sup>th</sup> to Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> November. Margi Lilienfeld and Jocelyn Mngomezulu will be traveling to the school with Jill Rose as part of the follow-up team. Jill expressed great interest in our project at the time of our AGM, and we are very excited to have her on board. Currently the Interface office is a hive of activity as last minute touches are made to materials and handouts, and resources are gathered together for the trip. Watch our web page for an updated report on the visit.....

Our committee is presently hard at work planning our fundraising events, projects and training workshops for the New Year. We are also very excited to have Merle Brown, Professional Fundraiser, joining our team!

*Felicity Jonck  
Chairperson: Interface KZN*

## School News

### Pathways Roodepoort

It is a very busy time of the year for Pathways Roodepoort but we are rising to every challenge, thanks to the wonderful support we are receiving from the parents, sponsors and volunteers helping us.



We are busy with our Lotto applications, a golf day, a black tie evening, a Sundowners show and, of course, our year-end Christmas concert with our kids being the stars of the show, with the parents and friends of Pathways Roodepoort being our loving and devoted audience.

Fay and I are facing our exams as bravely as we can whilst juggling our other responsibilities to meet various deadlines. "Let the games begin!"

At least we can laugh about our colourful and busy lives inspired by our special needs children, who make every effort so rewarding and worthwhile.

Our most pressing need is to find larger premises for our 22 children and 13 staff members, so Fay and I are urgently hunting for something big enough which we can afford, and therein lies the challenge! Wish us luck and watch this space. We'll let you know when we are moving to a new flower patch.

*Julie Botha  
Founder & Motivational Speaker  
[www.pathwaysroodepoort.org.za](http://www.pathwaysroodepoort.org.za)*

## Pathways Pretoria

We are looking back on a blessed year. The Pathways learners have excelled in many different ways. Our learners are doing aqua therapy as from this term with our Biokinetic therapist and are really enjoying it. The therapy takes place at a heated covered pool - which has much less water in it, once we have left! It is such a great benefit to our learners with severe physical challenges and our guys with autism. Once a theme has finished we organize a 'play'. Each class from the little ones to the seniors sing songs, dance and/or act out the theme!

Our young adults are going to move into their own young adult studio. They will be a group of 32 pupils. Most of our young adults work for 2 days in the open labour market independently or in small work crews in businesses. Some pupils like Shaun will start working at the lawn mower shop under the supervision of a facilitator. They have a job coach that supports their progress.

The first group of eight young adults have dug the soil for their group home of which phase one is almost completed. They want to live independently from their parents under the supervision of their own group home coordinator.

We have helped to start Pathways Atteridgeville in September 2010 and they already have six children in their programme. We have helped to train teacher Agnus and are excited to see them grow! They would love to have a small jungle gym and pre-loved toys as well as a sand box for Christmas!

We will end the year with our FAMOUS Pathways concert that will be about recycling this year. It will also contribute to our Outreach Christmas Project in conjunction with Bula Lobati for our 300 friends in Soshanguve.

Have a fun-filled and joyous Christmas Season.  
Love from all @ Pathways-Pretoria!

*Danita Nel  
Pathways Pretoria*



*Learners having fun with aqua-therapy*



*Dress-up for the clown-theme*

## Opkyk Pathways Brits North

Looking back on 2010 we are so grateful for the wonderful experiences and blessings we have had. Our children are loved and happy and progressing well - what a privilege it is to see them develop! They especially enjoy the horse riding. The first child started with the Impak Curriculum, a home schooling curriculum, which we are adapting to suit the learner. We feel this is really working well.

Our team of passionate personnel also have grown in knowledge and experience. We as team attended as many skillshops at the CAAC as possible, and the interaction with others and skills taught really benefited all. The training workshop we attended at by Pathways Pretoria was excellent and encouraging, and Drika visited Pathways Kloof for the first time when the Bridge school team visited them in March.

Drika attended her first ISAAC Conference (in Barcelona) together with Elmarie, our Speech Pathologist, and it was an eye opener to see the bigger picture of AAC on the globe. What a privilege to learn from the experts, (although Drika sometimes got lost with all the lectures on different places, being a bit overwhelmed) ! On their way back they could make a stopover in Switzerland and experience the 6 hour Glacier Express trip through the Alps! Much inspired they returned to start implementing what they had learned!

On a much sadder note we greeted Madeleine Rheeder, who passed away in September. She could blink for 'yes' and it was so comforting to know that through AAC she could express how much she enjoyed school, and was able to share her heart's feelings. She was an inspiration to all of us, encouraging us to continue with what we are doing. We know she is enjoying heaven...

Then in October all our children and facilitators had the opportunity to enjoy a helicopter ride, and it was a real "highlight" when they experienced what it means to see the "bigger picture" from liftoff, giving another perspective from the air. And suddenly we all understood that in life we are all part of a Bigger picture! This was an unforgettable experience for all of us, and the students who organised this alike!

Our yearly OPPOP fundraiser took place for the fourth time on 21 October and once again it was a big success! Bobby van Jaarsveld, Izak Davel, Vaughn Gardiner, Karlien van Jaarsveld, Andriette, Willem Botha and Snotkop blessed us with their talent, and the local community supported us by attending and also helping as volunteers where needed! This alcohol - free family friendly event is becoming a highlight in the local social calendar, and although it was on a Thursday evening, people from as far as Krugersdorp and Pretoria attended.

Then we are privileged and grateful to be part of the Vodacom Change The World program. Opkyk Pathways has been chosen as 1 of the 10 organisations in SA who will receive a volunteer's service from April to September 2011, and the volunteer will be paid by Vodacom funding! We asked for a teacher with remedial background or special school teaching experience who can help streamline the curriculum, adapting it and implementing AAC for our non speakers. Applications are open until the 8th of December.

Feel free to visit the Vodacom Website “Change the world” for more information. With the last days of 2010 speeding past, we wish all a peaceful and blessed break in December. May you all experience the love and presence of our Heavenly Father.

**Drika Kruger**  
 Founder and Director:  
 Opkyk Pathways Therapy and Educational Centre  
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*Opkyk Pathways Brits ready for a helicopter ride!*

## Autism Awareness Day

The Association for Autism and the Golden Key Students arranged an Autism Awareness Day on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at the University of Pretoria. Some classes from Unica School, a school for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Pretoria, had the privilege to participate in this fabulous day. Students from the Psychology Department arranged various play activities for the learners to enjoy. It was a day filled with fun, laughter and games, and in the process many students were made more aware of Autism. Emphasis was placed on how students could contribute by donating time facilitating individuals with Autism.

We enjoyed lunch after all the fun filled activities – we thank KFC and Woolworths for the lovely Sprinkle Pops.

We also received Go Talk Devices from Implats. These devices are used for alternative and augmentative communication and will help our learners communicate their needs and stimulate development of speech.

We thank everyone for all their efforts to make this day possible – it was a huge success. A special thank you to all the sponsors.

**Esmè Dawson**  
 Unica School

Learners from Unica, staff and volunteers participating in the awareness campaign [www.unicaschool.co.za](http://www.unicaschool.co.za)



# General

## News from Inclusive Solutions

There are some new faces around at Inclusive Solutions, national suppliers of Assistive Technology and AAC equipment for people with physical or communication disabilities. Many of you worked with Celeste Mukheibir and knew of the wonderful work she did to promote AAC use in South Africa. Due to ill health, she has sold the business, but her vision will live on as the company continues to go forward under its new management.

Lisa and Ed Ellis, joint directors and owners since July 2010, are delighted to have the opportunity of continuing to provide the products and services that have been so important in the past. ‘We feel a deep sense of responsibility – and huge excitement – this is a wonderful time for South Africa, as society, government policy and new technology are all ready to meet the needs of people with disabilities’ says Lisa. Lisa has worked in the AAC and AT industry throughout the UK and Europe for several years, and now brings this international experience to South Africa. She and her husband Ed, a business entrepreneur, hope to bring fresh perspective and innovation to the business in order to offer better value, better service and a wider range of products to their clients. ‘I’m passionate about helping people to match their needs – no matter how complex or challenging – with a little piece of technology that will make life easier,’ says Lisa.

And there is a remarkable range of products to choose from. As well as the familiar AAC and AT devices that have been used in the country for many years, Lisa and Ed have brought some cutting-edge new communication devices with them from Europe. There is, for example, a computer that is controlled with only eye movements, meaning that people who were previously ‘locked-in’ now have a real possibility of accessing a computer and communicating independently. Or a speech generating device that records over 60 hours of speech on about 190 levels – a really welcome improvement for some people - compared to the devices that only offer 45 minutes on five levels that have been available until now!

It’s an exciting time in the world of AAC and the couple, along with Technical Support Consultant, Ivor Moolman – who many of you will have worked with before – are committed to continuing the great work that was started by Celeste. Any questions are welcomed and we hope to meet many of you soon. Please feel free to contact us with any queries or simply to say hello!

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 or +27(0)10 590 2532 (International)



**Liza Ellis**  
 Inclusive Solutions

# ISAAC 2010

The ISAAC 2010 conference in Barcelona was absolutely amazing - I so wish that everyone involved in AAC in South Africa could have been there. And when I say “everyone” that includes adults and teens who use AAC as well as family members of children who use AAC in addition to the therapists, educators and every other professional who supports the communication of individuals who require AAC.

It is several years since I was last at an ISAAC conference and it was incredible to see how it has grown. There were over 1300 full conference registrations and everywhere one could see the people delving into their bright orange conference bags to scan the programme of 16 concurrent sessions. Major themes included literacy, inclusion, technology, intervention, assessment, accessibility, language, vocabulary selection, service delivery, socialisation, advocacy, employment and clinical studies related to specific diagnoses such as autism, cerebral palsy and aphasia. There were many interesting sub themes including the music and the arts in AAC. At least two streams were more specifically geared towards the 99 participants who used AAC. Most of these sessions were presented or co-presented by people using AAC.

I thoroughly enjoyed Melinda Smith and her Australian colleagues’ presentation of the ‘Catch the Dream’ workshop. Possibly the title of Robert Jean’s presentation, “A winning attitude and an insatiable thirst for life” best sums up the impact of these presentations. The hardest part of the conference was deciding what to attend!

At least the choice was made easier when there was a plenary session such as the spellbinding inaugural lecture by Spanish storyteller M. Serra titled “The Augmentative Rosetta Stone” and Word +/ISAAC outstanding consumer lecture Award presentation by Thor Sandmel of Norway. That his presentation was uniquely entertaining is reflected in Thor’s title “The Philosophy of Maths – What the heck is that!”. Besides the oral presentations there were numerous poster presentations on diverse aspects of AAC and 37 commercial exhibitors with a tremendous range of interesting and varied AAC and related products to be visited at teatime. The social program in the evenings included the welcoming reception of the first evening being followed by the screening of the movie “Only God Could Hear Me”, and the President’s reception at the Museu Maritim de Barcelona the next evening.

There were so many highlights, such as the AAC workshop band that performed so well during the opening addresses, awards ceremonies; being able to proudly watch Mary Blake-Huer welcome Prof. Erna Alant as the next president of ISAAC, as well as being able to make new friends and meet up with old friends, mentors and colleagues.

Although South Africa does not have a formal ISAAC Chapter, we did try to get everyone from SA together one lunchtime and I was amazed when twenty people gathered. They included Paul Burdett who uses AAC, parents, and by special invitation, Annulu Waller. Many of the South Africans who attended also gave presentations. One of my favourites was the presentation by Tammy Greyling. Tammy reported on their work with Mandisa, a young adult woman, diagnosed with severe autism complicated by deafness, a visual impairment and no functional speech. Mandisa is working in mainstream employment on a part time basis thanks to the process of supported employment paired with life-skills training and team work between the staff of Pathways Studio, Pretoria, Mandisa’s sister and the employer and her fellow workers. I did a presentation on the unique model of educator training to promote the inclusion of learners requiring AAC that we have developed in KZN.

It really is impossible to describe the unique and memorable experiences that make up attendance at an ISAAC conference so my advice is to start saving or fundraising now to go to the 15th Biennial Conference of ISAAC to be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA in 2012. Interface KZN has already made a start, as Dan Ngcobo and I collected a R1000 donation from the Keg and Trout in Hillcrest, which will go towards a special fund to support people who use AAC to attend the next ISAAC conference. A big thank you to Paul and Elaine Miller and the staff of the Keg and Trout for their generous donation.



M.Serra – inaugural lecture

*Dr Margi Liliensfeld  
Interface Kwazulu Natal*



*The plenary hall*



*Thor Sandmel - Words +/ISAAC  
Outstanding Consumer Lecture  
Award winner*

## Shonaquip

*Many of us are familiar with the brightly coloured seating and mobility equipment manufactured by Shonaquip, that is helping so many children with physical disabilities in South Africa. Ruth Stubbs, who recently joined Shonaquip in Centurion, tells us a bit about the history of this company.*

When Shona's daughter Shelly was small she soon realized that without full body support and adjustable tilt in space, Shelley would never be able to hold her head upright, access a computer or communicate effectively. Shona's interest in sculpture inspired a different way of seeing a solution to improving the postural support for people who are unable to maintain an upright functional sitting position by themselves.

Living in South Africa during the height of the Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigns resulted in extensive boycotts and trade sanctions. These sanctions effectively froze South African access to any imported goods which included devices and parts of devices for people with disabilities. The upside of this situation was that Shona was forced to think of innovative ways to solve the problems of Shelly's and the other children's mobility challenges. This became an opportunity to find locally manufactured parts to build a solution which could solve Shona's frustrations for improved postural support and also address our unique, rugged outdoor environments. Shona realized that there was no point and also no possibility to find or fund a replica of the sophisticated European devices seen in medical journals.

Shonaquip has grown organically based on Shona's initial desire to provide children with disabilities access and the most appropriate opportunity for mobility and independence.

With Shonaquip officially registered in 1992, Shona continued to design different products to meet the needs of the children she met. Working on just one item at a time and improving the designs as she went along, the range of products grew rapidly. As Shona became more and more engaged with research and development, opportunities presented themselves for Shonaquip to have an impact on National Government policy development, creating awareness and opening a market for these products, not only in South Africa but in surrounding countries as well.

Since 1992 Shonaquip has been committed to improving the quality of life of people living with severe disabilities. Shonaquip accomplishes this with a holistic professional service model that includes:

- ◆ Advocating for improved wheelchair service provision
- ◆ Designing and manufacturing African appropriate assistive devices
- ◆ Empowering wheelchair users, their families and their service providers with clinical skills, services, useful information and training.
- ◆ Providing clinical services to government agencies, NPOs and private sector

- ◆ Delivering community-based support, training, maintenance and repair
- ◆ Monitoring and evaluating outcomes with users
- ◆ Ongoing research and development of medical conditions, disability issues, mobility products and services with the aim of creating a positive impact on national and global policies for people with disabilities.

**Ruth Stubbs**  
**Shonaquip**

[www.shonaquip.co.za](http://www.shonaquip.co.za)



*Action-in-Autism is a recently formed NPO that aims at supporting persons with autism and their families in KwaZulu Natal and beyond. Herewith a brief update on their recent activities by the founder and chairperson, Mrs Liza Aziz:*

Our mass awareness campaign on 24 April 2010 to commemorate World Autism Day was a resounding success. For the first time a community of people connected by Autism marched through the City Hall precinct, campaigning for autism. Holding aloft posters, distributing 1000 pamphlets in isiZulu and English, family members and community supporters did their share to spread the word on autism. Presentations were also given by parents and professionals. The Early Learning Intervention Centre at the ABH Amitabh Bachchan premises in Asherville, Durban, opened the doors of its second classroom on 10 May 2010. This class caters for 6 learners. In total we have 12 learners with autism receiving daily intervention. We have also accepted a learner who is both blind and autistic – a learner that was turned away from all other early learning centres.

The centre offers an autism-specific, school readiness curriculum that establishes and builds on the basic skills needed for learning and learning readiness. A trans-disciplinary approach to intervention is followed whereby parents, educators and therapists work together to establish and implement an individual education plan for each child.

Our resource centre has thus far served 120 families, some searching for information, guidance and counseling, mostly requiring educational intervention for their little ones with autism. The opening hours of the centre are from 8h00 - 15h00. We offer information booklets (in 6 official languages), articles and books, DVDs, a resource list and a list of all the schools in the province as well as a comprehensive list of all the health care professionals that offer services for our children with autism. Our bi-monthly development workshops have been extremely successful. We hosted 16 workshops thus far, including a Makaton workshop, presented by Margaret Golding.

Action in Autism together with Autism South Africa co-hosted a National Conference on Autism on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 at the Graduate School of Business at UKZN. This was a resounding success with 280 delegates attending. Action in Autism's Educators' Forum meets on a monthly basis and is a chance for educators to share best practice and discuss challenges in the classroom. This is an important initiative to support the educator in the classroom. It is also a wonderful platform for open dialogue between schools in the public and private sector. Our Parent Sup-

port Group meets on a monthly basis - providing much needed support and knowledge to our parents. We have also initiated a monthly sibling support group meeting that runs concurrently with the Parents Support Group.

Projects under development include a monthly neurology clinic, a protected workshop for young adults and teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorders and a sensory garden project.

*Liza Aziz*

*Chairperson: Action in Autism*

## CAAC news

### Visit to Pathways Polokwane

In October, 4 of the staff members of the Centre embarked on a 2-day consultation and screening visit to the bushveld area of Polokwane. Ms Sue Altenroxel, director of Pathways stimulation centre, (an enrichment centre affiliated to Mitchell House since 2006), approached the staff and asked if we could assist her and her staff with screening some of the children and young adults who attend Pathways. The aim of the screening was to assist the staff and parents to implement personalized AAC systems for the students.

So with our car loaded full of switches, communication boards, overlays, devices, toys and tons of paperwork, we eagerly set off. Over 2 days the team consulted with 12 learners and designated people from their support systems, which included teachers and parents – we even had some grandparents provide their input! It was a wonderful opportunity to work with the teachers on improving their ability to screen for communication behaviour and a pleasure to work with parents who are so committed to going the extra mile to assist their children to reach their own potential. We also thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the learners.

There was lots to admire at Pathways - not only in terms of the resources which they have built up over the years (the “Snoezelen” multi-sensory room and the sensory garden were some of our favourite spaces), but also the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff. We were also privileged to be able to meet with Principal (Mr Andrew Cook) and Deputy Principal (Ms Kathy Proctor) of Mitchell House. During our meeting we discussed different strategies available to provide support to children with differing abilities within the school. We watched with wonder at how the inclusion model is being implemented within the Mitchell House environment. It is evidently a lot of hard work – but the rewards are slowly becoming visible. The value of inclusion was encapsulated when Lesedi entertained us with a narrative on how to get out of trouble. Apparently it is all about “having the right skills and competencies” - oh, and admittedly a little bit of practice does actually help! I couldn't help smiling at the confidence with which he dispensed with this pearl of wisdom for surviving in the school system. I can just imagine what skills and competencies these might be (it's obvious that charisma has something to do with it) – and I couldn't help feeling that

any teenager, given the opportunity, would value Lesedi's insight on the subject! We left feeling that it had been a privilege to witness, first-hand, how successful inclusion is being implemented. We would like to take this opportunity to salute Pathways Polokwane and Mitchell house, for being pioneers in the realm of inclusion – and to encourage them to keep the inclusion torch burning brightly!!

*Dr Michal Harty*  
*Centre for AAC*

### Assistive technology tender

“The distribution of resources to schools should take realistic account of the differences in expenditure required to provide appropriate education for all the children, bearing in mind their needs and circumstances. It may be realistic to begin by supporting those schools that wish to promote inclusive education” (Salamanca Statement 71, UNESCO, 1994).

We all know that the South African Education System has responded to the Salamanca statement (1994) that mandated access to education by all learners irrespective of their disabilities. As part of the implementation of inclusive education, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) is gradually focusing on addressing communication barriers experienced by learners through providing Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). The province has established a strong partnership with the Centre for AAC which has already conducted two AAC projects for them. The second project came to an end on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2010.

Special schools that participated in the project included Zodwa, Reinotswe and Thabo-Vhuyo. Fifteen learners from these three special schools were provided with assistive



*Learners with their commu-*

technology, such as the GoTalk 4, GoTalk 9, GoTalk 20, TechTalk 32 and finally an Ipod with Proloquo2Go software.

In completion of the project participating schools and their district have all gathered at the CAAC to share their experiences about the project. Each teacher involved gave a 10 min feedback presentation. Overall, teachers reported how their perceptions of the non-speaking learners in their classes had become more positive. " *I never thought that non-speaking learners have potentials to participate in class activities*" was one of the comments made by teachers during their presentation.

Principals of the schools and the district officials expressed their appreciation to the CAAC and the GDE for selecting them to take part in this project. We are very proud to announce that this is project was a huge success and we are looking forward to work again with the GDE in the near future.

Gloria Ledwaba  
Centre for AAC

## Clinical AAC Conference

In October this year I had the privilege (thanks to the generous sponsorship of Prof. Erna Alant) of attending and presenting a paper the 4<sup>th</sup> Clinical AAC research conference in Iowa City in the USA. This yearly conference aims at creating a forum for exchange for clinical researchers and clinicians working in the field of AAC. The aim of the conference is to share results from original clinical research, reflect on current trends and guide future research in the field of AAC, in order to ultimately translate research into improved practice, enhancing the quality of life for people using AAC.

Clinicians, researchers and students attending the conference came from a variety of backgrounds, such as education, psychology, linguistics and psycholinguistics, speech and language therapy, as well as computer science. The conference program included presentations from renown researchers in the field as well as presentations by doctoral students in the field of AAC from some of the leading US Universities. One of the policies of the conference is to purposefully keep attendance to a maximum of 100 people, in order to allow in-depth discussions of each presentation. During the afternoons there were opportunities to visit some of the AAC facilities on Iowa University Campus, including a nursing education simulator at the academic hospital, where nurses are trained in, amongst others, AAC implementation for ICU patients. I also visited Dr Richar Hurtig's AAC laboratory, and had an opportunity to try out the latest eye gaze technology – truly amazing! Dr Hurtig is also involved in a number of technology projects, such as the creation of e-books with animated sign—some of which can be viewed at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~comsci/research/speechlab/index.html>

The students' breakfast on the last day presented a great opportunity for all of us who came as students to be coached by leaders in clinical research in the AAC field. I felt

feeling enriched and inspired from having had the privilege to learn from and share thoughts and insights with a group of people who are passionate about improving the lives of individuals with severe communication disorders, while also being dedicated to top quality research. I am sincerely grateful to Prof Erna Alant for making my attendance possible, and also want to extend my thanks to the organisers of the conference, Dr Richard Hurtig from Iowa University, Dr Lyle Lloyd from Purdue University and Dr Katja Hill from the AAC Institute, University of Pittsburgh.

Kerstin Tönsing  
Centre for AAC



Attendants of the Clinical AAC conference (from left to right): Dr John Bonvillian, Mrs Karen Coulter, Dr. Richard Hurtig, Dr. Filip Loncke, Dr Katja Hill, Ms Deborah Downey, Dr. Sarah Wallace, Ms Kerstin Tönsing

## Skillshops

The CAAC hosted a range of skill shops throughout the year. These 2 hour accredited afternoon sessions gave therapists and teachers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with specific AAC related topics and gain practical skills. We started the year with a skill shop on AAC assessment and screening, which was followed by a skill shop on how to match an AAC device to a potential AAC user. The following two skill shops addressed the whole issue of vocabulary selection. The first of the two focussed on how to do an activity analysis and then develop a corresponding communication board, whereas the second focussed on how to select core vocabulary and then develop a corresponding communication board.

We ended the series of skill shops with two very practical sessions focussing on simple switch technology. They were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended it. On 22 September Prof Kitty Uys taught the teachers and therapists how to make a battery interrupter, followed by a session on how to make a simple pressure switch to use with battery operated toys, on October 20th. The participants not only learnt the importance of using switches, but everybody who attended the afternoon proudly walked out with his/her own switch made of old discarded CD's! We hope that these skill shops were meaningful to each and everyone who attended. For those of you who have missed it this year, don't worry, we will continue in 2011. For provisional dates please see p. 11. Further details of specific themes will be sent out early in the new year.

Enid Moolman  
Centre for AAC





# USER FORUM

## Challenging behaviour: Switch on the electricity! (Part 1)

Challenging behaviour is becoming a concern of growing proportions. We see it in our children, in our families, read about it in newspapers and even see it on television. The Centre for AAC had 3 different workshops about this topic in 2010 – in Nelspruit, Durban and Pretoria, with more planned for 2011.

We believe in a holistic approach to positive behaviour management that looks at the importance of human relationships. This approach is aimed at helping all children to develop socially desirable behaviours and overcoming destructive and stigmatising consequences of their challenging behaviour by aiming to prevent the behaviour. Challenging behaviour is defined in terms of its adverse effect on others and on the person self, and the problem-solving of possible causes with the consequent implementation of preventative practices.

Electricity is an effective metaphor for describing this type of approach. When lights are switched on, everything is lit up, and everybody involved can see all there is to be seen. In contrast, a torch only lights up one aspect at a time, and what is seen, is dependant on the direction in which the torch is pointed. It is safe to say that a holistic, multi-strategic approach, using a collection of coordinated strategies (electricity) more effective in preventing challenging behaviour than a single approach (torch). Everyone involved in managing challenging behaviour should therefore not attempt to see which single strategy works best, as there is unfortunately not a “one size fits all” strategy available. To successfully manage challenging behaviour, the focus should rather be on a combination of strategies for a variety of children, given their own skills, challenges, preferences and learning styles.

One specific strategy that is very effective in looking at challenging behaviour from a holistic perspective is looking at the possible setting events. Setting events refer to complex conditions that occur concurrent with the challenging behaviour but which are more distant in time. In other words, they do not directly result in challenging behaviour, but they are conditions, events or sensations that increase the probability that a problem will occur. Let's take a “demand task” as an example. On some days the child might feel ill and then respond to the demand by banging his head and screaming, but on other days the same task might be greeted with cheerful compliance.

Setting events may be grouped into 3 categories:

- ◆ **Environmental events:** This refers to set-up of the environment, and includes aspects such as the temperature, lighting, seating arrangements and noise levels as well as the people in the environment.
- ◆ **Biological/medical/personal events:** This refers to illnesses and biological conditions, such as pain, fatigue, allergies, digestive problems, oversleeping / lack of sleep, medication or lack of medication and hunger.

- ◆ **Social events:** This refers to conditions preceding events, e.g. demanding tasks, if the child has limited access to communication, newness in the situation, task or people, unexpected changes in routines, confrontations and too much or too little attention from others.



Below is an example of a Setting Events Checklist that will enable you to identify the most significant events that could sustain the challenging behaviour. Teachers and therapists may send this type of checklist home, and ask parents to help complete it. In future newsletters some of the other tools that are useful in identifying the functions of the challenging behaviour will be described. These tools and the approach that is used is described in detail in the book “Believe that all can achieve” (Bornman & Rose, 2010 Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria). If you are interested in learning more about our approach to challenging behaviour or in the different tools that we use – look out for the 2011 workshop dates!

### SETTING EVENT CHECKLIST

(This checklist has been adapted from [www.udel.edu/cds/pbs/downloads/pbs\\_settingeventlist.doc](http://www.udel.edu/cds/pbs/downloads/pbs_settingeventlist.doc))

In order to help understand the child's behaviour, please mark all of the following events that occurred in the last 48 hours.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS	YES	NO
Appeared to be too hot or too cold Appeared to be sensitive to noise Appeared to be sensitive to light		
BIOLOGICAL/MEDICAL/PERSONAL EVENTS	YES	NO
Sleep pattern changed (oversleeping/lack of sleep) Medications were changed/missed Has menstrual period Appeared/complained of being ill Appeared excessively tired/lethargic Eating pattern changed/missed a meal		
SOCIAL EVENTS	YES	NO
Was informed of something unusually disappointing Was refused some requested object/activity Fought, argued, bullied or had other negative interactions Was hurried or rushed more than usual Experienced other major changes at home Learned about visit/holiday with friends/family (will or will not occur) Visitors arrived/failed to arrive Appeared excessively agitated Appeared in a bad mood (e.g. angry, anxious)		

*Prof Juan Bornman  
Centre for AAC*

## The.Sponge project

As indicated in our previous newsletters, The.Sponge project is a privately funded initiative that aims at creating better networks for people with disabilities, as well as to advocate for better rehabilitation and other services. One of the initiatives started is the creation of a database of any disability-related services in South Africa and neighbouring countries. If you thus know of any organisations providing services to people with disabilities in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland or Lesotho who are not yet registered with The.Sponge, please encourage them to

do so by accessing the following website:

<http://thespongeproject.yolasite.com/> and completing a registration form. More information about the project as well as monthly newsletters can also be found here. The.Sponge provides an information service to people with disabilities and their families. Any questions related to disability and/or services for people with disabilities can be sms'd to 072 172 2623. This is a line dedicated only to sms, thus calls, missed calls or 'please call me's' cannot be responded to. Enquiries can also be sent by email to [the.sponge.project@gmail.com](mailto:the.sponge.project@gmail.com).

Tony Webb

The.Sponge Project Team, Port Elizabeth

## Tech Talk



### The silent revolution taking place in AAC!

There is a revolution taking place in AAC and typical of the field in which we find ourselves in... no one is "talking" about it! Possibly because unlike a typical revolution it is not noisy, there are no guns and more importantly not a drop of blood has been spilt! But like so many revolutions it tends to catch us unawares and the result of it is a shift in power relationships. I for one am happy to see a coup of this magnitude taking place because it represents an important shift in terms of ownership of the field of AAC by those who are most affected by it, namely the users and their families.

So what am I going on about? Well, while researching for my last technology supplement of the newsletter where I introduced you to some AAC alternatives to proloquo2go for the IPOD/IPHONE/IPAD media I started seeing a trend in the accessibility applications being developed. What struck me was that more often than not these applications were being developed for or by family members of people who use AAC or who require assistive technology. Take for example an Iphone application which is receiving lots of attention called Grace. Grace is designed to be used in a similar way to the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). Designed by *Lisa Domican*, a mother of two children with Autism, the inspiration for Lisa's app came about when she spotted an ad for the iPhone on the side of a bus. What struck her was that the main screen of the Iphone ad looked like an electronic version of a picture exchange book. Suddenly a light bulb sparked and she realised the phone's potential as a portable alternative to the existing picture exchange system. The rest, as they say, is history....Similar stories of seeing the potential of the iphone are told by parent developers of other AAC apps like Voice4 U, IComm, Tap to Talk and countless other assistive technology apps. What these applications also have in common is there general affordability in relation to the

more established AAC technologies and use technology infrastructure which is readily available which is great news to us in South Africa.



Sparking the revolution has been the Apple corporations dedication through its *Apple Developer Programme* to offer a complete set of technical resources and support to developers in order to create innovative applications (<http://developer.apple.com/technologies/>)

So to all those geeky moms, techy dads and nerdy brothers and sisters. If you ever looked at an AAC device and thought "Why didn't they..." or "If only they could..." stop wondering and see the possibilities. If you don't like what is available why don't you think about developing your own AAC application. Don't know where to start? Maybe check out the aptly named "Moms with Apps" <http://momswithapps.com/> and see how you can join the revolution!

Aluta continua!

*Alecia Samuels*  
Centre for AAC



For more information about applications which may be beneficial to AAC users and those who require assistive technology check out the following links

Iphone/Ipad Apps for AAC  
<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/blog/new-technologies/2010/09/iphoneipad-apps-for-aac-updated/>

10 Revolutionary iPad Apps to Help Autistic Children  
<http://www.gadgetsdna.com/10-revolutionary-ipad-apps-to-help-autistic-children/5522/>

Iphone, Ipod and Ipad apps for Special Education  
<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/downloads/general/iPhone%20iPod%20and%20iPod%20touch%20Apps%20AUS.pdf>

## Switches for people with disabilities

Why should people with severe disabilities learn how to operate a switch? While there are various potential advantages, I will briefly highlight the role of switch use in the development of the child in this article.

For a young child, play is his/her way of learning about the environment and his/her effect on the environment. However, when a child is disabled and does not have the motor abilities to interact with his/her environment appropriately, activities need to be adapted in order for the child to have meaningful play opportunities that will lead to learning. These activities can range from sensory-motor activities where there is a lot of sensory stimulation (e.g. sound and vision) to symbolic play activities creating opportunities for fantasy play using toys such as vacuum cleaners, washing machines or mixers. They could also include music activities where a tape recorder or CD player is adapted for the child to access when he wants to listen to his favourite songs. Switches can be used in all of these play activities to help a child with physical disabilities access and participate in them. Moreover, a child can learn cause-and-effect skills by controlling a toy with a switch. This skill is fundamental in learning to communicate intentionally.

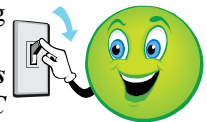
Switch use learnt in a non-threatening play situation can lead to the development of skills that can later be carried over to other contexts, like the use of a joystick to operate a powered

wheelchair, using a mouse to access the computer, or even using a switch and scanning to access a communication device. These skills are necessary for independence, and independence is something that is a priority for persons with disabilities.

It is important to realise that switch control is not only beneficial for children who cannot talk. Due to the cognitive skills involved in switch use, children with cognitive impairments like Down Syndrome and children with acquired disabilities like head injuries will also benefit. Children with progressive physical conditions like muscular dystrophy can also be helped with switch use. These children have usually developed typically in the early years, and, as a result, have usually acquired many skills that they can use to compensate for the deterioration of their motor skills. For these children independence is fundamental and a switch-operated device for environmental control or communication should be provided when necessary. Just because such a child cannot write due to his condition, does not mean that we cannot give him access to the academic stream of the school. A switch connected to a computer can be all it takes to provide access to participation in school activities.

Switches can be bought – but this can be quite expensive. Alternatively, one can make one’s own. In the next newsletter I will provide brief instructions on making a simple pressure switch.

*Prof Kitty Uys  
Centre for AAC*



## FOR YOUR DIARY....

**Interface AGM:** This will take place via email from 21 to 23 December 2010. All are welcome to participate. Only registered Interface members will have voting power. If you would like to join the



meeting, please email Dr Margi Lilienfeldt at [margi.lilienfeldt@westvet.co.za](mailto:margi.lilienfeldt@westvet.co.za). The agenda, proxy voting forms as well as the minutes of the previous AGM are also available from her.

### **Second Regional African AAC conference: Beginning a new chapter!** This

conference aims to bring together local and international experts in AAC – these including persons using AAC, family members, educators, clinicians and researchers. Don’t miss this wonderful opportunity to network, share and learn!

- When:** 2-4 August 2011
- Where:** Birchwood Conference Centre, Boksburg, Gauteng. A complimentary shuttle service is available from OR Tambo Airport. The airport can be reached via the brand new Gautrain.
- Call for papers:** This will be sent out via the AAC email list at the beginning of December.
- Early bird registration:** Ends 1 April 2011
- Registration:** Ends 30 June 2011



**Skillshops:** We will once again offer our 2-hour Wednesday afternoon skillshops at the Centre for AAC. Costs will be R 75, per workshop and tea/coffee will be served. The workshops are CPD accredited. We are planning a range of exciting new topics. The provisional dates are: 23 February, 23 March, 13 April, 25 May, 24 August and 14 September 2010.

*For more information or bookings please contact Liezl Maasdorp at 012 420 2001, or email her at [liezl.maasdorp@up.ac.za](mailto:liezl.maasdorp@up.ac.za).*

**Basic AAC training course for educators:** This course introduces basic themes around AAC, including symbol systems, assessment, early intervention and positioning as well as communication technology.

- When:** 28 March – 1 April 2011
- Where:** Centre for AAC
- Costs:** R 600 per day or R 2750 for the whole week. If three or more people attend from one school/ organization, the costs are R 550 per person per day.

*For more information or bookings please contact Liezl Maasdorp at 012 420 2001, or email her at [liezl.maasdorp@up.ac.za](mailto:liezl.maasdorp@up.ac.za).*

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- Interface (Awareness raising and AAC devices)
- Centre for AAC (Training in AAC)

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<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>Cheques/deposit slips can be sent, together with this form, to:</b>
Account Name: INTERFACE KWAZULU-NATAL Bank: First National Bank; Branch: Westville Branch Branch Code: 223526 Account Number: 62082948723	Interface KwaZulu-Natal P.O. Box 1995 Westville 3630
<b>Interface Western Cape</b>	<b>Cheques/deposit slips can be sent, together with this form, to:</b>
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.**