



# Interface National Newsletter



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**Contents:**

- ♦ Interface news.....2
- ♦ School news.....3
- ♦ User forum.....4
- ♦ Let's get practical.....6
- ♦ CAAC news.....8
- ♦ For your diary.....11

**W**elcome to the first edi-  
 tion of the 2009 Inter-  
 face Newsletter.

We truly hope you had a good break  
 over December, time to moor your ship,  
 dock your boat, maybe recover from a  
 few storms.... Hopefully you launched  
 your boat into 2009 revitalized and ex-  
 cited for the year! So how has your  
 journey been so far?

Plain sailing and sunshine? Had a few  
 storms to weather? For me personally,  
 the first 3 months have gone by like a  
 speedboat ride at an alarming pace. I  
 hope to change over into something a  
 little slower soon. A peddle boat would

do just nicely.

Whatever mode of transport you choose  
 to face the seas in this year, don't forget  
 to take your life buoy.

Read more about your lifebuoy and who  
 and what constitutes it in the article on  
 page 9.

In the pages following, you can read all  
 about the busy journeys of Interface,  
 schools and the CAAC. Take some use-  
 ful cargo on board from the user forum  
 and the practical corner. So, all hands  
 on deck! I promise you'll enjoy the voy-  
 age.

**Kerstin Tönsing**  
 Editor



## Interface news

### Interface Chairman's report

We've had our first National Coordinating  
 Committee meeting via email.  
 We've discussed a lot of issues. We are  
 planning our AGM, and hope to hold it

Cape Interface branch, in conjunction  
 with a 2-3 day workshop.

I think a lot of things will be discussed  
 at the AGM. I would love to see most  
 people coming to the AGM so that we  
 can work together to make Interface  
 what we dream of.

**Daniel Ncobo**

**Interface promotes communication for people with complex communication needs by supplementing existing communication with gestures, communication boards and assistive technology (thus, augmentative & alternative communication)**

## Interface South Africa

### News from the National Office

**2008** was a very exciting year for AAC in our country. The CAAC hosted Mary Blake Huer which sparked the talks about becoming an ISAAC chapter. Interface opened an office and we began “spreading the word” about AAC.

This year, I am still fielding calls from families who are looking for assistance and support. Whilst we are able to provide moral and emotional support, we certainly do need to provide professional support for families.

I urge all professional people who have knowledge and experience in AAC to please contact the members on our NEC and find out how you can help provide this essential service to families in South Africa.

#### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Chairman: Daniel Ngcobo (KZN)**  
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#### Committee members:

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Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, I cannot continue in my role as National Co-ordinator but remain a volunteer on the National Executive Committee. I have enjoyed working with the members on the NEC as well as the CAAC, and all the professionals and families whom I have had the privilege to have met. It is my wish that Interface will continue to grow from strength to strength...

*Desirae Pillay  
Interface South Africa*

## Interface Johannesburg

**I**nterface Johannesburg, held an eisteddfod on the 02<sup>nd</sup> December 2008 at Frances Vorweg School. It was certainly a “HIT” with all the participants, their teachers and their families. We were so proud of the children who participated as they all had little or no functional speech. The categories were divided into singing, poetry and rhyme and dance and movement. The items were performed either as group or solo items. The most exciting dynamic of the eisteddfod was the creative use of AAC. Everything from devices, manual hand signs, body language, PCS and dance and movement, were used.

When the certificates were handed out, there was not a dry eye in the room. We must extend a BIG thank you to Susan Viljoen and all the speech therapists who work with her at Frances Vorweg School for always turning our “dreams into reality”. Interface Johannesburg was also very fortunate to have Mrs. E. Myburgh, (also of Frances Vorweg School) who adjudicates eisteddfods for main stream schools. We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mrs. Myburgh for all her help in organising the eisteddfod as well as for being the adjudicator on the day.

We hope that we will host another eisteddfod for 2009, and if so...we will make the details available in the next newsletter.

Until next time...

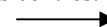
*Desirae Pillay*

## Interface KZN

**W**e were very sad to have had to move from 30 Beverley Drive, Westville, at the end of 2008. This decision had to be taken due to security concerns following several break-ins at the premises. We are however happy to announce though that we have alternative premises that we are currently in the process of moving into at 291 Underwood Rd, Sarnia, Pinetown. We aim to be completely moved in by Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. In the interim we have been continuing to operate by going out to see those in need of AAC at schools / institutions and client's homes.

Other exciting news is that through funding received from the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund; we have been able to appoint a part time Office Manager. Linda Wiles will be at the KZN AAC Resource and Training Centre on Monday and Friday afternoons, and Wednesday mornings. We are enormously grateful to the NLDTF for this funding, and are really looking forward to having Linda on our team.

We will be running our AAC Action Labs again this year, starting in the second term of school and will once again run them on Friday afternoons. We plan to repeat some of last year's topics, such as “What is AAC?” and “Access methods”, but also aim to include new topics, such as “Social Scripts”, “Talking mats” and sessions on specific programmes / software. Our Action Labs were a great success last year, and were attended by facilitators, classroom assistants, therapists, and educators working directly with children at LSEN schools and special needs centres.



*Continued from page 2*

To this end it is a blessing that we will have our own venue that is permanently available and ready for workshops, with our resource library accessible to participants!

A new initiative that we will also be starting this year is our Parent Support Group, which will also be held on Friday afternoons. Felicity Jonck and Leandra Hinds, both moms of young children using AAC; and Paul Burdett, our Vice-Chairperson and an adult AAC user will be running the group. This will be an opportunity for parents to get together informally to chat about experiences, share ideas, and learn from each other over a cup of tea or coffee.

*Felicity Jonck  
Interface KZN*

## SCHOOL NEWS

### PATHWAYS KLOOF

Well here we are almost at the end of the first term already! Time really does fly when you're hard at work! Having had 4 children leave at the end of 2008, we already have 5 new children, bringing our numbers to 38.

We have been blessed with specialised swings and a roundabout specially for wheelchairs. The children are thoroughly enjoying them. Thanks to our wonderful sponsors for their ongoing



### PATHWAYS POLOKWANE

The Mitchell House Enrichment Centre has welcomed new families and it is truly wonderful to see the Inclusive Programme expand and open its doors to more children. Our Life Skill Centre has developed into a real hub of activity and the young adults are flourishing and blossoming in their new "adult" roles. Each young adult runs their own small business enterprise and wonderful products are produced and sold.

The young adults are also exposed to the open labour market and do weekly job sampling at The Farmyard, a local restaurant, and Greener Tidings, a local nursery. Although great fun is had by all the work is taken very seriously and vouchers are earned for accumulated hours work. Due to the expansion of the Enrichment Centre a third teacher has been hired for the senior class and we all look forward to welcoming Mart-Mari Pretorius, into our family in the second term. Three classes will then be run – Junior Class, two and a half to eight year olds, Senior Class nine to thir-

support.

Our older boys have been hard at work, as you can see in the photos, painting, renovating and constructing! They have been constructing seed boxes which will be filled and used as prizes at our upcoming Golf Day, on 20th March.

More exciting news is that Kirsty Nourse, our academic principal, was awarded the Teacher in Residence position at The Bridge School in San Fran-



cisco, USA. This program has given her a fantastic opportunity to work and learn with the world leaders in alternative communication. This year Kirsty has spent learning skills about new devices, how to implement alternative communi-

teen year olds and the Life Skill Centre fourteen to eighteen year olds. We look forward to the new developments and the dynamics and challenges they bring.

Our Inclusive Programme still astounds us and it is truly heartwarming to see how naturally the interaction between the children occurs. The support from the mainstream teachers is incredible and it is inspirational to see how involved the teachers become with the process and how they make the necessary adaptations in a creative and spontaneous way. We have truly been blessed within the Mitchell House Community and within the wider community as a whole. We have had many visitors who have come from far and wide to experience the magic that is happening between the children and teachers within the Inclusive Programme and it is always very humbling to see it through their eyes.

The dedication, commitment and sincere belief in the inclusive process which radiates from the Management Committee and the Teachers forms the ethos of Mitchell House which has far-reaching, extremely beneficial effects on each and every one of the children who proudly wear the Mitchell House uniform.

*Ruth Stubbs*

cation and how children with limited speech can still be active members of society. She has also learnt how to ac-



cess many resources on the internet for working with children with disabilities. Kirsty has also been given the opportunity to study at a University in the USA focusing on both Autism and Alternative Communication, thus furthering her knowledge.

The Bridge School will be coming to Durban in 2010 to continue supporting Kirsty at Pathways as well as to offer training to therapists, teachers and families of children with severe disabilities.

*Jenny Head*

# Speak & Reach Centre

northern lights school • port elizabeth • tel 041 3651644



## Our story

**Northern Lights School** caters for learners with physical disabilities, Grade R to 12, and is situated in Port Elizabeth. Our learners come from mainly under-privileged backgrounds. After several years the school had to make due with 1 physiotherapist. In January 2007, 5 new therapists joined the staff. (The subsequent “we” refers to Mascha Carstens – Speech Therapist, and Emma Emmerich – Occupational Therapist!)

Several learners experiencing problems in communicating touched the hearts of the Speech and Occupational Therapist. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to get a physically disabled learner to communicate, we realised that our last resort was costly high technology AAC devices. Apart from not having the funds for these devices, there was no one in the Eastern Cape to assist us on High Technology AAC intervention.

We decided not to let that stand in our way and raised funds for this learner. We assessed him and conducted research on which device would best suit his needs. We also sent a funding proposal to the Department of Education - and very unexpectedly – the Department of Education allocated funding for starting an AAC centre at Northern Lights School.

The Speak and Reach Centre was born. We purchased basic equipment needed for assessment from Inclusive Solutions. Our implementation strategy was to compile a list of all the AAC candidates at our school. The majority of learners at our school can speak, but are unable to write or have difficulty writing, due to their physical disabilities. A normal academic curriculum is fol-

lowed. The learners are assessed sporadically, equipment ordered and staff and learners trained in using the devices.

During 2008 five of our learners became successful AAC users, with three more learners joining the ranks the first quarter of 2009. Another 3 learners are due to start training, with 7 more awaiting assessment. Due to the learners’ physical disabilities, selection techniques and methods are our main challenge. The Speech, Occupational and Physiotherapists work together to make unique adaptations for each learner. Implementing AAC requires continual reassessments and adaptations.

Plans for the future include for the centre to be utilised by other institutions. We have presented talks on the AAC Centre at SASHLA and SANDTA meetings, as well as for Department of Health Therapists and Officials. We have also completed assessments for 7 private clients referred from other schools and hospitals.

Several groups have also visited the centre. We are in the process of training a therapist at another special school in the city on the joys of AAC.

We leave you with the words that inspire us every day:

*Exe. 4:10 “Lord, I am a poor speaker, slow and hesitant.”*

*God replied...*

*Exe. 4:11 “Now, go! I will help you to speak, and I will tell you what to say.”*

Some of our learners were asked to write something on how AAC changed their lives:

“I’m 14 years old. A attend school at NORTHERNLIGHTS. Before I had this computer I have 2 depend on other people 2 help me 2 do my work but now I do everything myself. Thank you for the computer.”

“When I was told that there are other ways to type I was so excited and SMART NAV was introduced to me. SMART NAV has made my life easier. I hated typing because for me it was so difficult, it was so hard to reach the keyboard and I got tired, after typing my hand would so painful and my back would be sore because when I type I couldn’t seat straight. I didn’t even know about this but after trying SMART NAV everything became easier for me. When I had to attend a computer class I felt like screaming or running away because I knew what was going to happen to me, but now that’s change.

I love SMART NAV very much because now everything is perfect. When I showed my grandmother the Xhosa exam that I did, she asked me how I did it, I told her about SMART NAV she couldn’t believe. SMART NAV is a dream come true for me, it’s miracle from GOD. Lastly I want to thank the therapist staff for making my life easier, I love you so much, you are the best.”


“I am a learner at Northern Lights School. I am a disabled learner. I can’t physically write for my self so in my old school one of my friends used to write for me. That was very hard because they were very tired from writing for themselves to write for me but now that I have my own computer its much easier. I do my own work now. I love my new computer, it has improve my life.”

*Mascha Carstens and Emma Emmerich  
Speak and Reach Centre  
Northern Lights School*



# PATHWAYS PRETORIA

Dear friends

We are blessed in Pretoria with lots and lots of programme is very  because he can at a Nursery school,



One of our young adults, Shaun in our job sampling



the lawn twice a week! Kelly has a paid



helping in the kitchen and filling. Nicole has a paid job at a proud of them.



and loves working with flowers. We are so

We are blessed with 60.



We moved to our new premises in Moreletapark and all of us are having lots of fun.

Our teachers are planning a 3 day



It is called "THE TOOLBOX. It will include schedules, challenging behavior, life-skills and literacy and numeracy . Each person will receive a functional numeracy, literacy and life skill toolbox. Our young adults will pack the kits, tools and instructions. Be blessed.

*Danita Nel*

## USER FORUM

### *A school for my daughter*

I have discovered the truth in the fact that children with little or no functional speech (LNFS) are victims of low expectations and are thus denied opportunities to learn and participate and gain 'world experience'. This leads to passivity and learned helplessness.

For years, I have been trying to find a school for my now 13 year old apraxic daughter where her abilities would be recognized and nurtured and where she would be able to participate actively. The barriers I have faced include the perceptions that people who cannot speak cannot communicate and therefore cannot

learn. Moreover, many people believe that literacy is unattainable to these kids as speech precedes reading and writing. The fact that nobody bothered to listen or even attempted to understand what my daughter was communicating in her own multi-modal way, was irrelevant.

My daughter recently joined Little Stars, a school in Highlands North that provides holistic intervention for children with pervasive developmental disorder (PDD). For the first time in 13 years, I have experienced the trans-disciplinary approach in action. Regular meetings are held with the teachers, therapists as well as the parents (surprise, surprise!!) to discuss each child's specific needs and goals.

The school provides a 'toolbox of interventions' that are adapted to suit each child. Since Little Stars specializes in children on the autistic spectrum, they are adept at dealing with children with

LNFS. Furthermore, the fact that these children are largely visual learners, means that they incorporate aided AAC into most of their interventions in conjunction with unaided AAC.

Communication boards are evident throughout the school and are used for assembly, choosing songs, literacy, etc. Since TEACCH is a very structured approach, much use is made of visual schedules with 'finished' boxes. Each child's schedule is adapted to their graphical representational level, viz. real objects, photographs, line drawings, etc. Key word signing is used with both Makaton and S.A. sign language and PECS is used to communicate throughout the school. It is amazing to watch four children with vastly different levels of communication all participating in the classroom and working on their own levels.

The small staff-to-child ratio ensures that no child is left behind. High-technology like

'Writing With Symbols' and 'The Grid' are also used for teaching literacy. Life skills are another important part of the curriculum.

Every child at the school receives speech therapy. The school recently bought Deborah Hayden, director of the PROMPT Institute, out to South Africa. The PROMPT system of speech therapy has really been of benefit to my daughter and I applaud Little Stars for always being open to new interventions and therapies.

Another bonus for me, personally, is the fact that the teachers send home a daily schedule detailing what each child did that day and how well he/she coped. This has a dual benefit as I now know what my daughter actually did at school and I am in a better position to discuss her day with her and thus facilitate meaningful communication.



*Michelle Aronson*

# Virtual business

Two AAC users who have been part of the Fofa project (empowerment of young adults with little or no functional speech) have recently set up business websites for themselves. Electronic marketing is a great way to reach potential customers without even having to put a foot out the door. For people with little or no functional speech, contact with potential customers via the web takes away the communicative pressure that might be experienced during face-to-face interactions.

The artist at work



The public's first impression is based on the person's written representation of themselves and their products, which cuts out prejudices that are unfortunately still very prevalent.

Sindy Rebelo has set up a website to market her paintings.

Sindy writes:

"A friend helped me to set up my website. The reason why I wanted a web site is because I want to visit a friend overseas, and mom said that it is too expensive.

If I want to go I have to work and make my own money to pay for my ticket. And so I decided to start painting again, to sell my paintings and make money for my ticket next year."



Deliveries at your doorstep

Check out Sindy's website at [www.kwikwap.co.za/sindy](http://www.kwikwap.co.za/sindy)

Zach Joubert has a website advertising fruit juice and biltong sales. Check it out at [www.kwikwap.co.za/zach](http://www.kwikwap.co.za/zach)

Well done Sindy and Zach for these innovative steps taken in developing your businesses!

*Kerstin Tonsing*

## The fox and the crow

Enjoy this symbol story written with the program "Writing with symbols".

▶ + ▶

**The Fox and the Crow**

◀ - ▶

A crow was sitting in a tree.

▶ ▶

The crow had some cheese in her beak.

◀ ▶

A hungry fox wanted the cheese.

▶ ▶

The fox said, "Crow, sing me a song."

▶

"You have a beautiful voice."

▶ - ▶

The crow was proud of her singing.

### Let's get practical

▶ ▶

The crow sang a song.

▶ ▶

The cheese fell down into the fox's mouth.

▶

"Oops!" said the crow.

"You stole my dinner."

▶

"Not at all" said the fox.

▶ + ▶

"You got the compliment, and I got the cheese."

▶ -

The crow was cross.

▶ -

She had been very silly.

*Prof Kitty Uys*

# Aphasia and AAC: Getting your head around where to start!

## What is Aphasia?

Aphasia results from either a stroke or head injury. Lasker, Garret & Fox (2007) classify the main features of aphasia as a loss of ability to understand and use language. This means that the person will have difficulty:

- ◆ Communicating or understanding information
- ◆ Maintaining and establishing relationships
- ◆ Fulfilling social roles in his/her life

Determining AAC options for these individuals can be quite a complex task. Communication partners need to take the following into account when deciding what AAC options might work:

- ◆ The capabilities of the user (what they are able to do)
- ◆ The characteristics of environment
- ◆ The abilities of the communication partners
- ◆ The features of the AAC options you are considering to use
- ◆ Challenges relating to learning to use the system

Generally people with aphasia can be classified into two different groups according to their communication needs. Each group will utilize different AAC options. The first group of people are those who are dependent on partners for their communication success (termed partner-dependent communicators). The second group are independent in their communication (termed independent communicators).

Below is a list of possible strategies for partner dependent communicators. Each strategy is first listed and then a short description of the strategy follows.

*(This information is adapted from Lasker and Garrett, 2005)*

Specific type of partner dependent communicator	Possible AAC strategies	What the strategy involves
<b>Emerging communicators</b> (have difficulty in responding to speech and using symbols)	Augmented Input Strategy	Supplement the key word in your conversations with gestures/symbols and other additional clues to help understand the meaning of your message.
	Written choice conversation strategy	Generate written key word choices which will potentially answer the questions/provide information being requested in the conversation, e.g. partner says, "Who is your favourite rugby team?" (writes down and says:) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Blue Bulls</li> <li>○ Stormers</li> <li>○ Cheetha's?</li> </ul> (The person can point to the right answer)
<b>Contextual choice communicators</b> (can recognize visual symbols and indicate basic needs.)	Graphic rating scales	For times when the response is not a yes/no (closed option choice) use drawn rating scale 1-3 or 1-5 with key anchor points clearly indicated, such as 1= not satisfied 5=very satisfied.
	Tagged Yes-No Responses	Add the tag phrase 'yes' or 'no' to the end of questions and at the same time model a 'yes' or 'no' response (head nod or shake). This will make it easier for the person to provide an accurate response.
<b>Transitional communicators</b> (can recognize visual symbols and indicate basic needs but are unable to initiate communication)	Topic initiation cue cards	Write out introductory sentences about topics which the person enjoys talking about. These can be placed on card which can then cue either the partner or the person with Aphasia to start a particular topic
	Remnant or scrap books	Remnant books allow individuals to initiate a topic of conversation about a recent event in the past. Remnants or scraps (souvenirs) are saved and displayed into a photo album or any other display

The following websites are useful if you are looking for more information on Aphasia and/or AAC options for people with aphasia: <http://www.aphasia.org/> <http://www.unl.edu/aphasia/AAC.html> <http://www.strokeaid.org.za/>

*Michal Harty*

## AAC users share with students



speech language pathology and Audiology. Five people using AAC each gave a presentation, sharing about themselves, and about the difference AAC makes in their lives.

with little or no functional speech before. They indicated that they would not have the courage or knowledge to start a conversation with such a person.

about AAC. As the future professionals supporting people with little or no functional speech, they should be the ones to know the power of AAC and advocate for provision of AAC in the future. A big thank you to Sindy, Civil, Francois, Felix and Tom for their excellent presentations.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February the CAAC hosted 23 4<sup>th</sup> year students from the University of Limpopo's department of

While the students had come with some theoretical knowledge of AAC, none of them had ever spoken to an adult

Exposure to persons actually using AAC and even addressing an audience has certainly served to inspire them and change their perceptions

*Kerstin Tönsing*

## CAAC News

# Congratulations...

Well done to the following students who received awards for their achievements:

**Ensa Johnson** for the best research study for the Master's in AAC

**Liezl Schlebusch** for the best overall achievements in the Honour's course

**Erica Wylie** for the best progress in the Honour's course



*From left to right: Ensa Johnson (M AAC), Prof Juan Bornman, (CAAC), Liezl Schlebusch, Honours in AAC and Erica Wylie, Honours in AAC.*

The CAAC is very proud of you!!

We would also like to congratulate **Priscilla Kershaw**, one of our Honours students, on receiving an award for "Most outstanding achiever" from the Boksburg Community. Priscilla transformed a preschool classroom at a local primary school into a truly inclusive environment, teaching children with and without disability with expertise and passion. Parents of children who are typically developing have requested a space in this preschool because of the benefits they see for their children. Priscilla thus received this award for including and teaching children with severe disabilities in a mainstream setup and helping them to learn to read and write.



When asked to make a short statement at the awards ceremony, Priscilla said, "We all need to be educated and accepted within the communities we live. Some day we will all have perfect wings... Personally this award means that the Boksburg community accepts inclusion – it is becoming the reality it ought to be!"

We are very proud of you Priscilla – keep up the wonderful work.



Martin Pistorius, former employee of the CAAC, distinguished AAC user and dear friend of many, got engaged! On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2008, he proposed to Joanna, a social worker by training and Operational Team Manager for Social Services at a hospital in Essex. Rumour has it that this happened on a hot air balloon trip!

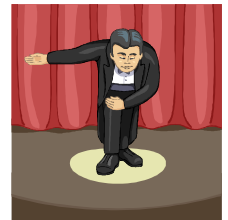


Joanna and Martin are currently residing in the UK. The wedding date is set for early June. You can visit the couple's wedding website at <http://www.martinp.co.za/wedding/>

Congratulations, Martin and Joanna!!

*Kerstin Tönsing*

## Curtain call for... the new ACE course!



From July 2009 the CAAC will be offering a new ACE course in inclusive education in conjunction with the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). This forms part of a larger initiative of the GDE, whereby they have partnered with various tertiary education institutes in order to provide in-service training for teachers. Two hundred students from four districts in Gauteng (Gauteng North, Tshwane North, South and West) are envisaged to be enrolled for the ACE in inclusive education.

They are being sponsored by the GDE in an effort to increase teacher skills. The course runs for 2 years, with one contact week per year on the premises of the University of Pretoria.

Modules include introduction to severe disabilities, communication and functional literacy, collaborative teaming where focus is placed on collaborating with other professionals and parents, as well as inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular schools. The first contact week will take place from 29 June to 3 July this year.

For more information about application for this course please contact Gloria Ledwaba at 012 420 4728, or email her at [gloria.ledwaba@up.ac.za](mailto:gloria.ledwaba@up.ac.za).

*Kerstin Tönsing*



## RESILIENCE : A SKIPPER'S THOUGHTS

All human beings have the capacity to transform and change, no matter what their risks are (Lifton, 1994). This transformation and change can take on different faces, such as resilience or buoyancy. Resilience comes from the Latin “*re-silere*” which means “*to spring back*”. Therefore it refers to an individual’s ability to bounce back and “*recover*” from almost anything, in other words a positive response to long-term challenges, e.g. how I’ll cope with a serious illness, hearing that my child is diagnosed with a disability, losing a loved one... Buoyancy on the other hand refers to a positive response to specific short term events, for example how I react when I loose my car keys, or when I oversleep...

Last year, when I did my “*skippers licence*”, buoyancy became an important part of my newly formed vocabulary. Suddenly I found myself having to measure buoyancy, as “*A water craft must have a 30% buoyancy against the laden weight, or 1 lifebuoy ring for every two persons aboard.*” I started contemplating whom I trust enough to share my lifebuoy ring with... Lovitt (1995) described 10 buoyancy self-measurements for adults.

- ◆ Am I a good listener?
- ◆ Do I laugh and smile much?
- ◆ Am I happy / enthusiastic most of the time?
- ◆ What is my attitude towards others?
- ◆ What is my attitude towards family members?
- ◆ Am I in a mentor / support relationship myself?
- ◆ Is my job fulfilling?
- ◆ Do I make mistakes and remain comfortable?
- ◆ Do I change my opinion with new information?
- ◆ Do I care for my own physical and emotional health?

Equally important to buoyancy, is resilience that refers to managing long term stressors. According to Wayne Muller in his book “*How, then, shall we live?*” there are four key questions that reveal the depth and resilience of our lives:

2. Who do I love?
3. How do I live?
4. What is my gift to the community?

Certain factors can build resilience in people and protect them from stress or adversity. In acknowledging these factors and taking into account that all human beings can change one basic rule of thumb applies: “*If something is working, do more of it!*”

Lifebuoy rings are characterized by the hole in the middle – and this represents me, and the tools and resources I need to face the world. These tools are in the form of how I view myself (*who I am*), the degree of confidence I have in my own abilities (*what I can do*) and the abilities of those who can support me (*who I have*).

The ring itself is divided into seven sections, with each section representing an external factor that I can use to build my own tools and resources (mentioned above). These factors form a ring around me (like a support ring), and become protection against the inevitable stress and adversities that I will face in my lifetime.



**The partner or parent factor:** Positive relationships with the key people in my life, lead to positive life choices and increased resiliency.

**The family factor:** If a broader family identity and connectedness is evident, I will feel anchored and protected.

**The peer group factor:** Interaction with my peers enhance my own social and moral development. It is important to “*love more than one;*” that is, to have several groups of friends and relatives and attempts should be made to maintain these networks of connections over long distances or in spite of busy schedules.

**The community factor:** I feel supported if the morals and values of the local community meet my own morals and values as this creates a feeling of belonging.

**The skill factor:** Individuals who feel competent are resilient. Feelings of competence arise from amongst others, academic success.

When academic success is achieved, other types of adversity is faced with much greater success.

**The education factor:** The learning process is enhanced if I experiences a sense of connectedness during learning, in other words if I don’t see learning as something external that is “*done to me*” but rather as something that I am actively part of and something which I can use to change my own destiny.

**The attitude factor:** I should be able to think positively, be optimistic, encourage myself to try, be determined to persist until I am successful and apply a problem-solving approach when difficult situations are encountered.

Positive attitudes reflect a sense of power, promise, purpose, worth, and “*self-efficacy.*” Attitudes are also closely linked to emotions. Emotions such as love and gratitude also increase resiliency and resilient people are able to appropriately express all emotions, even the negative ones.

IN CONCLUSION... TO REMAIN BUOYANT AND RESILIENT IN THE TURBULENT AND CHANGING TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE

- 10 defining moments in my life
- 7 critical decisions I have made
- 5 pivotal people

... and how I am unique

**Do I know whom I would share my life buoy ring with?**

**Prof Juan Bornman**

## AAC device implementation at Letaba Special School

As part of the support to be provided to the learners experiencing barriers to learning due to their severe speech problems, the CAAC is engaged in a tender to provide assistive technology. The project was mandated by the National Department of Education in 2008 as the part of the implementation of Inclusive Education in all the participating schools.

The CAAC has been involved with the Department of Education in different provinces. This time we have extended our networks to the Letaba Special School in Tzanneen (Mopani district) in the Limpopo Province. The role of the CAAC team was to assess 20 learners and train them together with their teacher on the use of AAC devices in the classroom. The project is divided into three phases, of which Phase 1 and Phase 2 are completed.

Phase 1: The team basically conducted a full AAC assessment for all 20 learners in order for them to match the learners' capabilities with the requirement of the devices. Based on the outcomes of the assessment, 15 learners were provided with the GoTalk 20 option, two received the GoTalk 9, three of the learners were given the Talara 32 which allows for scanning and two older learners were provided with laptops loaded with the Wivik software which allows accessing an onscreen keyboard with switches.

Phase 2: During this phase the team focused on AAC intervention in the classroom. Teachers were assisted with the planning and curriculum adaptation of the lessons in such a way as to incorporate the AAC user, selecting vocabulary for AAC devices, recording and deleting messages, and changing overlays. Learners were also trained on how to participate in classroom activities using the devices given to them. Intervention is a very demanding process, and it became clear that continued support should be provided if implementation of devices is to succeed. Creative problem solving between schools, district based support teams, the education department and service providers such as the CAAC will be needed to ensure projects such as these

are sustainable.

We asked teachers participating in the project about their feeling regarding the participation of learners who were provided with devices. It became clear that the use of AAC made many teachers aware of the potential of their learners.



*A young learner busily practicing on his Go Talk*

*“It is so exciting to see my learner participate in this activity, she was always quiet and it was so difficult for me to know if she understands or not, I am so proud of her.”*

One learner who is using the Wivik software loaded on the computer, wrote a message to the trainers to say

*“Thank you very much for this laptop, I never expected this, it is a great surprise”.*

*Gloria Ledwaba*

## Meet our new 2009 MECI Students

**A**s the field of early childhood intervention continues to grow in South Africa so too does the interest in our web based Masters degree in Early childhood Intervention (MECI).

This year was no exception and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March we welcomed a new cohort of eager minds into the course who very quickly became acquainted with whole new set of terminology such as the “ecological approach”, “collaborative teaming” as well as “transdisciplinary and family centred intervention” to name but a few!

This year our MECI class consists of 19 students from disciplines and fields ranging from Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Education, Psychology, Social Work, Speech Therapy/Audiology and Development Agencies. Our students come from all over South Africa as well as

from Nigeria, Mauritius and the UK!

This goes to show that this degree is not only relevant to our local context - the principles and philosophies of Early Childhood Intervention are universal and can be applied widely.

*Alecia Samuels*



## The Grid 2 wins a BETT award

I recently had the privilege of attending the Special Needs Fringe exhibition which is held in conjunction with BETT (British Education and Training Technology) show.

The BETT show, now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, is reported to be the world's largest educational technology event. I got to see and play with many of the switches, software programs and devices I had previously only seen on the web, which was great. The best was being able to play with the Mytobii and Alea Intelligaze eye gaze systems, they are incredible!

However, by far the most enjoyable thing for me was being able to meet Barney Hawes, the main programmer of The Grid, The Grid 2 and many other Sensory Software programs. Barney and I have known each other for several years and have exchanged many, many e-mails about The Grid and other programs, but we had yet to meet in person. Barney and I ended up chatting for hours that day.

One of the things we spoke about was that The Grid 2 had been nominated for a BETT Award. The BETT awards, di-

vided into 12 categories are stringently judged by a panel of judges and awarded annually to those ICT products that are deemed to be innovative and exemplary. The Grid 2 was chosen as one of the finalists in the Special Education Needs category. Barney didn't think they would win though; I personally thought and hoped they would.

The awards ceremony was the following evening - I wasn't able to attend. I found out a few days later that The Grid 2 had indeed won! The judges said that they chose the Grid 2 for the following reasons:

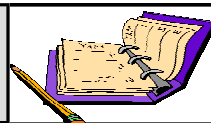
1. It improves accessibility for a very wide range of needs.
2. It offers real access and independence, and is very powerful because of its flexibility.

It gives users a 'voice' and control simultaneously. *Martin Pistorius*



*The Grid Team receiving the BETT award*

## For your diary.....



- ♦ **AAC Advance training workshop** will be held from 6 to 10 July 2009 daily from 08:00 to 16:00. A prerequisite for attendance is the previous attendance of the basic training workshop.

**Cost:** R 240,00 per person per day or R1100.00 for the week

Prices include tea and notes, but exclude lunch. Lunch facilities are available on the University Campus.

**Where:** CAAC lecture hall (room 2-44), Communication Pathology Building, Lynnwood Road, Main Campus of the University of Pretoria.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Limited space available, **no person will be allowed entrance without a prior booking and payment.**

Please contact: Liza Rossetti-Siefe at fax: (012)–420 4389 or tel: (012) 420–2001 or e-mail: [liza@up.ac.za](mailto:liza@up.ac.za) to make a booking, and for the registration form

**Fax** the registration form with your proof of payment to confirm your booking for the workshops.

## CAAC Information Sessions and Consultations

Do you want to find out more about AAC? About devices? About resources for the classroom or for home?

Why not come round to an information session at the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC), at the University of Pretoria (Lynnwood Road entrance).

Parents, AAC users, educators or therapists can attend a free presentation by the CAAC on services, resources and activities. A demonstration can be given on high and low tech communication aids. Programs are tailored to your special area of interest.

**Information sessions** take place by appointment, usually Fridays, from 9h00 -11h00. If you would like to attend, **please give up your name** to Liza Rossetti-Siefe at Tel 012 420 2001. Liza will then contact you with a proposed date. Please also indicate what your main interest would be. Bookings of no more than ten persons will be allowed.

Apart from the information sessions to give a basic overview of AAC and the Centre's services, the CAAC also offers **consultations** to persons with complex communication needs.

In order to schedule a consultation, please contact Kerstin Tönsing (012 420 4729) or Liza Rossetti-Siefe(012 420 2001).

# Interface Sponsorship and Membership

Yes, I would like to join Interface for a year

**Annual membership:**

- R 65.00 per person or family
- R200.00 per school or centre
- R650.00 for life-long membership (individual or family)

Hereby I include my INTERFACE membership fee or proof of deposit of

- \_\_\_\_\_ (please indicate amount) for the year 2009
- I would like to be placed on the AACSA list serve

I would like to give a donation for:

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

As a:

- Sponsor - a gift of R100
- Benefactor - a gift of R300
- Patron - a gift of R500

**NAME** (of individual or organisation): \_\_\_\_\_

**AFFILIATION** (e.g. parent, therapist): \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TEL Home:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work:** \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>Interface Western Cape</b>	Cheques/deposit slips can be sent, together with this form, to:
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*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*