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Interface

&
 Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication
 CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Interface National Newsletter



“Only the grave digger starts on top” was one of the favourite sayings of Prof Erna Alant. I heard it most often in the context of trying to bring a student’s unrealistic research project back to basics. When building bridges, the importance of starting out at the bottom, namely with good foundations and anchorage, can probably not be overemphasized - especially if the supporting pillars are set in a raging, turbulent river or on the edge of a perilous cliff. At the same time, if the pillars remain isolated pillars without connection, they have very little function, and – except by jumping from one to the next (which might prove fatal) - nobody can cross over.

When thinking of the field of AAC in South Africa, this picture of a pillared bridge came to mind. We have various strong pillars for this bridge – local and translocal AAC initiatives that focus on different aspects, such as service provision in intervention and education, technology provision, supporting families, advocacy, formal and informal training and research. You will read about the activities and experiences of some of them in this newsletter – Interface, schools, individuals using AAC and their families, therapists and students.

Many connections already exist, such as the newsletter to keep in touch, share and be inspired by each other. More connection opportunities are in the pipeline, such as

Diane Bryan’s workshop (see last page), the Interface AGM (October this year) and the October awareness month competition by ISAAC – opportunities to link hands nationally and internationally. The Bridge School training (what an appropriate name) which is planned for next year March in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg is another such event.

Connections between bridge pillars or pylons come in a variety. Some are horizontal, others at an angle. They can be made from steel, rope, wood or concrete. That is because these connections have different functions. Some serve to stabilize the pillars against each other, while others provide a surface for crossing over. Some connections are for pedestrians only, while others can take the weight of a laden train.

So, whether you are putting a plank across some stones in a stream, or spanning the Storms river gorge – keep building! Attend to the pillars - strengthen existing ones (especially those set in raging waters), build new ones, and don’t forget to reach out and make the connections.



*Kerstin Tönsing
 Editor*

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

Time is indeed flying, and we are way into the second half of the year already! The Interface national office has agreed to adopt the “new-old” slogan “Not being able to speak does not mean I have nothing to say” as the official Interface slogan. We felt it best captures the essence of what Interface stands for. So, let's make our messages (be it voices, gestures or pictures) LOUD and CLEAR under this motto. We were also very happy to have two new members on our national committee – welcome to Emma Emmerich, occupational therapist, and Mascha Carstens, speech therapist. Emma and Mascha both work at Northern Lights School – you will remember reading about their wonderful centre in the previous newsletter. A need that we have identified at our last meeting was a better data base of service providers for persons in need of AAC and their families. Together with service providers and the CAAC we are working towards this goal. We are also preparing for our annual AGM in October. We are hoping to present a workshop on AAC and autism in conjunction with the AGM, so watch this space for final dates and venues. Daniel Ngcobo, our chairman, presented a paper at the SAALED min-conference in Durban, entitled “Disabled or not – where would we be without education?” which was very well received. On a more personal note - since our last newsletter went out, one of our national committee members, Martin Pistorius, got married! Martin and his wife, Joanna, had a beautiful wedding (it is rumoured) in London, UK, early in June. Martin actually did not email for 2 weeks after the wedding, which, knowing Martin, really says something! We wish the newlyweds God's richest blessings for their life together.

Kerstin Tönsing for Daniel Ngcobo

News from KZN

After a lot of hard work during March and April, we can now say that we are well settled into our new premises. Linda Wiles, our Office Manager for the KZN AAC Resource and Training Centre, is proving to be such an asset, and we are very grateful to the NLDTF grant that has enabled us to appoint a part time employee. The centre is open Monday and Friday afternoons from 1 to 4pm and on Wednesday mornings from 9 to 12pm. Linda is currently capturing details of all of our devices, resources and books for our library database, and is responsible for a host of other administrative duties.

Pat Frow, an Interface KZN member, has been desperately in need of new assistive technology to access her computer. Margi Lilienfeld has worked extremely hard to motivate for Wivik software and a Traxsys Roller Plus Joystick through Discovery Health. This in itself was a huge challenge as none of the items have NAPPI codes, and medical aid funds will not cover items unless they have the relevant codes. Perseverance however, resulted in success, and Discovery Health eventually approved funding for the requested items.

In June, we held our 3rd Pub Quiz evening, which was very well attended and as usual enjoyed by young and old. Mary Allen volunteered to be our Quiz Master once again, and kept all the teams on their toes with questions that were put together by her son. Monies raised by this event have been allocated to our ISAAC 2010 fund, which aims to support Dan Ngcobo and Paul Burdett's efforts to attend the ISAAC Conference next year.

Our AGM was held at our new centre and was preceded by presentations from Liza Aziz of Autism in Action, and Saira Karim from UKZN. A lot of interest was shown towards the Early Learning Centre that Autism in Action has recently opened and towards the new post graduate courses on Autism that will be offered by UKZN in the future. The presentations and our AGM were very well attended by parents, therapists, representatives from other non-profits and Interface members, and we were literally “bulging at the seams” in our little centre!

During May and June, we held a raffle, the proceeds of which were also allocated

towards our ISAAC 2010 fund. The winner of the Panasonic Stereo system, Tina Leisegang, was announced on the evening of the AGM. We are now busily preparing for Casual Day 2009, as we aim to make this year's participation our best ever.

Our AAC Action labs have been very well attended during the first half of the year, and we have received very positive feedback on the informative nature of these mini-workshops. We have as a result had requests from specific schools to run additional workshops in their areas. The next few Action Labs will take place during August and September.

Dan Ngcobo was a speaker at the recently held SAALED Mini Conference, 16 to 17 July, at Durban High School. The theme of the conference was SIYANAKEKELA We Care & Support, From Inclusion to Belonging. Dan was as usual an inspiration and feedback from the delegates on his insights was very positive.

Felicity Jonck, Interface KZN

Eastern Cape

Although the Eastern Cape does not have an official Interface branch, there are various AAC activities going on. Meryl Rybnikar, a retired speech therapist, reports on some of the things that are happening in East London specifically.

“In a voluntary capacity, I see clients referred by Rehab who need an AAC evaluation and determine their needs for communication. Through Rehab I also go to Vukhambe Special School to support some learners there. At Canaan Care Centre I see children twice a week and do AAC training through the medium of story telling.

Children at the Centre have varying disabilities, ranging from severe intellectual impairment, to cerebral palsy with good mental ability, to autism and various syndromes. All children need some form of AAC - low tech to high.

The children's abilities also vary from active participation and response, to those who need to develop eye regard for an object, and a yes/no response.

The Centre has just bought the 4Talk4, so we are entering the age of high tech! The kids love it.

I am also involved in staff training e.g. feeding, seating, back care, toilet training and basic handling techniques. Recently, Veronica Gavu gave four workshops, organised by the Canaan Care Centre. Two were for the care workers at the Centre, one for the parents and one for professionals. There were 35 people at the professional workshop, including many social workers. The response was good and I hope people were encouraged to study further at the CAAC. The group was very keen to meet again and learn more and become pro-active in AAC.

We are also planning some activities for the AAC awareness month in October, Many Methods, One goal: To Communicate. I will be presenting a low tech workshop at the Department of Education in October and will be using story telling to help develop literacy. The other project will be to do story telling at a school that is not a special school, using resources developed by Maureen Casey with Boardmaker and PCS. I would like to encourage everybody to do a project in October and give feedback to me at mdryb@netactive.co.za.”

Meryl Rybnikar

SCHOOL NEWS

Pathways Roodepoort News

In February 2009, Pathways Roodepoort started a support group for parents of disabled children. It has been through word-of-mouth communication that people have attended thus far, but soon an article will be published in the local Caxton newspaper to extend an invitation to the community officially. It is run on the first Saturday of each month at Pathways Roodepoort, from 10h00 till 12h00 and we try to have a theme for discussion or a topic of interest. For example, we have already had a Tax Consultant giving parents guidance on what they're allowed to claim from SARS. June's support group had a dentist speaker discussing dental care for

our children. July – puberty in girls and what the options are in dealing with the challenges. We call the support group The Different Flight Support Group because parents with special needs kids are on a different journey to other parents. We are on a *different flight* path so to speak. Should anybody wish to contact us about the support group they can visit our website www.pathwaysroodepoort.org.za or phone Julie Botha on 083 653 5655.

Pathways Roodepoort was lucky enough to receive some money from the Lotto from our 2007 application. The money was spent on a vehicle, so we have happily taken delivery of an Iveco 16 seater, which will help us get our children to and from school and activities more efficiently.

In May 2009, Ruimsig Gemeente held special Sunday fundraisers for Pathways Roodepoort in a drive to meet our needs on our wish list.

The people's generosity, help and love was humbling and it is very exciting to have more people involved in keeping Pathways Roodepoort strong and thriving.

In June, we held our golf day at Roodepoort Country Club and the prizes were fantastic, thanks to Marinda at Triple E Training.

Due to the economic situation we did not have as many four ball entries as we would have liked but still, the day was a resounding success and Pathways Roodepoort has taken up residence deep in the hearts of our players and sponsors.

We are so grateful for their participation and generosity and we look forward to seeing them at our 2010 Golf Day again.
Julie Botha

Pathways Kloof News

The Pathways children had a really exciting visit to Seaworld at uShaka. Ann Kunz and Lesley Labuschagne organised the outing with such care and forethought.

We took the children in three

small groups, on the 8th, 9th and 11th June. They had a wonderful time going through the aquarium and then meeting



Teah just thoroughly enjoying it all

the dolphins, Gambit, Frodo and baby Khethiwe, who put on a really great show especially for our children.



Nomkhita, using her communication board, to talk to staff

The children were able to throw balls to the dolphins who, in turn, brought them back.

The Seaworld staff were all wonderful, helping wherever they could with the children, pushing wheelchairs and spon-



The dolphins doing their thing.



Gerard Pyoos using gestures to communicate with Lesley

taneously interacting with the children via the communication boards which we had taken.

Jenny Head

Pathways Pretoria News

Dear friends.



We hope you are all and well. All the



at school are happy that we started



again and their are happy too. We



had our 3 day workshop just before the school closed. We gave all the tools to help a teacher with behavior challenges (communication apron, contingency map and schedules) on day one.



Day two was our on literacy and every

participant received a crate with 18 different literacy activities for emergent literacy skills.

On day three each person received two toolboxes with 10 life skill units each to kick start good programmes in their school. We will also do a few more trainings at different school for children with special needs.

We were happy because Mandela had a



. Moreleta Checkers brought us a BIG



with chips and eats on the first day of school. and Bok van Blerk is having a concert for



us at the of Pretoria.

We feel very blessed.

Stay warm and healthy

The Pathways team.

USER FORUM

Diagnostic Criteria for Income Tax Purposes

In terms of the Income Tax Act, natural persons may deduct certain disability-related expenses from their taxable income. This deduction was recently amended by *inter alia* substituting the definition of “handicapped person” with “disability” with effect from the 2010 assessment year (i.e. 1 March 2009 to 28 February

2010). For the purposes of this deduction “disability” mean:

“a moderate to severe limitation of a person’s ability to function or perform daily activities as a result of a physical, sensory, communication, intellectual or mental impairment if the limitation: that has lasted or has a prognosis of lasting more than a year; and is diagnosed by a duly registered medical practitioner in accordance with criteria prescribed by the Commissioner”.

The Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication was recently invited by SARS to propose diagnostic criteria for speech impairment. The proposed diagnostic criteria is:

“A person is regarded to be living with a moderate to severe communication disability if he or she has any one or a com-

bination of the following, which even with appropriate therapy, medication and devices substantially limits one or more major life activity that is age appropriate:

speech that is difficult to understand in a quiet setting; inability to make self-understood to familiar and/or non-familiar communication partners and to meet their communication needs as appropriate for their age by using speech; less than 30 intelligible words; difficulty in understanding what is said to him/her (i.e. receptive language impairment) having to rely on augmentative or alternative communication, including unaided (sign language or other manual signs) or aided means of communication (ranging from communication boards to speech generating devices.)”

Koenraad Burger (SARS)











Inspirational.... Meet “Lulu”

“Lulu” is the most delightful child who really enjoys her therapies and has worked very hard at building new ways to move, communicate and learn since her discharge from the Entabeni Neurological Rehabilitation Unit at the end of May last year. Six months previously, following a motor vehicle accident, “Lulu” had been admitted to the ICU of a private hospital in Durban in a deep coma with multiple injuries, including severe head injuries. She was not initially expected to survive her injuries and her survival and subsequent progress have been remarkable.

As you can see from the following photos “Lulu”, just like you and I, uses multiple modes of communication and just like any other child of her age she loves to engage in ‘fantasy play.’ She has not let her physical disabilities, or the fact that she has been blind since the accident, hold her back and her determination is humbling. In the field of AAC we always say that “speech is the Rolls Royce of communication” and “Lulu” has also exceeded expectations in that she is now able to vocalise many sounds and words despite severe dysarthria and swallowing difficulties. Her swallowing difficulties are such that a PEG (percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy) remains in situ as she still cannot swallow fluids.

At present Lulu communicates using her voice, manual signs, gestures, tactile symbols and a recorded voice device with tactile overlays. She is able to make choices when given these using auditory scanning as she has consistent “yes/no” signals. When using manual signs “Lulu” signs whole words e.g. Rhianna (one of her favourite singers) or short phrases e.g. “I want to listen to music” with single hand signs or gestures. In building communication and learning skills for the future Lulu has learnt the configuration of most of the letters of the alphabet using Braille and has recently started to learn the one handed manual alphabet. In the past year her tactile discrimination and orientation skills have been developed as well as pre- and emergent literacy skills including phonological awareness skills.

Margie Lilienfeld

	<p>Many of the manual (hand) signs that Lulu has learned are adapted from SASL. However, some of Lulu’s manual signs and gestures have been made up by Lulu herself and this is how she says “I’m happy”.</p> <p>In less than a year she is using approximately 150 manual signs and gestures.</p>
	<p>When asked what her free choice activity was at the end of the therapy session Lulu was given 4 tactile symbols to choose from – she is holding the third symbol in her hand and identifying it from the tactile element. Various activities are represented on diamond shapes whereas people e.g. her peers are each represented by a unique element on circle shapes.</p>
	<p>Confirming her choice of Fantasy play. Typically only a limited number of tactile symbols would be used at a time.</p>
	<p>Here Lulu is orientating herself so that she knows where the toy tea set is as she begins the fantasy play of having tea.</p>
	<p>hmmmm.... delicious I like it sweet!</p>
	<p>” Learning the configuration of the letter “w” in Braille using a kinaesthetic approach with golf balls and an egg box.</p>
	<p>Manual (hand) alphabet sign for the letter “w”</p>
	<p>In the foreground is Lulu’s communication dictionary- a record of all the ‘messages’ she communicates and the mode she uses for each. It is arranged in alphabetical order and each pages has four columns – (i) the date (ii) the meaning e.g. “toilet” (iii) the mode e.g. manual sign and (iv) what she does i.e. a description of the her hand movement for that message.</p>
	<p>Additional materials from Lynette Rudman – all with Braille Feeling the letter “W” in Braille and the word whale in Braille in her “My alphabet colouring book” – a hand made book purchased from Lynette Rudman. www.tactilegraphics.co.za</p>
	<p>This recorded voice device “The Super Talker” facilitates Lulu’s participation in class routines in her group at the Special Needs Centre she attends. Here she is getting to grips with a new overlay. The tactile elements are made by using “pop art” pens that draw with a raised profile.</p>

Let's get practical

Aphasia and AAC: Getting your head around where to start! (Part 2)

(This article continues from the contribution on the topic found in our previous newsletter)

Recap: 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

According to Garrett (2005) people with aphasia need a meaningful context within which to use language. This is particularly important for independent communicators as it provides opportunities to practice the language skills they are mastering! The most motivational contexts are those which are personally relevant, interactive and functional. All of the strategies suggested below need to be practiced and used on a regular basis if they are going to be effective. One way to practice in a supportive environment is to join a support group!

AAC options for people with aphasia who are independent communicators

Specific type of independent communicator	Possible AAC strategies	What the strategy involves
Stored message communicators (can independently locate messages that have been pre-programmed into their AAC system)	Low and high tech communication systems	Determine the vocabulary which should be put on the system Pre-store whole messages on a voice output device or displaying messages on a communication board. Create opportunities to practice simple questions and provide specific answers or comments.
	Topic initiation (same as for transitional communicators)	Provides the independent communicator with a reason to begin an interaction Focus now on encouraging the use of the AAC system to maintain the interaction once it has begun.
Generative Communicators (can use their AAC system to create new/novel messages which have not been previously stored in the system)	Rate enhancement strategies	Teach word prediction and other encoding strategies like abbreviation expansion, for high tech AAC systems. Consider the layout of vocabulary and colour coding for easiest access if you have a low tech system.
	Compensatory strategies	Encourage person to indicate to the communication partner when their message has not been understood (communication breakdown). These will be very person specific, but may include: Establishing the topic of conversation at the start of the interaction. Using drawing, writing or pointing to key words/components of message (either symbol or written form) Using first-letter of word spelling Using gestures or pantomime.
Specific need communicators (may only use AAC within certain communication situations and not as a primary means of communication)	Situation-specific training: Using templates	Use templates to generate end products (letter or email writing, drawing up shopping lists), e.g. Devise a shopping list where you can just tick the applicable symbol or word of the items you need. Use templates on Microsoft office for letters, emails, etc. You can download templates for use in word from the Microsoft office online webpage. http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/templates/default.aspx
	Support groups	Think about using role play, story-telling or other scripted interactions/routines within a support group as opportunities to practice specific skills in a supportive environment.

(From Garrett & Lasker, 2005)

For a list of support groups in SA you can contact stroke aid at (011) 728 2292 or visit their website <http://www.strokeaid.org.za>

Michal Harty

VIVA ACE!

On June the 29th 2009 120 teachers from the Gauteng Department of Education attended their first contact session held at the University of Pretoria. These teachers all enrolled for an Advanced Certificate in Education specializing in the Inclusion of Learners with Severe Disabilities, which is presented by the CAAC in collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Education.

Teachers from the following districts attended: Gauteng North, Tshwane South, Tshwane North and Tshwane West.

The excellent cooperation of all the University Departments involved contributed greatly to the success of this event, together with the overwhelming enthusiasm of the students themselves. It was a tough week, crammed with loads of information, yet each day the teachers attending were more excited than the previous day. Spontaneous singing accompanied the opening of each morning, really leaving us as lecturers very touched by the sincere desire of these students to increase their skills.

Here are some comments made by the teachers:

- ◆ *Keep it up!*
- ◆ *It is sad to go home, I had the most amazing time of my life, it felt so good to be behind the desk.*
- ◆ *Every learner has the potential to learn, we only need to provide them with the opportunity, the ACE course will equip me with the skills I need.*
- ◆ *I see this as a dream come true, hope you are proud of us!*
- ◆ *I will be helpful to my school, I dedicate myself, with the help of God to work with other educators and help learners with severe disabilities.*

- ◆ *The facilitators were wonderful, we felt like one big family*
- ◆ *All teachers need this course, I plead with the Government of South Africa to discuss this!*
- ◆ *We felt honored and respected, our views were considered!!*

Well, after all of this how can one ever feel negative! Inclusion of all learners regardless of race, gender and abilities, is becoming the reality it really ought to be. It is no more the **pie** in the **sky** people use to talk about.

In true Obama fashion one can say: “Yes, we can!” That would of course only be politically correct, we however opt for inclusively correct and solemnly declare:” **Together we will**”

Priscilla Kershaw and Gloria Ledwaba



Mrs Mirinda van der Merwe facilitating a group activity to promote participation.



October is AAC awareness month!!

The AAC awareness month has been an initiative from the International Association for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC for short) for the past 3 years. Each year, ISAAC puts forward a theme for a competition in conjunction with the awareness month. Last year’s theme, “Many stories, one voice”, resulted in a collection of online stories written by AAC users all over the world. The stories can be accessed at

<http://www.aacawareness.org/collectiontoc.html>. This year’s theme is **Many Methods, One Goal: To Communicate**.

Quoting from the ISAAC website, the theme should inspire AAC users to:

“Show the world the methods of AAC you use with different people, in different places, about different things. Teach the world that communication is important and how AAC helps you.”

ISAAC encourages AAC users to capture the ways they communicate in photos, videos, poems or any other electronic format, and to submit to the following email by 15 September 2009: contest@aacawareness.org. More information can be obtained from their website at <http://www.aacawareness.org/contest.html>

ISAAC also suggested that, for awareness month activities, AAC users could read aloud from the stories in the ‘Many stories, one voice’ collection from last year’s competition in a library or other community place. For more ideas and flyers to download, please go to <http://www.aacawareness.org/aacevents.html>

Let’s put South Africa on the map like we did last year and get creative! We look forward to hearing all about the awareness activities which will take place.

Kerstin Tönsing

Tech Talk

Proloquo2Go™

Particularly for mobile individuals there is a huge need for small portable devices and the range of these has been somewhat limited. Two great options that readily spring to mind are the Grid Mobile software that can be used with a selected number of cell phones and the "Say-it! SAM communicator, that uses AAC software on an HP IPAQ handheld.

Now there is a new product with software developed by Samuel Sennott and David Niemieijer that can be installed on either iPhones or the iPod Touch.

Called Proloquo2Go (Proloquo means "Speak –out –Loud") it has a number of great features. These include:

- ◆ An automatic morphology feature so that if a cell showing a verb is held down the conjugations of that verb automatically appear or if a noun cell is held plurals and possessives are provided.
- ◆ The ability to access recent messages, whether used during the "last 15 minutes, the last hour, earlier today, yesterday, day before yesterday and earlier than that." A tap on the message window speaks the message but even more useful, touching the green plus button the message can be permanently added to the vocabulary.
- ◆ Built-in natural sounding text-to-speech voices from [Acapela Group](#). The current version includes North American English male, female, girl and boy voices. British English voices will soon be available as an option. Support for other languages and voices is in the pipeline.
- ◆ The software includes a default vocabulary of over 7000 items called VocaSpace that was developed by Sam Sennott and is based on the AAC Research Base List and the Fry Sight Word list. However, additional vocab can be programmed in allowing for customisation according to an individual's needs.

Quoting from their website:

"The VocaSpace vocabulary set includes a number of primary features:

- ◆ A core vocabulary system called Word Spaces.
- ◆ A Basics section with categories like greetings, manners, questions, jokes and more.
- ◆ Extensive Categories such as living creatures, colors, places, people, transportation, just to name a few.
- ◆ My Spaces: where you can put a range of personal vocab such as My People, My Places, My Family, or My Friends, just to name a few.
- ◆ An alternative keyboard that is larger than the default iPhone and iPod keyboard. (only works within the list/grid view).

Starters are a way to quickly branch using phrases and words. Spaces is a place to launch out into context specific categories. The primary Spaces are Home, Community, School, and Work. Inside each space is a section for activities, chat phrases and whatever else you would like to include. School includes a wide range of school related vocabulary.

While VocaSpace covers a wide range of communication needs it is meant to be used as a starting point for your own custom vocabulary.

With the powerful and easy editing features of Proloquo2Go you can very quickly create novel core vocab sets, new categories, or even a completely new user space."

The symbols used are from the Symbolstik library (not PCS/Boardmaker) and a feature that interested me was that the border of each vocab cell item was colour-coded according to the Goossens' Crain and Elder system.



The appearance can be altered e.g. either grid or list views, cell having just print or print and symbols as well as various background colour options etc. The default grid size is 16 cells (4x4) but can

be changed to 9 (3x3) or 4 (2x2) or even 1 cell per screen as well as to 25 cells (5x5) or the largest is 36 (6x6).



There is a "typing view" for typing full paragraphs. The software uses 300MB so there is still space for music and other applications on the iPod touch. External speakers are recommended to supplement the volume of the iPod Touch and the iMaingo 2 is one of the speaker cases that is recommended but this would need to be imported by the individual purchasing this new AAC option. The Shox mini speakers are another portable option available at stores like Game, Macro as well as music stores and sound equipment stores. There is a "users forum" that has been set up and anyone can join at proloquo2go_community@assistiveware.net.

There are also introductory videos, a downloadable manual etc. has the obvious limitation of access issues for individuals with poor fine motor control, but it is an exciting addition on the Proloquo2Go.com website.

What is really nice is the "cool" factor of using an iPod Touch that typically developing young adults and teenagers love and the low cost factor when compared with other high tech AAC devices.

I phoned our local Apple iStore in Gateway Umhlanga and was quoted the following costs: iPod Touch 8GB R3299.00 (the 16Gb is R4399.00) and the Proloquo2Go application that one downloads through the online store is \$US 150* which, at an exchange rate of R8.50 to the \$US, is R1275.00. Add the cost of the speaker case \$US 39.95 (R350) plus "shipping charges" for the speaker case.

In AAC there is never a "one size fits all" and this AAC option also to the range of small, portable non-dedicated AAC devices.

Margi Lilienfeld with information from www.Proloquo2Go.com

** This has increased to \$200,00*

What is a SmartNav?

A SmartNav is an input device that gives you the freedom to perform all the functions of a mouse without ever using your hands but by moving your head. Just a small movement of your head will instantly position the cursor, with pixel level precision. It uses an infrared camera to track your head movements. All this is easily done with the accessories that this product comes with, which is:



- *SmartNav Device-which mounts on top of your monitor or laptop.
- *Reflective dots, which you put on your head, hat or glasses.
- *Software CD-which you install on your computer or laptop
- *Electronic Manual- your informational guide to a hands free mouse.

There are also optional accessories like, a Trackhat, which incorporates a reflective dot, and Rings, which you can also use with your fingers to point instead of your head.

What is the Grid?

The Grid is a software that allows people with limited or unclear speech to use a computer as a voice output communication aid, using symbols or text to build sentences. Symbols are useful to people with no literacy skills, as well as helping those with limited literacy to develop a larger vocabulary, and Text on the other hand provides quick and accurate text communication for literate users.



Felix Visagie & Simon Sikhosana

Ella Liebenberg wrote: *We bought a Smart Nav and The Grid for my brother who had ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) also known as Motor Neuron Disease). Unfortunately he used the system for less than a month due to the fact that ALS is a progressive disease. As we know that these systems are very expensive, we would like to offer it at a reduced price to somebody who might be able to use it. We bought the system for ±R15,000-00 and would like to now sell it for 10,000-00. If you are interested, please contact Ella Liebenberg at: Cell: 0798992774 E-Mail: eliebenberg@grintek.com*

CAAC News

Giving young adults with CP a voice

The FOFA project for young AAC users aims to empower young adults with severe communication difficulties to become advocates for people with disabilities. As part of this process, FOFA participants are encouraged to 'make their voice heard' by giving presentations.

We are therefore very proud to report that Tsofelo Phiri, a young lady with cerebral palsy, delivered her first conference presentation at the National Association for Persons with Cerebral Palsy Conference in May this year. It seemed appropriate that, at a conference about cerebral palsy, the speakers should include people with cerebral palsy.

Two staff members of the Centre for AAC at the University of Pretoria, **Kerstin Tönsing and Karin van Niekerk**, together with **Tsofelo Phiri** thus delivered a joint presentation about the FOFA project run by the Centre for AAC since 2005.

Snapshots of the involvement and outcomes of several of the participants of this project over the past four years were presented.

Tsofelo spoke using her laptop and The Grid 2 software. There was a very positive response from conference attendees, and Tsofelo stole hearts when sharing her story with the audience.



Karin van Niekerk, Tsofelo Phiri and Kerstin Tönsing

The conference, hosted by the Gauteng Cerebral Palsy Association, had the theme "Towards the evidence supported management of cerebral palsy: Are we there yet?"

The conference was very well organised, boasting international presenters such as Dr. Charlene Butler, past president of the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, who delivered a thought-provoking keynote address on evidence-based practice.

The audience brought together a variety of stakeholders from the field of health, education and employment and provided for many networking opportunities.

Karin van Niekerk and Kerstin Tönsing



FOFA!

Our yearly Fofa youth empowerment project will take place again this year from the 17th to the 21st of August. Seven young adults with severe physical and communication disabilities are scheduled to take part. These young adults will be spending the whole week on campus, engaged in workshops and lectures around empowerment, entrepreneurship and efficient communication. Three 'alumni' of the project will also be presenting lectures and sharing their experiences with the participants. As always, we have a social programme lined up as well, including an outing to the movies and some music activities. On Friday, the 21st of August, the young adults will have a chance to address the public in a closing ceremony, which will be held in conjunction with the Neville Cohen Memorial lecture (see p. 11). Make space in your diary for this wonderful event—it is truly an inspiration to hear these young people 'say their say'!

Kerstin Tönsing

MECI STUDENTS GET PHDS

The MECI course started in 2001 at the CAAC and this course has now delivered its first 3 PhD graduates: Priya Rajaram, Karen Joubert, and Sadna Balton.



Priya Rajaram graduated at the autumn ceremony in 2009 and her research explored a novel way in which persons with severe aphasia, following a cerebral vascular accident (CVA), may be taught Blissymbols. The results indicated that the self-generating phenomenon may provide more long-term learning benefits. Priya is a part time lecturer at the University of KZN's Department of Speech Pathology.

Karen Joubert is a lecturer at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Witwatersrand and she is graduating in the spring.



The purpose of her study was to compare how individuals with Motor Neuron Disease (MND) and their spouses perceive changes in their marital communication in relation to the deteriorating speech of individuals with MND. The findings concluded that there no statistically significant relationship between the deteriorating speech of individuals with MND and the couples' perception of marital communication, confirming that marital communication was not influenced by decreased speech intelligibility.

Sadna Balton is the leader of the pack of speech therapist at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and her research was inspired from her own clinical experience working with caregivers of young



children. Her study aimed to identify everyday activities that provide children with varied opportunities for learning and development within the natural environment of the family context. The results provide information on the types of activities that children participate in, the frequency of participation, the partners involved, as well as the purpose of the activities. Caregiver perceptions on the importance of activities were also obtained. This information will enable therapists to structure home programmes for better impact.

Congratulations to all of you. You make us proud!



Prof Kitty Uys

Why is research important?

“Research. Ugh. It is soooo difficult! Why do we have to have a subject like research? It is only there to make life difficult for us! Research is so confusing! Why should I know about research?”

This is a conversation that I frequently hear in the passages. Students like to complain about things that make life difficult... but this might be a very legitimate question : Why is research important?

For me research is more than just simple data collection or research designs or dependant variables... Research is motivating – it helps us in our search for things which are not yet discovered. It is about moving the “frontiers of science” with the “frontier” being a place where different people, with different thoughts, ideas and principles “fight” about a particular “thing” (In research language one could say it is about researchers debating constructs).

The “things” that are “fought” about, can either be about knowledge (confirming facts) or about things that need to be discovered (exploring and

collecting new knowledge). In other words, when we move back the frontiers of science, it means that we are advancing the particular field, thereby enriching our minds. And the impact of this? Ultimately, it will help us live better lives....

With all of this in mind, the Centre for AAC presented its 17th annual AAC Research Seminar on the 11th – 12th of June 2009. This year the program was most exciting, with Prof Henk Huisman putting everybody in the right frame of mind with his talk “A short overview of a research survival guide”. This was followed by interesting research papers that all dealt with early childhood intervention, and aspects such as the use of a database in ECI research, looking beyond DC 4 counts in paediatric HIV positive children, the family-based activities that typically developing 3 – 5 years olds in low income African families engage in and using self-efficacy measurements to enhance parenting skills, were addressed. This day concluded with an interesting talk about how quality and integrity can be enhanced in qualitative research.

The second day focused specifically on AAC, and Prof Erna Alant, who now holds the Otting Endowed Chair at Indiana University in the USA, set the scene. She spoke about the prominent research issues when investigating the use of AAC in schools and drew interesting comparisons between South African and American schools.

Thereafter 2 PhD students presented their work on speech intelligibility and marital communication in persons with motor neuron disease and the use of a single subject design in informing evidence-based practice.

The day concluded with an ethics-based lecture on the ethos of caring which resulted in a very topical debate about the current strike of medical doctors with interesting (and contrasting!) viewpoints.

And so, all who participated helped to move the frontiers of science... If any of these topics tickle your fancy, the complete presentations can be found on our website : www.caac.up.ac.za.

Prof Juan Bornman

For your diary.....



The **Third Neville Cohen Memorial Lecture** hosted by the CAAC, will take place on Friday, **21 August 2009**, at 9:00 to 13:00. This event coincides with the closing ceremony of the **Fofa project** for leadership training of AAC users which will take place during 17—21 August 2009. The speaker at this event will be **Diane Nelson Bryen**, PhD, Professor Emerita, Temple University. She will deliver an address entitled: **“Finding Your Voice: The Key to Empowerment”**. RSVP Liza@up.ac.za or tel 012 420 2001 by 18 August if you wish to attend the memorial lecture.

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A workshop by Prof Diane Bryen will be held on **25 and 26 August 2009** at the Centre for AAC entitled: **“Speaking Up and Speaking Out: Reducing the Risk of Becoming a Victim of Crime and a Victim in Times of Emergencies”**, at a cost of R500.00 per person for both days this once off workshop is not to be missed. Limited space is available and only 60 people will be allowed to attend. Please contact Liza@up.ac.za or tel 012 420 2001 to obtain a registration form or go to www.caac.up.ac.za.

This 2-day workshop will focus on ethical considerations and interventions for therapists, teachers, parents, advocates and people with Complex Communication Needs, to reduce the risk of becoming victims of crime and abuse, or when going to court and seeking services. On the second day, participants of the workshop will learn about communicating during times of man-made and natural disasters. Vocabulary needed to communicate effectively and efficiently during emergencies will be identified and communication boards relevant to South Africans will be designed.



Prof Diane Nelson Bryen has worked toward making the goals of independence, productivity, inclusion, and full participation a reality for and with people with disabilities. As professor of Special Education since 1973 and Executive Director of Temple's Institute on Disabilities, Pennsylvania's University Center for Excellence since 1992 through to her retirement in June 2008, Dr. Bryen has been a leader, mentor, advocate, teacher, and researcher. She has served on several statewide, national and international boards, most recently serving as the plaintiffs' representative on the Gaskin Advisory Panel overseeing the implementation of the Gaskin v. Pennsylvania Department of Education Settlement Agreement.. Her contributions to improving the quality of life and equal access for people with disabilities have been widely recognized (i.e., the first annual Temple University Great Teacher's Award; the 1996 Humanitarian Award from United Cerebral Palsy of Pennsylvania; the ACES Free Speech Now Award in 1992; two leadership awards from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities; the Temple University Stauffer Award for distinguished service in 2006; the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Association of University Centers on Disability in 2007; and the 2008 Gallery of Success at Temple University. Dr. Bryen is pleased to return to the CAAC and to South Africa.

Course applications are open for the following courses offered by the Centre for AAC:

Masters in AAC (Course coordinator: Miss Michal Harty) michal.harty@up.ac.za

Masters in Early Childhood Intervention (Course coordinators: Dr Kitty Uys and Miss Alecia Samuels) kitty.uys@up.ac.za or alecia.samuels@up.ac.za

Honours in AAC (Course coordinator: Ms Gloria Ledwaba) gloria.ledwaba@up.ac.za

PhD in AAC, Early Childhood Intervention and Severe Disabilities (Course coordinator: Prof Juan Bornman) juan.bornman@up.ac.za

For further information you are welcome to contact the Centre for AAC at 012 420 2001. **Registration closes end January. Visit our website: www.caac.up.ac.za for online registration.**

CAAC Mini Workshops and Consultations

Do you want to find out more about AAC? Need some practical skills in a certain area? Maybe a mini-workshop is what you need!

Following the example of Interface KwaZulu Natal, the Centre for AAC is looking into starting a series of mini-workshops in various topics of interest in the field of AAC.

We are hoping to include things like making switches, adapting toys, and giving introductory sessions on various devices and software such as the Grid 2.

Parents, AAC users, educators or therapists can attend at a minimal fee. Mini-workshops will probably take place on a Friday. For more information, please phone Liza Rossetti-Siefe at Tel 012 420 2001.

The Centre for AAC also offers **consultations** to persons with complex communication needs and their intervention teams (family and service providers).

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

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