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Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

National Newsletter

Guest editorial: To knot or not!

Becoming a skipper – which means obtaining a licence to handle a boat – made me realize just how fascinating ropes and knots are. Thin material strands bound together, getting thicker, intertwined, becoming stronger and stronger. Ropes come in different shapes and sizes, and this skipper learned about nylon ropes, polyester ropes, polypropylene, plaited and manila ropes! Each rope has a very specific place and function. Some ropes are stronger than others. Some are thin, others are thick. Some are short, others are long. Some are colourful, like a ski-rope to help you know how exactly how far the skier is from the boat, others are plain, like the anchor rope. Ropes have enemies such as grit and sunshine. Ropes can get into knots and I don't mean the carefully tied reef knots, sheet bends, clove hitches or bowlines tied by an experienced skipper. I mean the tangled messiness of gut – “n kraaines”! A rope has a beginning and an end, can twist, form firm links, carry heavy loads, help guide us, be stretched to the limit... It reminds me so much of people.

We are all unique pieces of material but when we become intertwined and work together as a rope, our strength increases ten fold. All through our lives, we form bonds, friendships, partnerships. Soul mates will feel themselves tied together for a lifetime. On the other hand, some bonds must be tied loosely so that they can be untied again, as quickly and as effortlessly as possible, when circumstances change - as they surely will.

When we do “tie a knot” and we do it properly, the rope will hold, even if there might be ‘tension’. In fact, through this tension, the knot gets stronger and more difficult to undo! Then there are knots that cannot be untied, but that have to be cut, like after the death of a loved one.

What kind of results do you get when you don't know how to tie knots? I think we've all run into a situation like this before. You end up by twisting and tying the pieces of string in any haphazard way and end up with something more complicated, convoluted and confusing than you need. Hopefully, no one other than yourself has to deal with that knot after you! Isn't this how life sometimes works? We're not taught the skills to tie the knot properly; rather, we are encouraged to keep trudging away at a problem until we solve it. If you have time, come back and clean it up. Sometimes AAC works this way: therapists, teachers, device manufacturers don't come back and re-tie the knot leaving families with an over-programmed, over-abstracted, overly-complex communication system. So, if you can't tie a knot, sometimes the best thing to do is ask for help. Winnie the Pooh also thought about this, and said: “Never give up.... If the string breaks ... try another piece of string!” Although some knots are important and have a function, others are not. They hinder the function of the rope, or reduce its length, so that the rope cannot do what it is supposed to do. Sometimes we need to meaningfully engage



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

Editorial (continued)

in the practice of untying knots. When we take the time and sit down to reflect, we'll recognize where the knots are tied; we'll see all the things we're holding onto. Once we see them, we have an opportunity to untie them. We can recognize that we don't need to be shortened in these ways. Sitting down with a jumbled piece of rope, untying the knots can be enjoyable – if you take the time. I recently sat watching a friend untie the snarled rope of my son's kite, carefully examining the inter-connections of the knots. Some knots had to be tightened up to loosen others, others came out immediately. Some knots took more time and great patience to loosen. He examined the knots from different angles to see if a change in perspective might lead to the creation of a different approach, releasing some of the pressure on the knot so that it might be loosened and untangled. There was a practical side to having the ropes untangled. We all watched Heinrich's face light up at the prospect of testing his kite against the Gouritz wind.

What are the knots that bind you? Isn't it time to sit down and remove the have nots, the cannots and the do nots that live in your mind? Should you not erase the will nots, may nots, might nots that have a home in your heart? Get rid of the could nots, would nots and should nots that obstruct your life. But, most of all, for one and for all let go of all the am nots that might have held you back, especially the thoughts that you might not be good enough. Sit down and start untying your knots.

In the Greek mythology there is the lovely Gordian knot legend. The Phrygians were without a king and decided that the next man to enter their city driving an ox-cart would become king. Gordian, a peasant was the fortunate one and on entering the city he was declared king! Out of gratitude, his son, Midas, dedicated the ox-cart to Zeus and tied it to a post with an intricate knot. When Alexander the Great came to the city in the fourth century BC, he attempted to untie the knot. However, he could not find the end to the knot to unbind it, and consequently sliced it in half with a stroke of his sword - the so-called "Alexandrian solution". That night there was a violent thunderstorm. Alexander took this as a sign that Zeus was pleased and would grant Alexander many victories! How his reasoning worked, I don't fully understand, but this resulted in us having a wonderful metaphor for easily solving an stubborn problem by cheating or "thinking outside the box" - "cutting the Gordian knot"

I guess life is about balancing the meaning and context of the knots (even the Gordian knots!) and their purpose, both constructive and limiting. In this year ahead, may you have all the knots or not that you need!

Juan Bornman
Centre for AAC

Centre for AAC news

CAAC farewells: Michal Harty

January 31, 2012 was very sad day for us at the CAAC, as it was the last day that Dr Michal Harty was part of our staff. Michal accepted a position at the University of Cape Town, Communication Sciences and Disorders Division and commenced her position on February 1, 2012.



When Michal joined the Centre for AAC in 2002 just after graduating, she was mainly involved with the Honours student education, however, due to her knowledge and abilities she quickly became part of the Masters and PhD group as well. In 2004 she received her Masters degree (cum Laude) and in 2010 she obtained her PhD through the Centre for AAC. Michal contributed to the Centre's activities on many levels. She is an excellent researcher, teacher, and therapist, and also took a key role in various community projects such as teacher training in the North West province. Michal particularly valued the family as part of the intervention team. She made invaluable contributions to the Fofa project regarding empowerment of family members and/or caregivers. Michal was not only a valued colleague, but also a friend to all of us at the Centre, and we will sorely miss her.

Although the we at the Centre for AAC are already feeling Michal's absence, we know that her move has opened doors for her and also for the growth of AAC in the Western Cape. She barely put her toes in the Cape Town Sea, when the telephone lines started ringing with cases that needed her AAC expertise. So we are all smiling as things are working out so well.

We wish her just the best for the future. UCT must know that we are watching them carefully – if they do not look after her well, we will come and drag her back to Gauteng! Michal please do not miss us too much, and enjoy those walks on the beach and the fresh sea air.

Kitty Uys
Centre for AAC



CAAC farewells: Priscilla Kershaw

Priscilla Kershaw has been part of the CAAC's staff for the past three years. Priscilla has a teaching background, and founded and ran an inclusive preschool programme at a mainstream school prior to joining the Centre for AAC. Priscilla brought a wealth of practical experience to the Centre, which benefited the students as she incorporated it into her teaching. She was involved in training of students enrolled for the Advanced Certificate in Education course as well as the Honours course in AAC. She was also involved in community empowerment and consultations for clients with little or no functional speech and their support teams. Priscilla also has excellent event organising skills and always made sure that any occasion at the Centre had a truly magnificent special touch.



Priscilla will be moving to the States together with her family – their gain, our loss! We are very sad to see her go and she will surely leave a gap that will be hard to fill. We wish her the very best in the Wild Wild West and trust that she will continue to use her skills and expertise to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC

Pixon training – a preview

On 24 February 2012, the staff of the Centre for AAC had a preview of what will be on the menu for the scheduled Pixon training on 14 April 2012 when Maureen Casey gave us training in the Pixon curriculum. **Pixon** is a language curriculum for individuals who use AAC. The Pixon-curriculum is based on low-tech manual communication boards with a unique symbol set (which echoes Minspeak and PCS). The aim of the curriculum is to help individuals who rely on picture symbols to communicate to develop functional language for all situations. With a small core vocabulary, AAC users are able to communicate their messages quickly, build sentences, talk about abstract topics, access the curriculum and meet diverse communication needs.



The interactive training between trainer (Maureen) and trainees (CAAC-staff) proved very helpful and

was lots of fun! We even iced cookies, painted faces and played with play-do! By the end of the training, we were all convinced that:

- Core vocabulary is critical;
- All twelve communications functions must be represented on the communication board;
- Everyone can develop on the literacy continuum, and
- Higher order thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy) must be fostered from the onset.

Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC

Honours student receives prestigious bursary

Vuledzani Ndanganeni, enrolled in her second year of the Honours course in AAC, did us all proud by becoming the recipient of a postgraduate scholarship from the Margaret McNamara Memorial Fund (MMMMF). The MMMF is administered through the World Bank and was established to support women from developing countries in their post-graduate studies. Recipients are selected based on academic and leadership skills, and are expected to use the skills and knowledge gained to improve the lives of women and children in their home countries. Vuledzani was one of seven women from various African countries (Cameroon, Zambia, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa) who were awarded this prestigious scholarship.

Vuledzani, who hails from Venda, is a speech language therapist and Audiologist who completed her graduate training at the University of Limpopo (Medunsa). While training, she had exposure to AAC at Pathways Pretoria during a workshop they ran at the school and was inspired to pursue her studies in this direction. She is currently working at a school for children with learning disabilities and special needs (Willowridge Private school t/a Orion College) where she has opportunity to apply her skills. With the help of the scholarship received, she is planning to support AAC implementation in a care centre for children with disabilities in Venda, where resources are extremely limited.



Congratulations, Vuledzani, on this wonderful achievement! We wish you the best of success in your venture to improve the lives of children with disabilities in South Africa.

Vuledzani receiving her scholarship from Ruth Kagia, World Bank (South Africa Country Director)

Kerstin Tönsing

Student onsite weeks

Master's in Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Nine bright-eyed brand new Master's students arrived at the Centre for AAC on Monday, the 5th of March. These nine ladies come from a variety of professional backgrounds (including teaching, speech-language pathology and being a mother of a child who used AAC) and have a passion for implementing strategies to support people in need of AAC. While the week's lectures focussed on theoretical issues in AAC, there was also a rich informal exchange amongst students and lecturers on a variety of service delivery and intervention issues.

We are privileged to work with professionals who take the time and effort to further their skills and knowledge, including theoretical knowledge to back their intervention practices. We hope their studies will be rewarding to them and that they will equip them to make a difference out there.

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC



M AAC first year students and lecturers

BA Honours in Augmentative and Alternative Communication

The second year honours students attended a successful week during March at the Centre for AAC during the week of 12 to 16 March 2012. The twenty five students received training in intervention, the law and disabilities, employment for people with disabilities and they spent two days on research methodology.

All students were clear that the training they received will assist them, not only in their studies, but also in their field of work.



Honours second year students busy with a practical session during the intervention training

We wish them all of the best for their final year of study.

Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC

Advanced Certificate in Education: Inclusion of children with severe disabilities

Over a hundred ACE students started off the year with a weeklong series of lectures and workshops at the University of Pretoria. These students have been sponsored by the Gauteng Education Department and will be completing their 2-year course by the end of this year. Lectures and workshops centred around topics such as participation of children with severe disabilities and transition skills. Hands-on workshop activities helped to practice newly gained skills.



Teachers practicing how to position and engage students with severe disabilities.

One of the students, Wanda van Aarde, summed up her impressions of the week in a poem:

ACE Contact session 2012

What a week!
If only these walls could speak.
It's all about attitude
And don't forget your gratitude.

Bright-eyed we start to include:
Plan and prepare...
If you dare.
Behave now, learner, don't be rude!

Participate, participate, participate !
Please try not to come late.
As for the morning song
Dance now and sing along...

Integration for participation for independence...
Oh- where is the register for attendance?
SBST, DST, ISP and ITP, forever terminology.
Now we need some of Tshepiso's psychology?!

Generalise, maintain, instruct and monitor
Says the lector
Then never forget to reward,
Or it might be awkward.

Moving along on the transition train
Isn't it all simple and plain?
Watch out, the wheel will turn
And if not careful, you'll surely burn.

Wanda van Aarde
Student (ACE)

Interface Branch News

News from Interface KZN

We started our year off by welcoming Trudi Louw, our new Office Manager. Trudi has replaced Gail Ngcobo who relocated to Johannesburg at the end of 2011. Our centre remains open Monday to Friday 8 to 4pm (closed between 12 and 1pm for lunch). Please contact Trudi on 031 708 4237 for assistance.

With the majority of the population of KZN being isiZulu speaking, there is a critical need for isiZulu AAC resources. The Interface KZN isiZulu AAC Resource Project began in 2011 and has to date developed a small library of Zulu materials including recorded voice device overlays, Zulu song boards, Zulu placemats, Zulu word and alphabet boards and a set of generic communication boards for the major learning areas in the Foundation Phase. Our growing library of resources also includes translated interactive and noisy stories as well as entirely new stories. One of the groups that is benefiting immensely from this project is Khetiwe, "We are chosen". Glenys Ross, Physiotherapist at St Mary's Hospital in Marianhill, provides therapy to children with Cerebral Palsy and other neurological impairment in the outer west district who are unable to pay for it. The group will be moving sometime this year to a suitable venue at the Marianhill Convent. The goal is to grow into a day care centre or to send out teams from the centre to existing day care centres to offer support and therapy services. On the 18th January, the isiZulu resources from Interface KZN were officially handed over to Glenys by Jocelyn Mngomezulu and Dr Margi Lilienfeld. A press release will appear in the Highway mail and the Daily News.

In 2012, we will be moving away from our previous schedule of regular AAC Action Labs, in order to meet the changing needs of educators and facilitators. This year, Jocelyn Mngomezulu and Kirsty Nourse will be providing training at schools based on requests and specific needs. A number of special needs schools have requested training and guidance on AAC materials and resources that they have already received through the Dept of Education. During the first and second school terms, Interface KZN will be providing training at St Raphaels School, Day Dawn Special School, Vulekhani Special School and Khalipha School. For further information, please contact Trudi Louw at our centre.

Interface KZN began an exciting group last year for teens who use AAC. The group was termed the Communication Circle initially but its members have now voted for Kool Friends as their official title! The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity for AAC users to meet other users and develop meaningful friendships within their own peer group. The group is managed by a Speech Therapist, but also includes young adult AAC users as mentors for the younger friends. During the group, opportunities for both structured and spontaneous conversation are provided, in the context of game playing and generally having fun. The actual games played, topics discussed and ideas for the group are provided by the participants themselves, thus developing their communication skills within a nurturing environment. We are currently a small group but are hoping to grow in the future. Any teens (and tweens 10-18 years old) in the Durban area who would like to join us are welcome to do so. We meet once a month on a Thursday afternoon

from 2-4pm at the Interface KZN AAC Resource Centre.

Interface KZN is very excited to commence implementation of the Sisizakele Special School Project in April 2012. We were approached by this rural school with a request to provide introductory training in AAC for the educators and classroom assistants. Sisizakele Special School is situated within the Jozini-Umkhanyakude area. Of the 78 learners, 43 require AAC of whom 17 have no functional speech at all. We are planning an initial 5- day intensive training programme for the educators, classroom assistants and caregivers in the use of basic AAC systems and strategies in April to assist with assessing the needs of the children attending the school and to train and support the educators and caregivers. During this initial training, the team from Interface KZN would also prescribe and provide appropriate and relevant AAC materials and resources for the school to enable staff and caregivers to implement the skills and knowledge gained during the training.

Leandra Hinds
Chairperson: Interface KZN
ifacekzn@saol.com

School news

Pathways Polokwane: Mitchell House Enrichment Centre

The New Year has kicked off with Naas Botha's boot behind it! We are keeping our heads above water but also noses to the grind-stone, and as we look up to take a breath, we see that the first term is almost over and we can't believe where the time has flown off to!

We are very pleased to welcome four new 'family members' – learners that joined our Junior and Senior classes this year. We have enjoyed getting to know them all. On a sad note, we were all devastated to receive the news of our Michael's passing. After a short but vicious battle with cancer, Michael died on the 23rd of December 2011. His legacy will live on in the Mitchell House Enrichment Centre for ever more. Our most sincere condolences go out to the Baragwaneth family. You are in our thoughts and prayers daily.

A New Year means that Inclusion starts afresh. The 'mainstream' classes have had a disability awareness story read to them, our children have been introduced, and inclusion has gotten underway. It is such a wonderful opportunity, not only for our children to experience inclusion in the mainstream classes, but also for the mainstream children to understand and tolerate "disability".

Our Juniors had such a wonderful fun sports day, jumping in sack races, bouncing on bouncy-balls and all kinds of other fun races. Although we didn't run to win, we certainly had a blast of a time, and the smiles on the children's faces just made the whole event so worth it for us all. The Seniors and Life Skills classes also got their chance to strut their stuff at the colours house sports day and we are so proud of Kamogelo for being chosen to throw the Javelin at the Ironwood inter-schools sports event! Well done Kamo!



Renate Wieffering
Mitchell House
Enrichment Centre
r.wieffering@mitchellhouse.co.za

Pathways Roodepoort

Sadly for us we have lost three more of our little angels since August last year. Little Tristan passed away in August 2011, Melissa passed away after Christmas 2011, and Zanele left us in the middle of January 2012. Each loss has been an enormous shock to our parents and staff but we are creating a Fairy Memorial Garden in remembrance of the six children who were part of the Pathways Roodepoort family and left this life early to watch us from above. May our precious angels all rest in peace. We will always remember them with love and think of them in light.

On 26 February 2012 Pathways Roodepoort was officially seven years old and we want to thank everyone who has helped to sustain us during this time. Without the Friends of Pathways Roodepoort, we would not have made it through seven sometimes difficult years, but here we are, thanks to large and small sponsors, people donating their time and effort, donations in kind and the endless love and support from our Community. We make a constant effort to ensure that we offer specialist care to our children and align our practises to world class standards. We conduct regular staff training and expose our team to new trends and techniques in order to remain abreast of latest trends in the stimulation and development of children with profound disabilities. The results are so rewarding. When a small milestone is reached by one of our children, we are thrown into celebration ! Every little sign of progress in each of our children is what fills us with courage and motivates us to carry on with our work.

This year is flying by and Pathways Roodepoort has already plunged into fundraising efforts. Our calendar is filling up and we have exciting events planned. Please visit our web-site for details and join us in our efforts to continue helping our children reach their highest potential.

Julie Botha
Founder: Pathways Roodepoort
Mobile: 083 653 5655

Special feature news

Afrika Tikkun



Afrika Tikkun
 Developing Communities
 in South Africa



Empowerment Programme:
 Children with Disabilities & their Families

Speaking up and speaking out: Awareness campaign by Afrika Tikkun

Jean Elphick is the National Manager of the empowerment project for children with disabilities. She met up with Centre staff at a conference in Israel, and obtained communication boards used to report abuse and crime. These boards were used in a recent awareness campaign.

States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Article 19 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Ratified by South Africa in 1995).

Despite the fact that only a fraction of incidents get reported to police, it is well established that South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape per capita in the world. Of those reported, even fewer cases are prosecuted, and of those just a handful end in a conviction.

This is a bad situation and all citizens are at risk. However, children with disabilities are the group most vulnerable to sexual abuse, and are at extremely high risk of contracting HIV as a result (Hannass-Hancock). People with disabilities rarely report abuse to the police and there are very few cases where children with disabilities have successfully navigated our courts and accessed justice. As an NGO that delivers education, health and social services to children, youth and their families in South African townships, Afrika Tikkun is constantly witness to this horrific injustice. Afrika Tikkun operates from Community Centres of Excellence in Gauteng and the Western Cape. Our vision is to create a sustainable future for children in South African townships, through strategic partnerships within the public and private sectors.



/...

As part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign aimed at combating violence directed at women and children, we organised an event to highlight the vulnerability children with disabilities face in terms of sexual abuse, and the difficulties they experience when trying to access justice. Children, parents and staff from Afrika Tikkun's Arekopaneng Community Centre in Orange Farm, as well as people from 5 local disability-related organisa-



tions participated in a peaceful procession. The procession, united in song and cause, walked from the Community Centre to the local police station, enticing cheers from onlookers and beeps from cars as they passed.

As the procession reached its final street, a crowd of interested parties already waited in support at the gates of the police station. Once all were gathered at the steps of the station, the band of people was 200 strong. The sentiment was infectious and no one could stop themselves participating in the songs which reverberated around the area for all to hear. When members of the police were present, a sign-language interpreter and local disability activist, Mr Vilakhazi, addressed the crowd.

They explained how the disability movement had aligned itself with the anti-Apartheid movement; but stressed that more needed to be done in protecting children with disabilities from abuse and providing with them with the means to communicate their terrible encounters.

After Mr Vilakhazi's powerful speech, Brigadier Manala of Orange Farm SAPS stepped forward to receive a memorandum and AAC communication board from children with disabilities who attend programmes at Arekopaneng Community Centre. The memorandum requested the Police in Orange Farm to play an active role in tackling the social and structural discrimination that makes children with disabilities vulnerable and prevents them from accessing their services. It also detailed how Afrika Tikkun's Empowerment Programme for Children with Disabilities, would endeavour to help the police utilise AAC so that children with disabilities can effectively report crime and be heard.

The day was a resounding success and clearly deeply moving for all involved. Brigadier Manala's response was genuine and heartfelt. In addition to acknowledging the vulnerabilities children with disabilities suffer, he also pledged his and the police department's support for Afrika Tikkun's Empowerment Programme and stated they would do what they could to ensure children with disabilities experience a more enabling environment when dealing with police.

Although the situation for children with disabilities in Orange Farm remains unacceptable, the words and actions of that day appear to be having some consequence. Subsequent to the Campaign Afrika Tikkun and the Orange Farm SAPS have been involved in the rape of a young lady with Cerebral Palsy. We hope that together we can encourage more children with disabilities to report abuse and strive towards a safe, accessible and inclusive Orange Farm community.

Oliver Lloyd and Jean Elphic
Afrika Tikkun Empowerment Programme:
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www.mafrikatikkun.org.za



Tech Talk

Caveat App Emptor (Beware the App buyer)!



With the arrival of AAC mobile technologies, a few dangerous assumptions are beginning to creep into the area of AAC device selection. One of these assumptions is that anyone will be able to access mobile AAC iDevices like the iPad or any of the easily available tablets. The other equally dangerous assumption is that you do not need a specialist AAC assessment when considering iDevices or the specific applications that the client would need. While we at the Centre for AAC gladly direct people to websites where they can find out more about the different iDevices and Apps available, it would be presumptuous and even evidence of malpractice if we recommend a specific iDevice for a person without a formal assessment. Underlying such practice would be another assumption - that the person involved is in fact a candidate for an iDevice.

As with any other AAC device recommendation, AAC specialists should not forgo well-established clinical assessment strategies and thus should not be giving advice without having personally evaluated the client or at least examined a comprehensive AAC assessment report. This is because AAC device and App selection is not a straightforward process. A person's motor capabilities, literacy and language, hearing, vision, education and social environment, along with their desire to communicate all need to be evaluated before an attempt can even be made to match these with the available technologies and applications.

In recent publications John Costello and Jessica Gosnell, speech therapists at Children's Hospital Boston, have noted a similar worrying trend in the United States. With the advent of iDevices they see a shift away from skilled AAC clinicians being the driving force behind AAC assessments and interventions towards AAC app decisions being made via guesswork, public testimonials or recommendations from well-meaning friends and family.

Costello and Gosnell highlight a few iDevice and app pitfalls when decisions are made without sufficient experience or clinical judgment and knowledge. These are:

- Wasted time and money learning or attempting to learn inappropriate communication technologies due to insufficient knowledge about app capabilities.
- Insufficient feedback from the iDevice ie volume is not sufficient in certain environments
- iDevice hardware is quite fragile and might not be able to withstand extended long term use.
- Limited access options for clients with motor difficulties. Currently communication apps on iDevices can only be accessed via direct selection.

Gosnell et al. (2011) have thus developed a systematic iDevice and app clinical feature matching process which follows a series of important steps:

1. The clinician identifies the client's abilities as well as **current** and **future** needs. These are then matched to the most appropriate AAC communication tools and strategies. If the assessment supports an iDevice platform as either a primary or secondary communication tool then the assessment can proceed to the following step.
2. The clinician then needs a sound knowledge of the available iDevice communication Apps and should be able to compare the capabilities and features of various apps to one another.
3. The clinician then matches the client's abilities and needs to the specific features of the available iDevice communication Apps.
4. Functional evidence-based clinical trials are then instituted to assess the appropriateness of the App(s) selected in relation to the client's communication needs.

They further recommend a clinical framework for comparing and selecting Apps on a list of features that are known to be important to many potential AAC users. The list of App features include: **purpose of use** (receptive or expressive); **output** (speech or no speech); **speech settings and customization** (e.g volume, pitch, rate); **graphic representation and customization of symbol**; **display settings** (e.g layouts, symbol size, colour, dynamic vs static); **feedback features**; **rate enhancement abilities**; **access options**; **motor competencies required** and last but not least, the **support available** to learn about the App. This app feature matching chart can be downloaded from <http://childrenshospital.org/clinicalservices/Site2016/Documents/PDFofFeatureChart.pdf>

By determining the iDevice platform and the accompanying communication App through a thorough clinical feature-matching process, we can be assured that we are finding the right technology for our clients rather than trying to fit our clients to the technology.

An appeal is therefore made to all in the AAC community (and those outside) to make systematic, informed and diligent choices regarding mobile technologies and communication Apps. The field of AAC is paved with too many unnecessary and expensive examples of devices abandonment when unrealistic expectations are not met. As a field therefore we could find ourselves going inexplicably backwards rather than capturing the innovative opportunities which can advance AAC in this exciting period in its history.

Alecia Samuels
Centre for AAC

User forum

The doctor's corner A diamond in the rough

I am Dr PC Mills. I experience daily the humbling effect which not being able to speak has. I can explain speaking as the ability to project your personality and intellect to others. It's oh so easy to miss the Kimberly (or Royal) diamond



that can't shine and, on the converse, be stunned by the shiny but worthless costume jewellery. We all know the saying in the alternative and augmentative communication community: 'Not being able to speak does not mean you have nothing to say'. But here I can add, in this situation eating humble pie is the only alternative. My advice is to stay patient and shine undaunted – eventually even a fleeting brilliant radiance will get

noticed. Once its glitter shows, there's just nothing like it.

Dr PC Mills
AAC user

Dr Mills sustained a brain stem injury leaving him with very little movement and no speech. However, this has not managed to quench his insatiable appetite for life and adventure. Read more about Dr Mills on his website at <http://www.civalmills.co.za>

The Prince's Speech

Prince Khanyi is a learner at Felicitas School. He has been diagnosed with athetosis and is non verbal. After a consultation at the Centre for AAC, a voice output device was recommended for him. Prince started receiving individual speech-language therapy for the past year. His progress in therapy has been outstanding! Initially in therapy he used the Go Talk 9+ to communicate. He grasped concepts very easily and often did not need to be taught the use of a message/picture before he used it correctly. After only a few months Prince moved from using the Go Talk 9+ to using the Go talk 20+.

Being able to communicate enhanced Prince's personality and it was evident that the AAC device allowed him to ex-

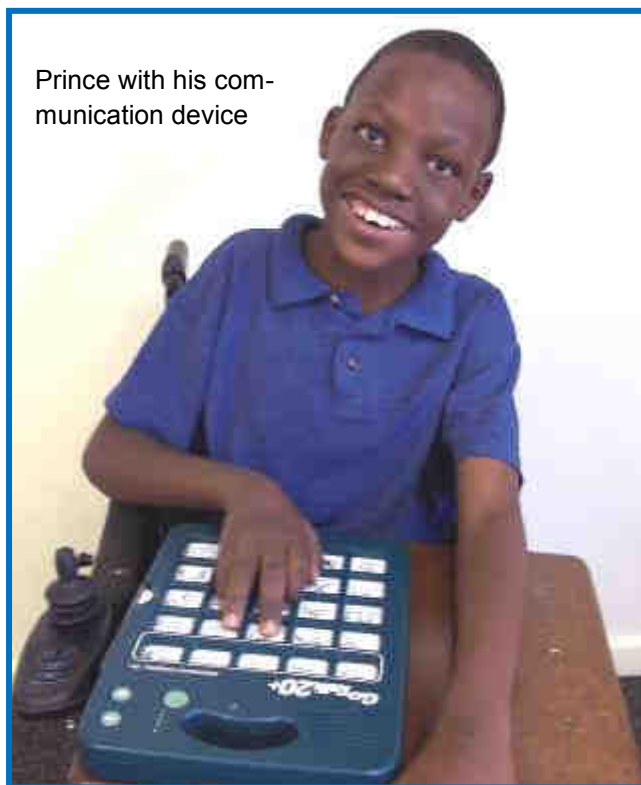
press his sense of humor.

In November 2011 four learners at Felicitas School received a donation of 4 custom-made motorized wheelchairs from Crawford College Lonehill. Prince was one of the fortunate learners to receive a wheelchair. He was super excited to be attending the handing over ceremony of the wheelchairs at Crawford College. When we arrived at Crawford College he introduced himself to the Principal as well as the learners. In addition he was interested in finding out everybody's names. The ceremony took place in the Hall of Crawford College. All learners and staff of Crawford College were present. The ceremony began with the principal introducing the learners of Felicitas School and providing a background of each learner, the principal thereafter continued with a lengthy speech. Prince was not very interested in the speech and he expressed himself using his AAC device "Enough, Enough, I'm bored, I'm bored!" Everyone present could not resist but laugh and the principal had no choice but to shorten his speech.

Prince is a motivated boy who inspires everyone around him on a daily basis. His determination in completing any task is amazing. Additionally, using an AAC device has opened up a whole world of opportunity to him.

Sima Parsot
Speech-Language Therapist & Audiologist
Felicitas School

Prince with his communication device



For your diary...

Pixon training

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

- Build sentences*
- Meet a variety of communication needs*
- Talk about abstract topics*
- Access the curriculum*

Maureen Casey, who has been working for the Prentke Romich Company will present the Pixon workshop to introduce the use of the system.



- When:** Saturday 14 April 2012
- Time:** 08h30–16h00
- Where:** The Centre for AAC, University of Pretoria
- Cost:** R 900.00 (Full Pixon CD set and brown bag lunch included) (10% discount for groups of five and more)
- RSVP:** By 30 March 2012



ECI knowledge building seminar

After 10 years of presenting the Masters in Early Childhood Intervention programme, the Centre for AAC would like to explore the current state of Early Childhood Intervention in South Africa in terms of policy and practice. A two-day seminar is therefore planned for the **25th and 26th of May 2012** with key role players in South Africa. We encourage our MECI alumni as well as people working with the 0-7 year population to attend. More detailed information about the programme will be sent out on our email lists soon.



PITTSBURGH • WOW



ISAAC 2012 July 24 - August 4, 2012

Would you like to get acquainted with the international AAC community? Catch up on the latest in AAC practice and research from around the world? Share your own practice experience or research in the field of AAC? Then the 15th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) is for you. This event will take place in Pittsburgh, PA, US July **24 - August 4, 2012**.

More info at <http://www.isaac2012.org/>

To get updates, Like this Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Isaac-2012-Pittsburgh/143324919049372>

AAC knowledge building seminar

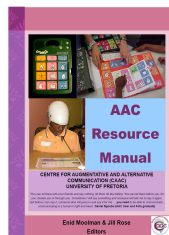
Interested in the latest AAC systems, strategies and techniques? The AAC knowledge building seminar, planned for **12 and 13 October 2012** at the Centre for AAC, is aimed at providing a platform for researchers and practitioners in the field to share the latest knowledge in the field. We are intending to dedicate one day mainly to research, and one day mainly to implementation issues. These days will also allow feedback from the ISAAC conference to be disseminated.



"You always complain that I don't know how to show my emotions, so I made these signs."



University of Pretoria



Items for sale at the CAAC : 2012

Please note: All prices exclude packaging and postage

Price

AAC resource manual

Your all-in-one AAC resource with covering a spectrum of AAC topics, full of practical tips and how-to guidelines

CD
Black-and white copy
Colour copy (on order only)

R 230.00
R 330.00
R 600.00



Memories (DVD)

The inspirational stories of Young South Africans who use AAC

R 40.00



Believe all can achieve

By Juan Bornman and Jill Rose

An invaluable book for educators who want to improve their ability to support learners with disabilities in their classrooms, schools and communities.

R 350.00



Just the same on the inside:

Understanding Diversity and Supporting Inclusion in Circle Time

By Margaret Collins and Juan Bornman

Aimed at helping children understand and accept their peers with disabilities, this book presents a series of stories on children with disabilities as well as circle time activities for youngsters aged 6-8 and 8-11.

R 150.00



'You can tell and be heard' Communication Boards

Communication boards that can help persons with little or no speech disclose abuse or neglect. Each pack includes two boards for adults (literate and non-literate) and two boards for children (literate and non-literate). Available in English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu and Sepedi.

R 80.00

TALKING TO THE DEAF



Talking to the Deaf

Department of Education and Training

South African Sign Language Dictionary – 1500 signs illustrated by simple line drawings. An ideal resource for key word signing.

Hard copy:
R 60.00
PdF on CD:
R 60.00



Beginning Communication Intervention Package

R 1500.00



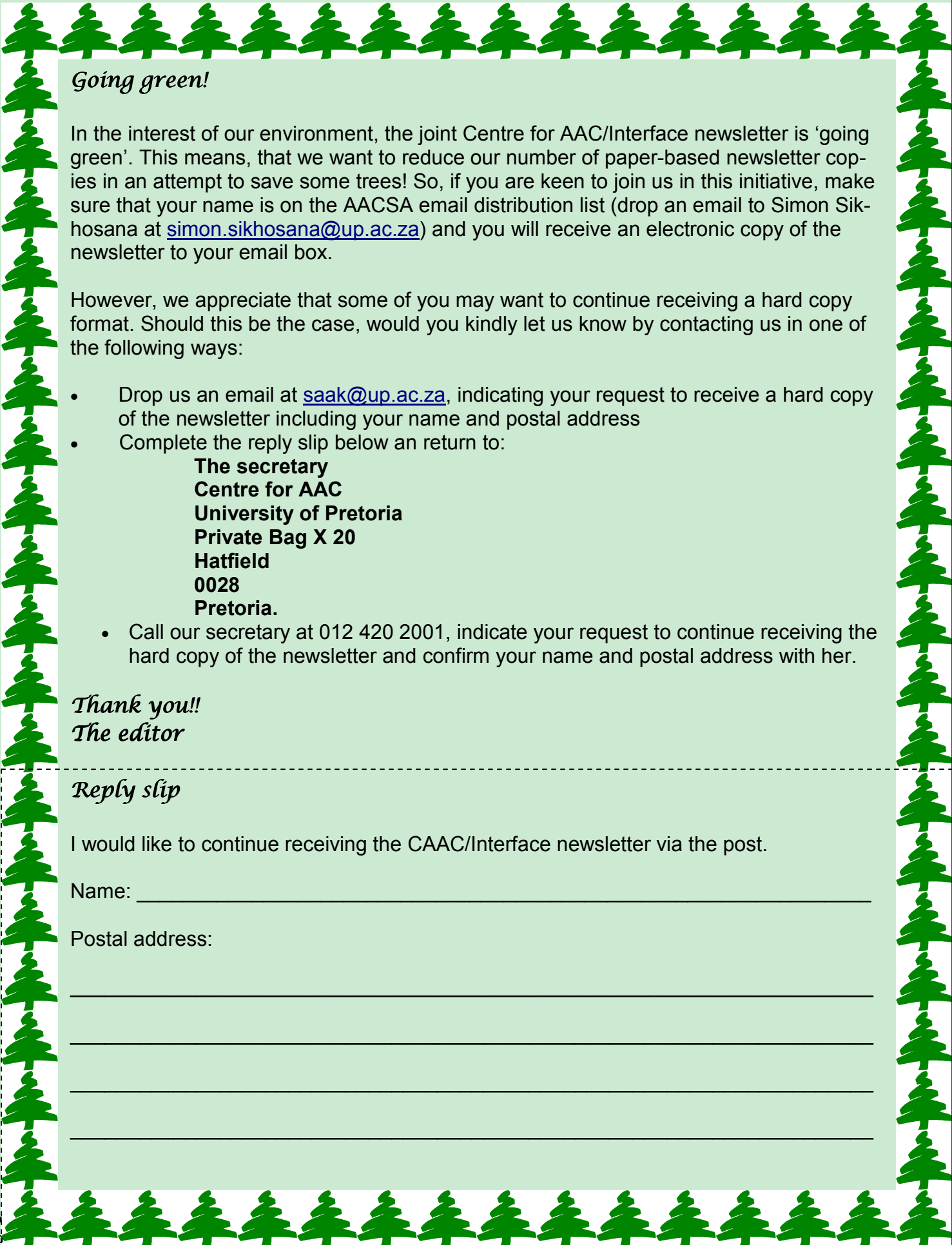
Mind if I Sit?

By Neville Cohen and Jane Fox

The inspirational story of Neville Cohen, a man who turned his (dis-)ability into the driving force to change things for the better.

R 120.00





Going green!

In the interest of our environment, the joint Centre for AAC/Interface newsletter is 'going green'. This means, that we want to reduce our number of paper-based newsletter copies in an attempt to save some trees! So, if you are keen to join us in this initiative, make sure that your name is on the AACSA email distribution list (drop an email to Simon Sikhosana at simon.sikhosana@up.ac.za) and you will receive an electronic copy of the newsletter to your email box.

However, we appreciate that some of you may want to continue receiving a hard copy format. Should this be the case, would you kindly let us know by contacting us in one of the following ways:

- Drop us an email at saak@up.ac.za, indicating your request to receive a hard copy of the newsletter including your name and postal address
- Complete the reply slip below an return to:

**The secretary
 Centre for AAC
 University of Pretoria
 Private Bag X 20
 Hatfield
 0028
 Pretoria.**

- Call our secretary at 012 420 2001, indicate your request to continue receiving the hard copy of the newsletter and confirm your name and postal address with her.

*Thank you!!
 The editor*

Reply slip

I would like to continue receiving the CAAC/Interface newsletter via the post.

Name: _____

Postal address: _____

