

Hello,

It's a pleasure to be in touch again with another AC World Network newsletter. I hope you will enjoy reading about the exciting AAC news and experiences that have reached me during the past two months. Hopefully you will also find some of the contents of this letter interesting and useful.

New AAC Programmes:

There is exciting news from Jordan following Arwen Kittelson-Aldred's visit to Eleanor's Project. www.eleanoresproject.org Arwen writes:

“During the course of our trip to Jordan we actually identified six people who all expressed a great deal of interest in becoming members of ISAAC. They are a varied group of people... parents, therapists, and educators.

We introduced some basic AAC to four children during our trip. It was quite a balancing act finding not only appropriate children (of whom there were many I assure you) but also families that were excited and supportive of using AAC with their children. Two children were introduced to Yes and No symbols that were affixed to their wheelchair trays, and both of them immediately started answering questions accurately. It was thrilling to see!

Two more individuals, teenagers, were introduced to various switches. One of them, a very bright 14 year old girl with an incredible family, caught on so quickly to the picture symbols we introduced her to that we gave her the Cardinal, a 3 level 8 slot recording device that was donated to Eleanor's Project at ISAAC. Her family was really excited about using picture symbols with her, and my father spent quite a while on the computer with her father, going through various websites where they could access picture symbols to make their own.

The other teenager who was introduced to a switch is 17 years old. He has extremely complex physical needs but a great personality and no cognitive impairments whatsoever. We set up a one message switch at the only site we could find that would not result in unintentional activation that he is using to get attention so he can express needs. Because of the complexity of his body he doesn't spend a lot of time in his chair. If we were working on his seating system in the US, all the changes that we had to make at one shot would have been made over the course of a few months to let him acclimate. We are hoping that he is acclimating and spending more time using his chair but have not yet heard how things are going with their family.

We will be following up with all of these people this summer and are planning on having one team member (probably myself) focused on AAC for the trip. Though we have not yet made specific plans, I imagine we will try to take along more picture

symbol sheets but also more devices that can have messages recorded.”
Very best wishes Arwen for all your future AAC dreams in Jordan.

From Brazil Dianne Martins writes:

I'm an occupational therapist and I work at CEDI in Porto Alegre with Rita Bersch, We are developing a project in a partnership with UFRGS to organize a service to assess, experience, implement and follow up the use of communication and computer access devices of students who are part of AEE - specialized educational programme and to support and instruct their teachers from the AEE resources room in the use of AT. We are still in the writing/planning stage of the project that will be better explained at the beginning of 2009 when I plan to post it in the BUILD project. In general the development of AAC in Brazil is of my interest and you can count on me for further projects. Great news, Dianne. Do let us know, as well as BUILD, about your plans and how your project progresses. Good luck.

Videos.

Our mentoring programme friends have requested information about videos that can be used to spread awareness of Augmentative Communication (AAC), and to demonstrate the use of AAC and Assisted Technology (AT) by people who rely on one or both means of support. There are some excellent videos via the internet. By referencing www.youtube.com and by searching 'Augmentative Communication' and 'Assistive Technology' you will find an impressive number of examples that demonstrate both situations.

At <http://www.youtube.com:80/watch?v=AlkqRPjI5mU&feature=related> there is a video of a young girl who uses her feet as hands (Spanish commentary). You can also find excellent videos on the University of Washington site. There you can search the site's video archives for particular subjects (pre-schoolers, teenagers), their means of communication (picture board, Morse code) and a situation in which AAC is being used (shopping, classroom). Go to <http://depts.washington.edu/enables/>

There is a Canadian site that shows adults commenting on their lives and community living experiences with communication boards via direct selection and assisted scanning. To view them go to www.accpc.ca select 'Pointing It Out' and find 'video clips' in the left hand column. Enabling Dreams is a video that shows some highly motivated students and the use of assistive technology in a university

setting. <http://www.edutopia.org/assistive-technology-enabling-dreams-video> In other media, a DVD has been produced by Communication Matters (United Kingdom) that provides an introductory presentation about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). 'Communication Matters', a film (running time 15 minutes) delivers a powerful message that communication really does matter. A demonstration

of this DVD is available on line www.communicationmatters.org.uk And finally, from India, a CD 'Silent Voices' gives an introduction to AAC and shows children demonstrating its use. www.iicp.com

As you will see most of these videos come from North America and are limited by my knowledge. I would love to know of videos from every country in which we live. Please send me that information so that I can share it in our next newsletter.

Donations.

A very big thank you to Cathy Binger, Speech Language Pathologist at the University of New Mexico. From another ACWN friend, Pat Politano, I heard that Cathy was 'housecleaning' in her AAC Department and had AAC materials to give to an emerging AAC programme. Seeing that Cathy was in New Mexico I got in touch with Gaby in Mexico City to see if she would be interested in this great offer. Then came Cathy's letter: "Hi Gaby - So nice to hear from you, and I'm thrilled that you want some of our materials. We can probably bring 2 trunks full of things." Two trunks full!!! Thanks so much Cathy. So the moral is, if anyone hears of any more AAC 'housecleaning' please let me know. This is a wonderful and generous way of sharing with friends who are just starting an AAC programme.

Conferences.

We have four colleagues who are busy preparing conferences: namely in India, Singapore, Mexico and Russia. If you have friends who might be interested in these events they can get further information via the following references.

India March 14-16 2009: National Conference on Alternative Communication and Assistive Technology for Persons with Disabilities. Sponsored by the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE) and ISAAC-India Chapter. National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE), Mumbai, India. Contact: ushadt@yahoo.co.in

Singapore April 22 - 26, 2009: Third International Convention on Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology, Singapore Management University, Singapore. Contact: icreate2009@start-centre.com

Website: <http://icreate.start-centre.com/icreate2009/index.php>

Mexico April 22 - 25 2009: Conference presented by Centro de Apoyo Tecnológico para la Comunicación y el Aprendizaje in association with La Universidad de Celaya, The Bridge School, Ablenet and the Central Coast Children's Foundation.

Spanish contact: <http://www.caticmexico.org/> Information in English is attached to this letter.

Russia June 29 - July 3 2009: TOUCH: Together in United Communicative Homes Organized by Archangelsk Municipality & Pomor State University

Archangelsk, Russia. The conference registration is open at <http://touch.pomorsu.ru>

Three of the conferences mentioned here are being organized completely or in a supportive way by recipients of The Bridge School International / ISAAC

Scholarship. This is a great testimonial to the impact that every staff member of The

Bridge School has had and continues to have on AAC development worldwide. Best wishes for the success of all these conferences.
For Picture Communication Symbol (PCS) Users.

The AdaptedLearning website (an associated PCS programme) offers a variety of content and implementation recourses, provided through download files, news and information as well as through support from members and a large user community. Best of all it is FREE. You register then start learning and sharing. If you have a question and need help you can be sure that there are others who have similar needs or who have “been there” and can provide assistance. Highly recommended.

<http://www.adapytedlearning.com>

Just Fun.

Here’s something for those who are just learning to use a mouse. Click on http://www.procreo.jp/labo/flower_garden.swf You will get a black page. Click your mouse on Flower Garden, then anywhere on the page and see what happens! Better yet, click and drag your mouse all over the page. Love it!

Finally Goodbye, that’s it from snowy Toronto. Please keep writing. There will be another newsletter at the end of April in which you can share your news, ask questions and make your AAC needs known. Until then, best wishes,

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