



It is hard to believe that this edition of Augmentative Communication World Network (ACWN) newsletter completes two years in which we have shared topics on augmentative communication together. We have read news of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) programmes from over forty countries, new ones added in each newsletter. In this issue there are reports from Columbia, Peru and Kenya, and news of volunteer opportunities in Kenya for anyone who wishes to take up that challenge. Thanks to all our contributors. Read on.

The author of the following report, Cory Ybarra, is the Founder, Director and mainstay of Building for Generations. As her report makes clear, one VERY DETERMINED individual can sometimes make a very significant impact on the lives of individuals with special needs in emerging areas.

Building for Generations in Tanzania and Peru

by Cory Ybarra, Santa Cruz, California

Tanzania. “Give Us a Chance and See us Perform” These words were scribbled on a piece of paper hanging over the door of a small overcrowded classroom at Secei Elementary in **Tanzania**. All the students had special needs, ranging from severe involvement to simple learning disabilities. Other children, who were too involved to even make it to the school site, received home visits from Victor and Tuzzie, the two teachers who taught parents ways to work with their children. The special needs classroom was threatened because the Secei Elementary school was overpopulated and they needed the space for “typical” students. The government had allotted the teachers of special needs students a piece of land, but they had to raise the money to build on it. Three years had passed with no donors in sight. **Building for Generations** gave them that chance. We were able to raise money to build a three classroom block for students with special needs and an auditorium to serve the entire school. The Naurei Special Needs Unit now serves 70 children. Many are integrated into the regular elementary classrooms. Most importantly, they all have a place and a home that is theirs.

Peru. A short time before Peru was ravaged by a magnitude 8.0 earthquake on August 15th, 2007, I made my first visit to Peru looking for a possible project. When the earthquake hit, I returned and planned to go to the rural site of Chincha Baja where the earthquake claimed more than 500 lives and 58,000 homes. An architect I met in Lima informed me that although she had visited Chincha Baja many times, but had never seen anyone

with disabilities. I reassured her that they were there and, that as a parent of a young adult with disabilities, I would find them.

I arrived to find rat-infested tent cities, and no running water. It was winter and very cold. There were no signs of reconstruction although families had submitted the necessary paperwork. The UN, UNICEF, and the church were the only hope in sight. As we gathered in the municipal building, it was a privilege and pleasure to ask the people questions and let them dream.

In June 2009, after joining forces with the local Peruvian community of Santa Cruz in California, Building for Generations completed a Rehabilitation and Resource Center, named after my son Joaquin. In August 2010, I had the privilege of meeting one of our newest participants and her family.

Maria Pilar is three and a half years old. She was born prematurely and has cerebral palsy. When she was a year old, Maria began severe seizures that left her unable to sit or stand. Her family doctor to doctor and clinic to clinic. Today, thanks to Jonathan, the therapist at the Joaquin Rehabilitation and Resource Center, Maria stand with the aid of her walker and can sit and play with her toys. eager and proud to pose for pictures and show off her accomplishments, and her parents have found hope where none has



at 6 months having trekked from physical can now Maria was existed.



For more information about Building For Generations, visit www.buildingforgenerations.com or e-mail Cory Barra at corybarra@aol.com

Tina Novero, a Research and Resource Associate at the Central Coast Children's Foundation, is about to complete her Master's Degree in International Management at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Tina has previously served as Thailand Program Coordinator for the Global Service Corps and Special Project Assistant for the Partnership for Immigrant Leadership and Action. She is an active participant on Team Peru and the Becky Fund.

Inspiration in Peru by Tina Novero, Monterey, CA

Our world is full of so many pressing challenges, from climate change to war, that it is difficult to find hope. If we look closely, we can indeed find inspiring stories of compassion and action. This article takes a closer look at Peru where 33% of the population is living in poverty. In recent years, the country has dealt with a number of disasters. In 2007, Peru's central coast was rocked by an 8.0 magnitude earthquake. Last January 2010, heavy flooding swept through the Sacred Valley devastating the agricultural region of the country. Here are a few organizations that are doing their part and making huge impacts in the lives of those with special needs in Peru:

Equip KIDS International is a wonderful, Canadian-based international development organization operating in Peru. Equip KIDS changes live through the production and distribution of assistive technology (*i.e.*,

wheelchairs, walkers and communication devices) as well as the education of children with disabilities, their caregivers and their therapists. People can help change lives through their sponsorship program by sponsoring just one child. Here is an excerpt from their website:

“Carlos is a bright 11 year-old with Cerebral Palsy from Cusco, Peru. When we met Carlos, he was spending his days in a plastic bathtub in one of the family's two rooms. His family had neither the money nor the resources to get him a wheelchair and Carlos is unable to sit in a normal chair. We supplied him with his first wheelchair, complete with custom seating and a tray. He can now go out to play with his friends, go for walks with his brother, and perhaps most importantly, is attending school for the first time. This one chair has changed his life immeasurably.” Visit their website to learn more at <http://www.equipkids.org>

Equip Kids also partners with the organization **Eleanore's Project**. Eleanore's Project, furnishes impoverished children with adaptable wheelchairs. The organization was created in memory of Eleanore Kittleson-Aldred who was born with cerebral palsy and deafness. She passed away in 2001 at the age of 11 and her parents vowed to help other disabled children around the world. The two organizations team up annually to assist children with disabilities in Peru. Here is an excerpt from their website:

“One of the highlights of our positioning workshop was the accidental discovery of Daniel’s interest in using a communication board once he was properly positioned. We changed the set-up of the wheelchair he already had, and I decided to try using a tray. The only one available belonged to Equip KIDS and happened to be transparent with communication symbols mounted underneath and clearly visible through the plastic. As soon as it was in place, Daniel’s attention was riveted on the symbols and he began to reach out and touch them. Although unplanned it was a perfect example of the message we emphasize – that proper positioning is a foundation that opens the door to so many other things.” To learn more, go to <http://www.eleanoresproject.org>.

Building for Generations (see previous article) supports education projects in Tanzania, Peru, Columbia and the United States with a focus on persons with special needs. Their mission is to “build appropriate facilities to meet the needs of the community” and “develop sustainable programs and increase economic opportunities.” Here is an excerpt from their website about their Peru project: *“June 2008, we visited Chincha Baja and Tambo de Mora, site of the 2007, 8.0 earthquake. Prior to our visit, we met with an architect at the University of Ricardo Palma, Lima. She was referred to us by sources in the U.S. We told her we were going to interview families in the area of the quake and requested a meeting on our return to Lima. She contacted the mayor, who we met with on our arrival...The mayor donated the land and building began December. Our location is across from the soccer field and after a meeting with the group we discussed bringing Special Olympics to the area. The mayor also agreed to underwrite the salary of a therapist into the budget for this year. In addition the wife of the assistant mayor, who works in special ed., has volunteered to work there after school hours. A therapist from Lima is interested in coming for a weekend volunteer shift and a grandmother wants to donate time to teach crocheting to participants.”* Please visit their website at <http://www.buildingforgenerations.com>

Team Peru is a budding grassroots organization affiliated with the **Monterey Institute of International Studies** and **The Becky Fund**. Team Peru is engaged in empowering indigenous communities in the Cusco region of Peru. The organization designs agriculture, education, and health projects in the Sacred Valley of Perú in an effort to improve lives and reduce poverty. Here is an excerpt from their blog, about a school greenhouse in the highlands of the Andes:

“The community of Pampacoral gathered to work on preparing the land for the school greenhouse. Weeks of working with the community and gaining their trust paid off as over 50 parents arrived with shovels and picks in hand ready to work. The amount of land moved and rocks removed was astounding. It’s amazing what 50 people can accomplish. The physical accomplishment was great but most importantly the community came together to help their school, it was the definition of community development.” To learn more, please visit <http://blogs.miis.edu/teamperu>

The Becky Fund provides crucial school supplies and teaching materials to thousands of children and 100 schools in Peru. Becky Prichard, from Minnesota in the U.S., worked with kids in the Sacred Valley and tragically died at the age of 30 in a car accident, when she and her fiancée were driving back to Calca from Cuzco, Peru. Here is an excerpt from the Becky fund blog:

“In schools where the few items available are usually purchased by the teacher with his or her own money, these supplies can make the difference between a child having only a rudimentary understanding of the language and being truly literate, opening up options for that child’s ability to make a contribution to his or her community in the future.”

To learn more about the Becky Fund, please visit <http://www.thebeckyfund.org>.

Disability is a very sensitive issue in Peru because challenges are exacerbated by extreme poverty. **APRODE PERU** has a program addressing the needs of impoverished people with disabilities in northern Peru. The organization is actively seeking physical therapists or persons studying physiotherapy for their physical therapy and rehabilitation program for people with disabilities. Here is an excerpt from their website.

“We are an institution dedicated to helping the modernization process and decentralization of the state to accomplish the Millennium Objectives fighting every day to eradicate poverty, inequality and exclusion with the basic intention of human development. The aim is to provide the persons most in need in our society a decent life to live in the future.” For more information, please visit <http://www.aprodeperu.com>

For more information about activities in Peru, you can also email the author, Tina Novero at Tinarosenovero@gmail.com or Harvey Pressman @ presstoe@aol.com

Lynnette Norris recently retired as a Special Education and Augmentative Communication Consultant in the Communication and Writing Aids Service at the Holland- Bloorview Kids Rehab in Toronto, Canada. For many years Lynnette has supported the development of augmentative communication through her membership in ISAAC and in countries such as Peru, Brazil and Columbia.

An AAC Colombian Adventure

by Lynnette Norris, Toronto, Canada

In July 2010 I had the privilege of attending the 5th International Conference on Disabilities in Medellin, Colombia. My host at the conference was an energetic speech language pathologist, Clara Lucia Avila Lozano, whom I had met the previous November at the 4th Annual International AAC Conference in Peru. Clara was excited about the new AAC ideas and philosophy she had heard about in Peru and wanted to share these ideas at the 5th International Conference on Disabilities in Colombia. Upon her return home from Peru she was able to persuade the conference organizers that a keynote address about AAC would be very motivating and appropriate for their upcoming conference. I was honoured to be asked to make two presentations.

This was my first trip to Colombia and I knew a little about Colombia. I knew it was a country of very diverse geography in coastal areas, both on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea; that there were mountainous areas where coffee was a plentiful crop; and that the valley regions were well-populated. I knew the climate was very different at the coast, mountains and valleys. I also knew, mainly from the negative press we hear, about drugs and violence. I wanted to attend the conference but I also wanted to spend some time getting a feel for how people live, work and play in Colombia.

The conference organizers were wonderful. They arranged my flights, my accommodation and even put me in touch with a private travel guide who was fluent in Spanish and English. I spent the weekend before and after the conference with my guide seeing some of the country around Medellin, a town situated in the southern part

of Colombia in a magnificent valley. The people were friendly, the scenery spectacular and the weather was superb with sun and warmth that stays all year round. I hope to have the opportunity to return. The three day conference (July 21-23 2010), was organized by two groups who work with people with disabilities in Medellin; the “Instituto de Capacitacion Los Alamos” and the “Fundacion Integrar”. The conference attracted 700 delegates from all over Colombia and other countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, Costa Rico, Panama, and Peru. Delegates represented the full spectrum of professionals in health and education as well as many parents. The five international speakers represented Canada, Costa Rico, Peru, Spain and the United States. We were treated to a wide variety of presentations, many of which related to the needs of people with autism. I believe that the two presentations I gave were the only two focusing on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). I was thrilled that one of my presentations was a keynote address that all participants attended. Most of the participants were Spanish speaking. My two presentations, delivered in English, were translated simultaneously into Spanish and sign language.

My topic for the keynote was “Why does the ability to develop communication affect human performance?” Though I had difficulty understanding the topic initially, I became excited about sharing stories of people who had developed interpersonal communication using AAC approaches. I decided to describe how AAC had affected their lives and their human performance.

During the session, I suggested that speaking is only one way of communicating. Applause broke out from the delegates who use sign language as their first method of communication. I told stories that my friends who use AAC allowed me to share, talking about the ups and downs of their real life experiences. For example, some of my friends were not introduced to AAC until they were in school or even older. To help the delegates understand how communication affects human performance, I shared what my friends told me life was like when they had no means of communication that others understood. They also told me their overwhelming feelings of joy, relief, and awaking when they were first introduced to AAC and their present activities and work, hopes and dreams for the future. This part of the presentation was motivational and inspirational, as well as an eye opener for many delegates who had not had the opportunity to know someone with severe communication challenges.

I also gave an overview of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Although most participants had heard of the Convention, few were familiar with its content. We seemed to agree that the challenge today is no longer to ask **when** or **if to** introduce AAC to someone with unmet communication needs, but rather **how** to introduce AAC approaches to someone who can benefit, and do so **right now**.

The topic for my elective session was “An Overview of Assessment and Intervention in Augmentative and Alternative Communication”. Based on Joy Zabala’s framework for the assessment for assistive technology, I presented the process we (Nora Rothschild and I) adapted for AAC. The SETT framework stands for Student (individual), Environment (and partners) Tasks and Tools and has many benefits. One message the delegates left with was the importance of a team approach, made up of many different professionals, as well as the student and parents, depending on the needs of each student.

An AAC assessment is done through careful and systematic observation. In addition to assessing the student’s needs and abilities, it is important to know about the abilities, skills, preferences and biases of the student’s communication partners. Also, I discussed the importance of considering the appropriateness of the activities a student is presently involved in and, when necessary, the need to brainstorm ideas to increase the student’s active participation. Finally, I stressed the importance of knowing the student well, their environments and the tasks they need to complete before setting communication goals or recommending AAC tools and strategies.

Many of the participants commented positively on the inclusiveness of the team approach and the idea that all team members have a voice in decision-making. In addition, they seem to appreciate the idea that the student is the focus of the framework and tools (things) are considered last.

I left Colombia excited about the possibility of returning as a tourist to learn more about this beautiful diverse country and feeling enriched by the opportunity to meet, share and learn from so many dedicated, motivated, caring and hard working professionals and family members.

For more information, you can contact Lynnette at lynnettenorris@hotmail.com

On September 2, 3 and 4, 2010, Al Cook, from the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada spoke at II CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE FONOAUDIOLOGIA in Bogotá Colombia, the Colombian Association of Phonoaudiologist's National Conference. This is his report:

Another Colombia Conference

by Al Cook, Edmonton, Canada

The conference featured invited speakers from Brazil, Argentina and Canada each of whom gave several talks to an audience of practicing SLPs and audiologists, with a sprinkling of teachers and others. I was the only person speaking about AAC. My three topics were: *Issues in AAC, The AAC Team and Playing with Language: AAC and Robots.*

The conference provided simultaneous translation from Spanish to English and from English or Portuguese to Spanish. I was fortunate to be able to make use of a talk given in Mexico by Gabriela Berlanga and Marcela Manzur. Having Power Point slides in Spanish--a definite benefit. The audience was interested in AAC, as I believe people are generally. I learned of many creative low and no-tech approaches for using AAC with people with complex communication needs.

In the question and answer periods following my talks, participants asked for suggestions about how they could make a difference in the lives of people needing AAC. They discussed the need to address public attitudes toward people who need to use AAC as a priority for the Association of Phonoaudiologists. They have already conducted public relations campaigns about closed captioning and the need for early screening of children. They can build on their experiences to develop a public awareness campaign for AAC.

Columbia does not have many mid or high-tech AAC devices available, primarily due to price. People do use cell phones and smart phones, and we discussed the emerging availability and possible future use of apps that address AAC needs. We also discussed issues related to (1) access for those unable to use the touch screen or keyboards, (2) the availability of Spanish language output and (3) other cultural questions. I was able to provide many communication board layouts with a variety of symbols and Spanish text for their website. I also shared a copy of Anne Warrick's book **Comunicacion Sin Habla**. There was another copy available in the audience, indicating local AAC expertise.

My final talk addressed the use of small Lego robots to evaluate cognitive development and to enhance the linkage between play and AAC. While there was lots of interest, the cost of technology is a barrier. Participants talked about using cell phones with Bluetooth to control robots and purchasing a few robots (about \$300 Canadian) for students in schools to share. I had the pleasure of speaking with some very enthusiastic SLP students who had heard about the robot work in an assistive technology class taught by OT profs at Rosario University in Bogota.

These OT profs, Liliana Alvarez and Adriana Rios, are currently in Edmonton pursuing PhD degrees in Rehabilitation Science specifically related to the robot work. This means that my colleague Kim Adams and I

will continue to have linkages to Colombia and the wonderful professionals there who are truly changing lives of people with disabilities.

I learned more about Colombia at the conference. In 2008, I attended a conference in Cartagena and saw some of those people at this conference. Each trip has opened my eyes to the work being done in rehabilitation and in AAC in Colombia. I am impressed by the people and the programs being developed to serve people with complex communication needs. I plan to return to Colombia and look forward to learning more from them about how to make maximum use of available resources.

For more information, contact Al at al.cook@ualberta.ca

Bea Staley has volunteered in Kenya since 2006. She is currently working on her doctoral degree in the School of Teaching & Learning at the Ohio State University. Both Bea and Mike Terry are ex-VSO volunteers who currently provide speech therapy services for Mombasa Children's Therapy Centre. Bea believes that blues are bluer and greens are greener in Mombasa and plans to move there for her dissertation research late next year.

Volunteer Opportunities in Kenya

by Bea Staley, Columbus, Ohio

This article provides an overview of speech language pathology (SLP) service in East Africa, as well as some perceived needs about augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Both the strongest professional presence and most of my experiences are in Kenya and while I write about volunteer opportunities for SLPs, the information may extend to other health and education professionals.

Kenya's current population is around 38 million, and global disability estimates suggest around 10% might be disabled (WHO, 1989). According to United Nations only 3% of people with disabilities who live in poverty receive the rehabilitative care they need (Groce, 1999). Hartley (1998), extrapolating from her work in community based rehabilitation in Uganda that 98.8 million people in less developed countries have communication disorders and could potentially benefit from services.

Volunteer SLP's can help meet the immediate needs of these people until longer term solutions are found.

In Kenya over the past two years, an average of three therapists per annum has come to stay from two weeks to three or more months. Kenya currently has 10 qualified practicing SLPs so this is significant increase in potential service provision.

Speech therapy is an emerging profession in much of Sub-Saharan Africa. There are some SLPs in Togo, Ghana, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Nigeria. Kenya has a handful of permanent SLPs as well as a rotating number of long term volunteers through Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO). Tanzania has two qualified practitioners and one is working in the field.

The only regional SLP training program is at MacAfee University in Uganda and its first cohort of students is scheduled to graduate in January 2012. The current challenge for VSO, the primary organizers of the program, is to lobby the Ugandan government to recognize the field and create positions for the new graduates.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication in Kenya

Mike Terry, a British SLP who has worked in Kenya since 2007 estimates that over 80% of children he sees at the Association for the Physically Disabled Kenya (APDK) have moderate to severe forms of cerebral palsy (cp) and high communication needs. He noted that AAC is rarely implemented due to lack of caregiver and professional knowledge about AAC methods.

Mike notes that caregivers often give up on the child's ability to develop communication and frequently don't understand or believe that their child can understand language because he or she doesn't talk.



Bea during a community assessment day in the Killifish district

The District Education Assessment Resource Centers (EARC) act as a clearing house for Kenyan children with disabilities. Parents bring their child to the center for assessment (or the EARC staff goes out to communities) and a formal referral is made for an appropriate school program which the EARC staff are expected to establish and support. Some children are kept home from school because they can't talk. Furthermore, children with mild disabilities who are not succeeding in school are said to be lazy or naughty. Children who do make it to an EARC have significant impairment and multiple areas of concern.

One of my personal goals in my work with both the EARCs and Mombasa Children's Therapy Center is to increase community awareness of disability and decrease the age at which children are referred. For example, the average age of first visit to Mombasa EARC today is 10 years old (based on the records of over 3000 children).

Helping Parents and Professionals accept AAC

Parents in Kenya, like everywhere, remain hopeful their child will start talking so when a professional suggests AAC they may feel let down. Mike noted that he finds it is hard to persuade people to 'take these things up and use them'. Mike implements AAC with children from 2 to 16 years and encourages parents to use gesture and communication books with relevant pictures. He estimates that half of the children he works with also have receptive language difficulties so he's used AAC to help them express themselves and build up an understanding of routines (e.g. go home, toilet) by emphasizing the link between picture (or object) and routine. He notes, however, that because of limited follow up, implementing AAC with children in his community is rarely successfully.

Also of note is that although SLPs in Kenya do not currently train on oral motor exercises, every speech therapy program run by an occupational therapist or a teacher predominantly focuses on oral activities. Despite research to the contrary, people continue to ask children to blow balls of paper across a table and report this as speech therapy. Unfortunately for the children of Kenya, the Kenyan Institute of Education once promoted 'speech kits' - a large wooden box that contained feathers, balloons and a mirror. These are constantly in demand. For practitioners who lack training, these speech kits seem to be comforting because they are tangible despite the fact that there is no relationship between oral motor activities and children learning to talk.



Poster on the wall of a classroom

When asked about the national needs of developing AAC programming in Kenya, Emma Shah, an SLP who lives in Kenya, but was trained in Britain, agreed that the possibilities for programming are extensive. In areas where a community based rehabilitation program exists, AAC could potentially be implemented and supported. Emma provides adult speech therapy services at both Nairobi and Agha Khan Hospital. She reports 'we need a proper AAC assessment service. We have lots of people who could use high tech AAC and have the personal finances to fund it.' She went on to say,

'Information on how to adapt your own computer for a disability would be helpful, as well as where to get accessories (e.g. adapted keyboards). Our stroke/ brain injury patients in high level jobs need some sort of computer assessment as part of the assessment for their return to work needs. There is currently no- one properly qualified to do this. Furthermore, we do not have any equipment to try people on. For example, we thought one client could probably benefit from a Lightwriter, but it would have been nice to try it and see if they liked it before they ordered it from overseas. On the low tech end, many EARCs and clinics could benefit from examples of low technology AAC including communications books, memory books, talking mats. Though there are problems getting hold of basic stuff like suitable Velcro for creating talking mats.'



Emma Shah training occupational therapists

Technology development for developing countries is important but beyond the expertise of most practitioners. Several copies of Boardmaker are available in Kenya, but underused. Mayer Johnson gave permission for distribution of limited sets of symbols to participants of the 2009 East African Speech Therapy conference. Participants could request a list of symbols needed but only one person (an SLP) has requested it. The intention was for caregivers and related service providers to make use of the resource.

Emma discussed issues surrounding the Servox (an electrolarynx) used by laryngectomy patients. She said that users are scared they will be approached by robbers and shot while reaching for their Servox in their pockets so they can speak. If they wear the device around their necks, they are concerned thieves will mistake it for a mobile phone and try to steal it. Also, the device and its batteries are also expensive. Finally, people without electricity (most of the population) have to travel long distances and pay money to get someone to charge their device, often leaving it there and coming back another day.

Next steps. I implore members of the greater AAC community who are interesting in working in East Africa to consider coming establishing a regional plan for training, support and service provision in low tech AAC for rural communities and high tech AAC support and services for urban communities. The East African Speech Therapy conference in January 2012 is a good forum for this. To get involved, please consider

- To volunteer at Makerere University, please contact them at speechuganda@yahoo.com.
- To volunteer in Kenya, please contact me at bea.staley@gmail.com. Plan to spend a minimum of 2 weeks at a site. Also, go to <http://bea-yellowhouse.blogspot.com> to get additional information. I am confident that Dorothy Mvoi and her team of educators at Mombasa Children's Therapy Centre will welcome volunteers to train parents and teachers as well as spend time in the clinic. Accommodation in Mombasa can be arranged with a family (own room) or at Mombasa Polytechnic (\$10 per night).

Attend and present at conferences. Some upcoming events include:

- a. The Pan African Reading conference sponsored by the International Reading Association in Botswana July 2011 <http://6thpanafricanrfa.blogspot.com/>
- b. A hands-on workshops for educators about using AAC to support literacy.
- c. Fourth East African Speech Therapy conference in Kampala, Uganda January 2012. Please email Helen Barrett helen.sltuganda@yahoo.com for more information. South African Speech Language and Hearing Association (www.saslha.co.za)
- d. Volunteering with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO). I highly recommend contacting VSO and volunteering. Canadian and American volunteers can contact them at <http://www.cuso-vso.org/>. Others should check their website for local recruiting information. VSO's positions are typically 'skill sharing' or training positions with the goal to create a sustainable impact once the volunteer has left the country. VSO volunteers receive housing, benefits and a monthly stipend as well as fantastic instruction on using participatory training methods.

In the past three months many newspaper articles have described the design and use of Apple iPhones, iPads etc as communication aids. Some of the articles are referenced here for your interest.

iPad:

1. Owen Cain depends on a respirator and struggles to make even the slightest movements. He's had a debilitating motor-neuron disease since infancy. Owen, now 7, does not have the strength to maneuver a computer mouse, but when a nurse propped her friend's [iPad](#) within reach in June, he did something his mother had never seen before. He aimed his left pointer finger at an icon on the screen, touched it — just barely — and opened the application Gravitarium, which plays music as users create landscapes of stars on the screen. Over the years, Owen's parents have tried several computerized communications contraptions to give him an escape from his disability, but the iPad worked on the first try.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/31/nyregion/31owen.html?_r=1

2. The rise of mainstream tablet computers is having unforeseen benefits for children with speech and communication problems. Before she got an iPad at age two, Caleigh Gray couldn't respond to yes-or-no questions. Now Caleigh, who has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, uses a \$190 software application that speaks the words associated with pictures she touches on the Apple Inc device.

http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424052748703440004575547971877769154-1MyQjAxMTAwMDEwNTEwNDUyWj.html#ixzz151feQbrx

3. You can also read a surprising story of how the iPad quickly changed the life of an adult with spinal cord injuries at The story begins: **My Friend the iPad Music Man** by Tracy Curry

This is a story about a very dear friend of mine named Dax. Several years ago Dax was in a car accident that caused severe spinal cord damage. He is now a quadriplegic and has been confined to both his wheel chair and bed ever since. Dax is an accomplished musician and composer who has played the piano and keyboard since his youth and has been in many popular bands"

*For more than ten years the Bridge School in Hillsborough, California, has, through its Teacher-in-Residence programme and its website, supported the emergence of AAC in many parts of the world. Thanks to the pupils, the staff and all the performers for allowing us to share the Bridge School Benefit Concert. **Happy faces and lots of music!** <http://www.connsensebulletin.com/2010/10/%E2%80%9Cmy-friend-the-ipad-music-man%E2%80%9D/>.*

AAC Conferences

Since 1997, at a tradition of biennial meetings – the Eastern and Central European Augmentative and Alternative Communication Conferences have encouraged participating countries to develop AAC and provided unique opportunities for sharing ideas and mutual support. Meetings have been held in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Russia. The 2011 conference will be in Poland. All participants are cordially invited to join the scientific AAC sessions and the festive celebration of a Polish Evening. You will see the most beautiful places in Warsaw. Make the most of this unique opportunity to have a good time, make new friends and enjoy Polish hospitality and traditions. For more information, go to <http://www.aac2011.org.pl/index.html>

Harvey's Place

How to Make Talking Communication Boards with Power Point.

<http://www.youtube.com:80/watch?v=JQr966uf-4M&feature=related>

HelpKidzLearn is a web site full of free software and resources from Inclusive Technology.

<http://www.helpkidzlearn.com/>

Talk To Me Technologies announces “**Pogo Boards**,” a powerful, easy-to-use, board-making application that can help you create and share communication boards and learning materials. You’ll be amazed at all the features: a large selection of picture communication symbols, many different templates for devices and activities, integrated Google image searching, and easy access to thousands of boards, therapy materials, that have already been created and shared. Attached is a flier that describes Pogo Boards in more detail.

<http://www.pogoboards.com/>

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) promotes the art and science of speech and language therapy. <http://www.rcslt.org/> Free sample newsletters are available at

<http://www.rcslt.org/about/publications/overview>

The Global Assistive Technology Encyclopedia, created by [AbilityNet](http://www.abilitynet.com/), provides up-to-date information on Assistive Technology. <http://abilitynet.wetpaint.com/>

The people at **Everyone Communicates** believe that everyone communicates, in one way or another and that communication is a basic need in life. When an individual does not have fluent, natural speech, it is urgent that other methods of communication, often called augmentative or alternative communication (AAC), be explored exhaustively. <http://everyonecommunicates.org/resources/partners.html>

Abilis Foundation promotes activities, human rights, equal opportunities and independent living for people with disabilities in developing countries. The Foundation receives the funding from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Development Cooperation Fund. The Foundation funds small (between 1,000 and 20,000 Euro) trustworthy and high-quality projects planned and implemented by people with disabilities to promote

empowerment and social integration. Funding is granted to grass roots organizations.

http://www.abilis.fi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11&Itemid=325&lang=en

The Bridge School

The concert video's introduction welcomes everyone to the concert then takes us on a tour of the school ending up with a seat at the concert. Then – hang on! There's Neil Young, Elton John, Elvis Costello and many other famous musicians playing and singing up a storm! http://www.bridgeschool.org/events/concert_videos.php

Vicki Casella, Executive Director, Bridge School, says “Hello all. We have been impressed with the IRIS Center's module on assistive technology. It helps explain technology and the process to folks and stimulates discussion.” Check out <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/at/challenge.htm>

The Central Coast Children's Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of **Dorothy Fraser** of Peeblesshire, Scotland as *Senior Representative for Eastern Europe*. In addition, at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the foundation board, **Anne Warrick** of Toronto, Canada, was elected to the *CCCF Board of Directors*. We look forward to hearing more from Dot about her activities. We deeply appreciate the ongoing benefits of Anne's advice and counsel.



As the year closes, very best wishes from Sarah, Harvey and I to all ACWN readers for the many holiday celebrations that will take place worldwide in the next few months. Good health, happiness and peace in 2011.

Anne Warrick awarrick@rogers.com

