



## **International AAC Awareness Month**

### **Story Collection 2009**

### **Many Methods, One Goal: To Communicate**

### **Argentina**

*It's Very Hard* by Juan Cobenas: My language is Spanish. Although I am studying English I needed some help to translate some phrases. Anyway, I wrote most of the text in English. I always made the powerpoint with the physical support of a personal assistant.

### **Australia**

*A Girl and a Boy Get Hope* by Jacklyn Irwin

*AAC a Big Opportunity in My Life* by Shane Kelly: I use eazy keys for Windows. Made by words plus I use my left foot to operate my computer like. Christy brown. I love writing.

### **Canada**

*Can I Dance!!!* by Rebecca Beayni: My friend, Anna Bruno, listened to my story as told by friends and family over the years. She learned that I lived in Lebanon when I was young and that I am a connector, peacemaker etc. She is also my dance partner and knows how much I love to dance. She and I wrote the poem as she confirmed with me if she was understanding my ideas correctly. I do not use a device but make confirmations of yes and no by raising my right or left hand and by facial expressions. For more information go to my website:

<http://www.tmw.to/members.php?uri=rebecca-beayni>

*This Is How We Chat* (pdf. file) by Members of the [CAYA Chat Room](#)—Rand Surbey, Derek Isobe, Catherine Dudas, Rafael Francisco, TJ Boucher, Andrea Paterson, Cydney Wong, Monica Francella (staff), James Burden (staff), Callie Coulson (staff): Each member used their communication devices and had help from their caregivers to create their own story which I



(Sarah Gauthier) then wrote in *Writing with Symbols* to reflect their own symbol knowledge and use.

*What everyone yearns for: Really good support to communicate* by Andrew Bloomfield: At present I use a DynaWrite device, but am transitioning into a new system with a laptop with a special keyboard, so I can be connected with other communicators. It was my idea to start a communication support group called Bridges-Over-Barriers which meets regularly to share ideas, struggles and strategies.

*All About Me* by Members of the [CAYA Chat Room](#)—Judy Kranabetter, Kurt Lattimer, Rand Surbey, Derek Isobe, Catherine Dudas, Rafael Francisco, TJ Boucher, Andrea Paterson, Cydney Wong, Donna Natola, Monica Francella (staff), James Burden (staff), Callie Coulson (staff): We wrote this short children's story for a preschool group and felt that it would also be fun for others to read. We came up with the subject and the contents of the story as a group and had lots of fun thinking of all of the things to include!

*A Voice* by Elsie Hudak: Submission was written on a Dynavox Vmax using single switch input.

## China

*My Life* (in Chinese) by Luo Yi Fan

心中的大海 (in Chinese) and *The Hearts of the Sea* (English) by Zhang Long Long

## Cyprus

*Collage: A Bridge to Communication* (in English and in Greek) by Danae Antoniou: My name is Danae Antoniou and I was born in 29/8/86, in Limassol, Cyprus. I have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and I have no verbal communication. During my life I have been working hard to communicate my needs and thoughts. Since I learned how to read and write, I am using a paper communication board with letters, syllables and words, which I manage to point to a facilitator or to others that I need to communicate with. I write a lot, and for this I use my computer with a keyguard on the keyboard. I am slow, but I manage to write, and I love it. In the last year I have been assessed for the use of eye gaze communication, and I will soon have my own My Tobii, C12. I am currently a student at the University of Cyprus, Department of Education. Thanks to the people that are close to me and love me all these years, and based on the inner strength and

courage I developed, I enjoy my studies. At the University I have other students and friends that work as my facilitators. I am very close to one of them, Maria, who is also taking me from Limassol where I stay, to Nicosia where the University is. She helps me very much in communication as well. This story is about a different way of communication that gave me voice: the Art of Collage, with an example of its use on Power Point, where I present a fairy tale about communication. Translation in English was done by Katerina.

*The Adventure of the Letter* (Greek text, English narration) (PowerPoint) by Danae Antoniou

## Dubai

by Bilal Hafeez

*AAC: MY WINDOW TO THE WORLD*

## France

In France, some people from APF (Association des paralysés de France) have created a blog to join people with AAC in France, to suggest to meet together and share everything: stories, aids, ideas, shouts, advocacy, etc...

This blog is: <http://unikom.blogs.apf.asso.fr>

*Honneur et loyauté* in French or *Honor and Honesty* in English by Chevaillier Pierre: I am a special education aide who has worked with Pierre on communication since he was 5 years old. At first, he used a Bliss board, but since he has been using a voice synthesis device, TELLUS, for the past 2 years, he never stops surprising us. Recently he is writing texts by himself on his TELLUS using a virtual keyboard. Pierre uses the joystick of his wheelchair to control the TELLUS. This demands much effort and concentration because of his uncontrolled movements and may take a long time to complete, but today the result is extraordinary. Pierre is at last able to have us enjoy all the richness he has in him by being able to express himself.

*Ma Vie*, in French, by Sofia B. Sofia is a young teenager with physical disease, so she is not able to walk and her speech is very difficult to understand. She is getting education and rehab in special school near Paris.

*J'EN AI ASSEZ, JE VEUX QU'ON M'ÉCOUTE* in French and *I'm fed up, I want to be listened to* in English, by Laetitia R. Laetitia is a young girl with CP, getting education and rehab in special school near Paris. She enjoyed to write this text and participate to an international contest.

*QUELQUES MARCHES DE TROP!* in French by Florence Jacob. J'utilise un ordinateur PC avec un cache touches et une souris adaptée. Comme j'ai beaucoup de mal à parler au téléphone, j'envoie des e-mails à ma famille et à mes amis. L'informatique est vraiment une révolution pour les personnes handicapées.

*Few Steps Too Many!* in English (translated by Mary Ann Glicksman) by Florence Jacob. I use a PC computer with a keyguard and a special mouse. As it's very difficult for me to talk on the phone, I send emails to my family and friends. Computing is really a revolution for disabled persons.

*Le monde des handicapés* by Franck Luthringer: This story was written using a Vantage with a knee switch.

## India

### Writings by students of IICP's Centre for Special Education

*Note: Several children have written about Durga Puja, the largest festival in the State of West Bengal, the capital of which is Kolkata. Although this is a Hindu festival, all communities participate in the 4 days of celebration. Durga is conceived of as the Mother who comes from her husband Shiva's home in the Himalayas to visit her parents' home on earth riding on a lion and accompanied by her daughters, Lakshmi and Saraswati and her sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya. Durga also represents Shakti (Strength) – thus, the images of Durga show her with weapons in 10 hands, killing a demon. This symbolizes the victory of good over evil. Held over four days in September-October, this is one occasion everyone, rich and poor, looks forward to for months. Dressed in new clothes, families visit community 'pandals', marquees under which gorgeously decorated images are worshipped. There are lights and music and for three days, communities celebrate in joy and harmony. On the fourth day, the images are immersed in the river in the belief and faith that we have to bid the Goddess goodbye so that she may return the following year.*

*Dance with a difference* by Abhijit Sen: Abhijit uses a multi-page picture communication display and gestures to communicate. The communication display is placed on a low stool. He pointed to each picture word with his right big toe and the teacher wrote it for him. After each sentence the text was read out to him. Then after 2-3 sentences it was read out to him again so that he could change or re-structure his composition.

*Durga Puja* by Somarathi Chakraborty: Somarathi uses a picture communication display with 4 pictures to a page. She also uses Kathamala a Voice Output Communication Aid and a few gestures. Somarathi pointed at the pictures of her communication display and teacher wrote it down which was later recorded in the VOCA. Before recording the text, the teacher asked her if this is what she wanted to tell her peers. During Circle Time (exchange of messages) in the class, Somarathi pressed each of the messages which were represented by pictures.

*Gabloo Zamindar (A landowner named Gabloo)* by Saikat Mitra: To communicate, Saikat uses a few gestures (e.g. elephant) and alphabet board. He also uses speech but it is slurred and is difficult for a person who is not familiar with him to understand. Saikat pointed at the letters in Bengali and teacher wrote the words. After each sentence was constructed the teacher read out the sentence to him for change or confirmation.

*In the land of happiness* by Sudip Dutta: Sudip uses a communication display which has few words with pictures and all the letters of the Bengali alphabet. Sudip pointed at the letters to form a word and the teacher wrote it for him. After construction of each sentence the text was read out to him. After 3-4 sentences, it was read out to him again and he had the choice of continuing with the sequence or modify the text. Sudip was also given a few key words to help him develop the story.

*My Didi (Older Sister)* by Ashis Jaiswara: Ashis uses a multi-page picture communication display and gestures to communicate. He pointed to each picture word with the index finger on his right hand and the teacher wrote for him. After construction of each sentence the text was read out to him. After 3-4 sentences, it was read out to him again and he had the choice of continuing with the sequence or modify the text. He used gestures for sentences such as “I help my sister”.

*My Doll* by Esha Bhattacharya: Esha uses a coloured picture communication display with 4 pictures to a page. During a doll play activity in class her teacher asked her “With what will you feed your doll? Esha pointed at the picture of spoon with her finger of her right hand. When she was asked, “What does the doll like to eat?” she pointed at the picture of chicken.

*My Durga Puja Days* by Sayari Sarkar: Sayari uses a multi-page picture communication display and gestures to communicate. She pointed to each picture word with her right hand index finger and the teacher wrote it for her. After construction of each sentence it was read out to her to change or confirm.

*My Durga Puja Holiday* by Sushmita Ghosh: Sushmita uses a picture communication display. She also uses Kathamala (Voice out put device) and few gestures e.g., mother, father. Sushmita pointed to the pictures on her communication display and teacher wrote it down which was later

recorded in the VOCA. Before recording the teacher asked her if this is what she wanted to tell her peers. During Circle Time (exchange of messages) in the class Sushmita pressed each of the messages which were represented by pictures.

*My Friend Bonnie* by Om Mahawar: Om uses coloured picture communication display with 2 pictures to a page. The message was pre-recorded in his “Talking Diary”. During a ‘bathing the doll’ activity the teacher asked “What is your Doll’s name?” She gave 2 choices. Om selected the name Bonnie by nodding his head in confirmation. When she asked, “With what will you bathe Bonnie?” Om pointed to the picture of soap. Teacher recorded this in the Talking Diary. Then the teacher helped him to press each of the messages which were represented by pictures.

*Our Visitor* by Kaberi Majhi: Kaberi uses a multi page picture communication display with 8-9 pictures to a page. She also uses Kathamala (VOCA). Kaberi pointed at the pictures of her communication display and her teacher wrote it down which was later recorded in the VOCA. Before recording, the teacher asked her if this is what she wanted to tell her peers. During Circle Time (exchange of messages) in the class Kaberi pressed each of the messages which were represented by pictures.

*Shubhojeet Overcomes a Barrier* by Shubhojeet Sen

### **Writings by 3 women who attend the services of IICP’s Adult Day Centre**

*The Cactus Flower* by Shradha Khator: Shradha uses an alphabet board. Her facilitators, all familiar communication partners write for her. As each sentence is composed, the partner reads it out to her.

*Fulfilment* by Putul Biswas: Putul uses an alphabet board. Her facilitators, all familiar communication partners write for her. As each sentence is composed, the partner reads it out to her.

*Upliftment* by Barsha Bhattacharya: Barsha uses an alphabet board. Her facilitators, all familiar communication partners write for her. As each sentence is composed, the partner reads it out to her. Barsha was the winner of the ISAAC 2008 International Writing Contest “Many Stories One Voice.”

## **Italy**

*I segnali del corpo: un modo per raggiungere la comunicazione* by Valeria Gervasini



Mi chiamo Valeria Gervasini, sono nata a Milano (Italia), il 20 luglio 1974. Io spero che questo mio contributo cui allego un video che documenta i miei diversi modi di comunicare possa essere d'aiuto a chiunque si trovi a vivere con persone che non hanno la possibilità di esprimersi verbalmente. Per me imparare a comunicare è stata la gioia più grande. Questo è il mio maggiore desiderio. Voglio dirvi che sono molto contenta di partecipare alle iniziative di Isaac, perché la mia mente si arricchisce di parole attraverso il racconto della mia esperienza. Mi piacerebbe poi visitare luoghi fuori dall'Italia, dove persone come me apprendono i nuovi metodi di comunicazione, chissà forse un giorno....

*Body Signals: A way to achieve communication* by Valeria Gervasini: Valeria Gervasini was born in Milan (Italy), 20 July 1974. She completed school and two years at university studying psychology and development. She stopped her studies due to lack of support and takes courses related to painting. She hopes to become more independent in writing and communicating using technology. Last year she entered the ISAAC story contest and this year she participated in a convention. She would like to travel outside Italy where people like herself learn new methods of communication.

## United Kingdom

**AAC Around The World** in English by Beth Moulam, UK.; Emma Green, Queensland Australia; Morgan Liddle-Webb, Victoria Australia: I (Beth) co-ordinated our entry. We worked together using email and each made our own video using photo-story which tells people about how we communicate and what methods we use. Emma and Morgan sent their videos to me and I put into the power point, added the sound on each slide and then sent to them for approval. This is a joint piece of work. Our Mums all talked but it is our work.

View on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGQ7wCsT3AY>

*Alfie's New Voca* by Alfie Fox: Alfie is a year 4 pupil in a mainstream school in Brighton. He has a one to one Teaching Assistant to support him. He used his DynaVox (child 30 setting), WIG5 Story Starter and Textease to write his story. He is an emerging writer who has only recently gain confidence to express his own ideas and commit them to writing. I believe Alfie's story is better in its original form before I helped him with his sentence structure; spelling and grammar. I am so impressed with his efforts that I have attached the original story along with the final amended piece of work.

## United States



*A Little About Me* by Juwaan Espinal: I use a program called Scanning Picture Word Power on my Vmax, which is a computer based system by Dynavox. I use two switches with my Vmax, a head switch to move from place to place, and my hand to select what I want to say. I wrote the story using words from Scanning Picture Word Power and then copied and pasted it into a Word Document directly on my Vmax. My teacher helped edit my story.

*My Deep Sea Fishing Trip* by Alex Layton: I am a high school Junior in Seaford, Delaware. He currently uses his DynaVox Series 4 device to communicate. Alex used his AccessIt device to type and edit his submission using Microsoft Word.

*Party Foods* by (David Blake, Michael Chaney, Amberly Creighton, Carl Fjetland, Sara Hunter, Lalena Manuel, Travis Messner, Sara Perkins, Ericka Rivera, Magdalena Serda, Gilbert Steve, Lora White, and Julie Wolfe) Every month we do cooking class at the Adult Day Program. Everyone votes on the ingredients using their AAC devices. In this group, we have people using Dynavox V, Dynavox Vmax, DynaMyte, MT4, Dynavox 3100, Vanguard, Vantage Lite, ECO-14, and Tango. We use an adapted pouring cup and ECU box so we can plug in switches to participate. After cooking we look at the pictures and vote on which ones should be in a PowerPoint story. We write a story together. We vote and edit as a group, using the SmartBoard. Once we have a story, it is printed and laminated. Then a group gets to go to the elementary school nearby and read the story to kindergarteners. Also, they did a video on youtube [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqRoN9iT\\_oQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqRoN9iT_oQ)

*The Phillies Save the Day* by Lauren Enders's class Heath Goldberg, Jacob Grunning, Caroline Lanctot, Jacqualinn Wharton, and Catherine Ferber (Written by Lauren Enders, SLP) My students wrote this story during our speech groups. It took about 6 or 7 weeks. First, I gave the students an outline and we filled it in over the course of a few hour-long sessions. The outline had categories of words on their devices. They picked good guys and bad guys from the people category, describing words for the story's setting and characters from the describing category, actions from the actions category, things from the things category and places from the places category. Caroline and Jake use DynaVox VMaxes and Jackie and Heath use DynaVox DV4s. We used Writing with Symbols on a computer connected to a computer projector while the students wrote the story from the outline. The students provided all of the characters, and the majority of the nouns, verbs, describing words, places, and things. Mrs. Ferber (the classroom teacher) and I typed helped add articles, prepositions and other words to connect the students' ideas. I typed some of the story in as we worked. For some parts of the story, the students sent what they wrote right from their message windows to the computer using a DynaVox Access It.

*My AAC Reopens Doors* and *The Three Voices I Now Have* by Barbara Watkins: My experience writing story: The experiences I had writing this story are actually experiences I have on a daily basis, however I must say that this is a unique contest that is my privilege to enter because there

8





are so many family members and neighbors who either know or have someone with little or no speech who need to know that the person can find a way to communicate with the world. This contest is the awareness that individuals like myself need.

*Frustration Galore* by Todd Washburne: He was thought to be seriously developmentally delayed throughout his school years and well into adulthood. Good things mushroomed at age 39 when he began communicating in earnest with his mom. He is now a happy camper since he is working on a real high school diploma and college courses are within sight.

*My Social Life* by Lateef McLeod: Lateef McLeod has a budding career as a writer. He's earned a BA in English from UC Berkeley then completed a MFA in Creative Writing from Mills College in his city of Oakland. He joined the AAC RERC Writers Brigade in 2006 where he wrote technical articles about the AAC community. He has joined the ranks of all the great poets listed at poetry.com and his poetry, essays, and literary criticisms have been anthologized. Lateef expanded into the genre of technical writing, placing articles in Advance Magazine, appearing as key-note speaker at the 07 Bubbly Ball, and was the plenary speaker at the AAC By The Bay Conference in 2007. He continues working in the field of technology contributing articles to the Assistive Technology Network and his expertise in communication and technology led to his current position as a consultant for Dynavox. Some of his more recent activities are traveling to South Africa and publishing his poetry book. Read more material by Lateef at his blogsite at [teefdabiggafigga.blogspot.com](http://teefdabiggafigga.blogspot.com)

*Silly Voices, Fun Voices* by Pamela Kennedy: Augmentative and Alternative Communication, advocacy and writing are my passions! I'm an AAC-RERC Writers Brigade Editor and Program Manager and USSAC's Co-Vice President of People Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Although I've had cerebral palsy and complex communication needs all my life, I just acquired a speech-generating device, (the DynaVox Vmax,) a year and a half ago. Explaining the change in my modality to my nieces, nephews and children in my neighbourhood was a challenge because my AAC seemed like my tabletPC to them. Naturally, they wanted to play with it.

*What Autism Is* by Shannon Barnes: I use Dynavox and PRC devices. I use colorcoded keyboard and pictures I color coded to talk/write. I own a Dynavox Palm 3, a Dyamyte, and a Vantage Lite from PRC. I also type, make sounds, gesture, sign, use some speech, I use a full range to make myself heard and it works for me.

*Working Out* by Tyson James Renze My name is Tyson Renze. I use a freedom toughbook extreme. This is my story.

*Dear Fellow Americans* by Jenell Gordon is a speech-language therapist who became a



quadriplegic after life-saving surgery to correct an AVM. She uses a communication board, the ASL alphabet, and a Vanguard II (AAC device). Through her Vanguard II and a mouse, Jenell is able to do email and writes using Microsoft Word. She has a computer consultant who assists her in using the PC. Her family and her computer consultant also assist in matters of style and usage because Jenell is a stickler for getting it right!