



Connecticut Tech Act Project

Achievement Through Technology

# CTTAP NEWS

## Fall 2018

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The Connecticut Tech Act Project, with support from EASTCONN's Assistive Technology and Transition Services, is excited to announce that the

# Achievement through Assistive Technology Conference

will be held on March 29, 2019 at the Hartford Hilton.

***Conference registration and Early Bird pricing is available now through January 18, 2019!***

Check out the conference website for information on the sessions and exhibitors. You will note that the education strand has been expanded and our March Conference now offers something for everyone!

Want a sneak peek at some of the amazing sessions we have planned for the 2019 Achievement through Assistive Technology Conference? You'll find some great descriptions of a few of the upcoming Conference sessions tucked into the stories we're sharing with you today.

Among the articles you'll read here are stories about: an impressive young man, Harold, and his introduction to smart home technology through our CT Tech Act partner agency, the NEAT Center. You'll also learn about our Conference Sponsor, iDevices, a new startup right here in Hartford, Conn., which is working to create an easy-to-use interface for Android phones; and much more.

***I hope you will find our Fall 2018 newsletter interesting and informative, and that we'll see you at our conference in March.***

For more information, visit  
[www.CTtechact.com/conference](http://www.CTtechact.com/conference)  
Our conference hashtag is #ATinCT19  
- follow us on Twitter: [@Cttechact](https://twitter.com/Cttechact)



Arlene Lugo, Program Director  
Connecticut Tech Act Project

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*Harold Johnson*

## Bringing It All Home!

*By Kristopher Thompson, Coordinator,  
Oak Hill's New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Center, Hartford, Connecticut*

**The NEAT Center at Oak Hill** strives to bring community awareness regarding the great impact that technology can have for individuals of all abilities. Every individual we meet has unique strengths and a strong desire to access the world around them. Rightfully so! Technology can empower people and create opportunities for independence that may not have existed before.

A few years ago, we worked with Harold Johnson (pictured above), his school-based team and his family to look for assistive technology solutions that could help him access his schoolwork in a more efficient manner. Harold is a bright and determined young man who does not let Cerebral Palsy stop him. While Harold uses a wheelchair and has limited mobility, assistive technology solutions were used to increase his access to the Internet, classroom materials and reading books. He had terrific success using his head to control a switch connected to an iPad. A few years later, Harold came back to the NEAT Center to explore new options for assistive technology as he transitioned into adulthood. He was seeking greater independence at home and in the community, as well as in the world at large.

The NEAT Center team approached this request hoping to help Harold reach his goals, but also expand the possibilities. In a collaborative effort, an AAC (augmentative alternative communication) Evaluation, AT (assistive technology) Evaluation and Smart Home Assessment were conducted. Our efforts resulted in several recommendations, such as eye-gaze technology and smart home solutions that could provide independence for Harold and peace of mind for his family.

*Through this assessment process, a local smart home company, iDevices, generously offered their support to Harold and his family by proposing to revolutionize their home with smart home solutions from their product line-up. iDevices is a leader in the connected market and strongly believes in accessibility and empowering individuals through the use of innovative smart home products. Please use the link below to find out more about what iDevices offers and their blogpost about this partnership.*

*We are thankful every day that we can help people reach their goals of independence*

through the use of technology and we are grateful for companies like iDevices, which truly inspire innovation and positive change in the world.



*Please use this link below find out more about what iDevices offers and their blogpost about this partnership.*

**[Click Here For iDevices Information](#)**

Interested in learning more about the topics discussed in this article? Attend the conference session, **Embracing Technology and Independence**, presented by Stephen Tarca, President and Co-Founder, The Be Thoughtful Movement, Inc., (a non-profit); Susan Johnson, Co-Founder, The Be Thoughtful Movement, Inc.; Harold Johnson III, Co-Founder, The Thoughtful Travelers, LLC. Also, learn more about the services of the NEAT Team during the presentations **Engineering AAC into the Modern Home**, presented by Elena Fader, SLP/AT Specialist, NEAT Center at Oak Hill; and **Utilizing Smart Technology to Combat Social Isolation**, presented by Kristopher Thompson, Coordinator, Oak Hill's NEAT Center.

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## Project RAY Comes to Hartford

**Project RAY, LLC**, announced the election of Patrick Olsen as President and CEO at their main headquarters in Hartford in early October. We are also announcing that operations have formally begun in the State of Connecticut. Our first successful meeting was with Connecticut Tech Act Project Director Arlene Lugo and the amazing Tech Act partners in our new facility.

Project RAY has patented an "eyes-free" graphic user interface for all Android™ smartphones. This unique system allows low vision, blind, or elderly Americans to use any Android™ smartphone in

under 15 minutes, with little or no initial training.  
(Please note: Does not run on iOS, at present.)

RAY

Mr. Olsen is a welcome addition to our U.S. team as he is legally blind himself and intuitively understands the needs and accessibility issues that come with being blind, low vision, or elderly in the U.S. in 2018.

**"Project RAY built this phone just for us!" he exclaims.**  
**"Finally, a real Android™ smartphone that works for us."**



Ray Olsen

Currently, there are more than 10,000 worldwide active users of the **RAYVISION™** and **RAYCLICK™** interface, and another 285 million potential users are getting the word.

***Here's what one of the Tech Act Partners had to say about Project Ray,***  
*"I think that Project Ray is a wonderful new tool for users with blindness or low vision. It offers us another avenue in the world of technology. It is true that there are other devices available to us, but, Project Ray offers a simple, user-friendly interface that will help people who have struggled with other interfaces in the past."*  
*- Steve Famiglietti, Blind Services Vocational Manager, Oak Hill NEAT Center*

For more information or to speak with marketing, sales or distribution, please contact Project RAY LLC at [patrick@project-ray.com](mailto:patrick@project-ray.com) or **203-274-6401**. You can also learn more by stopping by the Project Ray exhibitors table at our March Conference.

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## Accessible "Digital" Documents

*By John E. Brandt, Training Coordinator, Maine CITE*



**Once upon a time**, there was a day when all correspondence was conducted with paper. Some people took the time and wrote to others using pen and paper. They would place

their message in an envelope and post it in the mail. There were also people who spent their days using these devices called "typewriters" to create tons of paper documents, letters, memos, reports, and even things called books. There were daily communications from the press that took the form of news-papers, many of which had multiple editions per day to keep up with the changing news. In our schools, students would do their lessons and complete homework assignments with pen or pencil, writing into bound, paper notebooks or onto "loose leaf" paper.

Then the world changed. Not very quickly, mind you. More and more people stopped creating documents using paper. In their place came a new kind of document, one created with and preserved by electrons. Although some of these new documents continue to find their way to paper, using a special printing device, the large majority of these - let's call them "digital" documents - never move from electronic form.

Perhaps for many reading this article, the world of e-mail, faxes, e-books and websites are all you have ever known. However, back in the day of paper, communications and the transfer of information often took a long time. Information from different places around the world often took weeks to be delivered to your doorstep.

Today, digital documents are everywhere, created by many different devices and transferred around the planet in a matter of seconds. These documents are no longer limited to letters, words and paragraphs using alphanumeric characters. Modern digital content often comes in the form of images, videos or audio files. They may be a digital "form" where people can enter, post and exchange information. They can be animations and game-like types of content that can be shared, manipulated, transformed and re-shared. Some of these digital documents are created by machines and not people.

Back in the days of paper, if you had to communicate in writing to someone who had a visual disability, you would have to convert your document into Braille or perhaps large print. These documents required special equipment and a significant time to prepare. Thus, very often the needs of these people were ignored.

Today's digital documents can make communications to and from people with disabilities much easier and much faster, *but only if they are created in an accessible way.*

Come and learn more about accessible digital documents how to make your communications and correspondence accessible to all at the March conference session titled, **Accessible Digital Documents**, presented by John E. Brandt, Training Coordinator, Maine CITE

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## Access Through Technology

*by Arlene Lugo, Program Director, CT Tech Act Project*

**Access Through Technology**, a program of the Connecticut Tech Act Project, is funded through the FCC under the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program grant. Through this program we can provide equipment needed to make telecommunications and the Internet accessible to low-income individuals who have both significant vision loss and significant hearing loss.

We are also able to offer free assessments of need and to recommend technology, such as cell phones, tablets, computers, adaptive software, and more. All of these services, including the equipment, is offered at no cost to the consumer.



To learn more about **Access Through Technology** or to download the application, please visit [www.CTtechact.com/att](http://www.CTtechact.com/att)

***Below, you'll find a note of appreciation sent to Steve Famiglietti, Blind Services Vocational Manager, Oak Hill.***

*"Dear Steve,  
My family and I cannot thank you enough for your help and insight into getting my elderly parents the voice recognition phone and the Eye Pal Solo. These two technology-based tools have opened the small world they live in into a wider scope. My mom, who is 97% blind, is now able to call family and friends without needing someone to dial for her. That not only makes her smile, but my dad as well. That burden has been lightened.  
My dad is so very excited to have the Eye Pal Solo because he can now hear his mail being read to him. That not only makes him smile, but me as well, since that helped to lighten my burden.  
Your patience and understanding in teaching us how to best use these new devices was appreciated by all of us. These tools have made their lives better and I can see it in their faces.  
Your support has given them a piece of their independence that they had lost. I told you once that you were an angel presenting us with some wonderful gifts. God bless and may you continue helping others with vision disabilities for many more years to come.*

*Most Sincerely, Marie V. Santore,  
Daughter of Gennaro and Raffaella Viscuso"*

*Steve Famiglietti notes, "I think it is wonderful to have a program like Access through Technology because it gives people independence and peace of mind. In the case of the Viscuso family, the woman couldn't dial her phone so if there was an emergency, she would have to run outside and yell for help while waving her arms. Now, she can easily pick up the phone and use her voice to dial numbers. This may seem like a simple device and a simple task but it has brought so much back to this family. "*

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## Speaking AAC is Teaching AAC

by Joanne Lambert, SLP/CCC, Assistive Technology Specialist, EASTCONN



Let's think about it... no one gave us "lessons" when we were babies soaking up all of the language spoken by everyone around us. They just talked to us for about a year. Then, we started to communicate using the language we heard. Welcome to teaching an AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) user HOW to communicate with their AAC tool!

## "Modeling is just what it sounds like, it is showing."

It is our job as educators, parents and caregivers to teach AAC by using AAC. This method of speaking is "showing" the AAC user how to communicate by using the AAC tool. We refer to this technique as MODELING. Modeling is just what it sounds like, it is showing. In the research, you may notice the terms Aided Language Input (ALI), Aided Language Stimulation (ALS) or Partner Augmented Input (PAI). These terms all refer to the same thing, modeling. Modeling allows us to show the student HOW to communicate so they can then imitate when they are ready. Want to learn more about modeling and AAC?

Come learn about **AAC Implementation and Modeling AAC** with Ann Bedard and Joanne Lambert at **Connecticut's Achievement Through Assistive Technology Conference** on March 29, 2019 at the Hartford Hilton. You can find more information about this event at [www.cttechact.com/conference](http://www.cttechact.com/conference).

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## Successful Transition AAA - Accommodations, Advocacy & Assistive Technology

*by Diana Petschauer, M.Ed., ATP, Consultant, Manager of ATforED.com  
and Alyssa Marinaccio, M.Ed., ATP, Consultant, AT Coordinator UCONN*



Transition from high school to college is a significant and critical time in a student's life and educational career. This session will inform participants of process, strategies, technology and resources to help ensure that the transition is a successful one!

Topics include: Assistive Technologies (Laptop - Windows or Mac, Chromebook, iPad, Android, Smartphones), Supportive Accommodations, differences between high school and post-secondary laws; Admission Process; How to Access and Use your Accommodations, and the Importance of Self-Advocacy. Assistive Technologies will be



demonstrated, including support for literacy and math, note taking, executive function, sensory and physical disabilities.

*Many resources will be shared with participants to refer back to and use immediately; they are also significantly useful in the workplace environment!*

*We hope you will join us for this engaging and interactive session.*

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## Cutting to the Core with AAC

*by Carolann Cormier, Education Specialist, Speech/Language Pathologist*

*and Nicole Natale, Interim Supervisor:*

*Special Services Support Team/Education Specialist Expert Solutions, CREC*

We are thrilled to be presenting the session, Cutting to the Core with AAC. Core word intervention has increased in popularity over the past few years and rightfully so - the implementation of core vocabulary can allow students to generate and communicate a large number of messages throughout many contexts with relatively little programming of AAC devices. There are a number of tools, tricks and resources available that can assist teams with core vocabulary intervention. Many teams have begun implementing core AAC strategies within their classrooms or are interested in doing so. This session will be fast-paced and will give participants access to many resources and tools for successful AAC core implementation.

We will define core AAC vocabulary, discuss research on why we use core AAC vocabulary, demonstrate and role play how to use core AAC vocabulary, explore AAC core resources and develop a plan to implement core AAC vocabulary with the individuals you serve.

**Not sure of the impact of core AAC vocabulary intervention?**

**Check out this video:**



The Power of Core Vocabulary: Life Saving!

*We will see you in March!*

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Have an event of interest to persons with disabilities, their family members or caretakers and those who work with them to support their development and maximize independence?

If you would like that event to be included in the **CT Tech Act Newsletter**, please send a notice and contact information to Carol Magliocco at [cmagliocco@eastconn.org](mailto:cmagliocco@eastconn.org) or call 860-228-3483.

CTTAP MISSION: Increasing independence and improving the lives of individuals with disabilities through increased access to Assistive Technology for work, school and community living.

860-424-4881 | [Email](mailto:Email) | [www.cttechact.com](http://www.cttechact.com)

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