



Connecticut Tech Act Project

Achievement Through Technology

CTTAP NEWS

Spring 2019

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Introduction

CT Achievement Through Assistive Technology Conference is a Success!!!!

by Arlene Lugo

What an amazing day!

The 2019 CT Achievement Through Assistive Technology Conference, which took place on March 29, 2019, at the Hartford Hilton was a great success!

We had 30 exhibitors, who provide products and services including education and daily living, devices for people who are deaf or have low vision, and so much more. There were 20 breakout sessions to choose from and the feedback we heard from our attendees was that the sessions were great and it was difficult to choose which to attend. We had presenters from New Jersey, Maine and even Georgia (through our Double Robotics telepresence robot) alongside many of our very own local experts. The panel of students from Westbrook School in New London deserve a special mention as they did a fantastic job presenting and fielding questions. We were so glad to have them participate.

It was a packed house - we had just over 300 people in the building, resulting in full breakout-session rooms, a very busy exhibit hall and quite a crowd!

All in all, it was a great day!

We created an album of photos from the day which can be seen at www.Facebook.com/CTtechact and here is just a small sampling below:



Steve Famiglietti, Blind Services Vocational Manager for **NEAT**, delivers one of the conference keynotes.



Connecticut-based **Logan Tech** displays its products and shares information with attendees in the Exhibit Hall.



EASTCONN's **Kerin Griffin**, left, IT Specialist, and **Amy Norton**, a member of the EASTCONN AT Team, stand by to provide technical assistance as one of the conference keynotes, **Liz Persaud**, presents remotely from her home in Georgia via double robot avatar (on screen).



Students, above, joined staff from **Westbrook Public Schools** to highlight the use of technology in a panel presentation.

We look forward to seeing you all again as we prepare for an even bigger conference in 2021!

In case you were unable to attend the 2019 Conference, you can experience what the conference had to offer in the following three newsletter articles:

- **Telepresence Robots: A Big Step Beyond Videoconferencing** talks about the experience of Patti Clay, former BRS Bureau Chief, who attended the conference utilizing the Double Robotics telepresence robot.
- John Burfield of Lifeway Mobility shares some of the information he presented in **Home Access is Not a One-Size-Fits-All Solution**.
- Lisa Fiano, an Educational Specialist with CREC, shares information on one potential assistive technology solution for writing in the digital age in The Versatility of the **Rocketbook Everlast Notebook**.

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Patti Clay (on screen) attends a conference session via Double Robot telepresence. EASTCONN's Kerin Griffin, seated, assisted Patti as she navigated through conference crowds.

Telepresence Robots: A Big Step Beyond Videoconferencing

by Patti Clay, former BRS Bureau Chief

Did you ever find yourself wanting to be in two places at one time? For many years, I've enjoyed attending the Assistive Technology conferences in Connecticut, often finding new technology to increase my independence. I didn't know how I was going to continue to keep up to date on the latest AT after I retired and moved to North Carolina.

Luckily, the 700 miles between Hartford and Hendersonville didn't matter at all! I was able to attend the Achievement Through Assistive Technology Conference on March 29, 2019, and never left my home. I used a telepresence robot from Doubles Robotics to attend workshops, talk with other conference attendees and "walk" through the vendors' exhibits, talking with them about their products and services. It allowed me to participate in the conference much the way I would have if I'd actually been there with other conference attendees.

Getting a robot to navigate through the crowds and some narrow spaces required help from someone who walked with me and made sure I didn't bump into things. Thankfully, it didn't take long to learn the basic moves, so I could get around adequately without running over the people around me.

The Doubles Robotics telepresence robot turned out to be a wonderful tool for attending the conference. I can also see that it will not only have many applications for helping people who have disabilities navigate spaces they couldn't access in the past, but it will also have uses for businesses that will reduce time and travel without sacrificing real-time communication. This is a big step beyond

Home Access is Not a One-Size-Fits-All Solution

By John Burfield, Digital Content Manager, Lifeway Mobility

Recently, **Lifeway Mobility and Assisted Living Technologies, Inc.**, were invited to co-present at the Connecticut Achievement through Assistive Technology Conference in Hartford. We welcomed this opportunity because it allowed us to highlight two essential components for successful Aging-In-Place:

1. A thorough and comprehensive home evaluation from a qualified provider
2. Collaboration with clinicians and other service providers

Often, we receive calls from customers that already have a specific product or access solution in mind. While we're happy to provide general product information over the phone or via our website, a comprehensive evaluation of the entire home environment is essential in making sure that they are receiving the best possible solution for their situation.

Before selecting a solution, we always advise that a certified accessibility specialist visit the home and assess what areas of the home should be addressed to make it as safe and functional for the user as possible. We also advise that any home access provider collaborate with a client's clinical team - including doctors, occupational therapists and physical therapists, when applicable. After all, who else knows the user's unique mobility, cognitive, and sensory needs better than the clinicians that have worked closely with that individual?

During this evaluation, your provider should always look at these primary areas:

- **Entry points** - How does the user enter and exit the home?
Solutions include: Modular ramp systems, threshold ramps, platform wheelchair lifts, outdoor stair lifts, and low-rise steps.
- **Bath Safety** - How does the user access the bathroom including bathing and toileting?
Solutions include: Barrier-free showers, walk-in tubs, tub cuts, grab bars and support poles, roll-under sinks, bath lifts, and elevated toilets.
- **Up and Down Stairs** - Does the user need to access multiple levels of the home?
Solutions include: Stair lifts, vertical and inclined platform lifts, and residential elevators.
- **Transfers** - For those with significant mobility issues, how do they transfer from a wheelchair to a bed, toilet, shower, or even their favorite chair?
Solutions include: Overhead transfer lifts, floor transfer lifts and manual transfer aids such as slide sheets, transfer belts, and slide boards.

With home access, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. There are a variety of effective solutions for each of these areas that may suit some users and environments better than others. A qualified access specialist will be able to recommend the best possible solution for your needs and environment, while taking into consideration factors like the duration of the need and your budget.

Again, successful aging-in-place often means working with various clinicians and service providers to create a safe living environment. For instance, while our solutions can address mobility issues in the home environment, smart technology - such as fall detection devices, motion sensor lighting, and medication compliance systems - are products that can be just as necessary for living safely at home. Working with health care clinicians, such as occupational and physical therapists, adds an invaluable health care perspective so that solutions provided can be customized for unique individual needs. If you keep this in mind when developing a plan for you or a loved one to age-in-place, you'll likely have a successful outcome.

Lifeway Mobility is an accessibility solutions provider, serving Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and western Wisconsin. They offer a full selection of accessibility and safety solutions for people with temporary or permanent mobility limitations, including ramps, stair lifts, transfer lifts, and bath safety solutions.

To learn more about Lifeway Mobility, visit www.lifewaymobility.com

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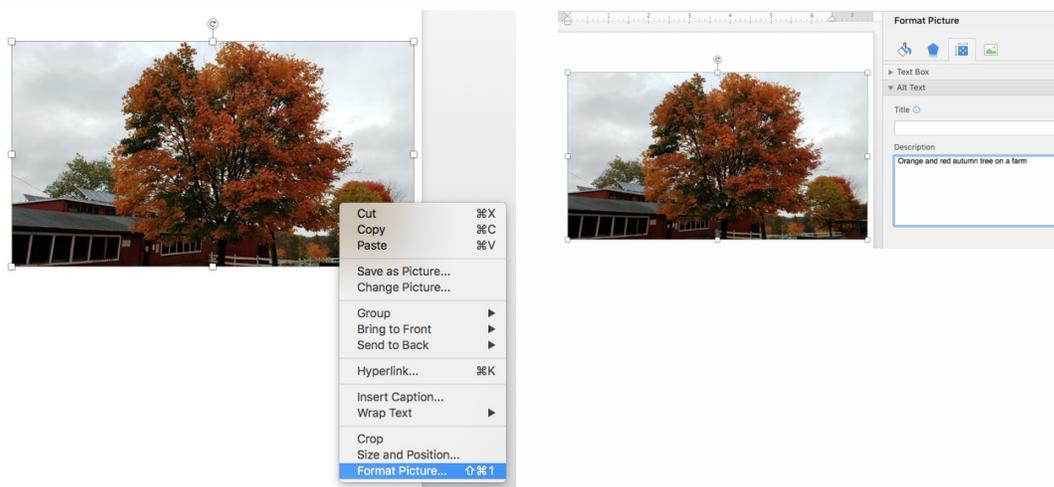
Digital Accessibility Tip

by Kerin Griffin, EASTCONN

Did you know alternative text (aka. alt text) is a necessary attribute for accessible technology to describe a picture or graphic? Whether in Word, PowerPoint, PDF or a website, alt text must be added for screen readers.

To add alt text to an image or a graphic in Word, right click directly on the image and select **Format Picture**. On the menu that pops up, go to the **Layout & Properties** tab (the icon is a square with arrows). Click the dark grey triangle next to **Alt Text**.

IMPORTANT: Add your alt text into the **Description** field and *not the Title field*. Screen readers are unable to read the Title field.



Stay tuned for another Digital Accessibility Tip in the next Newsletter!

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EASTCONN Expands the Lending Library Collection of Seating Options

The Third Time is the Charm

by Annie Ferron, DPT, EASTCONN

A high school-age student in EASTCONN's Autism Program requires frequent and consistent movement that a typical classroom chair cannot accommodate. Multiple

times throughout the day the student attempts to stand on his chair, creating a very unsafe situation. In an attempt to find a chair that would accommodate this student's needs, his Physical Therapist trialed several different seating options available through the EASTCONN Assistive Technology Lending Library, funded through the CT Tech Act.

For the first trial, a **Ballo Stool**, pictured below left, was tested. The student's seating habits improved and he did not attempt to get out of his chair as often. He did however, continue to attempt to stand on the stool, creating a potentially dangerous situation. Additionally, the stool deflated daily, making it unreliable for consistent use.

An **Ergo Stool**, a height-adjustable, active sitting office chair/ergonomic standing desk swivel stool, pictured in the center below, was trialed next. Though this chair deterred the student from attempting to standing on it, the chair was too unsteady to tolerate the student's continuous rocking.

The last seat tested was a **Sit-to-Stand Active Stool with Pivot Saddle Seat**. The student prefers to straddle the stool rather than sit on it as it is designed. He is able to rock and swivel slightly. This position is steady and may increase core strength activation due to the rounded top. Using this seating system, the student is able to maintain proper posture throughout the school day. The student attempts to stand on this stool less often.

For this active student, The Sit-to-Stand Active Stool with Pivot Saddle Seat provided the necessary blend of stability and movement.



Ballo Stool



Ergo Stool



*Sit-to-Stand Active Stool
with Pivot Saddle Seat*

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Alternative Seating for a Fidgety Student in EVC Classroom

by Erin Walsh, OTR.L, EASTCONN

In an early-elementary classroom, teachers were seeking alternative seating options for students who were noted as "fidgety" and demonstrated decreased attention in the classroom. These students were unable to sit in a comfortable position that allowed them to be available to learn in a typical classroom chair. While options such as a Hokki stool and a ball chair were provided to students as an opportunity for further input and movement while seated, these were not beneficial to one particular student, who presented with gravitational insecurity and anxiety regarding both of these alternative seating options. This rocker chair was presented as an opportunity to receive the necessary input and movement required, through rocking, so a student could be as available to learn, as much as possible.

Outcome: In the classroom, this student has demonstrated increased written output and participation in academic tasks while he uses the rocker chair. He also demonstrates increased self-awareness by beginning to independently request the chair throughout the day. He utilizes the chair appropriately and while he is not at the optimal 90/90/90-degree seated position, he expresses overall comfort in the chair when using it for short periods throughout the day.



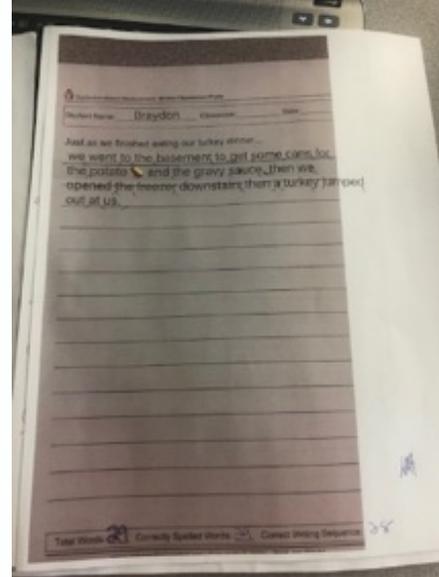
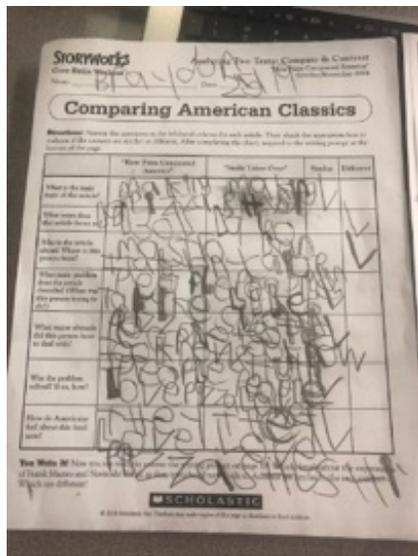
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SnapType Improves Student Legibility

by Lynn Toolan, COTA, EASTCONN

Illegible handwriting can be a source of frustration for students and their teachers. For one 12-year-old student who suffers from multiple ticks, this certainly is the case. His writing is very large and he often spends minutes at a time tracing over letters he has written. This contributes to future illegibility and makes it difficult to complete his work in a timely manner. As can be clearly seen in the sample below, left, work produced in the traditional pen and paper format does not produce a product that clearly demonstrates the student's knowledge. Occupational therapy introduced the student and his teacher to the app **SnapType**.

A sample of the student's work using this app is shown below, right.



The student's teacher, Emile Hammet, notes, "It may sound dramatic, but SnapType has changed my life with this student. I could never read his handwriting, and it was starting to cause behaviors because he knew it was basically illegible. I love how easy it is, it takes no time to prep. I can easily have myself, or my staff set it up...and he begins working right away."

SnapType comes in a free version that allows you to try this with your students. The free version is limited to storing only 3 documents at a time. The version that offers in-app purchases allows for unlimited storage of documents and supports other functions such as drawing on the screen for drawing lines, such as in a matching worksheet, or circling answers in a multiple-choice activity.

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The Versatility of the Rocketbook Everlast Notebook

By Lisa A. Fiano, MA CAGS, Education Specialist, CREC Resource Group

Are you using a Rocketbook? The Rocketbook System is the combination of a special notebook and a free mobile app. The description on the product website says, "The Everlast Notebook provides a classic pen and paper experience, yet is built for the digital age. Although it feels like a traditional notebook, the Everlast is endlessly reusable and connected to all of your favorite cloud services. When you write using any pen from the Pilot Frixion line, your writing sticks to Everlast pages like regular paper. But add a drop of water... and the notebook erases like magic." The Everlast notebook has pages that are made of a synthetic material that makes the paper smooth, erasable and reusable. The notebook is available in three sizes: letter, executive and mini.

How does it work?

The mobile app allows the user to assign destinations for your notes to a variety of cloud-based destinations, using the picture icons at the bottom of each Rocketbook page. You can send your notes to Google Drive, Evernote, Slack, Dropbox, Box, OneNote, OneDrive, iMessage, iCloud, Trello and email. Each page is scanned using the mobile app and automatically sent to the user's pre-assigned destinations.

Why is this so great?

We all know that handwriting your ideas and notes has many benefits. (cognitive benefits of handwriting). The Rocketbook allows users to have the handwriting experience and store their notes in a variety of digital formats. A new feature allows users to transcribe their handwritten notes into digital text using the OCR scanning feature. There are a variety of tutorial videos available online to walk you through the steps of having a handwritten note transcribed in an email or converting a PDF of your notes in Google Drive to digital text opened in a Google Doc. One of the most helpful videos is from Leslie Fisher and can be found by following this link: [Leslie Fisher Rocketbook OCR video](#)

The other advantage of the Rocketbook System is that you don't actually need to have the Rocketbook notebook or the Frixion pens. Rocketbook has an educator resource blog that allows you to access Rocketbook pages that you can download and print out for free. This allows teachers to use the many features of the Rocketbook with their entire class. The Rocketbook pages come in a variety of formats, including lined, graph and music sheets.

The Rocketbook Educators Community on Medium has news and resources to help teachers use their Rocketbooks in a variety of innovative and engaging ways. Teachers can learn how to turn any surface into a Rocketbook page and how to create a GIF using their Rocketbook. The video on how to create Rocket Windows or Rocket boards can be found here: [Rocketbook Hacks](#) The educators' community is also free to join and there are special pricing offers available on the site. Rocketbook offers flexibility for note-taking for diverse learners. Notes can be manipulated with a variety of tools available in the user's favorite cloud-based platform. The tools are also available if you don't want to purchase the actual notebook. The Rocketbook is a valuable option to keep notetaking alive in the digital age.

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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 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.

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