Connecticut Tech Act Project

Achievement Through Technology

CTTAP NEWSLETTER
Late Winter 2020

March 4th is National Assistive Technology Awareness Day!

By Arlene Lugo, Program Director, CT Tech Act Project

The U.S. Senate has designated **Wednesday, March 4, 2020, as National Assistive Technology Day** to raise awareness about Assistive Technology devices and services used to increase independence and allow for inclusion of individuals with disabilities, as well as older adults in their communities, schools, homes and workplaces. This special day also commends our nation's Assistive Technology specialists and program coordinators for their dedication to serving individuals with disabilities and older adults.

In honor of this day, the CT Tech Act Project would like to express its gratitude to its community partner agencies who provide such depth and breadth of Assistive Technology services to the residents of Connecticut every day. #ATAwarenessDay

Many thanks to our partners at:

CREC: www.crec.org/at

Berkshire Bank: www.CTtechact.com/loan

EASTCONN: www.eastconn.org/assistive-technology-home

The Eastern CT Assistive Technology Center at WRCC:
(860) 423-4534 ext. 319

The NEAT England Assistive Technology Center (NEAT):
https://assistivetechnology.oakhillct.org

SERC: (860) 632-1485 ext. 319

SCSU Center for Educational and Assistive Technology:
https://inside.southernct.edu/ceat

UCP of Eastern CT: https://ucpect.org/assistive-technology-at

The Western CT Assistive Technology Center at WCAAA:
http://wcaaa.org/programs/assistive-technology-center

Accessibility Tip: Everyone Uses Captions!

**by Adam Kosakowski, M.Ed., ATP, Assistive Technology Specialist
at
New England Assistive Technology (NEAT), an Oak Hill Center**

If you're deaf or hard of hearing or know someone in that population, you

likely know about captioning and how it's needed on videos in order for them to be accessible. But, did you also know that 80% of people who use captions are not deaf or hard of hearing? I am part of that 80%, and although I do not identify with deafness or being hard of hearing, I always turn on subtitles/captioning when available because it improves my comprehension of dialogue and increases my engagement with the video. I love captions! What I'm saying is, captions are used by a huge audience!

(For this statistic and more, check out this link:**captioning statistics article by 3PlayMedia)**

Quick fact! Captioning and subtitles are technically different. Subtitles are displayed during a video that includes spoken dialogue. Compare this to captioning, which includes spoken dialogue as well as non-dialogue noises like laughter, coffee pouring, explosions, etc. But, the two terms are often used interchangeably nowadays. This article will use the term captioning in this flexible way.

So, nearly everyone wants captioning, whether or not they have a disability. But, captioning on videos in social media is rare, especially when you consider how many videos are posted every day. The good news is that you don't need to be a video editing expert to add captions to your videos. There are a myriad of ways to add captions to your videos and my favorite is **Clipomatic** on Apple devices.
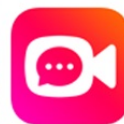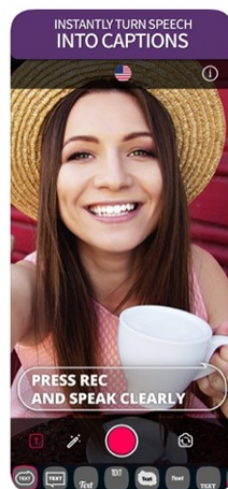
Graphics from Clipomatic

Clipomatic costs $4.99, but it is so worth it. When you start up the app, you press the big red record button and start recording, just like you would in other recording apps. While you record, the app automatically hears what you're saying and adds captions to your video. When you're done, press the stop button. Before you save your video, you can even tap a caption it created and then edit it, which is great when the app makes a rare mistake in its word recognition.

Using apps like this, you can seamlessly add captioning to your videos and post to social media. Taking this small, extra step can help you make a statement as an accessibility advocate!

Contact Adam at **Adam.Kosakowski@OakHillCT.org** and follow him on Twitter: **@NEATwithAdam**

Working Together to Support Independence

By Stacy Fulton,

EASTCONN Assistive Technology Specialist, ATP, OTR/L, CAPS

In the Spring of 2019, Connecticut's State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, made available an opportunity for one-time funding for "Individuals with Significant Cognitive Disabilities." Eastford Public Schools, in collaboration with EASTCONN's Woodstock Academy Cooperative, proposed and received an award to further independence in an Eastford student, along with her peers in the program, and to improve their Activities of Daily Living (ADL) skills. One facet of the program added the support of EASTCONN' S Occupational Therapy and Assistive Technology professionals, first to identify tools and resources to support independent performance; and second, to embed training and consultation to support both staff and students in strategies and practices that support increased independence in ADL's.

EASTCONN's staff worked with the team to identify skills to be incorporated into the program: making a bed; laundry, including sorting; use of the washer and dryer; folding and hanging clothes; vacuuming and cleaning routines; hygiene; dressing; and meal preparation, including following recipes and cooking. Grant funding was used to establish an independent living room and to purchase specialized adaptive equipment to support skill development and independence in project activities. The independent living room allows students to practice independent living skills tasks on a daily basis, such as the vacuuming and folding tasks pictured below. These and other daily living activities are supported and reinforced through the use of an iPad for learning new tasks, such as videos, and step-by-step visual supports.

Students in EASTCONN's Woodstock Academy Cooperative program practice day-to-day tasks that will support their independence after graduation.

The iPad has also enabled students to be more independent in their meal preparation tasks through the use of text-to-speech and step-by-step directions for recipes in apps, such as Storybook Creator. The adaptive cooking equipment has increased students' ability to manage a variety of tasks needed for meal preparation in a more independent, efficient and safe manner. See the illustration below where students are working on a Smoothie recipe. Directions are provided with visual and auditory support on an iPad. If necessary, the blender can be operated by using a switch, which allows students of all abilities to participate.

Text-to-speech devices and recipe apps enable students to experience increased independence as they prepare meals.

Smartwatches as Assistive Technology

by Nicole Natale, MS, CCC-SLP, ATP, CREC Resource Group

There is no denying the rise in popularity of wearable technologies, especially smartwatches. The market is saturated with many devices that have a multitude of features. Smartwatches provide many benefits to people with disabilities and can be used as part of anyone's Assistive Technology toolkit.

Many smartwatches operate either from a connected cell phone or they stand alone with a separate data plan. The Best Reviews website has a **comparison listing of the five most popular smartwatches on the market.** Available across the most popular, most robust smartwatches, the features that can help anyone include:

- Benefits for executive function issues, such as auditory and haptic reminders, some with video as well; calendar and appointment reminders; alarms; visual schedules and prompts; and curation and capturing of information for later (using voice commands or memos).
- Health rewards, such as **fall detection, heart monitoring** and **mindfulness.**
- Expressive communication rewards, such as speech-to-text messaging, text-to-speech content reading, and 3rd-party apps for communication, such as **Proloquo2go** and **Proloquo4text** for iOS.
- Location tracking with GPS and auditory/haptic maps information when walking.

There are many third-party apps to choose from for smartwatches, including **Fantastical 2 for Apple Watch** (combines Reminders and Calendars information), **Just Press Record** (voice memos), and **Google Keep** (a cross-platform with tools for reminders, lists and storage of information, including website curation). Check out Dr. Luis Perez's **webinar on wearables as assistive technology** for an excellent overview of wearables and their uses.

While many of these options are geared more toward adults and older children, younger children and people with intellectual disabilities may also benefit from more simplified smartwatch technology, particularly if a cell phone is not an option. Some popular options include the **Kidizoom Smartwatch from VTech** and the **Doki.** T3 has a **current article on wearable technology for children.** Many of these smartwatches and fitness trackers can voice and/or video call; message; provide GPS locators and safe zones (caregivers can set up an acceptable range for individuals to roam and if they leave the area, the caretaker will be notified); calendars; reminders; photo-taking; fitness information; and emergency SOS alerting.

Smartwatches and wearable technologies have opened up a host of possibilities for many people. They can help any individual become more independent and achieve their potential. This article only touches on the capabilities of these devices. The possibilities of further feature improvements are endless!

Gift of Technology

**by Shannon Taber, Assistive Technology Specialist,
United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern CT**

In November of 2019, United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern Connecticut asked local schools to nominate students with disabilities for the "Gift of Technology." We are happy to announce that we were able to select 18 individuals to receive this gift in the form of iPads, reader pens and more.

This event was funded by UCP through the Bellows Grant. TheElsie S. Bellows Fund was established in 1995 to provide Assistive Technology equipment to individuals with disabilities to help them achieve new levels of independence.

Students from Kelly Middle School in Norwich and New London High School were among some of the individuals selected, as well as students in Plainfield, Canterbury and Griswold. Most of the devices requested will be used for communication by Speech and Language Therapists in the school systems.

In the nomination form, each nominator was asked to identify how the technology would help their student, consumer or loved one. One of the nominations was for a **C-Pen Reader.** This portable, pocket-size device reads text aloud when scanned along a line of print and will significantly benefit the user, who is a young mom with an 11-year-old child. The consumer is not able to read and has struggled with helping her daughter complete her schoolwork. This simple device will help address this family's challenge and decrease barriers to independence in more ways than one.

When individuals with disabilities use technology and tools designed to remove barriers to school, community and employment, it helps to level the playing field.

At UCP we believe *everyone* should have access to solutions that help people with disabilities lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

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.

Should you experience any difficulty accessing the content in this newsletter, please contact Arlene Lugo at **Arlene.Lugo@ct.gov**

**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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