



Employing for SUCCESS

Published by **Advancing Opportunities**

October 2009

Volume 3 , Issue 1

Focusing on Ability

According to figures released by the U.S. Department of Labor in September, the percentage of people with disabilities in the labor force was 22.0, compared with 70.5 for persons with no disability and the unemployment rate for those with disabilities was 16.2 percent, compared with 9.2 percent for persons with no disability.

Advancing Opportunities provides advocacy, assistive technology and community education services to help ensure men and women with disabilities who want to work are able to.

We help high school students with disabilities plot career paths and perform assistive technology evaluations to determine how to remove the barriers that can get in the way of employment.

For more information on how Advancing Opportunities can help address your employment issues, contact us at 1-888-322-1918 or visit us on the web at www.advopps.org.

Transitioning with Technology Getting DVR in the Mix Early Makes a Big Difference

By **Kristen Russell, OTR, ATP**
Assistive Technology Specialist

Navigating the transition from high school to college can be a challenging process for anyone. Adding technology to the mix presents a whole new set of challenges. Kelly is an 18-year-old college student at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio with aspirations to be a journalist or to provide rehabilitation services. She has cerebral palsy, which affects her gross and fine motor coordination.

Kelly began this transition process several years ago, with the help of her Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team at Cherry Hill High School West. During her senior year, the team invited input from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Technology in High School

Kelly is not a newbie in the realm of assistive technology. In high school, Kelly used a laptop computer to complete her written tasks; handwriting is difficult and time consuming for her. She also used a software program called WYNN, to assist with reading, as Kelly has difficulty tracking the small text that is found in typical textbooks. Reading is a slow process for Kelly and can cause visual fatigue.

WYNN is a program that reads pages of text that have been scanned into a computer. Using a process called optical character recognition (OCR), the software program converts the scanned image into electronic text, which it then reads aloud while simultaneously highlighting the text as it is spoken. Having the laptop computer and WYNN available to her while in high school enabled Kelly to independently and successfully complete her assignments.

Evaluation Process

During the middle of her senior year, DVR made a referral for Kelly to Advancing

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Kelly is a college freshman at Wright State University in Ohio.

DVR in the Mix Makes a Big Difference

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Opportunities for an assistive technology evaluation. The evaluation focused on the areas of reading and writing. And Kelly's needs were assessed, taking into account what had worked well for her in high school.

Kelly's goal in the area of writing was to be able to complete her assignments at a faster pace, as her typing speed is 12-15 words per minute. During the evaluation, Kelly found that voice recognition software, Dragon Naturally Speaking, worked fairly well for her and showed potential to help her write significantly faster.

In the area of reading, Kelly's goal was to be able to complete reading tasks at a faster pace, and with less fatigue. She was given the latest version of WYNN and got to compare it with a similar program, Kurzweil 3000. Kelly found Kurzweil 3000 to be more user-friendly for her, and wished to test this tool further.

Note taking, problematic for many college students with disabilities, was also considered in the evaluation. Kelly felt that she may not be able to keep up with the note taking requirements in some of her college classes. The use of a digital recorder was considered so that she could record lectures and upload the file to her computer for review at a later time.

Trial Period

Equipment trials were performed to ensure the recommended technology would indeed help Kelly meet her goals. She was able to borrow all of the software and equipment from Advancing Opportunities' Technology Lending Center.

Initially, Kelly started out using a large, heavy laptop. Although this laptop with a big screen was helpful, Kelly was not able to set it up comfortably, and she was afraid she might drop it.

An Assistive Technology Specialist from Advancing Opportunities helped Kelly research and find a lighter weight, more durable laptop. Kelly is able to manipulate the new laptop with greater ease and feels more comfortable with it be-



Already being comfortable with the assistive technology she uses gives Kelly more time to focus on other transition issues, like navigating her new campus.

cause it has a handle and is manufactured to handle occasional drops and spills.

Kelly also received training and learned the basics of Dragon Naturally Speaking and Kurzweil 3000. After a 30 day trial period, Advancing Opportunities submitted a report to Kelly's DVR counselor with its final recommendations.

When Kelly graduated from high school, DVR purchased the assistive technology tools recommended during the AT evaluation. These tools included a laptop, Dragon Naturally Speaking voice recognition software with a headset microphone, Kurzweil 3000 software, a digital recorder, and a printer.

Using AT in College

Kelly is actively using her assistive tech-

nology to complete her college course work. She is able to use her laptop independently because it is lightweight and easy to handle.

Kurzweil 3000 has helped her read the many, many pages of material she has been assigned. Wright State's Office of Disability Services is helping Kelly obtain digital copies of her textbooks so she can use Kurzweil 3000 without having to scan pages first.

She uses the digital recorder to record her classes, and often listens to them while taking notes at her own pace. When Kelly is home on the semester break, she will be provided with more training from Advancing Opportunities, specifically on Dragon Naturally Speaking, so that she can begin using this software while writing long college papers.

Kelly's assistive technology enables her to be a more independent and successful college student. Without these tools, her work would take much longer and she would likely have to rely on others for assistance.

Details can often get lost in the shuffle during a transition from high school to college, especially for students with disabilities.

DVR's proactive approach, beginning the planning for Kelly's assistive technology needs in college while she was still in high school, helped make this process just go about as smoothly as possible.

For more information about technology evaluations from Advancing Opportunities, contact the Assistive Technology Services Department by visiting its website: assistivetechcenter.org or by calling 888-322-2918 ext. 595.

Assistive Technology
makes so many things
POSSIBLE

Read our blog, **Tools of the Trade**, for ideas: <http://assistivetechnj.blogspot.com/>

Community Education

Services Aid in Transition to Adulthood

by **Cathy Wiegand**
Community Education Services Coordinator

Our lives are full of transitions that are often considered major rites of passage such as starting school, graduating from high school, moving away to college, landing that first job and adjusting to the myriad of different responsibilities that independent adult life has to offer.

For people with disabilities, "transition" represents the formal process of cooperative planning that can assist students with disabilities to move from a school environment into the adult world.

"Transition services," according to the New Jersey Administration code 6A:14-1.3 means a "coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment,) continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation."

The Community Education Services Department provides services relevant to transition. Trained specialists work very closely with young consumers to enable smooth transitions from their school environments into their local communities. They also provide adults who are already out of school with similar services to further integrate them into their local communities.

For students, funding for transition services is generally provided by their local district or the private school they are enrolled in. For adults, funding for these services comes from either the New Jersey State Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) or the New Jersey State Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

An "Initial Interview Assessment" (IIA) is often the first step in the transition process. It consists of a thorough inventory of a consumer's academic, social and potential vocational skills.

A "Functional Vocational Assessment" (FVA) is an assessment process that provides information about job or career interests, aptitudes and skills. Information for this assessment is gathered using informal methods such as observation or formal methods such as a written test.

These assessments can be an insightful part of a student's

Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For our adult consumers, we often work in conjunction with DDD or DVR to assess skills and vocational needs.

The process of creating jobs and matching consumers of various ages and individual skill sets is called "Job Development." At Advancing Opportunities, we foster growth and consider each job as a stepping stone on a career path as opposed to a singular job on a plateau where the consumer would remain indefinitely. "Job Sampling" can offer consumers various opportunities to try out different types of jobs and potential career paths. In terms of job readiness, if necessary, we work on a consumer's daily living skills and provide on-site job coaching to help build confidence and independence.

For more information about Community Education Services at Advancing Opportunities, please contact Cathy Wiegand, Community Education Coordinator on 609-882-4182 ext. 532 or via e-mail at cwiegand@advopps.org.

Bristol Myers-Squibb Recognizes National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Members of the Assistive Technology Services (ATS) department were invited to three of Bristol Myers-Squibb's campuses this month to showcase the latest technologies available for workers with disabilities.

Employees had the opportunity to try a variety of accommodations used by people with disabilities. Demonstrations included alternate keyboarding, speech recognition and ergonomic seating.

"Clearly, Bristol Myers-Squibb recognizes the value of employing people with disabilities and providing optimal working conditions for all its employees," said Garth Heid, Assistant Director ATS.

"Companies don't have to wait for a special month to find out more about hiring individuals with disabilities or providing accommodations for workers. We'd be happy to show employers what is possible with technology all year round."

For information about assistive technology in the workplace, call us at 1-888-322-1918.

Do you want to receive copies of Employing for Success directly or do you know of someone else who would? Complete this form and fax it back to us at 609-882-4054, email the information to info@cpofnj.org or mail it to: Advancing Opportunities, 1005 Whitehead Road Extension, Suite 1, Ewing, NJ 08638.

Name: _____

Title: _____ Organization : _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____



Learn How Assistive Technology Can Help in the Workplace

Advancing Opportunities' Assistive Technology Services Department understands the many different types of barriers that keep men and women with disabilities from working. Staff members also understand that there is no one solution or single answer to getting beyond those barriers.

Working with the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, our staff has helped hundreds of people enter or re-enter the workforce by using assistive technology to create solutions unique to their circumstances.

Our on-site evaluations can cover:

- ✓ **ergonomic work stations**
- ✓ **special software or equipment to access a computer**
- ✓ **technology for memory and organization**
- ✓ **job accommodations for retail, trades, manufacturing and more**

To learn more and see examples of Assistive Technology at work in the workplace, visit us online at:



assistivetechologycenter.org