# DIRECTIONS

### Technology in Special Education

# What's New in AT Products

### The DREAMMS Staff

Springtime brings with it many new and exciting Assistive Technology products. This article will highlight a few that we have heard about lately.

**ablenet inc.**

You don't have to be "computer smart" to provide switch access to an IBM-compatible computer for a family member with severe or profound disabilities. With Symbi-Key from AbleNet, it takes just seconds to program keys for switch use and open up a world of educational or recreational software.

"Most computer interfaces typically are either difficult to install and set up or only work with the software programs of one manufacturer," said Peggy Locke, Director of Sales at AbleNet, Inc. "Symbi-Key's hardware can be part of your computer system in less than a minute, works with any switch accessible or commercially available software, and works equally as well in Windows and DOS."

With the Symbi-Key, you can store up to 27 separate switch setups. This allows you to use your Symbi-Key for several different computer programs without needing to reprogram each time.

Symbi-Key has "repeat" and "delay" keys so that switch activation can be modified for specific individuals who might continually hold down a switch or activate it repetitively in a short period of time.

Mouse functions can be set up for switch use if Windows 95 is installed on your computer, or if you have an earlier version of Windows that has been upgraded by Microsoft (done free-of-charge).

Symbi-Key is available for $299, plus shipping and handling. For more information or to order, contact AbleNet, Inc., 1081 Tenth Avenue SE,

## Inside

# Accessible Learning

**by Lorianne Hoenninger**

*lorianne@erols.com*

I don't know about you but I am a software junkie. No matter how many programs I have, I am always yearning for more, searching for that special program that fits the unique needs and interests of that special child. If only I had unlimited funds I could buy all the right software. If only I had unlimited time, I could write perfect software. But unfortunately, I had neither, or at least I didn't until I discovered authoring software!

Authoring software, for those unfamiliar with the term, is programming for idiots. Most authoring packages are a shell. You add your own graphics, sounds, words, etc. through a simple to understand format. Before you know it, you have painlessly created your own educational game!

The quintessential authoring program is Hyperstudio (http://www.hyperstudio.com). This commercially available product retails for about $150.00 and is available for both the Windows and Macintosh platforms. With a minimum of effort, Hyperstudio "stacks" can be accessed through switch technology, the Intellikeyboard or the Powerpad.

For those of us without $150.00, there is a freeware alternative for the Macintosh, **Scan and Read** (http://www.switchintime.com). With Scan 'n Read anyone can create accessible books with text, graphics and sounds. Students use a switch to turn pages and have text read to them. Scan 'n Read began life a special custom project for the Brockton Public Schools Special Needs Department (Helen Virga, Barbara Smith, and Ken Sennett) in conjunction with Lynn Chambers and Eden Associates of Rockport, MA.  It is a phenomenal tool. Enjoy!

**Storymaker** (http://www.crl.com/~embryev) is a DOS shareware program for creating interactive storybooks with animation and sound effects including music and speech. It is specially designed for kids as a creativity kit for arts, music, reading and writing. Parents and schools can also use it as a teaching tool and as a good introduction to multimedia. Storybooks can also be compiled as stand-alone programs and distributed royalty-free. A special feature of Storymaker+ VGA is a screen keyboard for the physically disabled who can not use the computer keyboard, but can enter text through a mouse emulator device.

Please note that Storymaker is a DOS program and may not run properly under Windows because of the way Windows control system resources For Windows 95, first run the storybooks in DOS, then create a

# Current PC Voice Dictation Products

**Source:** *Voice Input Update #2*
***Center for Accessible Technology.***

**DRAGON SYSTEMS PRODUCTS**
DragonDictate Classic
Discrete speech
Hands-free computer control for all applications
30,000 word active vocabulary
Text-to-speech capability
Minimum 486/66 processor, 16+ MB RAM
$150

DragonDictate Power
Discrete speech
Hands-free computer control - all applications
60,000 word active vocabulary
Text-to-speech capability
Minimum 486/66 processor, 16+ MB RAM
$695

NaturallySpeaking Personal
Continuous speech
Dictation into a dedicated word processor
30,000 word active vocabulary
Single user only
Minimum 133 MHz Pentium processor, 32-48+ MB RAM
$100

NaturallySpeaking Preferred
Continuous speech
Dictation into dedicated word processor or MS Word 97
30,000/45,000/55,000 word active vocabulary
mouse control
Digitized speech playback or text-to-speech
Minimum 133 MHz Pentium processor, 32-48+ MB RAM
$170

NaturallySpeaking Deluxe
Continuous speech
Dictation into dedicated word processor or MS Word 97
60,000 word active vocabulary
Digitized speech playback or text-to-speech
Minimum 133 MHz Pentium

processor
Macro creation capabilities
Includes Dragondictate 3.0
32-48+ MB RAM
$695

**IBM PRODUCTS**
SimplySpeaking
Discrete speech
Dictation into dedicated word processor
22,000 word active vocabulary
Minimum 100 MHz Pentium processor, 16+ MB RAM
$50

SimplySpeaking Gold
Discrete speech
Command & control, dictation into dedicated word processor or MS Word
64,000 word active vocabulary
Digitized speech playback or text-to-speech
Minimum 100 MHz Pentium processor, 16-32 MB RAM
$49

ViaVoice
Continuous speech
Dictation into dedicated word processor or MS Word
22,000 word active vocabulary
**Digitized speech playback or text-to-speech**
Minimum 166 MHz MMX Pentium processor
16-32 MB RAM
$70

ViaVoice Gold
Continuous speech
Command & control, dictation into dedicated word processor or MS Word
22,000 word active vocabulary
Digitized speech playback or text-to-speech
Minimum 166 MHz MMX Pentium processor
32+ MB RAM
$120

**KURZWEIL (LERNOUT & HAUSPIF) PRODUCTS**
VoicePad
Discrete speech
Command & control and dictation into a dedicated word processor
20,000 word active vocabulary
$40

VoicePlus
Discrete speech
General computer control, multiple applications, nearly hands-free
30,000 word active vocabulary, & child voice profiles
Minimum Pentium processor, 24-32 MB RAM
$80

Voic6Pro
Discrete speech
General computer control, multiple applications, nearly hands-free
60,000 word active vocabulary, & child voice profiles
Minimum Pentium processor, 24-32 MB RAM
$100

Please Note:
· The minimum systems listed are taken from the manufacturer's specifications. User feedback has indicated that using a faster processor and doubling the amount of RAM works best.
·Prices are current catalog/retail at time of publication and are subject to change.

# ATFSCP Notes
## The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project
*<http://www.ucpa.org/html/innovative/atfsc_index.html>*

**ATFSCP TO COORDINATE ADVOCACY EFFORT TO REFORM MEDICARE AAC DEVICE FUNDING POLICY**
*By Lewis Golinker, Esq.\**

Medicare, the nation's largest health services program, has significant barriers to coverage and funding for Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) devices. These barriers were created more than a decade ago and they remain in place today, despite the continuing erosion of MC device funding barriers imposed by other funding sources, most notably those in the Medicaid program.

Research sponsored by ATFSCP in 1997 illustrated that Medicare barriers can be challenged. The size of the Medicare program and the importance of expressive communication to adults and senior citizens with disabilities creates an urgency to do so.

In response, ATFSCP is coordinating the development of a multi-pronged nationwide advocacy strategy to reform Medicare MC device coverage and funding policy. Its partners in this initiative will include some state assistive technology projects, state Protection & Advocacy offices (P&A), AAC services providers and other disability organizations. Three major focus areas are information dissemination, development of information for specific advocacy efforts, and provision of technical assistance information.

### Information Dissemination

A shortage of information exists -both practical and advocacy related -about how the Medicare program operates. Neighborhood Legal Services (the project's subcontractor that provides legal technical assistance to state Protection and Advocacy assistive technology attorneys) and ATFSCP are developing an informational brochure about Medicare funding of AAC devices. This brochure will be useful for state P&A program staff and others to Medicare recipients, family members and services providers. It will contain, among other information, a specific outline of the Medicare claims and appeals processes (including names and addresses of decision makers); time frames for decisions and appeals; and options and issues to be considered regarding exhaustion of administrative remedies. It also will provide an evaluation form that can be completed by speech-language pathologists when assessing a Medicare recipient for an AAC device.

For advocates, ATFSCP is preparing an advocacy "looseleaf" about Medicare funding for AAC devices. This "looseleaf" will be created electronically and in hard copy. It will include all the materials produced regarding the Medicare AAC policy reform initiative, including copies of articles and descriptive materials about Medicare funding for AAC devices and of the strategy to overcome funding barriers that can be inserted into locally produced newsletters; the informational brochure, including evaluation forms;

-legal strategy memoranda;
-copies of Medicare AAC device decisions;
-copies of relevant Medicare guidelines; and

-other similar information.

ATFSCP will provide ongoing information and support to Medicare recipients, family members, services providers and advocates regarding the scope of Medicare funding; the status of Medicare funding barriers and the status of the systems change initiative.

ATFSCP also is also engaged in ongoing contact and networking activities with other organizations with common interests regarding Medicare AAC device policy reform. These organizations include the state assistive technology projects, United States Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, the United States ALS Society and its state chapters, CINI, American Speech and Hearing Association and Muscular Dystrophy of America.

NLS will hold every-other-month conference calls with Protection & Advocacy program staff devoted to Medicare AAC device funding reform. ATFSCP staff also will develop materials for and deliver a presentation about Medicare funding for AAC devices and the strategy to overcome related funding barriers.

### Development of Advocacy Tools

A second focus of this initiative is to develop advocacy tools that can be used by Medicare recipients in individual Medicare funding requests and appeals; by state Medicaid programs in Medicare funding requests in and appeals for its

recipients with dual eligibility; and by advocates pursuing direct Medicare policy reform.

To achieve these goals, ATFSCP is developing an outline of the Speech and Language Pathologist evaluation and report that must be submitted in support of Medicare funding for an AAC device. The factors to be considered and reported are intended to be included in the Medicare AAC device funding informational brochure.

In addition, ATFSCP is developing an outline of the expert witnesses' testimony. The testimony is needed to support Medicare funding for AAC devices before three Medicare decision-makers. These decision-makers include: (i) a Medicare administrative law judge in support of an individual appeal; (ii) a Medicare administrator in support of negotiated policy reform of a systemic nature; and (iii) a judge in support of judicially ordered policy reform.

The ATFSCP outline will include the topics to be addressed by one or more expert witnesses. Also included will be: videotape evidence and/or videotaped testimony of AAC users; AAC intervention literature reviews; supportive affidavits by nationally respected AAC experts; a script of the questions and answers generated as part of direct testimony of an expert; and the topics to be addressed in cross examination of an opposing expert.

For individuals or advocates who pursue Medicare funding for AAC devices, ATFSCP will develop model legal memoranda and/or pleadings, and will be available to help identify expert witnesses who can help with funding appeals and/or policy reform activities.

## Technical Assistance

The third prong of this strategy is to provide ongoing advocacy technical assistance. This will be directed to ATFSCP staff and state Assistive Technology Projects who have begun to recruit their state Medicaid programs as sources of individual Medicare AAC device appeals for persons with dual Medicare and Medicaid eligibility, and advocates, including state Medicaid program representatives, who are pursuing individual Medicare appeals. ATFSCP will develop and maintain a database of Medicare AAC device appeals being pursued.

Lewis Golinker, Esq., will be coordinating this initiative for ATFSCP. For more information about the initiative please contact him at 607-277-7286(v); 607-277-5239(fax); or via e-mail at the lgolinker@aol.com address. §

# Ask RJ
## RJ Cooper & Associates
*<http://www.rjcooper.com>*

I am currently working in speech recognition for dysarthric people and I would like to ask you where can I find a reliable speech database of dysarthric samples.   Humberto Zuluaga <hzuluaga@hotmail.com>

Interesting question.  In customizing software that is allows it, you almost always have 2 ways to go: 1) Use the samples or models that the software provides, or is available elsewhere, in the appropriate format; 2) Use samples or models that you create that are specific to a user/learner.   For example, with an Augmentative Communication program like my Point To Pictures, you should be using pictures that are personally understandable and motivating to a specific learner.  Many times, the pictures/models that a package provides are not specific enough to a learner.  So, in the case of PTP, Tthis might mean using a digital camera to take a picture of, say, the learner's mom, transferring the picture to the computer, and importing into PTP. That would be an example of 2) above.  To illustrate 1) above,  maybe one of the     packaged movies (animated picture and sound effects), or using a clip art picture from one of the many clip art libraries available just about anywhere, might fit the need.  Obviously, having content or data specific to a learner/user optimizes the users interactions.

This same methodology holds true for your question.  You can use templates/ models that the speech recognition software supplies, or you fine tune the packaged templates (what you call "speech database") or find a suitable set somewhere else.  I have found, from my 14 years of experience with speech recognition prodocts, that adding in (sort of 'averaging') the user's speech patterns to an existing set seems to work the best.  For example, in most speech recognition packages, if it does not understand what you have said, that is, it can't find a match in its database of stored samples, then it will prompt you or automatically average in your current utterance with its active set of models (I'm using "set ofmodels", "database", "templates" all interchangeably). With some speech recognition packages, it might take up to 10 new occurrences of your utterance before it fully 'understands' all occurences of that utterance.

In other words, just by *using* the software and letting it 'learn' as it goes along, it creates a unique set specific to that exact dysarthric sample set.  In my opinion, this is the best way to create a "reliable speech database of dysarthric samples" since you will not find 2 such databases that are the same for 2 different persons with dysarthric speech anyway.  So this is sort of a combination of 1) and 2) cited above.

You can always contact the manufacturer but I bet you a buck (which is a big bet for me ;-) that they will back me up.
--------

Hello, I am inquiring about software for a single person. (I will be finding a copy of your publication at my local library) I am looking for a "predictive" program. Peter Graystone suggested your company. A"predictive will figure out the most common word and then the second most common word, depending on what the person types for the first letter. Any information you may have would be a great help to me.   Looking forward to your reply, Nicole West, <titring@ silveranchor.com>

Word Prediction programs are all the rage and are almost as abundant, within the field of Assistive Technology, as on-screen keyboards <g>.  There are several that seem to be very popular.

Co-Writer, by Don Johnston, Inc. <www.donjohnston.com>, $290, is now available for Windows, as well as for Mac.  It has its own window in which your current typing and prediction take place, and when you're happy with it, you can 'transfer' it, by single click or keystroke, to your host application.

I just realized that I should explain the 'background' process involved in this complicated,   behind-the-scenes 'magic'.  When you launch (or load) a word prediction program, it may or may not make itself visible to you, unlike regular applications.  The job of the prediction programs is to take a peek at what you're typing (intercept keystrokes), or what you're clicking on in an on-screen keyboard program), compare that to its known database of words/phrases, and offer you a choice

to help you complete or predict what comes next. Usually this choice is performed by pressing a number key, using your arrow keys, or clicking on one of them. That word/phrase is then entered for you into your host application.

In the case of Co-Writer, you have a choice as to whether the prediction happens in its own window and then you transfer the result, or 'in-line', meaning right within your text in the application. By "application" I mean Microsoft Word, or SimpleText, or WordPad, or whatever text entry program you are using, even Netscape for email.

So the word prediction programs work within any software (or at least *most* software <g>; there are always exceptions, even though manufacturers don't like to admit it).

The programs almost always 'learn' new words/phrases as you use them, and they usually prompt you when you enter a new word, asking you whether you would like to add it to its database, or some even do this automatically. You might have to manually go through the prediction database, if the package allows you, to clean it up every once in awhile. Also, these packages are based, much of the time, on 'frequency-of-use', meaning that the more a word/phrase is used, the more quickly, or higher up on the list of choices, it will be presented. So if you use "I love daisies" very often, that would come up as a choice more quickly than "I love roses."

Here are some other choices for Windows:

- KeyREP by Prentke-Romich <www.prentrom.com>, $290.
- HandiWord by The Learning Co.'s Internet Solutions Group, <www.handiware.com>, $295.
- Aurora Prediction for Windows by Aurora Systems <www.djtech/ aurora>, $395.
- SoothSayer Word Prediction by AHF <www.ahf-net.com/sooth.htm>, $99.

Here's one that is made for both Windows and Macintosh:

OnScreen w/WordComplete by RJ Cooper & Assoc. (who? <g>), $99 (note the term Completion versus Prediction. I only try to complete the word you are on.)

There are also a few on-screen keyboards that have built-in word predictors but I only cite those with standalone prediction/completion abilities above.

There is an excellent article, done by Mark Novak and Jamie Klund of the Trace Center, called "If Word Prediction Can Help, Which Program Do You Use?" which you should read, in the Aug/Sept. issue of Closing The Gap <www.closingthegap.com> or contact Mark at <menovak@ facstaff.wisc.edu> (mention my name and say "hi" for me :).
----------

Since many of you ask my daughter's progress on computer, she's 20 months now and her progress is minimal, to my surprise (and maybe to yours also ;-) As she rolls the trackball around now, she is now more aware of the big cursor on the screen (my largest Biggy, of course) and even follows it with her finger. Her movement of the trackball is less random than it was 2 months ago. But she still does not

understand that moving the ball moves the cursor to a location for the purposes of selecting something with the button on the trackball. She does recognize and understand those programs where the button does something all by itself, like cause/ effect software from Laureate Learning <www.LLSys.com> or me <www.rjcooper.com>. And she is showing that she remembers the appropriate input device for a certain program, like she knows that the trackball is involved in Jump Start Toddlers because as soon as she recognizes the software, she reachs for the trackball. But when I fire up Point To Pictures or Living Books, she knows to use the Magic TouchScreen.

Within software that 'illustrates' the keys of the keyboard, by showing a short animation and playing a phrase that starts with a specific letter, she still does not get the one-to-one correspondence between pressing a single key and seeing something about that key displayed.

I've looked at some more titles for younger kids but they all still require mousing skills, even though they say they don't. For your reference, for those that have not been following her progress, CJ does not have a disability, but I thought it would be interesting to share her computer evolution with you. I consider her intelligence just a 'tad' above average (what parent would say anything else <g>?).

Therefore, I can say, with some degree of authority, that babies up to 20 months cannot operate a mouse

shortcut to view the storybook.

During all that time you saved by using authoring tools,   take a look on the Internet at **Billy Bear's Playground** (http://www.billybear4kids.com/story/books.htm). There you will discover a dozen animated storybooks created with Storymaker that available for the download and a small shareware fee, ranging from $8.00-&15.00. They include such titles as *Billy Bear Learns How to Sign, Billy Bear Joins the Circus* and *Billy Bear's Pumpkin Seed.*

Please note that Macintosh files are generally saved as self extracting archives. This means that after you download the game, it unshrinks itself and opens automatically. This is not necessarily the case with Windows files. If you download a file with a ".zip" extension, you need to manually open it with an extraction program. At http://www.pkware.com/download.html you can download **Pkzip,** an easy to use shareware utility that will open virtually all your Windows and DOS  downloads.

Well, according to the word counter, I need to "zip" my column and save the rest for another day! Next month, we will begin to explore reading and math shareware for early elementary students.  Until then I'll see you in cyberspace! Please  write  c/o: Accessible Learning Technology Associates, P.O. Box 597, Shirley NY, 11967.

# Council for Exceptional Children's DEC Conference 1998

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children will be bringing their fourteenth annual conference to Chicago in December of this year. This conference will address research, policy, personnel training, program planning, and service delivery issues related to young children with special needs and their families. The theme, *"Celebrating 25 Years of Excellence,"* will highlight past achievements and future goals in serving the needs of young exceptional children and their families.

Each year the conference draws together people from a wide variety of disciplines to share information and skills and provide participants with state-of-the-art information. Presenters and attendees will include teachers and other early childhood direct service providers; speech, physical and occupational therapists; pediatric health care providers; social workers;          psychologists; administrators; personnel trainers; parents; and researchers.

Workshops, keynote addresses, and conference sessions will cover a broad range of topics including assessment; diagnosis; service delivery; the role of the family; program evaluation; current research and applications; policy development and advocacy; Head Start and child care issues; collaborative efforts; personnel preparation and staff development; administration and funding; technological applications; and transitions. Receptions, poster sessions and commercial exhibits

provide an opportunity for networking and informal exchange of information among participants, presenters and exhibitors.

Featured Speakers

The Opening General Session will be held Sunday afternoon, December 6, 1998 featuring Tal Black**,** MA. Black's presentation, *"Unfinished Business: Thoughts On Where We Are After 25 years,"* will combine the perspectives of past advancements and future challenges facing educators and parents of young children with special needs.

The field of early childhood education has greatly enriched the lives of both individuals with disabilities and their families, yet much work remains to be done. "Our most difficult work lies ahead, as well as our most significant contributions," says Black. "It's something to think about."

Currently the Associate Director of NEC*TAS at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, Chapel Hill, NC, Black draws on over 20 years of professional experience in child development.

Plan now to attend this conference, which is an important professional development opportunity in the field of early intervention.

For further information, you can contact the Council for Exceptional Children at: 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191; Voice: 703-620-3660; Fax: 703-264-9446; Web: http://www.cec.sped.org. §

Minneapolis, MN 55414-1312, (800)322-0956.

## Laureate Learning Systems

Laureate Learning Systems, the premier publisher of special education software, is now offering a FREE Mac/Win 95 CD featuring 14 interactive product demos. This CD Demo is designed to help speech-language pathologists, special educators, and parents choose appropriate software for individuals with special needs. Laureate offers over 80 programs in the areas of language development, cognitive processing, reading, and speech/voice assessment and training.

The Laureate Demo highlights Laureate's Linguistic Hierarchy which outlines seven stages of language development from birth to adulthood. Language characteristics, training goals, and software suggestions are described for each stage. You'll also find video footage of individuals using Laureate programs; testimonials from professionals and national publications, sample goals and objectives, in-depth product descriptions, and complete ordering information.

Laureate was founded in 1982 by two pioneering speech-language pathologists who were among the first to recognize the important contributions that multimedia software could make to the lives of individuals with special needs. Laureate software is specifically designed for children and adults with language-learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, hearing impairments, physical impairments, and autism. Over the years, Laureate software has consistently been recognized for excellence of design and instructional content.

For more information and a FREE CD DEMO, please contact Laureate Learning Systems, 110 Spring Street, Winooski, VT 05404, call 1-800-562-6801, or visit www.Laureate Learning.com.

## MINDPLAY

MlNDPLAY is pleased to announce that our new interactive reading program, Jo-Jo's Read 'n' Say World, was selected as the Best Early Elementary Software in the Language

or trackball for point and click tasks. Please let me know *your* exceptions! <g>
------------

In closing this column, just a bit of information for those of you operating special needs technology resource centers that are 'asking' vendors to provide freebies for your 'unique' center. 10 years ago, there were not many special centers like these. I still remember being involved in the first ATA center opening! So when a center asked a vendor for freebies back then, it was a special case. But these days there are *hundreds* if not a few thousand special needs centers. And they are all under-funded. So they need materials to be able to present options to those people that they serve. Where does this sometimes costly equipment come from?

Lately, many centers have been sending me, and other vendors, letters raving about "unique marketing opportunities" and the like, by giving products to them and having them 'sell' them for us to *thousands* of potential customers. While there is some truth in this, and I do appreciate being included as someone that makes something that they would want in their center', rest assured that if I gave my products to all those that ask, I would soon be in a different field.

Oh, you should read some of these letters. They are like infomercials on TV. Just a bit too much hype for me. I would rather receive a plain request for a donation. And I would want that request to be personal, and not some form letter. I give things to those that can best use them and get the word out

about my work, and make a difference in people's lives because of my products.

This field, as in *any* field, is built on a partnership between users, facilitators, and vendors. One cannot exist without the others. And *each* must benefit, in some way, from their efforts. I, as one of the latter, benefit by getting out there with 'you' all year long (conferences, trade shows, lectures) and seeing, and many times *helping*, to make little 'miracles' happen with some of my stuff. Of course, I also use revenue from sales to feed and shelter my family.

The user obviously benefits from my [vendors'] efforts and your's (I'm assuming that my average reader is a 'facilitator', that is, teacher, therapist, or parent).

And the facilitator benefits by doing a job well, matching up appropriate materials with a person, implementing and maintaining that connection.

In other words, this is a win-win-win situation. We each must respect out little niches and give each other their 'due'. So, please, when you ask a vendor for a freebie, do a personal letter, not a form letter, and state specifically why you believe that you could change some lives with their product in your center. But don't count too much on donations these days, as it's just so difficult for vendors like myself to choose one center over the other to donate to, even if they claim that what they are doing is 'unique'.

Basically, I believe, we are all doing good work! Keep it up ;-)

RJ :) §

## Conferences & Events

**Date: June 22 - 24, 1998**
NECC '98 National Educational Computing Conference,
San Diego, CA
Contact: 541-346-6322, FAX: 541-346-2565, necc@oregon.uoregon.edu, http://necc98.csusm.edu

**Date: June 26 - July 1, 1998**
RESNA '98 - Rehabilitation Engineers and Assistancts Society of N. America, Minneapolis, MN
Contact: 703-524-6686; 703-524-6630 fax; www.resna.org

**Date: July 9 - 11, 1998**
1998 National Down Syndrome Society Conference, *The Future is Ours*, Delavan, WI
Contact: 800-221-4602

**Date: July 10 - 11, 1998**
Minspeak Conference '98, Celebrating the Success of Minspeak,
Wooster, OH
Contact: 800-262-1984, x 257; tlb@prentrom.com; www.prentrom.com

**Date: July 13 - 24 and August 10 - 21, 1998**
Assistive Technology Application Certificate Program, (ATACP '98), Northridge, CA
Contact: Center on Disabilities, CSUN, 818-677-2578 voice/tdd, 818-677-4929 fax; E-mail: ltm@csun.edu

**Date: July 31 - August 2, 1998**
Abilities Expo, Chicago, IL.
Contact: 203-256-4700 x 114 for general info and 203-256-4700 x 123 exhibitors.

*PRODUCTS continued from page 8*

Arts category of ComputEd's annual BESSIE awards.

ComputEd, a learning lab in California, evaluates software from around the nation in different academic subject areas and age groups. They use extensive criteria in selecting the best software, including: curriculum inclusion, content quality, and ease of use. Software must also score high with children who test it in the lab.

Jo-Jo's Read 'n' Say World combines phonics, word family and whole language techniques into an interactive reading adventure for Pre-K to 2nd grade students. Material from the five titles in MINDPLAY's award-winning Jo-Jo's Reading Series have been integrated into this single piece of software. As students progress through over 100 on-line lessons, new reading skills are introduced and words and sentences are colorfully animated.
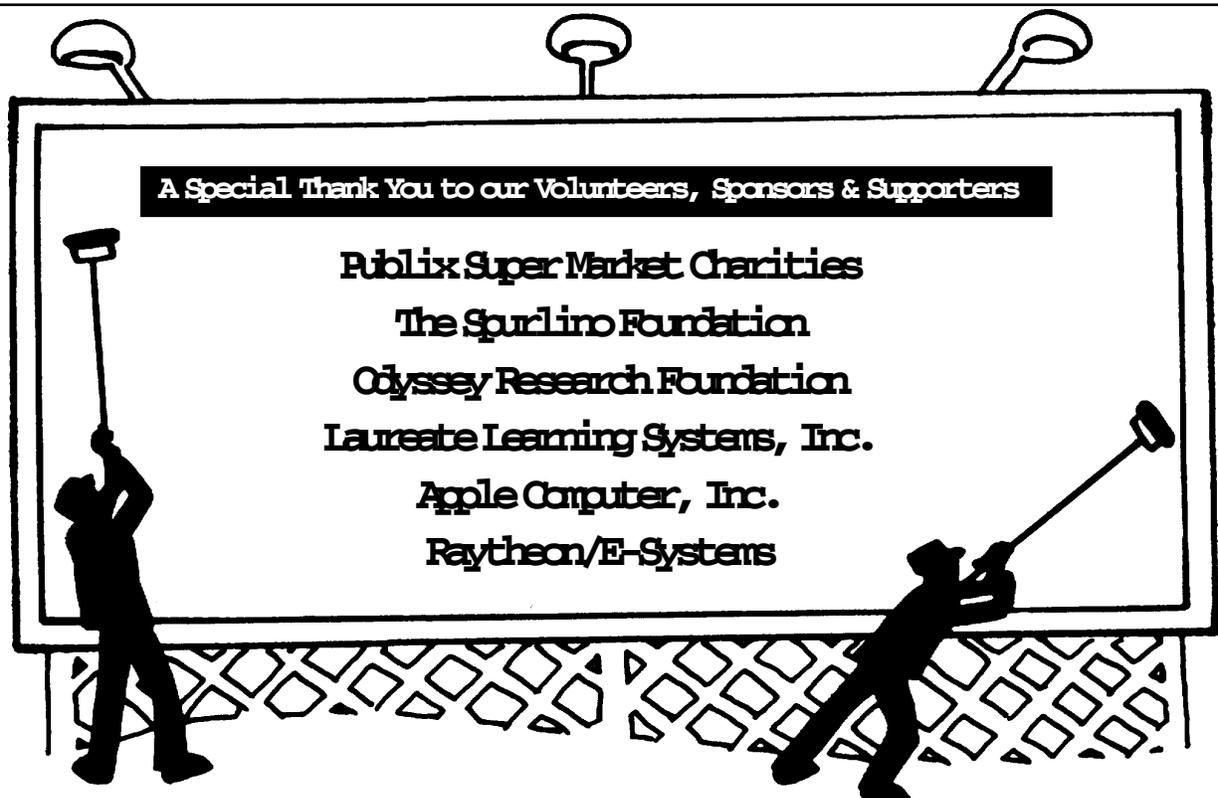
The program may be customized to fit individual student needs. Using the on-line management system, teachers can select the specific lessons presented, the number of repetitions, and options for ESL and FSL support. An optional recording feature allows the program to capture and playback the student's own voice, providing reinforcement and motivation. Performance records and student recordings are saved for teachers to review.

Jo-Jo's Read 'n' Say World is specially priced at $499. Each package includes 6 copies of the program on Mac/Win hybrid CD, a program guide, and written goals and objectives. An extensive set of lesson plans and reproducible blackline masters is also included.

Further information about this award winning program can be found obtained by contacting MINDPLAY at 1(800)221-7911 or email at: mindplay@ rtd.com. Download free demos and shareware at our web site: http://www.mindplay.com.

## TASH International Inc.

Concerned about safety? The Stove Power Controller isa stove minder equipped with an alarm for use with conventional electric stoves. The timer/alarm may be set for 15, 30 or 60 minute intervals before the auto shut-off occurs. It may be used with individuals who are forgetful or by a family member who is concerned about leaving something unattended on the stove. The price is $150 US. For more information please contact: TASH International Inc.; 1-800-463-5685; E-mail: tashcan@aol.com; www.tashint.com. §



A Special Thank You to our Volunteers, Sponsors & Supporters

Publix Super Market Charities
The Spurlino Foundation
Odyssey Research Foundation
Laureate Learning Systems, Inc.
Apple Computer, Inc.
Raytheon/E-Systems

## Book of Possibilities

MINNEAPOLIS, MN, —A newly published *"Book of Possibilities"* for including 12 to 21 year old students with severe/profound disabilities in regular school activities is available from AbleNet, Inc., a Minneapolis-based developer of simple technology products and services.

The "how-to" resource contains more than 80 ideas by professionals around the world on how-to-use simple technology to serve students with disabilities in both included and non-included classrooms. Each activity is presented with a short description, step-by-step instructions, listing of materials or equipment needed, and resources for securing the equipment. The spiral-bound *"Book of Possibilities: Secondary Edition"* contains user stories and general information about simple technology for those teachers just getting started with simple-to-use assistive technology. In the classroom, switches and other communication aids can be used to minimize individual differences and help students with severe/profound disabilities to build relationships and share experiences.

"The possibilities presented address common problems and frustrations that educators face throughout the day," said Peggy Locke, Director of Sales at AbleNet. "The book features ways to include switch users in classroom

**SPOTLIGHT**

routines such as presenting math problems, giving reports and journaling, and also in non-curricular activities such as school plays and sports events." For additional information, contact AbleNet, Inc., 1081 Tenth Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, 1-800-322-0956.

## New TV & VCR Remote Control

Also from AbleNet - Now any person with a disability who can use a switch can turn on favorite TV shows and play videos using a new TV and VCR remote control from AbleNet, Inc., a Minneapolis-based developer of simple technology products and programs.

"Decision making, discrimination and scanning skills are not required to operate this remote," said Peggy Locke, Director of Sales at AbleNet, Inc. "Individuals with the most severe disabilities now can control either a TV or VCR simply by touching the surface of our programmable remote, making this one of the most unique TVIVCR remote products currently available."

In using the remote with a TV, the first surface activation turns the TV on. Each subsequent activation advances through the channels, and the final touch turns the TV off. The remote can be pre-programmed to access only desired channels. To control a VCR, one activation of the remote turns on both the TV and VCR, sets the TV to the proper station, and starts the "play" function on your VCR. The second activation turns the TV and VCR off. The remote can be programmed to perform other TV and VCR functions, such as "mute," "fast forward" and pause. It can be programmed to operate any two devices, one device at a time, such as one TV and one VCR, two different TVs, or two different VCRs, making it useful when a home has TVs and VCRs in several rooms.

AbleNet's remote was developed to work with most commercially-available TVs and VCRs. It operates cable channels with cable-ready televisions and does not impact the operation of the remote control manufactured for the TV or VCR. The TV and VCR remote comes with an easy-to-follow instruction manual and requires a 9-volt battery, not included. This new product is part of the AbleLink Connectables™ product line, an innovative and simple-to-use system for communication and control. The TV and VCR remote is available for $82, plus shipping and handling.