



MassMATCH NEWS Quarterly

Maximizing Assistive
Technology in
Consumers' Hands

Summer 2012

IN THIS ISSUE

[New Wheelchair Clinic in Western Mass. is Up and Rolling!](#)

[Catching Up with MCB's AT Director](#)

[Tech Decision: Choosing the Right Smoke Detector](#)

[Get AT Stuff Highlights](#)

[So Many Ways to Play!](#)

[Product Spotlight: the Lawnbott Evolution](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

New Wheelchair Clinic in Western Mass is Up and Rolling!

MassMATCH is helping sponsor a new wheelchair clinic in Amherst and it's off to a great start! The clinic is a collaboration between the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, the Stavros Center for Independent Living (CIL), and the Dept. of Developmental Services (DDS). Once every three months Stavros provides the space for specialists from DDS to problem-solve serious seating and positioning issues for individuals who have had trouble accessing this level of expertise. To make evaluations and repairs possible, MassMATCH has purchased tools for the site including a high-tech pressure mapping system.

Why is this clinic so valuable?

For years there has been a gap in these services for individuals who do not fall within DDS eligibility. The clinic begins to address this gap by leveraging the decades worth of knowledge, skills, and vendor

 Pressure map. This is a square mat with a grid on its surface wired to a digital display showing pressure zones in a rainbow of colors.

An example of a pressure map: the xsensor x3 seat pad

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So Many Ways to Play!

*DCR's Universal Access
Program heats up for
summer!*



The Action TrackChair

In June, the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Universal Access Program held their annual Adaptive Recreation Fair in Boston. You can read about the day and some exciting new vendors at this [Everyone Outdoors blog post](#). If you are sorry you missed the event, keep in mind that everyday is a recreation fair at the [Everyone Outdoors Blog!](#) Check out the site's sidebar for Massachusetts State Parks Recommended for Accessibility, Massachusetts State Parks

relationships held by DDS assistive technology staff for the benefit of more people. Stavros is providing the referrals.

"We're seeing people who have had long-term issues with seating and positioning, issues that could not be solved through commercial pieces," explains Tom Mercier, deputy director of AT Services at DDS. "Also people who are having difficulty with a longstanding repair problem."

Mercier is an occupational therapist and ATP (assistive technology professional) who, before working at DDS, gained experience working with a wheelchair vendor and a manufacturer. As result, he knows the whole system and many individuals working in the industry. Accompanying him on clinic days are also Laury Moore and Cathy McMahon, AT designers from DDS's Munson AT Center. "They've been incredibly helpful and useful," Mercier emphasizes. "We can look at a situation together, and they are able to evaluate what's going on and do the repairs right on the spot or design and fabricate something [for follow up] later." They also know the vendors in western Mass., and the ins and out of acquiring durable medical equipment. "We know what's commercially available; we know what can be fabricated; we can look at a situation from all points of view."

Mercier emphasizes that it's the little things that really impact a person in a wheelchair. One clinic attendee came in because she was using her footrest to open doors and it was wearing out the upholstery. The team was able to fabricate a hard plastic bumper to protect both her foot and the chair. Another client felt her power chair wasn't as responsive to turning as it should be. The team found there was too much weight on her front casters, wearing them out and keeping them from spinning well. They are contacting the vendor to rebalance the seating system.

Pressure mapping, too, highlights the little things that make a critical difference for individuals who use mobility systems. This evaluation technique uses a high-tech mat that is placed between the individual and the seat's surface. Connected to a computer, the mat reveals pressure zones, areas where the individual is most at risk of developing sores or another problem. Mats like these are powerful tools for professionals like McMahon and Moore, who know how to make adjustments or fabricate what is needed to prevent secondary health issues. One clinic participant came in complaining of hip pain and back discomfort in her new manual wheelchair. The mat evaluation showed that removing 1" of support from under her right side could help in addition to adjusting the modular back for increased support.

Stavros sets up the room and the equipment each clinic day so that everything is ready to go when staff and clients arrive. The CIL is also home to the DME Reuse program, a long-term loan program of donated durable medical equipment like power chairs and scooters. Co-locating the clinic with the reuse program has recently proven to have its advantages. In June, a power chair user attended the clinic with a chair that was technically appropriate for him--if he wanted to stay indoors most of the time and travel smooth level surfaces. He left, however, in a more powerful chair

Accessible by Public Transportation, a growing list of Equipment Resources for Recreation, and links to New England Adaptive Recreation Opportunities.

Finally, don't miss the [Universal Access Program Summer Schedule](#). Learn about opportunities for adaptive hiking, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, cycling, rowing, horseback riding and more. Everyone outdoors indeed!

Product Spotlight: Lawnbott Evolution

 Lawnbott Evolution photo. Looks like a small red rocket on wheels.

Here's a product for summer: a robotic mower that mows for you! The Lawnbott Evolution is small, relatively light weight (22 lbs) and can handle tight spaces. The unit returns itself to its charging station as needed and then keeps going. It is designed to handle about an acre of lawn and grades as steep as 27 degrees.

Other features include: a rain sensor, a self-programming feature that analyzes your lawn and makes adjustments (including the ability to handle thicker lawn segments), an infrared remote control (you can return the unit to the charger at the touch of a

from the reuse program inventory, one that empowered him to get outside and into the community. The swap was made possible when Tom Filiault, the Stavros DME reuse program coordinator, stuck his head in the clinic room door to see how things were going. Before long he was problem-solving with the team to make this man's mobility dreams come true.

The next clinic is scheduled for September. Call Stavros at 413-256-0473 ex.233 to learn more and arrange for transportation.

Catching Up with MCB's AT Director

Alexander Pooler brings his passion for technology and demographic data to the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind's Assistive Technology Department

Photo headshot of Alexander Poolner

As director of Assistive Technology and Consumer Information Systems, Alexander Pooler is not what you would expect. He is originally from Tennessee; he's new to disability services; and his background is mostly with the private sector. Yet at the Mass. Commission for the Blind he says he has found his calling.

MassMATCH News Quarterly caught up with Pooler on the phone last week. Pooler is a new member of the [MassMATCH AT Advisory Council](#) and we wanted to learn more about his background and the direction he's taking MCB's AT services.

MassMATCH: It looks like you arrived at MCB off the beaten path. Can you tell us more?

AP: Well technology has always been a hobby of mine, keeping up with the latest trends. And my original career field was tied to geographic information systems, mapping data, tracking information for advertisers, census data, that sort of thing. But before college, I'd started off working for a youth intervention program. And when I relocated to Massachusetts in 2008, I was looking for something I was passionate about when I saw the opening at MCB.

A techie job with meaning...

Ever since I was a young child I have always had this interest in understanding how things work. I was constantly taking things apart and rebuilding them, seeing if I could improve on them. At the department I found we are doing something similar. We meet with a consumer to find out what goals they have in mind--whether it's a vocational rehabilitation goal or a social rehabilitation goal--and pair them up with the most appropriate technology, understanding exactly what we can do to help them achieve their goals and remain independent.

So this felt like a good fit.

Yes, and probably a month and a half in I went to visit a

button). It comes with a lithium ion battery that is fully charged out of the box. An additional battery may be purchased to extend the unit's range. The unit sells for \$2,749.00 shipping included.

[Learn more at this bamabots.com web page.](#)

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Upcoming Events



Everyone Rides!

Get fitted for an adapted bike and go for a ride on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail! Free!

July 11th

1 pm to 3 pm

Dept of Conservation and Recreation building on Rt 8 in Cheshire.

RSVP [Dawn Matthews](#)

UCP-Pittsfield office

413-442-1562

Bringing the Printed Page to Life

Learn how the Open Book software can help to make print and text accessible to individuals who are visually impaired. Free.

senior who'd been losing her vision for a long time and I introduced her to a CCTV [magnification system]. I looked around the house and saw that she had a new photo that appeared to be of her grandchildren. To show her the color capabilities of the unit, I put the photo on the screen and then realized that she hadn't really seen them in years, what they looked like. In that moment--just to see the look on her face!--I felt I had found my calling, and that this was definitely what I want to do.

What would you like to convey about your approach to this position to the MassMATCH community?

I feel the time is right to evolve the approach the Technology Department takes in how we reach out, engage, and serve our consumers. The technology is changing so fast compared to what I saw only three years ago. What is in the marketplace now is vastly different--such as technologies from Apple. And we live in a state where the demographics tell us that we have an aging population and that more and more of these individuals are going to need our services, and that they will also be working later and later into life. So if we want to keep most people fully employed and independent, it's not enough to hand them a hand held CCTV. We need to teach them, really, the latest and greatest of what's available and it's going to take some patience and a little bit of innovation on our side to reach these individuals so they are not afraid of the technology.

So how are you going about that?

One of the things I'm working on right now is to reach out to the different MCB departments and programs to find ways we can share our expertise with staff who may have more daily contact with our consumers than the Technology Department does. This should allow us to better serve our consumers. For example, I'm organizing a series of training sessions with our rehabilitation teachers (who have a great deal of contact with our consumers). Because what I'm hearing from the rehabilitation teachers is that they are finding that older individuals, their children come visit convinced that what they really need is an iPad or iPhone or some other [mainstream mobile consumer] device. They buy their parents an iPad 2 for their birthday or Christmas, show them how they can do certain things with it, and then go home. And now their parents have this rather expensive piece of technology that can be transformative, but there's been no real effort to teach them how to use that equipment. And so I'm working on showing the RTs basic things, how they can use the iPad like a zoom text device, how they can use the text-to-speech capabilities. There's a lot of things in there, but all this technology is only going to be as useful as a teacher who knows that it exists and how to teach it.

In addition, the trainings will cover some of the basics about the technology the Technology Department deploys to consumers so they can answer questions that come up during a visit rather than bring questions back to the office and have the consumer wait for our department to return a call. This training will in no way replace the duties of the

July 17th

1 pm to 3 pm
UCP Pittsfield
208 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
Contact [Dawn Matthews](#)
413-442-1562

Proloquo2Go 101: Getting off the Ground with Programming and Vocabulary

A 3 hour workshop to get you up and running.
\$75.00

July 19th

9:30 am to 12:30 pm
Easter Seals Technology
and Training Center
89 South Street
Boston, MA 02111
Contact [Jeff McAuslin](#)
800-244-2756 x 448

August 9th

Easter Seals
484 Main Street
Worcester, MA
Same contact info.

Learn to Use Boardmaker

Learn to use this educational software for use with your students with special needs.
Free.

July 26th

1 pm to 3 pm
UCP
208 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
Contact [Dawn Matthews](#)
413-442-1562

Open House on Apple iPad's Accessibility

Drop in to learn about voice-over, assistive touch, and visual adaptations.
Free.

August 1st

10 am to 12 pm and
2 pm to 4 pm
AT Regional Center at
Easter Seals Technology
and Training Center
89 South Street
Boston, MA 02111
Contact: [Jeff McAuslin](#)
800-244-2756

Technology Department but I feel will offer the agency a tool to speed up response time to simple questions in the field and enhance our ability to provide timely services.

So I've started to work with our [Bridge Program](#) which serves older consumers. But actually I'm trying to do two things at one time. I'm also working with [children's services](#). I'm trying to go after the bookends of the generations that we serve here at MCB because I think those are the most vulnerable people. And our younger consumers, their issues are a little different. They just need to be exposed to technology and to get interested in technology. If we can get them to that point, they'll amaze us with what they'll learn on their own and what they can teach us about technology. But with older people, we need to find what works best for them. And one of the things I've noticed here is that sometimes the newest technology is not always the greatest thing.

Thanks so much for talking with us Alex!

Learn more about [AT services at MCB](#)

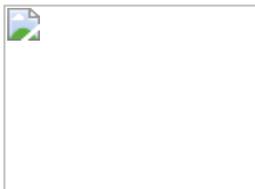
Tech Decision: Choosing the Right Smoke Detector

Jonathan O'Dell reminds us that AT must be tailored to the person and the environment

A Deaf tenant of a multistory privately owned apartment building purchases a plug-in smoke detector. The smoke detector is what we call a single-station detector, meaning it will activate only when there is smoke in the immediate vicinity of the detector.

Is the person safer than they were before? By and large, yes, something is almost always better than nothing. But if the building has a built-in, hard-wired, fire alarm system, then the equation changes. In this scenario, it would have made more sense to purchase a fire alarm system transmitter, a device which is wired into the actual building fire panel. When the building alarm goes off, it would activate the transmitter, which would then signal the receiver in the Deaf tenant's apartment where a strobe would flash and a tactile alarm would shake the bed, allowing for a safe exit.

A wireless transmitter is a much better choice because it would alert the Deaf tenant to a fire regardless of where the fire starts. Say the tenant lives on the fifth floor, and the fire starts on the first floor. A single-station plug-in detector would only alert the tenant once the smoke reaches the fifth floor in sufficient concentration to activate the unit. The fire alarm transmitter, however, would activate the moment the fire was detected at the point of origin on the first floor, in all likelihood giving the tenant not just seconds but precious minutes to evacuate safely in far less dangerous conditions. As any firefighter will tell you, time is of the essence in any



Jonathan O'Dell

iPad App Camp: Work with Applications for Productivity and More!

A hands-on workshop
Registration required.
\$75.00

August 14th

9:30 am to 12:30 pm
Easter Seals
256 Union Street
New Bedford, MA
Contact [Jeff McAuslin](#)
800-244-2756 x448

Open House on Back to School Academic Tools

Drop in to learn about reading and writing aids, organizers, text-to-speech and more.
Free.

September 5th

10 am to 12 pm and
2pm to 4 pm
AT Regional Center at
Easter Seals Tech and
Training Center
89 South Street
Boston, MA 02111
Contact [Jeff McAuslin](#)
800-244-2756 x 448

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structural fire. The earlier you are warned, the more time you have to escape.

But to find these solutions, one needs to have an inherent understanding of the strengths and limitations of specific technologies. While the fire alarm transmitter is a much better solution in the above example, it would be even more effective to expand an existing hardwired system to trigger audiovisual strobes installed in the bedrooms and common living areas of the apartment unit itself. An additional electric outlet could then also be added to tie into the fire alarm circuit and activate a bed shaker only when the fire alarm system activates. Why would this be better? Because some fires are electrical in origin, and if the power goes out then it is best to have a system which, by design, relies on a separate power supply.

The moral of the story: the people who understand technology, and can help users implement it appropriately, are absolutely crucial to the process. The best technology is useless if it doesn't do what it is designed to do because of user inexperience or improper application in an environment that doesn't lend itself to the particular solution in question. In some cases, having technology that isn't functioning the way it should can be even worse than not having any technology at all, because we become overly dependent on our tools and forget, for a moment, that that is all technology really is--a tool.

Considering AT? Learn your resources at www.massmatch.org

Jonathan O'Dell is director of communication access at the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Get AT Stuff Highlights



GetATStuff--the New England "Craig's List" for AT--currently has hundreds of items available for sale or free throughout the six New England states.

As of this writing, GetATStuff highlights include:

12 Vision-related items

including an Extreme Reader--Guerrilla for \$300 or Best Offer in Boston, MA.

2 Hearing-related items

including an amplified cordless telephone for \$45 in Manchester, NH

20 Speech Communication-related items

including a Voice Enhancer--Personal Public Address System for \$95 or Best Offer in Amherst, MA

8 Learning, Cognitive, Development related items

including a BigKeys LX, White/QWERTY keyboard for \$110 in Ripton, VT

330 Mobility, Seating, and Positioning related items

including a Hoyer lift (manual hydraulic) for Best Offer in Malden, MA.

312 Daily Living related items

including an amplified cordless phone with visual ringer for \$15 in Boston, MA

71 Environmental Adaptation related items

including a portable wheelchair shower unit/rolling shower chair included for \$400 in Boston, MA

59 Transportation and Vehicle Modification related items

including FREE hand controls for car or van in Springfield, MA

21 Computer related items

including a fully adjustable computer station for \$75 or best offer in Watertown, MA

13 Recreation, Sports, and Leisure related items

including a hand-peddled bike for \$350 or Best Offer in Portland, ME

Go to www.getatstuff.org to search items by category or geography or to list what you need. Go to the [MassMATCH AT Swap and Shop web page](#) to learn about additional AT reuse sites.

[Forward To A Friend!](#)

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