

# MassMATCH Quarterly News: Winter 2014

## In This Edition:

- [Macedonia Delegation Visits Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission \(#Macedonia\)](#)
- [Now Up and Running: Reequipment! \(#Logo Contest\)](#)
- [Carroll Center Tech Fair Highlights \(#Carroll\)](#)
- [AT Success Story: Jillian Loves to Read \(#AT Success\)](#)
- [AT Regional Center News \(#ATRC news\)](#)
- [Switch Access for iPad! Devices to Borrow \(#Switch access\)](#)
- [Apps for the Holidays? \(#Apps Holidays\)](#)
- [Get AT Stuff Highlights \(#GetATStuff\)](#)
- [Upcoming Events \(.../events/index.php\)](#) (opens the MassMATCH Events page)

## Macedonia Delegation Visits Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)



Last month MassMATCH, along with staff from MRC's Community Living Transition program and the Vocational Rehabilitation division, had the opportunity to welcome officials from Macedonia through the US State Department's Voluntary Visitor program. The visit was organized by [World Boston \(http://www.worldboston.org\)](http://www.worldboston.org) to enable sharing about policies and best practices for providing services to adults, youth, and children with disabilities. "The delegates were particularly interested in models for inclusive education," explains Kobena Bonney, MassMATCH Coordinator. "In Macedonia, students with disabilities

are educated primarily in institutions, but they have computers and the Internet in schools. So now they're interested in learning more about moving toward inclusion with the help of technology." Bonney was particularly delighted to share contact information with Vladimir Lazovski, Executive Director of Open the Windows. "His is the only NGO [non-governmental organization] working to promote assistive technology in Macedonia."

Charles Carr, Commissioner of MRC, spoke about the rights Americans with disabilities have acquired through advocacy to live in the community, and about the philosophy of Independent Living in general. His remarks were followed by a question and answer period that centered on the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program as a vehicle for providing services within communities for individuals with significant physical disabilities.

"The need for CRPD [the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities] was obvious," Carr reflects. "We talked about our mutual struggles to live independently in the community outside of institutions, and the lack of motivation and resistance from the Macedonian government to embrace the fundamental philosophical tenets of the Americans with Disabilities Act."

Ann Shor, Director of Independent Living and Assistive Technology Programs for MRC, created a packet of resources for the visitors gleaned from MassMATCH's [AT for Education \(.../for\\_educators.php\)](#) Web pages. In addition, Shor says the delegates were interested in employment initiatives. "They were impressed to learn that 29% of MRC staff members now self-identify as having a disability."

Prior to visiting MRC, the group met with agencies in New York and D.C. Their plan after MRC was a stop at the [Center for Applied Special Technology](#)



Commissioner Carr (seated front) with MRC staff members and the delegates from Macedonia

(<http://www.cast.org/>) (CAST) in Wakefield. "Hopefully," Shor says, "this is just the beginning of our learning and sharing with each other, because we look forward to emailing and hearing how their programs develop!"

## Now Up and Running: *Requiment!*

### ***The new DME Reuse program has launched***

#### **What is DME reuse?**

A way to find or donate gently-used durable medical equipment (DME) such as wheelchairs, scooters, ramps, and shower chairs.



#### **Why was Requiment created?**

To provide fast affordable access to the equipment people need to support their quality of life (when timely new equipment is not available).

#### **How does it work?**

Gently-used mobility equipment, mechanical lifts, electric beds, etc. is donated by families and individuals who no longer need it. Requiment program partners clean, sanitize, and provide minor repairs so that the DME is in good working condition. People search and find the equipment they need on the Web site, and complete a request form (up to 5 items may be requested at one time). Requiment program staff follow up to arrange transport or pick up (a delivery fee may apply).

The Boston Home (TBH) has launched the pilot with two additional reuse partners: the Massachusetts Hospital School, and the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL). MRC's MassMATCH program hosts the Web site (as well as provides administrative office space). "We are very excited to be piloting this new service in the greater Boston area," notes Reuse Program Coordinator Randi Sargent. "The need has been there for a long time, and the survey we conducted this past fall showed a great interest in using refurbished DME." Sargent came on board with the project last spring to help get the pilot up and running. She is a long-time member of the MassMATCH AT Advisory Committee and has a wide range of AT/DME experience as mom to a teenaged son with physical and developmental disabilities.

The Requiment program logo (above) is the result of a design contest recently held by TBH. Student and professional graphic designers submitted their ideas, and the DME Reuse Council voted to adopt a submission by Kerrilyn Ciccomancini. "The Council liked the energy Kerrilyn's logo conveys," explains Ann Shor, Director of Independent Living and Assistive Technology Programs at MRC. "Recycling arrows are incorporated into the wheelchair user icon in a way

that suggests action and empowered mobility in addition to a green approach to DME. We are thrilled to have it."

Start-up funding for Reequipment was obtained from the Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, and MRC. The pilot is funded through June 2014. "We are actively seeking funding to continue and expand the program's reach across the state," reports Sargent. "Organizations interested in partnering to help should get in touch with me." ([Contact Randi Sargent \(mailto:reuse@massmail.state.ma.us\)](mailto:reuse@massmail.state.ma.us))

Would you or someone you know benefit from gently-used DME? Refurbished DME is a great way for individuals to obtain back-up equipment or for primary needs when insurance is not adequate or timely. Learn more at [DMERequipment.org \(http://www.dmerequipment.org/\)](http://www.dmerequipment.org/) or call 617-204-3626.

### Carroll Center Tech Fair Highlights!

Close to 150 assistive technology (AT) users, families, educators, and other professionals turned out for the Carroll Center's annual Technology Fair this November. The Tech Fair provides an opportunity to learn about the latest technology for persons with visual impairments, and to take advantage of on-site personalized tech advice. This year 15 AT vendors exhibited their wares. Massachusetts is fortunate to be home to many AT companies and vendors, and most of the exhibitors were local. Cutting-edge hardware on display included Humanware's new Prodigy 2-in-1 personal vision assistant, and the HIMS Braille Sense U2.



*The Prodiqi (<http://www.humanware.com/microsite/prodiqi/>) bundles together a desktop and handheld video magnifier, and includes features such as the ability for magnified/captured text to be read aloud or saved for later on the portable unit.*



*The Braille Sense U2 (<http://www.hims-inc.com/products/braille-sense-u2/>) is a notetaker with a refreshable Braille display that provides access to the Internet, music, GPS, and numerous other tools.*

Carroll Center's Dina Rosenbaum recalls when the Tech Fair attracted closer to just 30 participants. "Two decades ago we started with just a few vendors to promote our video magnifier loan program to schools. Now it's grown from an expo to an expo-conference with presentations on hot topics." This year Carroll staff held workshops on accessible e-books, on iDevices as low vision magnifiers, and on Apple's voice control with Siri. "All were standing room only," Rosenbaum observes.



*MassMATCH Program Coordinator Kobena Bonney (left) attended to provide outreach on MassMATCH services.*

Although the venue can be crowded, Rosenbaum is committed to keeping the Tech Fair right where it is. "People know how to get to us here. We have space for providing lunch. We have the Carroll Store for more technology exploring, and because it's on our campus it's free!"

The Carroll Center (<http://carroll.org/>) has been providing services to individuals with visual impairments for over 75 years. Carroll's services include rehabilitation, vocational and transition programs, assistive technology training, educational support and recreation opportunities. Interested in attending the Tech Fair in 2014? Mark your calendar, the event is always the Tuesday before Thanksgiving!

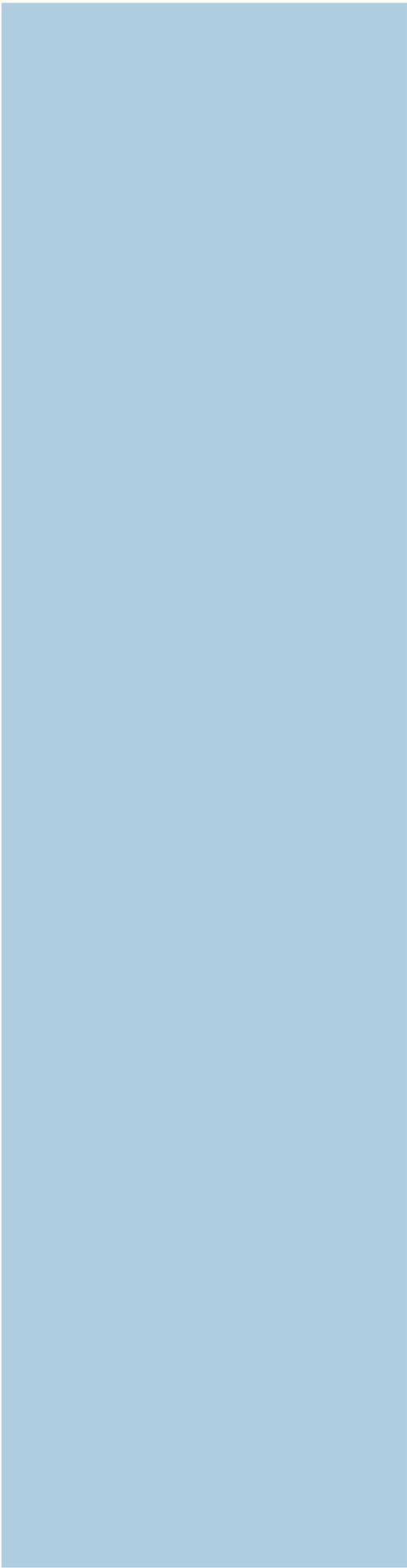
### AT Success Story: Jillian Loves to Read

Last spring, Kristi Peak-Oliveira, AT Regional Center Co-Coordinator (at Easter Seals in Boston), was contacted by a mom on the south shore whose daughter struggles with reading and reading comprehension. Jillian would be entering the 7th grade that fall, and Laurie, her mom, was worried. The school had determined she processes language differently due to a form of dyslexia. For Laurie, this was information to use to ensure seventh grade went much better than sixth. She hated to see Jillian's self-esteem so low.

Laurie is a strong advocate for her daughter. She'd already had Jillian evaluated for assistive technology and had even purchased her an iPad. The AT evaluation, however, failed to make specific recommendations for apps to use with Jillian and Laurie was now swimming in a long list of options with little direction or support. Kristi was glad she came in to the ATRC.

"This is something we see often," Kristi explains. "Parents buy an iPad and then seek us out for how to use it and for advice about apps. There are hundreds of thousands of apps in the apps store, including over 40,000 education apps for the iPad. It's a lot to figure out."

Through the ATRC's Short-term Device Loan Program (.../inventory), Kristi loaned Laurie and Jillian the ATRC's iPad preloaded with a variety of full-featured apps for trial. Laurie and Jillian were highly motivated to explore the apps they had heard about, those Kristi recommended, and even apps they discovered on the device which peaked their curiosity. "A downside of apps is that they can't be



tried through iTunes. Only 'lite' versions may be available, and they don't show users enough to judge the products. The ATRC's iPad provides an important service."

As result of their visit and the loaner device, Jillian found several tools to support her academically. Jillian is now using her iPad for taking notes using iWordQ, Pages, even Sticky Notes, and she is no longer struggling to make sense of her own handwriting. Of greater importance, however, is the impact the iPad has had on Jillian's reading. "Finally," Laurie wrote Kristi over email, "she is able to read/listen independently to a book that she chooses."

Indeed the family feels the iPad is a game-changer for Jillian. With the [Read2Go](http://read2go.org/) (<http://read2go.org/>) app, Jillian accesses [Bookshare](https://www.bookshare.org) (<https://www.bookshare.org>)'s library of audio books (free to students with print disabilities). She downloads the files she needs or wants at Bookshare, and then follows along with the audio as the app syncs to highlighting text. As result, Jillian now reads for pleasure, and her reading teacher says she's noticed an improvement in her spoken vocabulary in addition to better test scores. "The best thing ever," Laurie wrote Kristi, "has been her asking to stay up later because she is reading the Little House on the Prairie books and is at a good part!"

Jillian's father, Marc, feels that of equal benefit to his daughter has been apps to help her get organized. Jillian uses MyHomework, an agenda app, to keep track of her work. He is also amazed at what these tools mean and will mean for her throughout her schooling. Marc also has dyslexia, and he struggled in the same way Jillian has in school. Now he sees she doesn't have to.

The family's active role, Kristi feels, has helped give Jillian confidence with using the technology. They've also worked with her teachers to create a plan to help Jillian be successful. Her teacher, too, has begun recommending apps for other students with similar challenges thanks to what she's learned working with Jillian and Laurie. The most important outcome of all, however, is Jillian's improved self-esteem and grades. This year Jillian is pulling down As!

*This story and several more will also be available in the MassMATCH FFY2013 Report available this winter. Stay tuned...*

## AT Regional Center News

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### **Welcome Flemmings Beaubrun!**



In November, the Assistive Technology Regional Center in Boston (housed at Easter Seals), welcomed Flemmings Beaubrun as our new intern. Flemmings has his bachelor's degree in Interactive Media from Becker College in Worcester. His specialty is working with computers and other types of technology, and he also enjoys working in audio (music composition and engineering). In our office he is

learning about all types of assistive technology, and updating our computers, laptops, and tablets. In addition, he is conducting a full equipment inventory check. When asked what he has learned so far, he reflects, "AT is not just limited to speech and vision devices but is incorporated in a wide variety of devices that we use every day." In his spare time, Flemmings writes a blog on his experiences being on the autism spectrum ([www.theepicautistic.com](http://www.theepicautistic.com)) (<http://theepicautistic.com/>). We are indeed fortunate to have Flemmings working with us.

*-Catherine Bly, ATRC Co-coordinator*

### **Welcome Cash McConnell!**

The Assistive Technology Regional Center located at United Cerebral Palsy of Berkshire County would like to announce our newest staff member--Cash McConnell. Cash will be working in all of capacities of the ATRC. He comes to us with a great deal of customer service experience and a commitment to helping the individuals that we serve further their independence by way of assistive



technology. Please feel free to contact him at [cmconnell@ucpberkshire.org](mailto:cmconnell@ucpberkshire.org) (<mailto:cmconnell@ucpberkshire.org>) or by phone at 413-442-1562 ext. 28.

- Dawn Matthews, AT Demonstration and Loan Coordinator

## Switch Access for iPad! Devices to Borrow

Did you know that with iOS 7 the iPad is now switch accessible?! Would you or someone you know like to try the iPad using a switch? The AT Regional Center in Boston has the following switch options available for trialing with iPad (links open in a new window):

- [Blue Tooth Sip and Puff Switch](http://www.broadenedhorizons.com/ps3-wireless-Bluetooth-sip-n-puff-headset) (<http://www.broadenedhorizons.com/ps3-wireless-Bluetooth-sip-n-puff-headset>)
- [Pal Pad Switch](http://www.enablemart.com/switches/sensitive-switches/adaptation-pal-pads) (<http://www.enablemart.com/switches/sensitive-switches/adaptation-pal-pads>)
- [Sensitive Sensor Switch](http://www.enablemart.com/switches/sensitive-switches/sensor-switch-kit) (<http://www.enablemart.com/switches/sensitive-switches/sensor-switch-kit>)
- [Laser Test Pointer](http://store.lowtechsolutions.org/assessment-laser-head-mounted/) (<http://store.lowtechsolutions.org/assessment-laser-head-mounted/>)
- [String Switch](http://www.enablemart.com/string-switch) (<http://www.enablemart.com/string-switch>)
- [Thumb Switch](http://www.enablemart.com/thumb-switch) (<http://www.enablemart.com/thumb-switch>)
- [ChinCheeka Dual Switch](http://www.enablemart.com/chincheeka-dual-switch) (<http://www.enablemart.com/chincheeka-dual-switch>)
- [Cordless Switch Interface w/Switchhopper](http://www.enablemart.com/sam-cordless-switch-interface) (<http://www.enablemart.com/sam-cordless-switch-interface>)



Learn more about the MassMATCH [Short-Term Device Loan Program](#) and the AT Regional Centers ([../inventory](#)).

## Apps for the Holidays?

Here's a novel last minute gift idea for hip grandparents, aunts and uncles, and anyone looking for affordable and unique gifts for tech-motivated kids: apps! Apps for smart phones, iPod, and tablet computers (iPad, Samsung Galaxy, Kindle Fire, Nook HD, etc) extend from creative (drawing and painting) and pure fun (games) to functional tools (notetakers, organizers) and educational (often a combination of fun and learning). Friends and relatives can research a child's interest (and needs?), and then gift a thoughtful bit of engaging software for play and more (great for those long car rides). Apps cost as little as nothing to... a lot of money (but most are just a few dollars).



To get started:

1. Confirm that the child has access to a device and learn what platform it uses. Apps are for sale at iTunes (all iDevices) or the Android Marketplace (Google's "Play" store: apps for Kindle Fire, Nexus 7, Samsung Galaxy, Nook HD, etc)
2. At iTunes (which must be installed on your computer), click the down arrow next to the "buy" button for the app you select. If the app is free there is no "gift this app" option, but you can still share it via email ("Tell a Friend") or through Facebook and Twitter. To gift an app for purchase, you will need your own iTunes account and an email address for the child or a parent (if the child is under age 13). You can also gift an app directly from your own mobile iDevice. Go to the Apps Store, choose an app, and use the Share

icon button for gift options. Whether you do so from your mobile device or computer you can schedule when you'd like the gift to arrive.

3. Unfortunately Google does not have a way to gift apps directly. But you can purchase and send a Google Play gift card.
4. Check out this [Common Sense Media library of app reviews](http://www.commonensemedia.org/reviews?app_subfilter=52431&media_type=30061) ([http://www.commonensemedia.org/reviews?app\\_subfilter=52431&media\\_type=30061](http://www.commonensemedia.org/reviews?app_subfilter=52431&media_type=30061))(apps for all platforms). Common Sense Media is a nonprofit "dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology."

Happy app hunting!

## Get AT Stuff Highlights

The New England "Craig's List" for AT, GetATStuff, currently has hundreds of items available for sale or free throughout the six New England states. As of this writing, GetATStuff highlights include:



- 11 Vision-related items, including a new braille writer by Perkins for \$300 in South Burlington, VT.
- 2 Hearing-related items, including a ClearSounds A50 Amplified Cordless Telephone for \$45 OBO in Manchester, NH.
- 19 Speech Communication-related items, including a Dynavox Maestro-Like New-for \$1,000 OBO in Newton, MA.
- 11 Learning, Cognitive, Development related items, including a new 7" Mini Netbook Laptop for \$199 in Hartford, CT.
- 295 Mobility, Seating, and Positioning related items, including a standard contour cushion with adjustable air cells for \$70 OBO in Amherst, MA.
- 289 Daily Living related items, including a free bathtub assist bar by Medline Guardian, in Watertown, MA
- 74 Environmental Adaptation related items, including a Bruno StairGlide Chair Lift for \$1,000 OBO in Amesbury, MA
- 45 Transportation and Vehicle Modification related items, including a mini-van with manual rear door and ramp for Best Offer in Quincy, MA.
- 10 Computer-related items, including a Mini Merc Compact fully integrated computer and Augmentative and Alternative Communication device for \$2,500 OBO in Sutton, MA.
- 8 Recreation, Sports, and Leisure related items, including a 3-wheeled handcycle for \$200 in North Attleboro, MA.

Go to [GetATStuff \(http://www.getatstuff.com\)](http://www.getatstuff.com) to search items by category or geography or to list what you need. [Learn about additional AT reuse sites \(././find\\_at/at\\_swap\\_shop.php\)](http://www.getatstuff.com/././find_at/at_swap_shop.php).

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