

# A Closer Look

## Increasing Access to and Acquisition of Assistive Technology for Georgians with Disabilities

An Assistive Technology Publication of Tools for Life, the Georgia Assistive Technology Act Program  
**Summer 2010**

### **Director's Notes**

**By: Carolyn Phillips**

#### **Be the Bridge**

I have been fascinated with bridges my entire life, intrigued that two lands can be joined by a structure that provides a foundation for people to cross safely -- to meet and talk, to exchange goods, services and ideas, and to grow their communities. Whether it's the log that helps us cross over a creek, or the maze of over- and underpasses called "spaghetti junction" that impacts people going in all directions, or the Jekyll Island Bridge that allows us to travel over the ships that pass below -- bridges are beautiful, powerful and fundamental to crossing waters both calm and troubled.

Building bridges with employers leads to people with disAbilities landing jobs with career potential.

Building bridges with teachers helps incorporate AT

into classrooms and means more students being fully integrated into their educational settings.

Building bridges in the community helps people become actively involved in all aspects of where they choose to live.

Building bridges means being open to others and creating communication that can lead to new opportunities. While it's not always easy to build bridges, doing so is undeniably linked to success in both the disAbility community and the larger one.

The secret to a strong bridge is building it with a true desire to connect and grow beyond the existing boundaries.

My bridge-building efforts have had mixed results. Some were easy to build because of a common belief in equal rights for all people; others because of a common mission seeking independence for all individuals, and still others because of the positive power of assistive technology. But I also have half constructed bridges, where I have reached out to an individual or organization and stand ready to meet them when they are ready ...and some day they will be ready.

I know it gets tiring, reaching out to organizations and individuals who don't reach back as you try to build that bridge. But, if not you, who? Don't give up -- speak up, speak out and let others know about the bridge you are trying to build.

I have been thinking about the small ways each of us can celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the ADA. Perhaps a really good way is to make a personal commitment to build a bridge to at least one other person, or one community or social group to which we belong, and to educate those people about the power of inclusive language and disability awareness. . . to challenge them to break the cycles of discrimination that lead to misunderstanding, disdain, exclusion and unemployment. Or to build a bridge to Facebook with a clear message about making it more accessible to those of us who use assistive technology for computer and internet access. Or to simply tell a favorite restaurant that it needs to re-examine its accessibility.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the ADA, I encourage you to Be the Bridge. . . be one who makes a difference.

Yours in the Struggle & the Hope!

Carolyn P. Phillips

## **AT Spotlight**

**By: Martha Rust**

### **Ginger**

While recently cruising around the exhibit hall at an assistive technology expo, I stumbled upon *Ginger*, an online software program that corrects both

spelling and grammar. I was immediately impressed with how easy it was to check grammar context with both auditory and visual feedback. *Ginger* also creates progress reports so you can track your most commonly made grammatical mistakes and misspelled words.

There is a downloadable 14-day free trial available at [www.gingersoftware.com](http://www.gingersoftware.com). If you decide to purchase *Ginger*, monthly payments are as low as \$6.00. All Tools for Life ATRCs now have *Ginger* available for demonstrations. To find your local ATRC, go to the [www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org) home page and click on Locate Your Local AT Resource Center.

### **pebble**

The *pebble* is a new and innovative handheld video magnifier that has the functions of many magnifiers in one lightweight, portable device. This magnifier is perfect for those always on-the-go or for anyone who desires a more compact design. With the *pebble* you will benefit from many functions such as the adjustable and foldable handle, adjustable magnification, 6 color-contrast modes and large viewing area. This small device is powered by AA batteries. The *pebble* sells for \$595.00.

For more information about AT or the TFL Network, please contact Martha Rust at [Martha@gatfl.org](mailto:Martha@gatfl.org).

## *20 Years*

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),  
To learn more about Your Rights and the ADA visit  
[www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov) or the Tools for Life website  
[www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org)

### **Tools for Life Website: Training Update**

**By: Liz Persaud**

As you have visited the Tools for Life website [www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org) in the last few months, we hope you have noticed some minor changes and additions. One of our most recent and important additions is the Training Page, which offers visitors information on training from the TFL State Office as well as from the ATRCs.

To access the Training Page, click on the Training link on the home page menu or go directly to [www.gatfl.org/Training.aspx](http://www.gatfl.org/Training.aspx). Select one of the training topics from the list displayed that piques your interest, or just scroll down the page to see a detailed description of each specific training offered. When you are ready to submit a training request, simply click on the training request link to access a training request form. Fill out the information based on your needs and we will contact you to schedule a time and work on other details. If you are interested in a training or particular subject that is not listed, or

if you have a unique request, feel free to contact us; we might just be able to work something out.

The TFL team continually improves the website as we develop more projects and serve the community. Please visit us often to see more exciting additions coming soon!

For more information on TFL Trainings and Events, please contact Liz Persaud at [Liz@gatfl.org](mailto:Liz@gatfl.org).

## **AT Funding and Resources for Military Members and their Families**

**By: Rhonda Perling**

With the continued conflict overseas, TFL is experiencing a high demand in services for our servicemen and women and their families. Here are some resources that may be of help:

*The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP)* within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) provides free assistive technology (AT) and services to federal employees with disabilities, wounded service members, federal managers, supervisors, and IT professionals, increasing employment opportunities and access to the information technology environment in the U.S. and abroad. *CAP* is currently working to remove barriers to federal employment opportunities by

eliminating the costs of assistive technology. For more information, visit [www.tricare.mil/cap](http://www.tricare.mil/cap).

*The Fisher House* provides housing accommodations to family members of injured military, allowing them to be close to loved ones during hospitalization for an illness, disease or injury. *The Fisher House* also supports both active troops and veterans during their care and rehabilitation at military installations and VA medical centers around the world. Visit [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org) for more information.

*Our Military Kids* provides tangible support to children of deployed National Guard and Reserve personnel as well as to children of injured service members through tutoring and grants for enrichment activities that help children cope with the stress of having a parent in a war zone or recovering from injury at home. *Our Military Kids* grants are made to ensure that military children have access to sports, fine arts, and academic tutoring programs. Visit [www.ourmilitarykids.org](http://www.ourmilitarykids.org) for more information. For more information about these programs and many others, please contact Rhonda E. Perling, at 404-235-0142 or [rhonda@gatfl.org](mailto:rhonda@gatfl.org).

## **Tools for Life in the Community**

**By: Liz Persaud**

This year the Tools for Life team has been working on ways to be more visible in our community and to connect with the individuals and families we serve more often. We recently created a Facebook page and are quickly building quite a fan base. Facebook allows us the opportunity to post real time updates, photos, and our activities in the community. This has been a great way for us to receive instant feedback and provide a platform for discussion about assistive technology not just here in Georgia, but all over the country. So next time you log in to Facebook to update your status, be sure to “friend” us so you can see what we’ve been up to!

There is a direct link to the Tools for Life Facebook page on the TFL website, [www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org).

For more information on TFL events, please contact Liz Persaud at [Liz@gatfl.org](mailto:Liz@gatfl.org).

## **Tools for Life Data Corner**

**by Connie Freier**

The numbers continue to grow for Tools for Life. The Online Data Collection System continues to improve and capture the extensive data necessary to increase public awareness and information and assistance. The TFL numbers have increased by over 1000 individuals assisted this last year as

compared to the past three years. That is a significant increase in the number of people getting the information and assistance they need to make better choices in community living, education, employment, health and assistive technology. Currently, we are working on improving the data collected that is required by the National Information System for Assistive Technology (NISAT), the Data Collection Instrument and Performance Report for Statewide AT Programs. The data collected allows TFL to grow and develop new projects. For more information about TFL Data please contact Connie Freier at [Connie@gatfl.org](mailto:Connie@gatfl.org).

## **Data Details**

### **January 2010 through December 2010**

- 3,489 Georgian's received Direct AT Services
- 40,796 Georgian's received Information and Assistance
- 2,861 Participated in Personalized AT Training/ Tech Assist Workshops
- 258 Vocational Rehabilitation Clients Assisted AT

### Loan Library

- 634 Pieces of AT Borrowed

### ReBoot - Computer Reuse Program

- 475 Computers Placed

- 8,700+ Total Computers Placed from 1994 – 2010

### **Tools for Life Network**

Services include an initial interview, information and assistance, device demonstration, equipment lending library, assessments and training.

#### Disability Connections

The Middle Georgia Center for Independent Living, Inc.

170 College Street, Macon, GA 31201

478-741-1425 Phone/TTY

1-800-743-2117 Phone/TTY

[www.disabilityconnections.com](http://www.disabilityconnections.com)

#### Tech-Able

1114 Brett Drive, Suite 100

Conyers, GA 30094

770-922-6768 Phone/TTY

[www.techable.org](http://www.techable.org)

#### Walton Options for Independent Living, Inc.

948 Walton Way

Augusta, GA 30901

706-724-6262 Phone/TTY

[www.waltonoptions.org](http://www.waltonoptions.org)

Touch the Future, Inc. Home of Reboot™ and the  
Assistive Technology Center  
4508 Bibb Blvd., Suite B10  
Tucker, GA 30084  
770-934-8432 Phone/TTY  
[www.touchthefuture.us](http://www.touchthefuture.us)

The Center for Financial Independence & Innovation  
(CFII)  
Alternative Financing Program/Credit Able  
1419 Mayson St NE  
Atlanta, GA 30325  
404-541-9005 Phone  
[www.thecfii.org](http://www.thecfii.org)

FODAC  
4900 Lewis Road  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
770-491-9014 Phone  
[www.fodac.org](http://www.fodac.org)

Tools for Life  
Georgia Department of Labor  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program  
1700 Century Circle, Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-638-0390 Office  
1-800-497-8665 GA Only

[www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org)

## **The TFL Team**

Joy Kniskern, AT Service Director -

[Joy.Kniskern@dol.state.ga.us](mailto:Joy.Kniskern@dol.state.ga.us)

Carolyn Phillips, TFL Program Director -

[Carolyn@gatfl.org](mailto:Carolyn@gatfl.org)

Connie Freier, Administrative Operations

Coordinator - [Connie@gatfl.org](mailto:Connie@gatfl.org)

Rhonda Perling, Resource and Funding/Specialist -

[Rhonda@gatfl.org](mailto:Rhonda@gatfl.org)

Liz Persaud, Training and Development Coordinator

- [Liz@gatfl.org](mailto:Liz@gatfl.org)

Meredith Phillips, Program Associate –

[Meredith@gatfl.org](mailto:Meredith@gatfl.org)

Martha Rust, AT Specialist and Services Coordinator

- [Martha@gatfl.org](mailto:Martha@gatfl.org)

Valerie Wiley, Graphic Artist –

[vrwiley@verizon.net](mailto:vrwiley@verizon.net)

Tools for Life data and resources are made available to everyone on the web at [www.gatfl.org](http://www.gatfl.org) or call 404-638-0390 for more information.

Individuals and groups advocate for funding that is needed to increase availability of additional state-of-the-art assistive technology equipment that would

greatly increase daily living for persons with disabilities.

The contents of this issue of A Closer Look were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to the Georgia Department of Labor/Tools for Life Program.

These contents, however, do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Georgia Department of Labor, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government or the State of Georgia.