

Summer 2011

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Service dogs enhance independence for people with disabilities!



A service dog assists an individual by retrieving an object.

Service Dogs Are More than Just "Guide Dogs"

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, a *service animal* is defined as one that has been "individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability." To be considered a service dog, the dog must be trained to complete tasks directly related to the person's disability.

Service dogs, or assistance dogs, are not limited to helping people with visual impairments and can aid individuals with a wide range of disabilities. Properly trained dogs can assist people in hearing, walking, seeing, learning, and working. Though a wide variety of terms are used—like "seeing eye dog" or "mobility dog"—many service dogs are cross-trained to perform more than one type of work (such as guide and mobility tasks for a person who is blind and has severe arthritis). No matter what tasks the dog is trained to do, the goal is to enable the individual to be as independent and integrated in the community as anyone else.

There are many credible organizations that train dogs to assist people with disabilities. For instance, Paws With A Cause is based in Michigan but trains service dogs nationally to match them with people with a wide range of disabilities. They provide dogs to help children with autism facilitate social relationships, foster verbal and nonverbal communications, and decrease overall stress. Other dogs are trained to assist individuals with seizure disorders. Pilot Dogs, based in Columbus, OH, trains guide dogs for people with visual impairments across the country. They work with a variety of breeds such as Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, Doberman Pinscher, Boxer, Vizsla, German Shepherd, and even the Standard Poodle!

When you meet a service dog, please remember that they are working, and proper etiquette is appreciated. Some basic rules should be followed when interacting with individuals and their service dogs:

- Speak to the person first.
- Do not touch the service dog without asking for, and receiving, permission.
- Do not offer food to the service dog.
- Do not do anything to interrupt the service dog while it is performing its tasks.

If you would like more information about service dogs, please visit www.deltasociety.org or www.assistedogsoninternational.org.



Cindy Lift seat transfer lift aid.



QuickLook Zoom video magnifier.



Pocketalker Ultra personal amplification system.

New interpretations of the definition of a disability help protect more Americans with disabilities from discrimination in the workplace!

Aging in the Workplace

Over 6 million Americans ages 65 and older are currently in the workforce. Of them, about 38% report having a disability. Older Americans experience conditions from arthritis to lower back pain to impairments related to hearing and vision loss, any of which can create problems in the workplace. It may affect their ability to complete paperwork, lift heavy objects, and even communicate effectively with customers and co-workers. Assistive equipment and workplace accommodations can address these difficulties and create a more comfortable, productive work environment.

A Cindy Lift transfer device, for example, could be beneficial for someone with limited strength who works in a nursing home and is required to lift patients. The Cindy Lift is designed to make lifts more manageable for caregivers and the individual being assisted, and to broaden accessible areas for the user. For individuals who have difficulty hearing, a personal amplification device like the Pocketalker Ultra could be beneficial. This discreet device amplifies sounds, making it easier to have conversations with others, which is essential in the workplace. Additionally, a hand-held video magnifier, like the QuickLook Zoom, may be an ideal solution for individuals with vision loss. It is easily portable and fits comfortably in a purse or brief case.

For more information on these products, or to discuss how to meet additional needs of aging workers, contact the AT Program today!

The Legal Definition of 'Disability'

As of May 24th, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) effected a new, broader interpretation of 'disability' to be consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). The purpose of this expanded interpretation is to cover more Americans with disabilities under the ADAAA, protecting them from discrimination in the workplace.

While the definition of 'disability' in the ADAAA has not changed from the original version, how the EEOC now interprets some terms in that definition has been updated. According to the ADAAA, an individual with a disability is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment. Highlighted here are a few expanded interpretations of this definition:

- *Major life activities* now include the operation of major bodily functions, such as those related to the immune, digestive, cardiovascular, and reproductive systems.
- The interpretation of *substantially limits*, among other factors, now compares an individual's ability to complete a major life activity with the ability of the general population. Also, the use of assistive technology, adaptive aids, medication or medical therapy, or other accommodations shall NOT be considered when ruling whether activities are substantially limited.

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The 2011 AT Demo gave visitors an opportunity to discover new, helpful assistive equipment!

- Someone is *regarded as* having an impairment if it is established that an employer discriminated against him or her because of an impairment, whether one actually exists or the employer just perceived one.

For more information on the ADA or EEOC, contact the AT Program. Or, visit www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/adaaa_info.cfm to read the EEOC's guidance on ADA matters.

AT Program Update: Demo of New Devices

On June 22nd, Goodwill's Assistive Technology Program hosted an AT Demonstration Event to showcase various assistive products for curious Goodwill staff, participants, and community members. Among the items displayed included devices to help individuals in reading, hearing, memory, and time management.

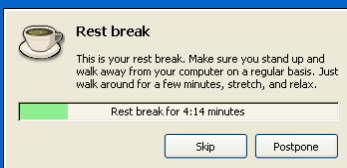
Several software programs were also demonstrated which help individuals control their computers hands-free, using only their voice or head movement. An example of an ergonomically designed computer workstation displayed a set-up and office equipment to help workers reduce pain and prevent injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome.

A special thanks to practicum intern Kathleen Feroz for her help with planning the event, and in assisting with day-to-day aspects of the AT Program at Goodwill this summer. We wish her the best as she continues her graduate studies in Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Pittsburgh!

FREE Software Helps Computer Users Stay Healthy

One highlight of this summer's AT Demo was an ergonomically designed workstation for people who spend much of the day working in front of computers. Some of the most common work-related injuries are Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI's), caused by repetitive tasks or awkward postures sustained over time. For example, carpal tunnel syndrome may develop or become aggravated if a worker's wrists are consistently bent while typing on the keyboard. Tight back and neck muscles, and as eye strain, can also occur if employees are fixed on their computer screens for long periods of time.

Workrave is a free downloadable program that aims to help prevent RSI's by reminding office workers to take micro-pauses and rest breaks from their computers throughout the day. The program also guides individuals through stretches and exercises designed to help combat common office postures' effects on the body. These exercises can be easily performed in an individual's cubicle. Visit www.workrave.org to learn more!



Workrave reminds frequent computer users to take breaks throughout the day.

Alternative formats of this newsletter are available upon request.

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