

Accessibility Solutions

Newsletter of Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Program

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**Assistive Technology
&
Job Accommodations**

**Accessibility
Solutions meeting the
customer's diverse
needs**

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Every October, America celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In 1945, Congress designated the first week in October as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week" to raise public awareness about disability and employment issues. The word "physically" was omitted in 1962 to embrace the employment concerns of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to the entire month of October and changed the name to what we know today.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is sponsored by the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), which works toward "a world in which people with disabilities have unlimited employment opportunities."

This year's theme for National Disability Employment Awareness Month is *Expectation + Opportunity = Full Participation*. This important message urges employers to welcome workforce diversity by recognizing that workers with disabilities can make valuable contributions, and by giving them the opportunity to make those contributions by hiring them.

One way of helping individuals with disabilities achieve full participation in the workforce is by providing job accommodations and assistive technology equipment. Employers may be reluctant or uninformed about how assistive technology and accommodations can benefit the workplace. But providing these supports can increase productivity, enhance independence of workers with disabilities, and retain valuable employees who have been injured or who have acquired a disability.

Job Accommodation Network

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a nationwide resource for both employers and for workers with disabilities. Sponsored by the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, JAN represents the most comprehensive resource for job accommodations in the country.

JAN is a free service that provides information about workplace accommodations and issues related to the Americans with Disabilities Act. JAN also works one-on-one with employers and workers across the country to identify appropriate, customized accommodations and assistive technology solutions.

Find out more about how the Job Accommodation Network uses assistive technology and accommodations to support employers and workers at <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>.

Microsoft Releases Windows 7

On October 22nd, Microsoft rolls out its newest operating system. Windows 7 is designed to be more reliable, simpler, and faster to use than previous versions of Windows. Some new features include:

- An improved search tool to find documents and files more quickly and easily
- Redesigned displays with larger icons and thumbnail previews of items in the taskbar
- Jump Lists that provide faster, more convenient access to frequently used documents and files
- More options to personalize and organize the computer

Visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/> to learn more about Windows 7. And remember: Please do not install new software or operating systems on your Goodwill computer without approval from the Information Technology Department.

Accessibility in Microsoft Windows

Many new features in Microsoft Windows 7 will make the computer easier for everyone to access. For users who need even greater ease of access, Windows 7 includes enhanced accessibility features such as:

- An improved screen magnifier to make the computer easier to see
- A better on-screen keyboard with word prediction to make typing tasks easier
- Better touch-screen capability to control the computer without a mouse or pointing device (a touch-screen monitor is required)

Contact Goodwill's Microsoft Accessible Resource Center (MARC), part of Goodwill's Assistive Technology Program, to learn more about Microsoft's newest accessibility initiatives in Windows 7. Or, you can visit <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/windows7/>.

But for the time being, many of us will continue using older operating systems, such as Windows XP and Vista. Did you know that these older systems still have many valuable accessibility features built right in?

Goodwill's MARC distributes *free tutorial CD's that can show you how to enhance accessibility in XP and Vista*. Contact the Assistive Technology Program to receive a free Microsoft Accessibility tutorial CD!

Universal Design

Universal Design (UD) is a way of making products, environments, and communications usable to the widest possible range of people, regardless of disability. Also referred to as barrier-free or inclusive design, UD strives to make the everyday world accessible to all people.

While the UD concept started as early as the 1950's, architect Ron Mace coined the term in the 1980's, and more recent legislation has helped to

(story continues)

Windows 7 will be available to the public this month, with enhanced ease-of-use features.

Learn how to make your computer easier to see, hear, and use.

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propel UD into the mainstream environment. The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that public accommodations be accessible to everyone. The ADA Standards for Accessible Design draw upon UD ideas such as making doorways and aisles wide enough for wheelchair users to pass through, or placing elevator buttons where people of virtually any height can reach them. The UD movement continues to grow and shape the world around us. Some examples include:

- Signs with both text labels and pictures
- Fire alarms that give both visual and auditory signals (flashing lights and sound)
- Lever-style doorknobs that do not require grasping or twisting motions
- Automatic doors, faucets, and towel dispensers

Assistive technology is primarily intended for people with disabilities, while UD includes everyone. Though it might seem like the two are in conflict, in reality they compliment each other, working toward the same goal to increase accessibility and independence.

Used Equipment Available through REEP

The Recycled and Exchanged Equipment Partnership (REEP) is a free statewide resource that connects Pennsylvanians with disabilities to previously-owned assistive equipment and devices. Sponsored by Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology, REEP consists of several partner programs across the state that accept donated equipment and make them available to individuals who can use them.

Used assistive technology equipment such as wheelchairs, communication devices, vision aids, computer access equipment and more are available through REEP. These used devices are generally available at a much lower cost than purchasing them new.

REEP Online Classifieds (<http://piat.reep.ioddev.org/home.php>) allows users to search for used equipment and contact the seller directly. If the desired equipment is not available, users can post messages for items needed. Individuals who no longer need their used equipment can also list their items for sale on REEP Online Classifieds.



*Alternative formats of this newsletter
are available upon request.*

***The AT Program has
products with
Universal Design
features. Check out
our inventory to see
what we have to offer!***

***Pennsylvanians with
disabilities can
obtain lower-cost,
used assistive
technology
equipment.***

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