



Spring News 2022

Technology Solutions for Life's Limitations

Greetings!

Happy Spring! I hope you all are enjoying warmer weather and new beginnings. Spring always seems full of life and 2022 is certainly no exception. After two years of Covid, I feel like this spring is a little brighter and a lot fuller than the past couple of years.

On April 6th, we celebrated National Assistive Technology Awareness Day.

The National Assistive Technology (AT) Awareness Day commemorates the importance and vital role AT plays in the lives of people with disabilities and older adults. This day reinforces the necessary support and funding the federal government provides to ensure people receive the assistive technology necessary to engage in education, employment, and community living. Assistive technology allows individuals with disabilities and older adults to be included in their communities and in inclusive classrooms and workplaces and these devices are necessities, not luxury items.

National Assistive Technology Awareness Day also provides an opportunity to commend assistive technology specialists and program coordinators for their hard work and dedication to serving individuals with disabilities who are in need of finding the proper assistive technology to meet their individual needs, and professional organizations and researchers dedicated to facilitating the access and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities and older adults in need of assistive technology devices.

This is also the time that we make our Congressional Hill visits to meet and inform Congress and staff about what DakotaLink does for South Dakota and request reauthorization for S. 2401 The 21st Century Assistive Technology Act. We are still

meeting remotely so we did a virtual fly-in through Zoom to meet and discuss our program and the need for its reauthorization.

Leadership

Each year the BHSSC Leadership Team meets to develop organizational goals to help continue to move BHSSC forward. One of the goals set at this year's Leadership Retreat focused on developing professional and leadership growth for those employees who have shown an interest in learning more about leadership and/or building professional or personal growth. Based on this goal, this professional development opportunity was created. Brett Burden and Page Hudson are participating in this program. We started in person in Deadwood in March, and it will last about 18 months. It is called PREVAInG Leadership and is the perfect time for us to participate as we both are taking on new responsibilities with Pat's retirement.

DakotaLink Advisory Council

In our next Advisory Council Meeting, we will be electing a new Executive Committee that assists with creating the agenda for future DakotaLink Advisory Council meetings. Please think about who you might nominate or if you would like to be on the Executive Committee.

The DakotaLink Bylaws Subcommittee completed the amendments, and we were able to put it to a vote that passed. This was a big milestone for the committee as it had not been updated since May of 2005. We will continue to review it and update it more regularly to fit the needs.

We are currently looking for individuals with a disability to join our Advisory Council. If you or anyone you know would like to be a part of the DakotaLink Advisory Council, I have provided a link to the application:

<https://www.dakotalink.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/DakotaLink-Advisory-Council-Application.pdf>

Outreach

In February we participated in the "Let's Talk About Work" conference in Sioux Falls where we had about 55 participants that we were able to demonstrate some of our devices at a booth. We also attended this same conference in Pierre and Rapid City. We presented at the SPED Conference in Sioux Falls in March. We participated in the Optometry Convention in Sioux Falls which had about 100 participants where we were able to demonstrate low vision equipment that we provide. We also participated in "Catch the Wave" events where we get to demonstrate directly to students that might benefit from Assistive Technology. Luckily COVID is waning to the point that we are able to meet in person more often. Hopefully for good!

KeloLand Commercial

DakotaLink is keeping our commercial going through September of 2022. It will also air on KeloLand Xtra. Here is a link to the commercial if you missed it:

<https://www.keloland.com/keloland-living/dakotalink-providing-technology-solutions-for-lifes-limitations/>

State Plan

I am currently working on DakotaLink's State Plan for 2021-23.

As part of an expanded CATADA work scope, a new State Plan component in NATADS (National Assistive Technology Act Data System) is under development for submission of the 2021-23 State Plan. The target date for the online State Plan component to open for data entry is April 1 with a due date of July 1 which provides a full three months to submit.

Washington Update - Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

ATAP had a busy start to the New Year and the organization kept quite busy on a variety of State and Territory priorities. ATAP's activities, during this past quarter, include:

ATAP actively worked to push S. 2401, The 21st Century Assistive Technology Act through the Senate.

ATAP actively working with the House on a bill that will reauthorize the Assistive Technology Act. ATAP is advocating for a companion bill in the House to S. 2401.

ATAP weighed in on efforts to finalize the FY2022 budget and began preparing for advocacy efforts regarding FY2023

ATAP began to work with the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities to prepare a video and materials for National Assistive Technology Awareness Day.

ATAP worked to finalize an updated ATAP Return on Investment Document for FY2021.

ATAP supported AT3 Center efforts for a successful Leaderships Symposium.

ATAP worked to develop materials for the organization for National Assistive Technology Awareness Day and prepared for member-events.

ATAP continued to monitor and work on the technical assistance grant for State and Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs and prepared for the competition.

ATAP continued to work on collecting dues for this fiscal year.

MERR Program Year 6

If you or anyone you know needs gently used Medical Equipment, we would encourage you to support this program.

Ron Lien continues to work to expand The Medical Equipment Recycle and Reuse program.

Here is a link to the brochure for the program:

<https://www.dakotalink.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MERR-Brochure-20181004-1.pdf>

Here is a list of the latest items available from the website:

<https://www.sd.at4all.com/Items/ItemSearch.aspx?Mode=NewItem>

Free Assistive Technology Webinars

This link will provide you with several Assistive Technology Webinars assembled by the Accessible Technology Coalition:

<https://www.atia.org/path-lms/?pathPage=%2Fatia%2Fcourses>

Social Networking

We continue our efforts in social networking getting a great deal of traffic on Facebook and share posts with ATAP, AT3, ILC, DHS, DSS, and MERR. More resource information on our website: <https://www.dakotalink.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/AT-Resource-Directory-2017.pdf>

Low-Interest Loans

We also want to remind everyone of our low-interest loan program. The loans are designed to fit your budget and we will work with you to create affordable payback payments. We will also help you fill out the application if you have any concerns with that process. The application is on our website, but here is the direct link:

<https://www.dakotalink.net/at-funding>

DakotaLink strives to maintain its professionalism by earning a RESNA ATP certification. (ATP – Assistive Technology Professional). We currently have 5 staff with their ATP certification and will continue to help the newer employees gain that status. To maintain these credentials, we must complete a specific amount of CEU's (Continuing Education Credits) on a biennial basis. We have been doing that mostly through webinars that ATAP provides through an agreement with ATIA.



Remember, we are on Facebook! So, be sure to “like” us to see what we are up to daily:
<https://www.facebook.com/DakotaLinkAT/>

Be safe and healthy!

Best,

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DakotaLink is the South Dakota Assistive Technology Program.

Our mission is to assist individuals with functional limitations; due to a disability, illness, injury, or the effects of aging; maximize their potential whether at home or in the community, at school, at work, or at play through the use of Assistive Technology.

An assistive technology device is any equipment or tool that helps individuals overcome limitations in daily activities.

Assistive technology services assist individuals to acquire, use, modify or maintain an assistive technology device.