

Home Modifications

Peggy S. Shireley, IPAT Coordinator

There is a movement afoot to make homes more flexible and supportive for the people living in them. It is the home modification movement, and it is all about making homes work for, rather than against a person who has experienced an injury, illness or disability. Making homes work better may involve remodeling, using assistive technology devices, or rearranging the environment to reduce barriers. The overall purpose of home modification is to make the home you have into the home you want as lifestyle and needs change.

According to the 2007 US Census, 1 in 6 people in North Dakota have a disability, and frequently people with a disability need home modifications. They are friends, family members and neighbors who; have sustained injury, are impacted by disease, are aging, and/or were born with a disability. We all need homes and they play a unique role in our lives by offering safety, comfort, and independence, plus access to amenities, services and activities. Unfortunately, during the process of living, our homes can become a barrier due to stairs, tiny bathrooms, and inadequate lighting.

The three spaces in the average home which create the most difficulties are the entrance, bathroom, and kitchen. To address entrance barriers, increase the width of the door to 36", create ample landing space both outside and inside the door, eliminate a raised threshold, and use locks that are easy to operate such as, keyless locks. In the bathroom, use non-glare lighting, an anti-scald faucet with a single on/off lever, an adjustable height, hand-held showerhead, and a shower seat or platform. Kitchen changes may include, enough clear counter space to set dishes down next to all appliances and cupboards, easy access to storage with pull-out shelves, lazy Susan's and reachers, appliance controls that are easy to read and easy to reach, and a sit-stand stool for task completion.

Home modifications have been identified as a viable means to remaining in our homes; surveys show people think they are a necessary and desirable change, and yet the majority of homes do not have them. This lack may be due to minimal awareness about the range and importance of home modifications, an unclear path to service provision, and/or limited access to funding to make modifications for individuals of low-income. To help North Dakotans learn more about home modifications, IPAT has developed two booklets "*Home Design for Diverse Populations*" and "*Staying or Returning Home with Assistive Technology*" which may serve as a starting point, call 800-365-4728 or email jswetland@ndipat.org to request copies. Remember, home modifications are simply changes made to living spaces that help the people living there; and research indicates that they can make care-giving easier, save money and eliminate or delay institutionalization.

New Home for IPAT in Fargo

June was a busy time for the Fargo IPAT staff as they packed up and moved to a new location. The office is now located at 3240 15th Street S; east of the Hornbacher's on 32nd Avenue S. The move provides space for the expanded equipment loan library and demonstration center, but more importantly, it affords those using IPAT services increased privacy and autonomy as they engage in device explorations, AT assessments, and consultations. In addition, there is now room to train groups, host meetings and use the space with your individual therapist. IPAT will be hosting a formal open house on the afternoon of August 18th, but if you are in the neighborhood, stop in and see the new space.

AT Access & Acquisition: It Takes a Team

In the summer of 2008, Greg Rose, who has multiple sclerosis received an AT assessment at his residence. The team that completed the assessment included an IPAT coordinator, his social worker and *occupational therapist* from Sunset Nursing Home, and a physical therapist and rehab engineer from Mobile Adaptive Equipment Services.

The team recommended various AT devices, and suggested that Greg rent them from IPAT's Equipment Loan Library. The device rentals gave him an opportunity to use the devices in his environment and helped him determine what worked. This was done before any money was spent.

After using the equipment, Greg & his team identified the AT devices he needed. The list of devices was then compiled into a report by IPAT staff, noting cost and statement of need. Greg, his wife, his OT, social worker and IPAT wrote request letters, filled out required paperwork, sent emails and made telephone calls to various agencies to obtain funding. In the end, the following devices were selected and purchased by:

- **ND Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program** - RC200, remote controlled phone with voice answering and Origin Sip/Puff switch
- **Technology Access Foundation**-desktop computer with large screen
- **Sunset Nursing Home**-Jouse2-mouth controlled joystick with built-in sip/puff switch and Internet service
- **Multiple Sclerosis Society**-Relax 2, an infrared environmental control unit with X-10 modules, to control his TV, VCR, book player, lights, heater and fan
- **Mobile Adaptive Equipment Services**—built a mount for the Relax2

Greg's family and the entire team helped install his new equipment. Training on the AT devices was provided by IPAT, and Greg's son provided him with computer, Internet and email training.

When he has questions or breakdowns regarding his AT equipment, Greg calls IPAT or the manufacturer for advice and instructions. These are then carried out by the nursing home staff and OTs. His son continues to offer him computer support.

This process took over a year to complete and involved more than 15 individuals, including Greg, and 6 different agencies. According to the letter Greg wrote on the adjacent page, you can tell it was well worth the time and effort.

CONSUMER CONNECTION

Independence, while still Dependent

An abridged letter from Greg Rose, Grafton, North Dakota

I have multiple sclerosis and only have use of my head. Although family, friends and the great people that take care of me fill a part of my day, there is still a lot of day left that is unoccupied time, so I mostly watch TV as the world goes on outside and around me.

The idea came up in conversation that maybe a computer would be a useful item to occupy my time. Connections were made and Jeannie Krull at IPAT was contacted. I told her that a computer would be impossible for me to use, and she said something like, "Don't say that! Wait until you see what IPAT has to offer!", and then she drove up to see me with a big load of equipment.

Once she arrived, she took inventory of my needs, and we discovered that I also needed help controlling my phone, TV, lights, and fan. She gave me an overview of assistive technology equipment to match those needs and demonstrated some of the items. Well, the equipment she explained to me, amazed me and started me thinking this could actually work.

We tried various types of equipment for controlling the computer and ended up with the Jouse2, which is simply amazing tech! It is a mouth joystick with a sip or puff mouthpiece for the right/left clicks, and can be mounted on just about any surface and adjusted in multiple angles and directions to fit most uses. It's awesome, and I can attest to that because I just created this letter using it and only my mouth!!! IT IS TRULY FREEING!!! You use the Jouse2, with an on-screen keyboard, moving the cursor over each letter, and sipping/puffing to select the letters, make them into words, sentences, paragraphs, and then Viola!! a letter. While this may seem overwhelming, it's not! What it is is time consuming, and that's OK because I'm RICH in that department.

So with the Jouse2, I can send e-mail, play games on and offline, go online read a newspaper, or check out an endless amount of web sites from A to Z and beyond. There is no reason to be bored anymore. I can use my computer with the Jouse2

system to take me away from this room to places I could never afford or physically go to; like I stated before its TOTAL FREEDOM!!!, and I LOVE IT!!!

IPAT also hooked me up with another wonderful SIP/PUFF switch that allows me to operate a telephone and the Relax2, an environmental control device that operates the TV, DVD player, stereo and various electrical appliances such as a fan or light. I simply sip or puff on the switch, scan through commands, and then sip or puff again to do things like dial a number, change the channel or flip on the fan. It's that simple!

In conclusion, I want people who are in my situation to know that even if one is limited to only the physical use of their mouth, you can still be FREE!!! and VERY VERY INDEPENDENT! What a GREAT FEELING!!! With this new technology, I'm on cloud nine. I never dreamed I could be so **Independent** while being dependent. It's so FREEING; I LOVE IT!!!

To see Greg's entire letter, letter go to: www.ndipat.org/newsevents

FUNDING NEWS

Financing an Accessible Home

Past funding articles have addressed home ownership and improvement financing programs. With the maze of local, state, and federal agencies offerings; it's helpful to have a broader, statewide overview of government support and who to contact so you can have an existing or new home modified for your needs.

North Dakota Housing Finance Agency: (800) 292-8621, (800) 366-6888 (TTY)

- **Helping HAND:** Supports new or existing single or multifamily housing rehabilitation programs.
- **Homeownership Acquisition and Rehabilitation Program (HARP):** Purchase and rehabilitation of existing single family homes for resale to eligible homebuyers.
- **Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP):** Funds to purchase foreclosed or abandoned homes and to rehabilitate, resell, or redevelop these homes.
- **Rehab Accessibility Program (RAP):** Grants help convert single or multifamily properties into safe and comfortable homes adapted for their needs.
- **Rural Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program:** Low-cost loans for the rehabilitation of single and multifamily properties.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (701) 845-5150 or (800) 688-2293 ext. 4

- **Home Improvement and Repair Loans and Grants:** Enables homeowners to remove health and safety hazards in their home and to make homes accessible.
- **Housing Direct Loans:** Loans to purchase, construct, repair, or relocate a single family dwelling and related facilities.
- **Housing Guaranteed Loans:** Single family housing guaranteed loans that are available to credit-worthy applicants who are residents of rural areas and towns with under 25,000 populations.

- **Self-Help Housing Loans:** Assists groups of six to eight low-income families in helping each other build homes by providing materials, site and the skilled labor they cannot furnish. The families must agree to work together until all homes are finished.

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT



Jouse2

Computers and the way we interact with them change on a daily basis. It can be difficult for users that are unable to access a computer through the traditional keyboard and mouse to interact. The Jouse2 is one way to promote interaction.

The Jouse2 is a joystick-operated mouse. The user can move the joystick with their mouth, cheek, chin or tongue to shift the mouse cursor wherever they want. The further you move the joystick, the faster the cursor travels. You can perform right-click, left-click and double-click actions with the sip and puff switches that are built in. The **Jouse2** will mount to most desktops with options for mounting additional equipment such as microphones and switches. It comes with built-in support for two external switches. If the user cannot perform a sip or puff function (e.g., if they're on a respirator), they can use a switch as an alternative.

For more information on this device please contact the manufacturer at: 888-388-8180 or visit their website at www.compusult.net. If you would like to rent this item from the IPAT loan library, please call 1-800-895-4728 or email: ipatinfo@ndipat.org

Mark Your Calendar

July 26, 2010

Celebrate 20 Years of the ADA

Rally at the Capitol

11:00 am – Event begins

Noon – Keynote, Emma Lewis-Sullivan

1-3 pm – Americans with Disabilities Act

Free lunch while supplies last

August 2-6, 2010

Summer Camp – Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Nativity Elementary School
Fargo, ND
Pediatric Therapy Partners – 701-232-2340

September 28-30, 2010
“Celebrate Aging – Endless Possibilities”
Northern Plains Conference on Aging & Disability
Ramada Plaza Suites
Fargo, ND
218-477-5859