

RI Council on Assistive Technology  
August 14, 2008: 2:30 – 4:00 pm  
TechACCESS of RI, Suite I  
110 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI

Minutes

**Present:** Charlie Pollock, Margaret Hoye, Susan Gnrke, Kerri Cicione, Flo-Adeni Awosaki, Jeanne Panarace, Denise Corson, Bill Robinson, Kat Grygiel, Teresa O'Brien, Joe Murphy, Judi Carlson, Elisabeth Hubbard. New members attending were Michael Matraccia and Dan Pieroni.

• **Welcome:**

Meeting was called to order by Chair Pollock at 2:32 p.m. where he welcomed the two new members to the Council and asked them to tell everyone a little about themselves.

Mike Matraccia stated that he is a 43 year old father of 8 year old twin boys who has had multiple sclerosis for the past 11 years. He is a Providence Policeman doing special events. He feels one of his assets to RICAT would be fundraising.

Dan Pieroni stated he graduated from Curry College with his BA in 2007. He is now going for his Masters in Communication at URI. He has been involved with the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) – first as an attendee and then as a counselor. He is currently unemployed but would like to work in the communications field.

• **Acceptance of Minutes:**

Approval of Minutes for 6/12/08: Motion made by Sue Gnrke and seconded by Joe Murphy. Motion unanimously passed

• **Project Director's Report:** Kat Grygiel welcomed both new members again, adding that they had a quick orientation before the meeting, and will schedule another before next meeting.

K. Grygiel noted that the State Plan is due to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) though she does not have an exact date due. She added that it is a very different type of state plan. Last Tuesday the partners and some advisory council members got together to review sections of the state plan which she felt was really a helpful process. She added there will probably be an abstract that will go on

website when done. K. Grygiel then again thanked members of advisory council who were helpful in the review process.

K. Grygiel showed the data collection report to members, explaining how it helps when it comes time to report the data. Part of reporting to the RSA is the type of outcomes which are occurring and also identifying performance goals over the next couple of years. RSA wants to see that for the money they are giving us, it is assisting individuals to get AT.

K. Grygiel also noted that in October she would like the Council to start revisiting the by-laws, and encouraged people to help with this process. They are looking for by-laws that are a little more flexible and include Ad hoc committees. All feel that Membership Committee is important to keep.

K. Grygiel noted she had exciting news. By bringing in ATEL program into ATAP, they are now in compliance because RSA considers it as an Alternative Financing Program (AFP) program - State Financing. The big benefit is they can use more money towards customers and less towards training.

J. Panarace asked if there were standards for the Performance Measures. K. Grygiel explained that a new system is being introduced in January which will include Peer Review Monitoring where 3 or 4 AT Directors will review individual AT programs around the country. Webinars, PowerPoint presentations, etc will be used, and practices will come into play there. The whole program is having an increased amount of accountability.

- **Partner Reports**

ATEL: Denise Corson explained how ATEL provides adaptive telephone equipment. Adding that their just added new product is the Casa Futura Technologies Telephone Fluency System, an anti-stuttering device. It has a delayed auditory feedback and even trains people to not even need it in a few years. Individual would go through a speech clinic. ATEL's Success Story: A nice gentleman came in who was visually disabled as well as having hearing problems. Caption phone has a USB port on it. Denise explained how things could be downloaded to a computer. Then she showed him how to increase the font to make things readable for him. This man also has grandkids, and she explained that he would be able to use it to converse with them as well. He was very happy when he left. J. Panarace asked if there was any possibility of funding through

a surcharge. They had tried to develop a resource base previously, where the PUC had said they would be more amenable to surcharge. They lost over \$1m in 1990. This was supposed to be a self sustaining program. D. Corson responded that right now with the extra \$10,000 received from ATAP, there shouldn't be a waiting list and they should be all set.

EBEC: N/A

OSCIL: Success Story: A 47 year old man with multiple disabilities including being legally blind and having diabetes contacted us in hopes of transitioning from a nursing home into an assisted living facility which would allow him to live closer to his daughter and have more freedom. Consumer was very motivated to move and to be more independent. Initially, consumer was not a candidate for assisted living because his blood glucose level fluctuated and he required insulin injections three times a day. Over a period of several months, however, consumer's condition stabilized which enabled him to be able to apply for assisted living. After researching facilities in several communities with consumer, consumer applied to some facilities and was on their waiting lists. After only a few months, consumer received word of a studio apartment becoming available. In April consumer moved into his apartment with assistance from OSCIL in arranging for a hospital bed and providing kitchen and other household items. Furniture was provided by a local charity. Consumer received mobility training through SBVI. Follow up calls to assisted living facility social worker indicate that consumer is doing well.

PARI: N/A

TECHACCESS: Judi Carlson noted that the Demonstration and Loan Program activity always decreases during the summer. Now that it is nearing September, people are now making appointments to come in. Success Story: TechACCESS had been contacted by a gentleman to have an evaluation to get a computer. He felt he couldn't use 2 hands on a keyboard, and came in with a list of things he wanted to look at that were suggested to him. When he came to see the demonstration center, those recommendations weren't appropriate for him. Gloria, a staff person at TechACCESS, pulled out a regular keyboard along with a rollerball with programmable buttons. The man used one and was very happy with how he was moving along. When Gloria asked what he wanted to do on the computer, the man said he wasn't sure. She showed him the website Google and did a search. They found the studio that this man had earned his black belt

at as well as his name. He was absolutely thrilled. There are open hours here that he will attend.

J. Carlson added that they have done a lot of training over the summer – RIPIN, volunteer training, Providence College. She reminded everyone that November 20<sup>th</sup> will be the Annual AT Conference. She noted that a lot of colleges that usually are involved have lost funding this year and won't be able to make it. 18 vendors committed so far out of 38. If anyone knows of anyone who does presentations, let J. Carlson know.

### **Chairperson's Reports:**

Chair Pollock asked L. Hubbard if DLC had any comments. She noted that people have raised concerns about the Governor and the budget, adding that if anyone has concerns about cuts in programs, to contact DLC.

RAM (Remote Area Medical) Clinic – free hospital for uninsured individuals (with disabilities?). J. Murphy added that a lot of hospitals have free clinics based on sliding scale of income. No one was really sure where this was located.

Chair Pollock had an article asking discussing Disability Act of 1990 and asked what does constitute a disability? M. Matraccia commented that in law enforcement, they find that a lot of people might have had a family member who had a disability that passed away, yet the placard was never returned. Others also stated that it could be that the individual could have a hidden disability. A discussion was held with many members commenting on how handicap placards are used and also abused.

### **• COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

#### **○ Executive Committee:**

N/A – K. Grygiel explained to new members how Executive Committee works and who comprises it. She added that they need to define the responsibilities of members on the Executive Committee.

#### **○ Membership/Outreach**

K. Grygiel commented that historically when they have new members, J. Blaney and Chair Pollock did the orientation. At last meeting it was mentioned that the Program Director will be part of the orientation as well. This time it was hard to get everyone

together, so K. Grygiel gave a brief presentation which will be followed by a more comprehensive one prior to the next meeting. F. Adeni-Awosaki commented that each time the Membership Committee has a meeting or interviews, they are held when she is in school. K. Grygiel suggested that she get in touch with J. Blaney to see about scheduling different times so that she will be able to come too.

- **By-Laws:**

Council is planning to look at and revise in October. There had been a debate if Council needed bylaws. Some AT programs around the country don't have bylaws. Some members feel by-laws may be too structured, but they need to at least have something that shows what we do in writing showing that their current needs of program are reflected. M. Hoyer asked if by-laws are required. K. Grygiel responded they are not. 51% of the Council members or a member of their family does have to have a disability. They also need to have a member from the VR program, IL centers, WIA, and Education. Entire Council felt very strongly to not have anything at all was too drastic. They are looking at modifying but not totally eliminating.

- **Alternative Finance:**

AFP is something they had talked about doing. K. Grygiel explained they had been approached by Easter Seals of MA, however, they were asking too much for administrative overhead. Since last meeting she has gotten news about ATEL so instead will use that under AF. K. Grygiel continued that there has to be an infusion of funds to start a new program as well as to sustain it. There are 56 AT programs and only 36 have AF programs around the country. Rhode Island is definitely not in any position to approach for any extra funds.

- **Legislative**

N/A

- **Communications**

Joe Murphy stated that the insert was their last job. The next project will be to look at RICAT's website. J. Murphy also said this committee could assist with the summarizing of the state plan. J. Panarace commented that they all need an updated list of committee members, adding that they do a lot of work via email. Dan Pieroni will sign up for this committee.

- **Partner Support**

K. Grygiel explained how in the beginning this committee was created to provide support to partners. She questioned if we still feel we need it because they haven't done anything in a long period of time. J. Panarace noted that the origin of this committee went back to 3 years ago when RSA was encouraging programs to have some type of closer advisement from RICAT helping them to complete their work. They had a site visit where they tried out a tool, but haven't had any formal meetings. K. Grygiel noted that members are always welcome to sit in or visit any of the agencies funded by ATAP.

**Roundtable:**

- M. Hoyer brought up that at the last meeting she had asked about getting equipment for her neighbors - one needed a hospital bed which they already received from PARI. Another friend also needs one and they are in the process. M. Hoyer also wanted to let everyone know that her doctor told her anytime a blind or disabled person can't use their phone, to dial "O", and ask for a special operator to get through. This was helpful when her power was out. B. Robinson added that there is a special number that he can get for us to call as well. D. Corson added that Verizon also has a disability line that offers free information and person just needs a note from their doctor. J. Panarace offered another resource for information – 1-800-free-411. She hasn't verified it though.
- S. Gnrke talked about a nice resource for individuals with disabilities and their families – *Accessible RI*. [www.accessiblerhodeisland.org](http://www.accessiblerhodeisland.org). Booklet is connected with them through an event they had planned for children with disabilities. Foundation was created by Marie Perna who was diagnosed with MS 1997. This booklet lists accessible place to go, what access is available, parking, etc. It lists restaurants, parks, museums, libraries, etc. It is showed to schools for when children go on field trips. There are a number of accessible places to go. This year the "Accessible RI" booklet was dedicated to her daughter who passed away in December, 2007. She added that issues related to children with disabilities are definitely her focus with regards to RICAT.
- B. Robinson asked who he should contact regarding the exchange of technical assistance. PARI was the recommendation.
- E. Hubbard stated that the RI Disability Law Center is going to be doing their annual priorities survey again. She will email a copy to be sent out to members. During election time, the

RIDLC is there for people to contact if they have any problems with voting. Please refer them to her either before the election or the day of election when they will have 4 people on call on election day. Last year they did have a call from a man who couldn't get into his polling place. She then went through the deadlines – August 19<sup>th</sup> was the last day to request mail ballots for the primary. Braille ballot deadline has already passed. September 9<sup>th</sup> is the primary. October 4<sup>th</sup> is registration deadline for general election. November 4<sup>th</sup> is general election. September 22<sup>nd</sup> is the last day to request Braille ballot for general election. Dates are also posted on the Secretary of States website.

- B. Robinson stated that the Lung Association sponsors meetings in September through June at RI Rehab where they have speakers. Also Swedish hall on Route 2 is also always looking for different speakers. He asked if it would be possible to have RICAT speak before either of these groups. Communications committee was doing that for a couple of years. Contact person Tina Ragless – West Exchange St.
- **Next Meeting Date: October 9, 2008** at from 2:30 pm. – 4:00 p.m. at TechACCESS. New members, Chair Pollock, J. Blaney and K. Grygiel to meet 15 minutes prior to meeting.
- Motion made to adjourn by M. Hoyer, seconded by S. Gnirke. Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.
- **Reminder:** contact Sharon (sharond@ors.ri.gov or 421-7005 ext. 318) if you will or will not attend. Also – any question of where the meeting will be held or date, you can always check the website, [www.atap.ri.gov/ricat2.htm](http://www.atap.ri.gov/ricat2.htm).