



# Ability Tools

Assistive Technology Network



Oct. 1, 2014 - Sep. 30, 2015

## Annual Report

Cristian Orbe Rosas can communicate his thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas with assistive technology (AT).



## ABILITY TOOLS MISSION STATEMENT

To connect Californians with disabilities to assistive technology devices, tools and services to make life easier.

## ABOUT ABILITY TOOLS

Ability Tools is one of 56 Assistive Technology Act funded programs; one exists in each state and U.S. territory. We work with multiple partners, including device lending libraries, reuse centers, assistive technology centers, Independent Living Centers, CalAgrability and our membership to advance Californians' use of AT.

## ABILITY TOOLS SERVICES

Ability Tools provides a variety of services for Californians with disabilities of all ages. Our services include:

- Device Lending Libraries
- Reuse program in affiliation with organizational partners
- Financial loan program for AT
- Information & Referral
- Online and in-person AT trainings
- AT Exchange marketplace
- Low-cost Internet access
- Technical assistance to organizations on AT issues
- Daily, weekly and monthly information on current AT issues through a variety of social media sites and listservs



## ABOUT ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

Assistive technology (AT) makes life easier. Specifically, assistive technology is any device, gadget, hardware or software used by a person with a disability to do things for themselves that might otherwise be difficult or impossible to do because of their disability.

Assistive technology helps people with disabilities live, work, learn and play as independently as possible. AT includes low-tech items like a shower chair or a magnifier and high-tech equipment like tablets and computer applications.

## FUNDERS

Ability Tools is made possible through funding from the Administration for Community Living allocated by the Assistive Technology Act of 2004.

Ability Tools also received generous support from Molina Healthcare, Batteries Plus and Anthem Blue Cross. We would also like to thank California Health & Wellness, the Rotary Club and individual donors for their contribution in aiding the victims of the Butte fires.



Peter Thaler shows that even stairs and steps can be conquered with simple ramps.





## DEVICE LENDING LIBRARIES

Ability Tools operates a Device Lending Library (DLL) program throughout the state, loaning AT to Californians for free for 30 days. Our DLLs allow individuals to try out different AT solutions before they purchase something or to help with a temporary need. Our online “AT Exchange” makes it easy to search through hundreds of items for loan. Portable ramps, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, magnifiers, iPads, and computer software are just a few examples of the many items available for loan.

### TOTAL DEVICE LOANS

1,458

- **Devices Loaned:** Communication devices, ramps, amplified listening equipment, screen-reading software and braille notetakers, laptops, tablets, and adaptive mice.
- **195 loans** to educators for students' use.
- Over **98% of borrowers** were satisfied or highly satisfied with the loan program.

## ZACH EXPRESSES HIMSELF FULLY

Five-year-old Zach lives with a neurological condition that affects the connections between the brain and the muscles of the tongue, lips and jaw required to produce speech. Zach understands everything he hears and knows exactly what he wants to say, but is not able to express himself.

Wanting to help her son be able to communicate effectively and independently, his mom requested to borrow the iAdapter mini bundle from the device lending library at Central Coast Center for Independent Living (CCCIL) in Salinas. The LAMP Words for Life app on a tablet worked well for Zach; he started talking and he was better able to fully express himself.

In fact, once his mother saw how great it worked, she convinced the school to purchase the device and app for him. She showed them photos of Zach with the loaner device and shared the positive change she had seen in him since he started using the iPad.





# REUSE KEEPS TERESA MOVING

At a Senior Center in South LA, AT Advocate Sergio Garibay met Teresa Picaso.

Teresa, a 58-year-old Hispanic woman, was having difficulty getting around her apartment. She lives with a variety of conditions that affect her mobility. Teresa needed a walker, but she could barely afford to pay her rent and utility bills. After learning about the Communities Actively Living Independent and Free (CALIF) AT Reuse program from Sergio, Teresa was able to get a walker for free thanks to their Reuse Program. Now Teresa is able to walk independently around her home with the help of her walker.



## REUSE

Assistive Technology Reuse reclaims assistive technology and medical devices that are cleaned, sometimes repaired and then donated or provided at a low-cost to people with disabilities.

Ability Tools coordinates the California Assistive Technology Reuse Coalition and provides information, training and assistance to help organizations participate in the reuse of AT. In addition, Ability Tools provides mini grants to 3 reuse organizations that list their available used equipment on our online AT Exchange.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS  
THAT RECEIVED A REUSE DEVICE:

697

TOTAL VALUE OF THE REUSE DEVICES (MSRP):

\$263,583

- **Most common types of devices redistributed:** Power wheelchairs and scooters, manual wheelchairs, walkers, commodes, grabbers, and magnifiers.
- **380 devices** were mobility AT.
- **267 items** were AT for daily living.



## KEEP THE WHEELS ROLLING REPAIR FUND

The Keep the Wheels Rolling Repair Fund (KWRF) provides small grants to nonprofit reuse agencies in California of up to \$450 per device to repair and clean wheelchairs and scooters to give to low-income Californians with disabilities who would otherwise not be able to afford a wheelchair or scooter.



The KWRF increases access and freedom of individuals and their families and helps protect our environment by keeping used devices out of city landfills.

We want to acknowledge the support of our 2015 funder Anthem Blue Cross and our partnership with Batteries Plus for their assistance in making this project possible.

AMOUNT GIVEN TO  
10 DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS  
FOR REPAIR WORK:

\$11,576

43

Wheelchairs and  
scooters repaired

## KEEPING LONNIE'S WHEELS ROLLING

Deborah at the Disability Action Center in Redding learned that Lonnie just had heart surgery and really needed a power scooter or wheelchair to get around. Lonnie and his wife recently moved from Arkansas and were just getting settled in their new home and didn't know many folks or resources in the area.

Deborah told him that she had a scooter for him. She explained that it needed new batteries and it would take about a week to buy and get them installed. Deborah was able to purchase the new batteries through our Keep the Wheels Rolling Repair Fund. Shortly after the batteries were installed, she delivered the scooter to Lonnie, who was thrilled to get a scooter for free! Lonnie and his wife told Deborah they were just astounded that their prayers were answered.



With batteries replaced this scooter is getting delivered to its new owner.



## ABILITY TOOLS RESPONDS TO FIRE VICTIMS IN CALIFORNIA

In the summer of 2015, Ability Tools played a vital role assisting in the disaster relief efforts of the Valley and Butte Fires.

Ability Tools collaborated with state partners to quickly assess the needs of community members with disabilities impacted by the fires and found considerable and immediate unmet basic needs. Some individuals lost their ability to walk, as canes, walkers and wheelchairs were left behind in their harrowing escape.

Along with the Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living (DRAIL), Independent Living Resources of Solano and Contra Costa Counties (ILRSCC), and Disability Services and Legal Center (DSLCC), Ability Tools was able to locate and assist victims with **\$14,200 worth of new and used Assistive Technology (AT)** for individuals with disabilities, including power wheelchairs and scooters, walkers, canes, bathroom equipment and more. Getting these devices to fire survivors made it easier for them to face long-term recovery.

We would also like to acknowledge the Richard Devylder Memorial Fund, California Health & Wellness, Lake Area Rotary Club Association, and Dagney Hollander for financially donating to the victims of the fires.

These grandparents are thankful to have evacuated safely and have mobility restored.



The Valley and Butte fires of 2015 damaged homes and vital resources for residents with disabilities.



## DIGITAL ACCESS PROJECT

Our Digital Access Project connects Californians with disabilities to low-cost, high-speed Internet services, perfect for those who have limited incomes.

The Digital Access Project helps individuals who do not have the digital literacy skills they need to understand the relevance the Internet has in their lives. Whether it's finding a job, helping their children complete homework, connecting with distant family or accessing electronic medical records; the Digital Access Project works with people with disabilities to access the internet.



Valerie connecting her devices to high-speed Internet.

CONNECTED CALIFORNIANS  
TO LOW-COST, HIGH-SPEED  
INTERNET:

1,288



## FREEDOMTECH FINANCIAL LOAN PROGRAM



In preparation for the 2016 launch of our new FreedomTech financial loan program, CFILC and Ability Tools cultivated relationships, created policies and procedures, built a website and developed outreach materials.

The program will offer borrowers the opportunity to apply for loans of as little as \$500 and as much as \$15,000, with an interest rate of 6% over a period of up to 5 years. Borrowers may apply for funds to purchase assistive technology devices, computer technology, home modifications and vehicle modifications that will increase their ability to live, work, learn and play independently.

AbilityTools.org

A new Zipzac gives this toddler the freedom to explore on her own.





## OUTREACH

Ability Tools programs have a significant impact in California. Our staff and partner centers attend many community events, give presentations, and participate in dozens of conventions and resource fairs throughout the state. Our combined outreach efforts help spread the word about all of our AT services.

### NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS REACHED THROUGH:

**3,440** PRESENTATIONS / CONFERENCES

**19,476** OUTREACH MATERIALS

**35,144** PSA / RADIO / TV / OTHER MEDIA

**101,640** NEWSLETTERS / SOCIAL MEDIA

**159,700** TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED

Ability Tools Regional Meeting discussing outreach strategies.





## INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Ability Tools provides Information and Referral (I&R) assistance to thousands of Californians with disabilities looking for advice and funding sources for AT. People can contact Ability Tools through our toll-free telephone line, email and online contact form, as well as through various social media avenues like Facebook and Twitter.

### NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING AT INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICES:

**52** REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYMENT

**272** REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNITY LIVING

**355** REPRESENTATIVES OF EDUCATION

**906** REPRESENTATIVES OF HEALTH AND COMMUNITY LIVING

**1,520** FAMILY MEMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

**4,594** INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

**8,428** TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED ACCROSS CATEGORIES

## TRAININGS

Ability Tools provides in-person and online trainings on various topics, including funding resources, transition and education-focused AT, as well as specific devices, software and/or apps. Participants include Independent Living Center staff, AT Center employees, educators, therapists, people with disabilities and their families and friends. Captioned trainings can be accessed online via YouTube and Vimeo.

### NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING TRAINING:

**282** REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNITY LIVING (AND ILC)

**294** FAMILY MEMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

**800** EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

**1,978** PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**3,778** TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

**6,587** PEOPLE VIEWED ONE OR MORE OF OUR ONLINE TRAINING VIDEOS

- Our most popular webinar, **Tips for Making Your Events Accessible to People with Disabilities**, was attended by 85 people on December 16, 2014.
- Another popular webinar, **Communication Technology for Young Children** was attended by 79 people on February 18th, 2015. The presenter reviewed different Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) technologies to help young children.



## AT ADVOCATE SERVICES

AT Advocates are community-based information and referral specialists that work at Independent Living Centers throughout California.

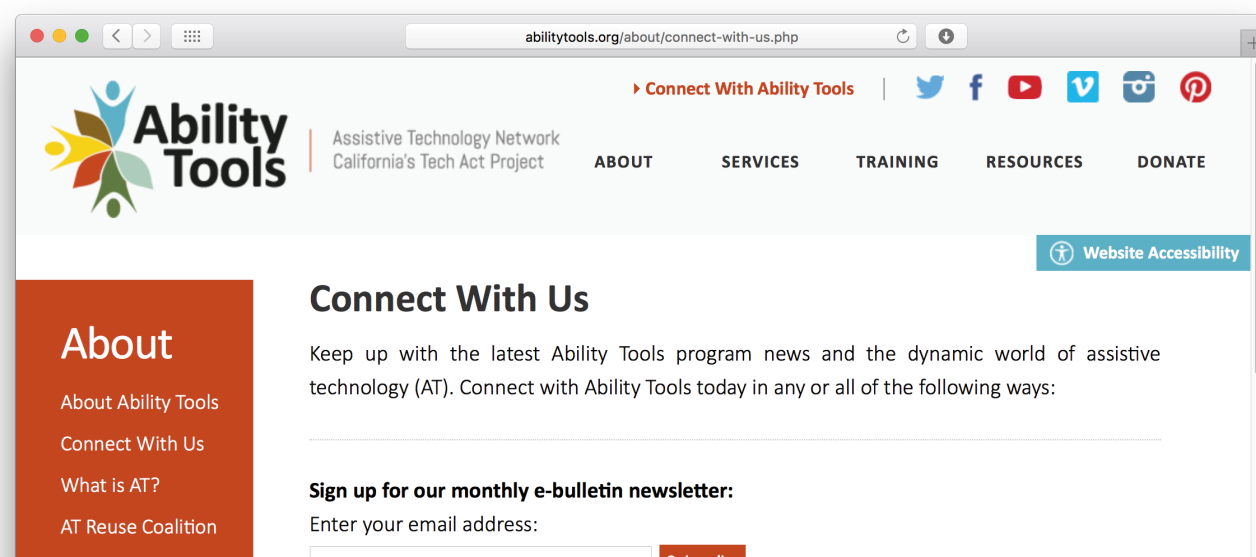
AT Advocates work along with Ability Tools to:

- Provide information on assistive technology.
- Provide referrals to qualified AT professionals for evaluations, assessments and training.
- Help locate AT vendors, services and funding resources.
- Make outreach and community education presentations.
- Connect consumers to AT in our Device Lending Libraries and reuse items.

## CURRENT AT NEEDS, OUR WISH LIST, AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

Ability Tools is always looking for donations of gently used AT and durable medical equipment like wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, grabbers, magnifiers, utensils, listening devices, communication devices, and more.

**Connect with us!** Another way to further our mission is to like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, sign up to receive our weekly blog and/or join one of our listservs! Then you can like and share away all of our posts about AT and AT trainings and services.



We also accept financial donations online. Donations are always tax deductible.

We are actively seeking funding for the Keep the Wheels Rolling Repair Fund from sponsors like you. Check out our other current partnerships and join us in reusing, reducing and recycling.

## AT A GLANCE...

NUMBER OF  
DEVICE LOANS **1,458**

**\$263,583** WORTH OF REUSE  
ITEMS DISTRIBUTED

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED  
INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICES **8,428**

**159,700** INDIVIDUALS REACHED WITH  
OUR OUTREACH EFFORTS

WORTH OF AT EQUIPMENT DONATED  
TO SURVIVORS OF THE FIRES **\$14,200**

**\$11,576** GIVEN TO ORGANIZATIONS TO  
REPAIR AND REFURBISH EQUIPMENT

Data from: Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA). (2015). Information and Assistance Activity Summary Report for CA for 2015. Retrieved 3/1/2016 from <http://www.catada.info>.









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