

# Enhancing Abilities

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**Mid-South ACT, where we provide demonstrations, resources, and services for individuals with disabilities throughout the Mid-South area.**

## Success Story

Having been told that because of his blindness he would never attend college, Chris Spivey set out to prove everyone wrong. Not only is he attending college, he is majoring in International Studies and will be graduating from Morehouse College in May! Such is the success story of one of our clients at Mid-South ACT.

Chris Spivey was born in Texas, but transitioned into Memphis while he was attending high school. Now Memphis is his present home. At the age of 23, Chris was diagnosed with Diabetic Retinopathy, which caused him to lose his eyesight. Chris was not the kind of person to let his blindness hinder him. He has always had a very positive attitude and says that he lives by the "Anything is Possible" motto.

Christopher's mom, Heather, expresses her sentiments about Mid-South ACT by saying "...it creates the most important bridge for a blind person, like my son, to receive the concentrated instruction in learning to type, and learning to utilize the adaptive programs, that have allowed him to continue his education. However, what was most important is seeing his self esteem grow slowly as he learned to use the various programs which help him to see his world was not going to be as stark as he perceived when he lost his sight as a young adult."

Mid-South ACT was recommended to Chris through a Tennessee vocational rehabilitation counselor. Initially, his goal was to learn how to live with his blindness, and to overcome the obstacles associated with his disability. He began learning how to use the computer and train as a blind individual through Assistive Technology (AT). In particular, he learned how to use Freedom Scientific's JAWS, which is a Windows screen reading software. It allows him to surf the web with no other assistance. It reads his email to him, and helps him in many other ways of his everyday life. He says that Mid-South ACT was instrumental in setting him on his path back to the mainstream, and credits Dr. Perry Claybon, Mid-South ACT Director, and Pamela Johnson, V.R. Counselor, with his success. He enjoyed the positive atmosphere in the lab, surrounded by other individuals with similar disabilities, which gave him a very comfortable feeling.

"He would not be graduating from Morehouse if we had not been in the lab with Dr. Perry Claybon and the ACT staff," says his mom. "I just pray that the powers that be understand how important that center is to a blind individual similar to Christopher. If they do, the center would have many others experienced in teaching to fully utilize the various programs, as well as to help maintain their computers so that the down time is lessened when there is a computer problem."

Chris Spivey is a true believer in perseverance, and says that instead of waiting for opportunities to find him, he seeks them out. Dr. Melinda Wade, his mentor at Southwest Tennessee Community College, is responsible for his favorite quote, "Ignorance is Expensive." He thinks that people in general are afraid to ask questions about his disability, so he would like to encourage people to ask him questions. Everyone has a different story to tell. Every blind individual became blind in a different way, and he has met no other individual with a disability that didn't mind sharing his or her experience.

Chris would ultimately like to speak to youth groups and has already been contributing to others in the public schools in Atlanta by sharing his story of overcoming the personal devastation he felt when he went blind. He wants to continue to teach them that no excuses, challenges, or even disabilities are too hard to overcome. He wants to set an example for children to know that there is no limit to what they can achieve, if they put forth the effort. Chris is a perfect example of practicing what he preaches. He truly does believe that **anything is possible.**



**Mr. Chris Spivey**  
Mid-South ACT client  
and Success Story

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*Ms. Betty Anderson, MATA Travel/Trainer Consultant and Outreach Volunteer with Mid-South ACT*

(continued from above)

The training program is open to everyone, with priority given to people with disabilities and the elderly. The use of fixed route buses allows for greater flexibility and independence for people with disabilities than does MATApplus paratransit, because there are no reservations to make and the cost is much less due to the discounted fare with proper ID.

MATApplus riders can rotate between MATApplus and fixed route buses if their disability or health condition permits them to ride only in certain kinds of weather. A MATApplus ID card is one of the approved forms of ID for discounted fixed route fare.

For more information on the free Travel Training Program or to set up a presentation, Betty Anderson can be contacted at 901.574.2247.

## MATA Training at University Place Apartments

On September 7, 2010, Betty Anderson, MATA Travel/Trainer Consultant and Outreach Volunteer with Mid-South Access Center for Technology, (ACT) conducted a presentation for elderly residents with disabilities at University Place Apartments. Mid-South ACT partners with other organizations to better the lives of people with disabilities. The apartments are located at 600 Somerville, just off of E. H. Crump Boulevard. The topic of the presentation was the MATApplus paratransit service and the free travel program to teach people with all types of disabilities to use the fixed route (regular) buses if they are able to do so.

Many individuals who use mobility devices are under the impression that they cannot use the regular buses because of their mobility device, and that MATApplus is their only transportation option. Ms. Betty, a wheelchair user, conducts the travel training sessions as well as presentations and workshops to educate people with disabilities about fixed route bus accessibility.

(continued below)

# Donate

**Here is a list of acceptable electronic and non-electronic assistive technology equipment. The list will change from time to time as we research other AT equipment that can be reutilized. We appreciate your participation.**

*Make a Difference  
in your community  
by helping individuals in  
need by donating AT equipment.*

### Electronic

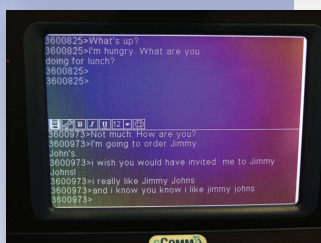
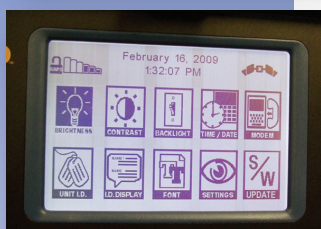
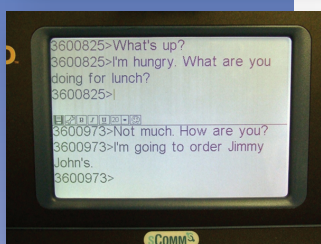
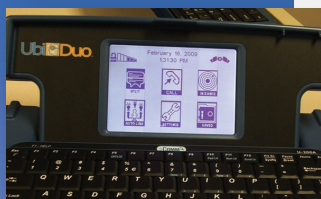
- Electronic Wheelchairs/Scooters
- Desktops/Laptops
  - 512 or more MB of RAM
  - 1.5 or more GHz processor
- 15-17 inch monitors
- Speakers
- Headphones
- Printers
- CCTVs
- Keyboards/Large Print Keyboards
- Mouse
- Low Vision Clocks
- Talking Clocks
- Illuminated Magnifiers

### Non-Electronic

- Wheelchairs
- Walkers/Walking Canes
- Magnifiers
- Timers
- Braille and Blindness Aids
- Large Print Books
- Handheld Shower Heads
- Anti-Glare Magnifier Screens
- Glass Filler







## The UbiDuo Face-to-Face Communicator

**The UbiDuo** is an ideal communication device for people with hearing impairment. It's portable, runs on batteries, and allows for uncomplicated conversation between two to four people. Here's a brief tutorial about how this piece of assistive technology operates.

### Ubi-Duo Home Screen

When you first turn on the UbiDuo, you will see a home screen like the one pictured in the second photo on the left. From the options given, you can navigate to where you'd like to begin. For example, the date on the screen is incorrect, so if you wished to set it to today's date, you would use your arrow keys to highlight the Settings box and go from there. There are a couple of different ways to start a conversation with another Ubi-Duo device. Notice the little seat belt buckle icon in the upper right hand corner. This is the Auto-Link indicator. When the seat belt appears to be buckled, this means that the Auto-Link feature is set to On, meaning that the device will automatically seek out another nearby Ubi-Duo and connect to it. If the icon appears unbuckled, the Auto-Link is Off. Because our UbiDuo Auto-Link is On, we can go ahead and start a conversation by clicking on the Split screen icon. If the Auto-Link happens to be Off, you can either click the Auto-Link icon or first check to see if another UbiDuo is within range of your device by clicking the In Range button.

### Ubi-Duo Split Screen

The third image shows what a conversation looks like in Split screen. Your messages will be displayed on the top while the other person's messages will show up on the bottom portion of the screen. The numbers at the beginning of each message indicate your device's specific ID number, and can be customized to display your name in the Settings section.

### Settings Screen

As you can see, there are many options for customizing your UbiDuo. You can change the font size, the contrast, adjust the brightness, or turn off the backlight. You can also set the screen so that the text is white on a black background, like in the last image:

### White Text on a Black Background

You can easily adjust your settings by navigating through the menus with your arrow keys, but there are also function keys assigned to each task, which are provided to you in the user manual.

*Sateesh Madireddy, Rehabilitation Technician for Mid-South ACT, will be holding a workshop on using the UbiDuo on Friday, January 21, 2011, from 10 am until 12 noon. If you are interested in learning more about this piece of assistive technology, or to register for the training session, contact Miriam Clay via email at [act@memphis.edu](mailto:act@memphis.edu), or by phone at 901.678.1489. Space is limited.*



Disclaimer: Mid-South Access for Technology does not endorse any vendors. Details are provided as a resource and for information only.

Information in this article was adapted from <http://www.scomm.com> and <http://blog.eastersealstech.com/product-review-ubiduo-face-to-face-communicator>

### With the UbiDuo...

- family members connect
- deaf and hearing friends converse
- colleagues work closer together

You can communicate instantly anywhere, because it's always there when you need it!



Mary Hayes, Volunteer

## Roll in the New Year by Rolling with the Punches

### A Networking Group for People Who Use Wheelchairs

by Mary Hayes • Volunteer • Mid-South ACT

**Do you feel that your wheelchair may limit your dreams?** Do you have success stories that you would like to share with other people who use wheelchairs? Come and join our start-up group. Meet people who have overcome their disabilities. We

will have group discussions on the issues you face, and gain knowledge about technology that you may be able to acquire that can help you.

**Roll with the Punches** is a networking group for people who use wheelchairs and provides a way for them to get acquainted with each other. They can also learn about technology and resources that may be new and helpful to them. The group is sponsored by Mid-South ACT. One service that Mid-South ACT provides is to promote community awareness of assistive technology (AT). During this demonstration, we hope to offer brief training on technology, introduction to art therapy, and have representatives from different companies come and talk to members about their new products. We will also have group discussions where success stories are shared, and in turn inspire others; or discussions regarding the challenges they have faced. **Roll with the Punches** will be a month-long workshop. There are four separate sessions, which will be meeting once a week. These meetings will be held in Patterson Hall, and will be scheduled sometime in February, 2011.

#### MEETING I – Information Meet and Greet

This meeting will be a time for individuals who use wheelchairs and/or their parents and friends to come and see what will be going on in each meeting during the month. They will also meet the people that created the group and preview Mid-South ACT services and programs.

#### Meeting II – Group Discussion

The main goal of this meeting is to find out what types of AT would be useful to this group, so that Mid-South ACT can give demonstrations of that technology. People can discuss the obstacles that they have faced, and if they have been able to overcome them through the use of an assistive technology.

#### Meeting III – Show and Tell

Representatives from AT vendors will be on deck to show and tell about assistive technology devices. Ms. Betty Anderson, a Mid-South ACT volunteer and representative from MATA will share information on MATA

and MATA Plus. Mid-South ACT staff and volunteers will be available to demonstrate the AT devices and applications.

#### Meeting IV – Art Therapy and Technology Activities

An art therapist will be available to perform demonstrations for hands-on activities with the group. Mid-South ACT can let people try out the equipment that was displayed in the meeting before. The American Art Therapy Association (AATA) defines art therapy as "Employing the creative process of art-making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages with the aim of resolving conflicts and problems, developing interpersonal skills, managing behavior, reducing stress, and increasing self-esteem and self-awareness." Art therapy can have emotional, physical, cognitive, and social benefits.

You are welcome to come and "Roll with the Punches!"

#### For more information, contact:

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Website: <http://act.memphis.edu>  
Email: [act@memphis.edu](mailto:act@memphis.edu)



### Sateesh's Corner

Sateesh Madireddy, M.S., Rehabilitation Technologist

#### Come to the Mid-South ACT lab to check out the latest in Assistive Technology devices!

In January, we continue to present **mini-training sessions** for individuals who would like to learn more about AT devices. This month we will feature the **UbiDuo** by sComm, and the **SARA** (Scanning and Reading Appliance) by Freedom Scientific. We will host workshops for each of these devices in the Mid-South ACT lab (room 111) at the following times:

- **Friday, January 21, 2011 – 10 am til 12 noon, the UbiDuo**
- **Friday, January 28, 2011 – 10 am til 12 noon, the SARA**

To register for either or both of these sessions, please contact Sateesh in the lab at 901.678.1489 or email him at [act@memphis.edu](mailto:act@memphis.edu). Space is limited, so register early!