

# 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.**

## Our Featured Client... Yes, He Can!

*By Tamara Williamson  
Mid-South ACT Staff Writer*



Mid-South ACT's goal is to help individuals with disabilities become more independent in their personal and professional lives. One client, the tech-savvy John Buchanan, is experiencing his third stint at Mid-South ACT. Mr. Buchanan works with Ms. Mary Washington, who was been his speech-language pathologist for three years.

Whereas many babies enter the world exercising the newfound use of their lungs to scream, Mr. Buchanan was quiet at birth, and his mother learned that he had infant respiratory distress syndrome. He was put on a ventilator to help him breathe, and he had emergency surgery and used a feeding tube for nutrition before he was one month old. At eight months, Mr. Buchanan was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, a neuromotor disorder, possibly due to oxygen deprivation at birth. He then began a rehabilitation program for infants at Les Passes, which he engaged in until age five.



**Mr. John Buchanan, Mid-South ACT client and Success Story**

At age six, he began a formal school program first at Knight Road School, then at the Shrine School. At Shrine School, he was in a class where technology was integrated. He got his first high-tech communication device, a Touch Talker, at age eight. By sheer coincidence, Mary Washington worked there at the time, but did not work with him. Mr. Buchanan did learn to communicate verbally, but it was still difficult for anyone other than his mother to understand him. While at the Shrine School, he helped write articles for the Shrine Times, the school's newspaper.

He graduated from the Shrine School in 1998, and began working at Goodwill shortly thereafter. After he finished high school, Mr. Buchanan received a Delta Talker communication device from Tennessee Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. He later enrolled at the University of Memphis and began to receive training at Mid-South ACT to learn to use the Delta Talker. In his theater class, he used the Delta Talker to program parts of a play. Unfortunately, he had to leave the University because his mother, his assistant with schoolwork, became ill.

Mr. Buchanan is back at Mid-South ACT in a quest to obtain a more updated, state of the art communication device that will help him to obtain a job. He is receiving training on an Augmentative and Alternative Communication device (AAC) at Mid-South ACT. And, considering what he has accomplished thus far, he will surely reach this goal. Mr. Buchanan believes that his greatest accomplishments have been graduating from high school and learning to use major technology. For example, he sends text messages on his iPhone, organizes Facebook groups for individuals with disabilities, and maintains a blog. He uses his webcam to communicate on Skype with friends across the United States and uses e-mail and Facebook to stay in touch with family members in East Tennessee. He recently uploaded



a video of his nephew to YouTube. He has communication apps on his iPhone such as SpeakIt, and uses it to talk on his phone when he needs to. And, like half of the population of the world, he enjoys Farmville (a Facebook game). John was recently offered employment as an augmentative communication ambassador for the Prentke Romich Company (PRC). As an ambassador, he would demonstrate equipment, when the regional PRC consultant is in the Memphis area. He has also been asked to initiate and maintain a social network blog for communication device users for Mid-South ACT. However, he will need his own personal augmentative communication device to accept the employment as an ambassador so that he can communicate more effectively.

Also, Mr. Buchanan was recently asked to be a chairperson of a committee for the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) in October 2011. He will use his various social media skills to help further the mission of ISAAC. Although John has many accomplishments, his biggest hurdle has been obtaining an updated personal communication device due to difficulty obtaining the necessary funding. Mr. Buchanan credits Mid-South ACT with helping him gain useful skills. "At Mid-South ACT, I am relearning MiniSpeak language on a loaner device, and refreshing my AAC language skills," he said.

St. Ignatius Loyola said, "Go forth and set the world on fire." With the help of Mid-South ACT, Mr. Buchanan is doing exactly that.

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# Get The FACTS

## with Mid-South ACT

**Functional Activities and Communication  
Technology Training: A Work-Systems Approach**  
By Speech Language Pathologist Mary Washington, M.A., CCC-SLP

Independent functioning in all life skills areas is the focus of many academic and pre-vocational training programs. Individuals who are involved in these programs often range from having developmental disabilities from an early age to older individuals with an acquired illness or injury. All of these individuals may need to learn new skills or re-learn old skills. They may have diagnoses such as autism, traumatic brain injury, cerebral vascular accident (stroke), or moderate-to-severe learning disorders. Cognitive and behavioral deficits, as well as communication deficits, often interfere with the successful training of these skills.

Research has shown that individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities function best in a routine situation in which they know what is expected, how much is expected, and how to complete the tasks. Because many of the individuals are cue-dependent, they can perform tasks more independently, making employment a possibility if training is organized around these expectations. Successful interventions must consider the physical structure of the training site. The training area should be visually organized with each space representing a specific purpose and set of expectations. Visual and auditory distractions should be minimized. The learner may need a schedule to tell where he or she needs to be, the involved activities, and the order in which the activities will occur. The work-systems approach addresses these components of successful interventions.



**John uses a communication device**

what to expect next. Individuals in training need an organized system for knowing what is expected, how much they are to accomplish, and what happens after the activity is finished. Routines help to define expectations for these learners. They also need visual structure, including visual cues to help with organization, and instructions to help assist with comprehension. Asking an individual to learn isolated skills in a clinical setting is often confusing and provides little carryover for independence. For example, helping someone learn to use an augmentative communication device (AAC) without integrating it into the home, school, or work setting is teaching an isolated skill that may seem unmotivating to the user. The work-systems approach helps to organize the training program for individuals by using a structured teaching approach to learning and integrating technology into intervention.

The functional activities and communication technology training program at the Mid-South Access Center for Technology (Mid-South ACT) targets two groups of individuals with similar needs. The first group will be school-aged children or young adults who have developmental disabilities. They may be attending school or targeted for a work-based program. They are often referred to Mid-South ACT for assessment and intervention for

communication disorders resulting from developmental disabilities such as autism, mental retardation, and severe communication disorders. They have been primarily involved in academic programs in the past, but continue to

demonstrate learning deficits for reading and writing, as well as comprehension and expression. Many of these individuals may have minimal experience with doing chores or having other responsibilities that help to set up routines and skills for lifelong learning abilities such as light housekeeping, making snacks, and doing work around the house. The second group of individuals may have held responsible employment and managed households and families but, due to illnesses and trauma that caused severe cognitive and communication deficits, are no longer able to work.

The speech language pathologist (SLP) considered using a combination of the structured teaching method and functional activities to design a treatment area that would allow integration of communication and functional skills training with the work-systems approach utilized in the TEACCH program. The individuals in treatment have been diagnosed with auditory comprehension, expressive language disorder, memory and other cognitive-related deficits. The SLP needed a method that would consider structure and organization to help promote independence and new learning. Many of the individuals have severe speech and language impairments and may be non-speaking. These individuals may need an augmentative communication device to help them express their wants and needs, and to participate in the learning or work environment.

The goal of the intervention is to integrate the usage of the augmentative communication device or visual strategies into the environment, so that they either supplement communication or provide a more sophisticated means of communication.

These augmentative supports also serve to increase comprehension by providing visual support for the speech and language impaired individual. Some individuals with autism have verbal skills that are not used in a functional manner.

They may need augmentative support, especially in a work or school setting. Augmentative communication devices and visual supports allow individuals who have expressive and receptive language disorders to communicate and comprehend. The work-systems approach allows integration of technology and training while helping individuals with disabilities achieve lifelong learning skills and employment.



**Speech Language Pathologist  
Mary Washington works with Mid-South ACT client  
John Ramirez as he performs workstation-related tasks**



**John prepares to work**





## Target Medical, Inc.

Target Medical, Inc. is a locally-owned medical provider company in Memphis, Tennessee. We have a proven track record for providing Home Medical Equipment on a daily basis. We can answer any questions that you may have on acquiring medical equipment or supplies. Products include canes, walkers, rollators, manual wheelchairs, scooters, power wheelchairs, oxygen and concentrators, cpap, and incontinent supplies.

Medical equipment and replacement is a very complex issue. We have trained and certified personnel to help walk you or your family through the process of insurances and funding. Target Medical, Inc. is an accredited facility that will provide timely deliveries. The equipment will be the latest medical products available on the market. If you have any questions, please contact our staff at (901) 323-1304.



## J-Say Voice Input/Output Technology

### What is J-Say Pro?

J-Say Pro brings together Dragon NaturallySpeaking professional version 11.0, from Nuance, and JAWS For Windows version 11.0, from Freedom Scientific. However although the product integrates these two applications, it also presents the user with an easy to understand interface enabling interaction with the computer using natural language and easy to remember and understand vocabulary.

### Who can use it?

As the product has evolved the range of people who are benefiting from the technology has increased. From people who simply want to be more productive and use their voice as an additional means of computer input and control, to individuals who have complex combinations of needs, and who find it difficult if not impossible to make use of computer technology using traditionally accepted methods of input access and control.

Even more remarkably many people interacting with this technology do not have a visual impairment simply finding it difficult or uncomfortable to use the computer screen and so find the J-Say Pro approach more suited to their needs.



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

# Older Blind Services Stimulus Grant Ends

*By Tamara Williamson, Mid-South ACT Staff Writer*

Unfortunately, the time has come to bid goodbye to a member of the Mid-South ACT family. Shayla Thomas, a graduate student in the Rehabilitation Counseling Program who assists with the demonstrations and coordination of services for the Older Blind Services Stimulus Grant, will be leaving Mid-South Access Center for Technology at the end of May. She began working at Mid-South ACT in August of last year.

Thomas assists in providing clients who are 55 and older and legally blind, assistive technology that helps them with daily living activities. She processes referrals from sources such as the Rehabilitation Teachers Program through the Department of Human Services, the National Federation of the Blind, and private referrals from outreach events. Then, she evaluates the referrals to assure that they match the criteria set in the grant specifications (i.e. the client is at least 55 years of age and legally blind). Thomas demonstrates the equipment for the client, assessing the client's goals and needs. During the second phase of the equipment demonstration, she instructs them while she demonstrates how the assistive technology devices and/or applications work and its purpose. After the demonstrations of various assistive technology devices and/or applications that may fit their needs, she makes recommendations on the best equipment for the client, then consults with Sateesh Madireddy, Mid South ACT's Rehabilitation Technologist.

Thomas then corresponds with the vendor of the equipment to get quotes, works with Mid-South ACT staff to place the order, and delivers the assistive technology devices/applications to the client. Finally, Thomas then makes a final demonstration of the equipment during the delivery and set-up. In addition to these tasks, she also makes follow-up calls to previous clients to check if they have any questions about the equipment or in they have any issues. Other Mid-South Volunteers, such as Mrs. Betty Anderson, assist with follow-up calls.

Thomas is leaving Mid-South ACT to begin an internship at Youth Villages, which will enhance her counseling skills (she is currently as Master's candidate in Rehabilitation Counseling), but her services at Mid-South ACT mean a great deal to her.

"The most rewarding thing about working for Mid-South ACT is when a client is reading material from the equipment I showed them how to use and they tell me that they haven't been able to read anything in ten years," said Thomas. "The feeling I get when a client tells me that they feel more independent and can be more self-reliant...is worth its weight in gold!"

Thomas also has a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. No doubt she will be a shining star at Youth Villages, just as she has been at Mid-South ACT.

## Upcoming Events

### Reutilization Information and Networking Program Meeting

Mid-South ACT will once again team up with the Orange Mound Community Center on Monday, June 6, for the Reutilization Information and Networking Program Meeting.

Our goal for this event is to increase the familiarity of Mid-South ACT's Reutilization program in Memphis and the Mid-South.

Working in conjunction with Tennessee Technology Access Project's Reutilization Information Program, we seek to promote the donation, repair, and reuse of technology and durable medical equipment for individuals with disabilities and senior citizens. The program allows more citizens to have an opportunity to use equipment, whether for home, work, or school, that will allow them more independence and the chance to achieve a higher quality of life.

At the meeting, Mid-South ACT will inform attendees about how equipment is reutilized through donations, acquisitions, and refurbishment. Vendors who supply DME (Durable Medical Equipment) and other Assistive Technology devices will be present. Door prizes, drawings, and refreshments will be available.

Senior citizens are strongly encouraged to attend. If special accommodations are necessary, contact Mid-South ACT by June 5, 2011.



#### Mark Your Calendars!

Math & Assistive Technology  
Demonstration on June 23, 2011

Don't Throw It Away...



**Check our website**  
**[act.memphis.edu](http://act.memphis.edu) to sign up**  
**for any of our monthly mini-**  
**training sessions, or to register**  
**for the Reutilization Information**  
**and Networking Program Meeting at Orange**  
**Mound Community Center on June 6, 2011.**

Give It Away!

## Donate

For Reutilization



### Special Thanks To:

- Our newsletter Editor and Writer, Tamara Williamson
- Our newsletter Graphic Designer, Karen Wilson

## 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



## Director's Corner

with Lavonnie Perry Claybon, Ph.D.



Don't forget to visit us as we continue to present **mini-training sessions** for individuals who would like to learn more about AT devices. We will host workshops in the Mid-South ACT lab (room 111, Patterson Hall) on the following dates/times:

- **Friday, June 17, 2011 – 10 am til 12 noon, J-Say Pro (by Freedom Scientific)**
- **Thursday, June 23, 2011 – 10 am til 12 noon, Mathematics & Assistive Technology**
- **Friday, June 24, 2011 – 10 am til 12 noon, Zoom Text (by Ai Squared)**

A Reutilization Information and Networking Program Meeting will be held at Orange Mound Community Center June 6, 2011.

Members of our staff will present on Customizing Mobile Technologies (e.g. iPod Touch, iPhone, iPad) as Assistive Technologies at the Ninth Annual Tennessee Disability MegaConference on June 2-3, 2011 in Nashville. We hope to see you there! To learn more, please see <http://www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org>.

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