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**EDGE**  
 SPECIAL EDITION 2018 - WVSILC - PO Box 625 - Institute, WV 25112

# 2018 SPECIAL EDITION

## 2017 DISABILITY ESSAY CONTEST

The SILC is very pleased to share this Special Edition of our newsletter showcasing the winners of the 2017 Disability History Essay Contest. The contest began in the fall of 2017, corresponding to WV Disability History Week in October, and the awards were presented at high school Senior Awards Ceremonies in May 2018.

The theme for the contest this year was, *"How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities"*. This special edition of our newsletter includes all the winning essays, photos of the authors, and a bit of information to help you get to know these students. The authors of the winning essays received an engraved key chain and a check for the amount of their award as follows:

State Winner - \$3,000  
 District 1st Place Winners - \$1,500  
 District 2nd Place Winners - \$750

Congratulations to all the winners! I hope this contest continues to motivate high school seniors to not only submit an entry, but to learn more about disability history and how the disability rights movement has changed our world and our lives.

### MISSION

*"To ensure persons who have disabilities have access to community-based resources that promote personal choice and facilitate the achievement of their independent living goals."*

Continue Learning,

*Ann McDaniel*

Ann McDaniel  
 Executive Director

## PREVIOUS STATE WINNERS



**Heidi Dennison**  
 2012 State Winner  
 Nicholas County  
 High School



**Alexandria Rundle**  
 2013 State Winner  
 East Fairmont  
 High School



**Mason Ryck**  
 2014 State Winner  
 Robert C. Byrd  
 High School



**Blake Huffman**  
 2015 State Winner  
 Winfield  
 High School



**Lindsey Beane**  
 2016 State Winner  
 Hurricane  
 High School





## State Winner



**Lydia Andlinger**, is a graduate of The Linsly School in Wheeling, WV. She was a four-year varsity cheerleader and served as team captain for the Cadets' varsity tennis team for two years, leading them to victory in 3 consecutive Ohio Valley Athletic Conference (OVAC) championships. She also served 2 years as manager for the hockey team for two years.

Lydia consistently landed on the Headmaster's Performance List and made academic honors. She took a rigorous academic curriculum including several Advanced Placement courses. She was a member of the Key Club, S.A.D.D. Club, and the Drug-Free Clubs of America.

Lydia volunteers for the area's annual C3 Soccer Camp, Wheeling Hospital and The Center for Pediatrics, a local pediatric rehabilitation center. She also assists with young children's tennis clinics. Additionally, she works part-time at The Wheeling Coffee Shoppe.

Lydia plans to attend Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. She has been accepted into the Direct Freshman Admit Doctorate of Physical Therapy Program at Duquesne, and plans to pursue a career as a pediatric physical therapist.

In her spare time, she enjoys playing tennis, baby sitting, shopping and spending time with her family and friends.

## The Linsly School

LEARN LEAD LIVE



## Lydia Andlinger

The Linsly School

### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

To the average high school student, having the latest smart phone and most up-to-date tablet seems like a necessity. Most teenagers today cannot imagine life without modern technology. It is used to stay connected with friends and family via texts, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and other social media outlets. Today, technology is used for such things as preparing for and taking exams, submitting assignments and researching topics for class. Voice recognition technology on smart phones allows for hands-free use of devices for safety while driving. There's no doubt that technology has improved our ability to connect with and communicate with people almost instantaneously. For individuals with disabilities, however, technology creates a gateway to education, training, employment, and recreational activities. Technology helps people with disabilities become more independent in their daily life activities.

Nearly everyone has encountered some hardship or difficulty at some point in their life that prevents them from being independent. This could be a broken bone, a concussion, an illness or an injury. For a person with a disability, these hardships have a greater impact on their life and are often life-long. Assistive technology has been used for decades to assist people with various disabilities ranging from physical disabilities to cognitive and learning disabilities. Simple technology such as a walker, crutches a wheelchair or a reach extender has been used to help people with short-term and long-term disabilities be more independent in their daily living. With advancements in technology such as smart phones and tablets, many barriers that people with disabilities experience have been broken.

Federal laws such as the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.) have insured that individuals with disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities as non-disabled individuals. These federal laws have influenced the development of electronic and assistive devices to help disabled individuals. It is not until you have a disabling condition, whether it is temporary or permanent, the existing barriers in our society are truly revealed. I suffered an extensive fracture to my leg and had to rely on crutches to ambulate. I realized how difficult it was to get around in my home, school and community without technology such as elevators, wheelchairs, adapted shower seat and wireless computer access. Opening heavy doors was difficult while trying to manage crutches or a wheelchair, and was quite a challenge for me. Recent renovations to meet ADA requirements at my school such as the newly installed elevators and ramps helped make navigating my school environment with this temporary disability more manageable. Textbooks that could be loaded onto an iPad made carrying my books so much easier than trying to carry a heavy backpack with crutches. This temporary loss of function made me realize how difficult having a permanent physical disability can be and the everyday obstacles that an individual with disabilities faces on a daily basis.

Today, there have been great advancements in technology to help individuals become more independent. Robots have been developed to help people with strokes, spinal cord injuries, visual impairments and brain injuries to navigate their environment. In addition, robots have been utilized to help individuals with

## Maggy Criser

### Ripley High School

#### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

Beginning in sixth grade, I ate lunch everyday with the special education class throughout middle school. I grew very close to the students and teachers as they provided me with joy and happiness that is very rare to find in today's world. As I walked into the classroom on Friday, a student that could not speak said "hi" to me using an augmentative device. After eight years of being acquainted with him, this was the first time he had ever recognized me through communication. He showed pure joy. I did as well. Because of my experience with this friend, people with disabilities hold a very special place in my heart. Through our friendship, I witnessed the benefit of the use of technology by those that are intellectually and physically challenged.

"Assistive technology (AT) for kids with learning disabilities (LD) is defined as any device, piece of equipment or system that helps bypass, work around or compensate for an individual's specific learning deficits" (Assistive Technology for Kids with Learning Disabilities: An Overview 1). By providing children, young adults, and adults with AT, their future is brightened. Those who are not confident in themselves and their knowledge can now flourish as learners, and as people. Portable word processors, speech-recognition programs, and talking calculators are just a few examples of the advanced technology that can help those with learning disabilities gain confidence. By capitalizing on the strengths of those with learning disabilities, their opportunity to reach their full potential is enhanced.

Not only has technology helped people to learn, but it has also created opportunities for those who are living with mental disabilities. It is rumored that those with special needs are incapable of using the same technology that everyday people use. I believe this to be false. I am blessed to have a good friend that has autism. She is caring, funny, smart, and knows how to work an iPad better than most. Every human has a unique skill set, and to exploit each skill in a traditional environment is almost impossible. Personal FM listening systems allow those who have communication disabilities such as autism to reach out and express themselves with ease. This system benefits the speaker and listener by allowing them to communicate directly through a wireless transmitter. This is made possible through a microphone worn by the speaker and an earbud worn by the listener. This technology opens the world up for interaction and communication.

Technology has helped those who live with physical disabilities to experience actions that those without disabilities may take for granted. I attended prom this year with a young man that has a progressive neuro-muscular condition. Although we had a great time, it was extremely difficult getting ready for the event. My eyes were opened when I saw how hard it was for his parents to dress and feed him. One of the easiest things was to transfer him into the car with the help of an assistive lifting device. This technology helped us to both have an enjoyable time. Disabilities have a wide of range of severity, making simple tasks extremely difficult. E-readers provide a way for people to read a book and turn its pages without any physical touch. Voice adaptive software helps people to write by audio command. The ReWalk exoskeleton gives those who have been paralyzed the opportunity to walk again. Other

## *District 1 First Place*

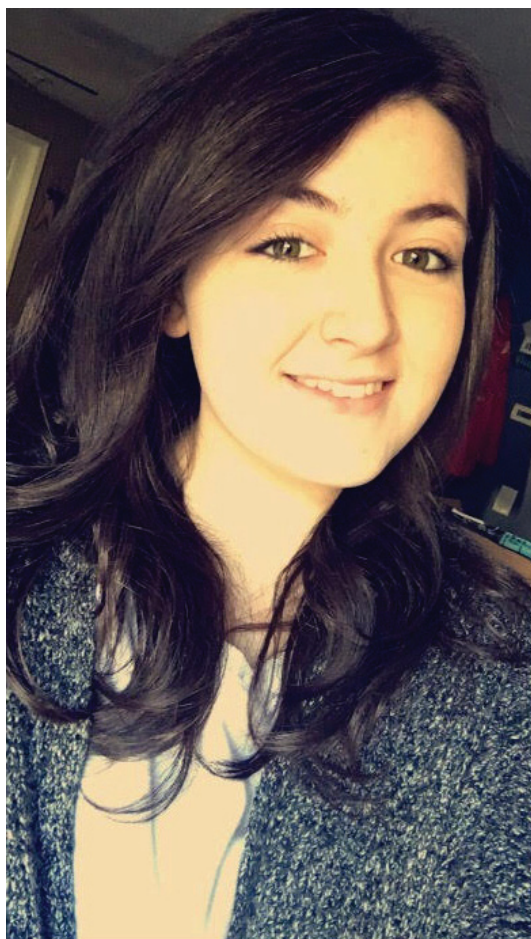


**Maggy Criser**, is a graduate of Ripley High School. She participated in several school activities such as basketball, band, and track. She is a member of Rho Kappa, Mu Alpha Theta, and was the secretary of the National Honor Society. Her GPA was 4.15 and she enjoyed taking advanced/AP classes. She is very inspired by those with disabilities with the Special Olympics being one of her favorite events to volunteer for. She has volunteered with the Special Olympics since the sixth grade and the athletes have become like family to her. She has been employed since receiving her work permit at 14 years old, which allowed her to travel with her school to countries such as Italy, Spain, Australia, and New Zealand. She plans on attending West Virginia University in the fall majoring in Exercise Physiology. She also plans to pursue a medical degree so she can join Doctors without Borders and travel the world helping those in need.





## District 2 First Place



**Katelynn Miller**, is a graduate of North Marion High School. She has been employed at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, as a Hostess and Skill Trainer for the past two years. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and spending time with her family and friends. She plans to attend Fairmont State University and major in Nursing. She's very excited to begin this new chapter in her life and looks forward to seeing what the future holds.



## Katelynn Miller North Marion High School

### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

At this very moment, a person with a disability is feeling empowered due to today's technology. Technology is exceeding functional limitations and has shattered the chains of restrictions. Although assistive technology is still in its early stages, it is proving to have a positive impact in the lives of people with disabilities. Constant technological advances have helped people with disabilities overcome barriers regarding mobility, communication, and function.

Due to outstanding advancements in the world of technology, products such as the iBot Stair Climbing Wheelchair, Google's Driverless Car, Kapten PLUS Personal Navigation Device and the AXS Map have been created to conquer mobility restrictions. These well-designed devices allow people with disabilities to have greater levels of freedom. The iBot Stair Climbing Wheelchair, created by Toyota, is a leading example. It is a self-balancing wheelchair with the ability to climb stairs, and it gives the individual the independence to navigate any terrain. Stairs no longer have to be seen as an impossible obstacle. Quite recently, Google engineers designed a car specifically for people with a visual, physical, or mental disability. Known as Google's Driverless Car, it accommodates safe transportation while providing the user with independence. The car functions with help from Google Street View information, sensors and cameras on the vehicle. Driving, regardless of visual impairment, age, epilepsy or any other disability, is now a possibility. Another revolutionary device is the Kapten PLUS Personal Navigation Device. Intended for visually impaired individuals, the Kapten PLUS is a simple and affordable GPS locator that speaks to give direction and location. The device ensures security and confidence for independent travelers. People with visual impairments will not have to solely depend on a cane or service dog while using the Kapten PLUS. Accessibility is a priority. The AXS Map is an online tool that gives information regarding public places that have wheelchair accessibility. Users of the tool can also receive information about how well the facilities are designed with the aid of ratings. With the AXS Map, people with disabilities will have better experiences when going out and about.

In a generation of innovative technology, communication restrictions for people with disabilities have also been combatted. Applications and electronics, such as the DynaVox EyeMax System and Talkitt, are allowing people with disabilities to participate in spoken communication. The DynaVox EyeMax System is an eye tracking system that allows the individual to communicate using only their eyes. The device has an on-screen keyboard that is used to convert text into speech. With the language software, the device offers an abundance of pre-defined words and phrases. A great benefit of the DynaVox EyeMax System is its adaptability to any age. For younger children, the device can display pictures and scenes. Another unique application is Talkitt. Talkitt provides a way of communication for people with speech and language disorders. It can translate incomprehensible pronunciation into an understandable speech.

People with disabilities are now able to lead a more self-determined life because of recent inventions, such as three-dimensional printing and robotics, which improve their functional abilities. Three-dimensional printing and robotics give people, who use prosthetics, more control over their life. Due to the success

## Keelin Howes

### Buckhannon-Upshur High School

#### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

Millions of people with disabilities use various technological devices that help with mobility and several other aspects of everyday life; the advancement in technology has improved the lives of many. Did you know that texting was designed to help people who are deaf with communication (Roy)? And now texting is one of the most popular methods of communicating. The disabilities that require technological services may include (but are not limited to) blindness, paralysis, deafness, certain brain disorders (like Cerebral Palsy [CP] or Parkinson's disease), and there are many more. People with disabilities such as these have always seen mobility as an immense barrier in their lives; however, due to advances in technology, there are ways now that make travel tremendously easier.

"Just over 6.8 million community-resident Americans use assistive devices to help them with mobility. This group comprises of 1.7 million wheelchair or scooter riders and 6.1 million users of other mobility devices, such as canes, crutches, and walkers" (Kaye, Kang, and LaPlante pg. 3). Since the invention of mobility devices such as these, their popularity has increased; they have become more accessible for those people who need them.

For people who are blind, navigation or mobility can be a hassle, but there are devices such as a voice operated Global Positioning System [GPS], braille maps, and the iPhone that help these individuals tremendously. Being blind and also a pedestrian on an unknown street can be dangerous and it takes a lot of thought for that individual to get a feel for that street and its intersections and traffic (Bentzen, Barlow, and Franck pg.1). Advances in vocal GPS systems have helped blind individuals navigate streets, find intersections, and has created a safer way for blind individuals to travel on their own.

Now, there are technological advancements that help people with mental disabilities. A suicide hotline has been put in the minds of many to help individuals with depression or anxiety. "New technology can also be packaged into an extremely sophisticated app for smart phones or tablets. Such apps might use the device's built-in sensors to collect information on a user's typical behavior patterns. If the app detects a change in behavior, it may provide a signal that help is needed before a crisis occurs" (NIMH).

Individuals who are not able to walk find it difficult to find a way to their destination when they require the use of a wheelchair, crutches, or some other device used for mobility. Accessible parking, elevators, and escalators help those people have easier access to their destinations.

Although most people know that this technology was made for individuals with disabilities, some abuse the open access to these devices; this creates an accessibility issue for people who truly need this equipment. "For one of the most accessible cities in the country [New York] still has a long way to go" (Anner, 2017). In one of his adventures for the Cerebral Palsy Foundation, to raise awareness about accessibility issues for people with CP or others who have walking disabilities, Zach Anner goes on a Quest through New York City to find a Rainbow Bagel. Along the way he encounters many obstacles despite

## *District 2 Second Place*



**Keelin Howes**, is a 2018 graduate of Buckhannon-Upshur High School. She was a four year member of the Buckhannon-Upshur Marching Band and the Symphonic Band. In addition to her musical interests, she was also a member of Educators Rising, Friends of Rachel, and the Youth Leadership Association. Throughout her tenure at Buckhannon-Upshur High School, she took Advanced Placement courses and fine arts classes that helped her prepare for college and explore her creative outlets. During her spare time, she enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and her musical talents by playing her clarinet, guitar, ukulele, and piano. She plans to attend Glenville State College in the fall to work on her Bachelor's Degree in English, with aspirations of pursuing a career in journalism, writing for a newspaper, magazine, or blog. She hopes to be an inspiration to the youth that follow behind her so they will pursue their dreams and realize that they can accomplish anything in this big chaotic world.





## District 3 First Place



**Alanna Cervenak**, is a graduate of Brooke High School, where she was as a four-year-member of the marching band, and also participated in Jazz Band, Concert Band, Percussion Ensemble, Color-guard, and acted as Co-Captain for the Percussion Section her senior year. She challenged herself with Honors and Advanced Placement classes, and recently completed classes at West Virginia Northern Community College while finishing high school. Her academic awards achieved at Brooke High School include, the bronze, silver and gold academic pins, Principal's Honor Roll, and membership within the National Honors Society. Maintaining her GPA was a top priority despite her busy schedule, and employment at Bob Evans. She has always had a passion for music and has played piano for twelve years, although her heart lies in English. She plans to attend Fairmont State University majoring in English while also being apart of the Honors Program, and the marching band.



## Alanna Cervenak

Brooke High School

### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

Similar to a small child exploring the world for the first time, technology leaves its fingerprints on everything. Cars, boats, and even airplanes make traveling significantly easier, and more time-efficient. New advancements in medical technology and health leads most individuals to a happier, more successful life. With the widespread focus of social media, people can see and communicate with others thousands of miles away with just the click of a button. These accomplishments, although slightly different in status, can also be said for people with disabilities. All across the world, technological advancements remove barriers and improved the lives of people with disabilities by improving accessibility, medical treatments, and erasure of barriers against people with disabilities.

For most parts of the world, technology is an engraved part into our societies, local communities, and even our own lives. Yet, many people in the world struggle to see, hear--and sometimes even walk. These difficulties don't even begin to describe the daily tolls and challenges that individuals with disabilities face every day. However, as technology advances over the years, life for those with disabilities continues to improve. For example mobile devices have adapted to assist individuals with visual impairments. While traditionally users with sight-loss access material through auditory or verbal readings, apps on a smart phone can take this form of seeing so much further. An article by Tim Bajarin titled *How Tech Can Help the Visually Impaired* describes an app in development called "Avi" that relays information after being pointed at an object like a chair or a desktop. Such technology assists blind individuals into becoming more independently mobile and confident in their navigations without a service dog or assistant. Likewise, technology advances transportation and mobility for those who have congenital limb defects or amputated limbs. For instance, the Horton Orthotics and Prosthetics facility describes the development of the microprocessor-controlled joint on their website. This invention in the 1990s allowed a new sense of liberty and natural mobility as the prosthetic would "automatically adapt to the person's specific walking patterns" (Horton). The materials also used to build these prosthetics constantly evolve, giving amputees a more realistic, human-like replica of the human hand. According to the article, the development of a prosthetic controlled entirely by a user's mind is in progress, promising a bright and eventful future in prosthetic technology. Andrianes Pinantoan promotes this idea in her article *Learning Difficulties: What Can Technology Do for Disabled Learners?* She believes that technology creates a "sea of change" in the "limited opportunities" that students with learning disabilities have faced (Pinantoan). Furthermore, the enhancement of technology in computer and lab science, advancement of research on autism and treatments for autism are moving at a fast pace. According to Sheryl Burgstahler, the founder and director of DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology,) specific computer software can assist those with learning disabilities as they may "provide[s] multi-sensory experiences, interaction, positive reinforcement, individualized instruction, and repetition [that] can be useful in skill building." Technological advancements in software and research have led children with learning disabilities to thrive in educational environments.

## **Riley Christine Bennington**

### **Wheeling Central Catholic High School**

#### *How Technology Has Removed Barriers and Improved the Lives of People with Disabilities*

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), people with disabilities account for about fifteen percent of the world's population. There are many types of disabilities that can be classified into the following categories: cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or a combination of these. There are many frustrations and obstacles these people face daily. While sadly there is still a perception that people with disabilities are inferior to the non-disabled, technology has removed many barriers for people with disabilities which has helped to erase this prejudice.

Disabilities are present in every community, among every race and gender, and among every socioeconomic status. In the United States, twenty-two percent of adults have some type of disability. One in four women have a disability and three out of ten non-Hispanic blacks have a disability ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). In 2016, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 17.9% of persons with disabilities were employed. The unemployment rate of this population was 10.5%. Almost half (47%) of all persons with a disability were over age 65. This shows that there is increased incidence of disability as a person ages. Combined with other health related factors, adults with disabilities are more likely to be inactive. Addressing the needs of this population and assisting them to be more active can in turn improve their health.

Awareness of the different types of disabilities is the start to understanding how people with disabilities can be assisted to share their full potential. All disabilities can range from mild to severe. Cognitive disabilities include less severe types of disabilities like attention deficit disorder (ADD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, and other types of learning disabilities. More severe cognitive disabilities include autism, Down Syndrome, and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Intellectual and Developmental disabilities often tend to overlap with cognitive disabilities. Physical disabilities inhibit a person's activities of daily living and can include deafness, blindness, epilepsy, paralysis, among many others. Mental disabilities include many mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Not all mental health conditions cause a person to be disabled. Sensory disabilities are related to the senses and can include disorders affecting sight, hearing, smell, touch, or taste. "As 95% of the information about the world around us comes from our sight and hearing, a sensory disability can affect how a person gathers information from the world around them" ([www.hwms.com.au/Resource-centre](http://www.hwms.com.au/Resource-centre)).

Like the non-disabled, people with disabilities have their own strengths and talents that are a huge asset to their communities. Sadly, obstacles that these people must face daily prevent or discourage them from sharing their talents and contributing back to society. All people face obstacles, but for people with disabilities these obstacles can have a much greater impact. Some common obstacles include a physical environment that is not accessible, negative attitudes from people they encounter, services or policies that hinder the involvement of all people, and a lack of assistive technology. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, addressed these obstacles. There have been many improvements. As we continue to advance in the world of technology, there has been great focus on assistive technology

(See Riley p14)

## *District 3 Second Place*



**Riley Christine Bennington**, is a graduate of Central Catholic High School, where she was a member of the National Honor Society, French National Honor Society, and Rho Kappa National Honor Society. She was a pitcher for the high school's softball team and a two time state softball champion (2016, 2017). She was also on the high school's basketball team who were the 2018 basketball state champions. She will be employed as an Arts and Crafts Instructor over the summer, and plans to attend West Liberty University studying Speech Pathology while playing on the university's NCAA Division II softball team.





## District 4 First Place



**Maria Faith Hughart**, is a graduate of Nicholas County High School where she was a member of the National Honor Society and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. She is from the small town of Birch River where she is a member of the Birch River Baptist Church and a cashier at Dairy Queen. She loves social media, music, hanging out with friends, and the outdoors. She enjoys hiking, swimming, kayaking and exploring new places. Maria plans to attend West Virginia Wesleyan College in the Fall of 2018, where she'll major in Biology, and then attend optometry school. She hopes to eventually become an eye doctor with and have her own office.



## Maria Faith Hughart Nicholas County High School

### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

In this world of electronic gadgets and smart phone apps, it's not surprising that there are many whose purpose is to improve everyday lives. In a recent post on the Hongkiat web-blog, ten exciting, technologically-advanced inventions designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities were featured. As I read about each one, I couldn't wait to read the next one. They were all very exciting and I couldn't help but think, "Wow! Why did it take so long for someone to invent this?" These products of technology have the potential to help people with disabilities become more independent and to help people without disabilities improve communication with those who have disabilities.

One of the gadgets is a Braille smartwatch called Dot. The dots on the face of the watch convert texts or e-mails from the owner's smart phone into Braille for blind people. There are several text-to-talk apps that have been around for a while, but those are not always practical and they're not private if other people happen to be within hearing distance. With this device, the user can receive his or her own messages and not depend on others to read to them. The Dot innovation solves the issue of privacy. (Agus, n.d.)

Another amazing gadget called a Sesame Phone, has been developed for people whose mobility is limited. It's a smart phone that is "touch-free" and uses voice control, gestures and head movements instead of finger swipes and taps. It uses the front-facing camera to detect the movements that operate the phone. (Agus, n.d.) This device could potentially open a whole new world for people who may have never had the ability to play games on a phone or tablet or even use one to make a phone call by themselves.

Two innovative smart phone applications, Talkitt and UNI, were also developed to help people with disabilities. Talkitt assists those with serious speech impediments in their communication with others by building a custom database of the owner's personal speech and turning it into spoken words that most people can understand. UNI uses a camera to convert sign language into speech for those who can hear and it uses software to convert speech into text for those who are deaf. These two functions of the UNI app make conversations possible between a deaf person and a person who can hear, but who does not know sign language, eliminating the need for a translator. (Agus, n.d.) When there is quick, two-way conversation between people, it is easier to focus on the conversation itself than on the tools that make the conversation possible. The barriers to effective communication begin to diminish.

Another application discussed in the blog is like the Dot gadget, discussed earlier, in that it was designed to assist blind people with some everyday tasks that many people take for granted. It's called Be My Eyes and helps people be more independent. The blog lists checking for expiration dates on food packages as one example for the use of this app. It uses volunteers to receive video phone call requests for help. A similar app called assist-Mi, helps people locate someone who can provide urgently needed services such as transportation or shopping assistance and it can alert the service providers when the app user arrives so there won't be unnecessary delays. (Agus, n.d.)

## **Cassandra Stover**

### **Westside High School**

#### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

Recent increases in technology have ushered in a new era for people living with disabilities. Not only has technology removed many barriers and improved the lives of people with disabilities, but it has also worked to change prevailing attitudes towards those living with disabilities. There are numerous technological improvements we see on a daily basis for those living with physical disabilities; however, an often-overlooked area is for those living with learning disabilities. Assistive technology has greatly improved the lives of those living with learning disabilities (LD); it has done so through providing various accommodations, inclusiveness, and much needed support via social media and blogs.

Consider the case of a student living with dysgraphia and dyslexia. In previous years, said student had accommodations such as shortened assignments, alternatives to writing assignments, and occasional access to a word processor with spell check. In the past two years, this student has had daily, constant access to a laptop with a word processor to allow him to type documents instead of struggling to handwrite them. He uses speech to text software, which allows him to get his thoughts out on paper easier. Additionally, he uses NaturalReader, a free assistive technology that reads aloud any text (<https://www.naturalreaders.com/>), allowing him to focus on content being read instead of struggling with letters and words as he typically would when reading alone. He is also able to take pictures of class notes instead of copying them by hand or having to type them quickly. If notes are strictly from lecture, he can record the lecture and use the voice to text function to put the notes in word form. Another assistive technology he uses is a document to PDF application where he takes a picture of a worksheet, textbook, or graphic organizer and is able to convert it to an editable PDF and type in his answers instead of having to handwrite them.

Technologies have drastically improved the quality of life for this student. Before such technologies, he “felt embarrassed when the teacher read my test out loud in the back of the room.” Now he simply goes online, plugs in his earbuds, and opens up the software that reads the test aloud, “because now most of our tests are online,” and “no one ever notices.” He feels a sense of inclusiveness he has never felt before. He can accomplish tasks much more quickly and can essentially accommodate himself without “feeling like everyone thinks I can’t read.”

He also feels that his teachers are happier with the work he produces and he feels happier about going to school. In years past, things were the opposite—school was drudgery and writing was an unobtainable goal. Now he feels that he can be successful in school and in life. Previously, “I felt like I would never do good in school but now I keep getting better and better. I probably won’t ever have a job where I will be writing a lot but I’m going to try and go to college now.” Without technological accommodations like these, this student would most likely never experience much success within the classroom. Just experiencing success has changed his whole outlook on life.

Unfortunately, there are still barriers that people with learning disabilities face.

## *District 5 First Place*

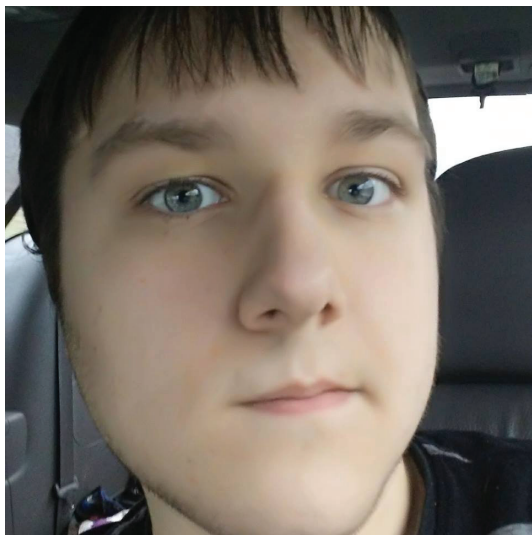


**Cassandra Stover**, I'm 18 years old and from Oceana, West Virginia. I am graduating Westside High School this May and plan to attend West Virginia University Institute of Technology for college. I'm very excited to see what the future has planned for me!

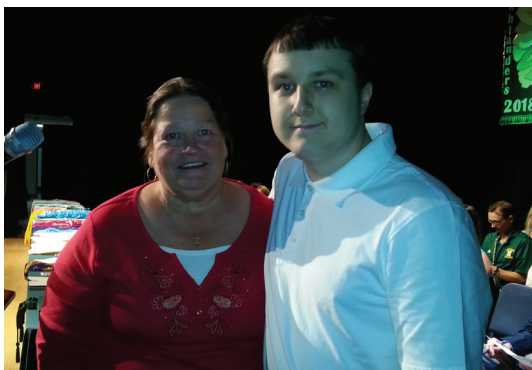




## District 5 Second Place



**Andrew Mays**, is a graduate of Huntington High School who was inspired to enter the disability essay contest by his father, who is physically disabled.



Beverley Jones - WV Statewide Independent Living Council Chairperson, and Andrew Mays after the Senior Awards Ceremony.



## Andrew Mays Huntington High School

### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

Since civilization began, people with disabilities have struggled to integrate into society due not only to their physical limitations, but by the limitations made by their own societies and governments. It is now the 21st century, and new technology has made it easier for them to participate in sports, jobs and other public activities. However these changes did not happen overnight. They happened over the course of about two hundred years.

In the 1800's, people with disabilities were often shunned from society in one way or another. People with disabilities were often forced into asylums. Those who lived outside of asylums had very little technology at their disposal. The extent of technology in the 19th century was limited to rudimentary wheelchairs, wooden limbs and crutches. In 1894 Louis Braille developed a language of textures that allowed the blind to read. Those who were wealthy and hearing impaired had horns that allowed them to hear slightly better. This was not a very bright time for the movement.

The ridicule and isolation of people with disabilities continued well into World War I. Veteran's with disabilities returning from the war had expected their country to provide them with rehabilitation in exchange for their service for their country. However many of these veterans didn't see changes in their lifetime but, after World War II, returning veterans pressured the government to provide them with rehabilitation and workplace training. The government soon began offering the veterans with disabilities rehabilitation and long term welfare.

Despite the advancements made after World War II, people with disabilities still had no public transportation or other public services. People with disabilities often had trouble finding workplaces who could accommodate them. This prevented otherwise talented and hardworking people from acquiring jobs. In the 1970's, disability rights activists marched on Washington to pass the Rehabilitation Act, which prevented discrimination in the work place. Then, in 1990 the Americans With Disabilities Act was passed, the ADA extended the Rehabilitation Act by including public services and other services offered by local, state and federal governments. This also prohibited discrimination in any public place

Since the ADA, many technologies have been developed to help people with disabilities live normal lives. Wheelchair lifts were installed on almost all public buses. In the 1990's electric wheelchairs became much more common. Schools and workplaces had to have parking for people with disabilities and wheelchair ramps. Public bathrooms in public places also became accessible for people with disabilities.

Technology has also allowed people with disabilities to participate in sports and other physical activities. The racing wheelchair has allowed people with physical disabilities to participate in marathons. A more lightweight wheelchair was developed to allow people with physical disabilities to play tennis, basketball and other similar sports. Technology has allowed 5.7 million athletes with physical disabilities to participate in BMX and the Special Olympics and the X Games. Bowling balls that can be gripped with one hand became more

(See Andrew p12)

## **Dylan Corbin**

### **Hampshire Senior High School**

#### *How Technology has Removed Barriers and Improved The Lives of People With Disabilities*

The perfect person does not exist, although many believe themselves to be such. Many believe they are superior to others. If someone is different, some people cast them out; they discriminate against them. Some believe themselves to be perfect and anyone not like them are erroneous. For example, when “white” people saw African Americans, they did not understand why they were different from them. As a result, they refused to accept them as humans and treated them as property. Similarly, those who were disabled, such as having impaired vision or an inability to move without assistance, were discriminated against.

During the 1800's, people with disabilities were considered to be less than human; unable to be productive members of society. Instead they were used in circuses and exhibitions as ridiculed objects of entertainment. Many people that exhibited any kind of “abnormality” were forced to undergo sterilization. Negative attitudes, stereotyping and fear led to the marginalization of people with disabilities. Many were forced to enter institutions or asylums and kept hidden from society for their entire lives.

Everyday life posed many challenges for people with disabilities. Public services that most people take for granted were simply not accessible to someone with a disability. It wasn't until wounded veterans started insisting the US government provide rehabilitation for their war injuries that technological advancements were made to help people who were disabled to become self-sufficient.

The government stepping in to help provide rehabilitation services for veterans brought attention from the general population to individuals with disabilities. Disability advocates, (people who fight for and defend individuals with disabilities) began to challenge the negative attitudes and physical and social barriers that people with disabilities faced on a daily basis. Individuals with disabilities were overlooked or refused job opportunities that they were qualified to do based solely on their having a disability. Work sites also lacked the necessary accommodations for people with limited mobility or other impairments. After decades of campaigning and lobbying, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in 1990. This prohibited discrimination of any kind based on disability. In addition to being prohibited to discriminate against people with disabilities, businesses were required to modify work equipment and all public accommodations to be accessible to them.

These modifications started in businesses; however, they were not confined to them. Later, modifications started to be made everywhere. For example, curbs were cut out to allow those in wheelchairs to access sidewalks easier. Crosswalks were changed to emit sounds to allow people who are visually impaired know when it was safe to cross them. Braille started to show up in buildings, such as schools and on ATMs. Many modifications were made to enhance everyday life for those who were considered disabled. However, it was not limited to these types of modifications; people started inventing different tools and technologies that would ease their living.

## *District 6 First Place*



**Dylan Corbin**, A graduate of Hampshire Senior High School where he maintained a 4.0 GPA. He plans to attend Potomac State College of WVU to study computers.





*(Lydia continued from p2)*

physical disabilities feed themselves, cook, drive a car, and operate household items like lights, television, and other devices in their environment. In-home monitoring devices have helped the elderly live independently longer with the capability to notify authorities in the event of an emergency. Smart phones and tablets have been modified to help people with disabilities have greater accessibility with features such as speech and voice recognition, speech to text, and text to speech features.

In preparation for my career in physical therapy, I have had the privilege to volunteer and shadow with therapists in a variety of settings. I have seen, firsthand, how technology has helped level the playing field for those with physical and cognitive limitations and witnessed how iPads have helped a child with autism be able to communicate his basic needs and make simple requests. One student with illegible handwriting used voice dictation to write a paper and put his thoughts into writing in a legible way. I observed children use eye-gaze or a joystick to maneuver a wheelchair so that they can independently move through their environment.

In retrospect, I realize that having the latest and greatest smart phone or electronic device is not a necessity for me even though it makes certain things in my life more convenient and faster. These devices do, however, hold the key to unlock unprecedented possibilities in terms of communication, mobility, and independence for those individuals that do not have the same abilities as me. The most exciting and best technology is yet to come. The future is promising for individuals with disabilities as technology will continue to advance and minimize barriers that impact independence of all people in our society. ■



*(Maggy continued from p3)*

examples of assistive technology are the Dot, Talkitt, Sesame phone, and Be My Eyes. The Dot is the world's first Braille smartwatch, allowing those who are blind to understand messages, books, or tweets at anytime, anywhere. The Talkitt aids those who have difficulty speaking to communicate easily with those around them. This application translates unintelligible pronunciation into concise words, allowing the person to speak freely without trouble. A touch-free device called the Sesame phone is operated by small head movements that are tracked by the front-facing camera. Be My Eyes is an app that allows the blind to experience the world through someone else's eyes. Volunteers are always available to aid in sight, viewing what is needed to be seen by the caller. These examples prove how our society has tremendously recognized the moral imperative for providing the disabled an environment that allows them to fully enjoy every-day life.

When I got out of bed that Saturday morning, I made my usual trek down the stairs and into the kitchen for breakfast. I heard my mom talking on the phone. She was in tears. When I heard my friend's name, I knew something was drastically wrong. I ran outside into the cold morning air. I didn't want to hear what had happened, and I did not want anyone to see me. My mother followed me and slowly broke the news. My friend had died. My heart was broken. I immediately recalled his greeting from the day before. "Hi." His laugh rang in my ears, his smile in my mind. At that moment, I realized that technology had changed his life, and ultimately, he had changed mine. ■

*(Andrew continued from p10)*

common after the 20th century. Athletics overall has become an activity that all Americans can participate in.

Technology for people who are hearing impaired, blind, or cannot speak became more common after the ADA as well. A computer that turns pressing buttons into sounds, commonly known as EZ keys has allowed people with ALS to speak again. Hearing aids have gone from horns you put in your ears to very small microphones that amplify sound in the user's ear. The blind can now easily get guide dogs, and possibly cars that drive themselves in the future.

Robotic limbs are being developed for people who have lost their own. They use the same muscles that the natural limb previously used to move the prosthetic. While they can't feel pain in these areas, they are in full control of them. Fake limbs have been around for centuries, but were typically just meant to hide the lost body part and were hand made. Now the limbs are commonly 3-D printed. The new limbs have hydraulic presses and artificial joints to simulate muscle and bone. This technology is heavily funded by governments all over the world and will likely improve as time goes on.

Technology has been developed for people with mental disabilities. An app called Pacifia helps users with anxiety by giving the breathing exercises. A neuron stimulation machine has been made to promote brain activity and make learning easier. Spire is a device that fits on your wrist and can tell you when you are beginning to get stressed and tells you how to calm down. Adults with mental disabilities have seen major improvements from the asylums of the 1800's.

Over two hundred years ago people with disabilities went from being shunned from society to now, being treated like they should be: as Americans. They are

*(See Andrew p15)*

*(Alanna continued from p6)*

Technology in medicine has also lead many individuals to live happier, longer lives. As new technology sparks even newer inventions and methods, doctors are having a field day with all of the progress they've made in the last few years alone. Take mental health for example. According to an article from the World Health Organization, nearly 450 million people suffer from a mental disorder. Other research suggests that nearly 40% of people with mental disabilities don't seek help due to the negative stereotypes about it, the fear of opening up for people, and the simple lack of desire to ask for help. However, new developments in smart-phone apps may bring this percentage to an all-time low. By having constant communication with therapists and counselors at your fingertips with optional anonymity, getting help has never been easier for those with mental disabilities. Furthermore, medical advancements in physical illnesses progress daily. Dr. Meskó Bertalan describes the creation of the artificial pancreas, which automatically supplies an individual with they need. This creation will decrease the wait and need for pancreas transplants of those who need them, as well as giving individuals with diabetes an easier chance at a healthier life. Bertalan also describes perhaps one of the most exciting developments, the CRISPR method. "Researchers have already used gene-editing to create mosquitoes that are almost entirely resistant to the parasite that causes malaria," Bertalan says. "Some scientists also believe that we will have the chance to edit our cells in our immune systems with CRISPR to improve them against cancer cells and to help them kill these malevolent entities in time." With the power to improve our immune systems to effectively fight back and even kill cancer cells, humankind has taken a large step forward in the battle against the life-taking disease.

Ever since the passing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities are protected under law to ensure equal rights and opportunities. And yet, there is an almost negative stigma surrounding individuals with disabilities. Perhaps an overlooked benefit of technology, however, is social media. While many traditionalists look down upon the overuse of social media, it seems as though individuals with disabilities cannot use them enough. Many individuals like Nick Vujicic use social media as an advantage to spread both inspiration and consciousness that people with disabilities shouldn't be looked down upon. Vujicic is an inspirational speaker on YouTube, who shares his daily life and determination to promote good in the world despite his lack of arms and legs. Millions of people across the world watch his YouTube channel and allow themselves to be enlightened by his messages of positivity. "When you feel like giving up your dream, force yourself to work another day, another week, another year," says Vujicic. "You'll be amazed what happens when you don't give up." Social media also provides a more physical support to those who need it. It's no secret that prosthetic limbs and fancy braille equipment can come at quite the cost, but nobody with needs should have to suffer. The internet offers a multitude of options for individuals with disabilities to share their stories and, when needed, ask for help with funds. Thousands of individuals, either with physical or medical disabilities, have received financial assistance in achieving their treatment through sites like GoFundMe and GiveForward. Similarly, this expanse of media and chance of exposure gives individuals who were perhaps never even considered a chance at a happy life. Individuals born in third-world countries that have little access to proper medical care can receive a chance of a lifetime. Before the Internet or social media, it was challenging for children with disabilities in African countries to receive the proper care that they need. However, many volunteer groups and sometimes even celebrities travel to these poorer countries and, with social media at their hands, they have the ability to properly fundraise and assist individuals with these needs.

*(See Alanna p14)*

*(Katelynn continued from p4)*

of 3D printing, prosthetic limbs can be customized for a more natural fit and provides comfortability for the user. Three-dimensional printed prosthetics are an affordable and time-friendly creation. Another revolutionary technology is robotics. Robotics can provide customizable controls that are suited for the individual's needs, whether the person needs a hand or an entire arm and shoulder socket. A popular example of innovative robotics is the DEKA Robotic Arm. The DEKA arm has excellent precision, and enables the ability to grip objects. Built-in sensors can measure strength and provide feedback in the form of vibrations.

Success in the advancements of technology and its rapid developments have had a positive impact in the lives of people with disabilities. The mobility, communication and function of people with disabilities have been strengthened. Because of these innovative tools and devices, individuals are empowered and can face any obstacles in their daily life. ■

*(Keelin continued from p5)*

the many 'accessible' locations. He takes an hour to get from his hotel room to the hotel entrance because the only elevator on his floor is always full; eventually he crawls down some stairs to get to another elevator and finally, after an hour, reaches the entrance to the hotel. Through all of the obstacles on his trip through New York City he eventually reaches the bagel shop that sells rainbow bagels, taking about five hours.

People can't always change what their lives will become. Some end up with disabilities that are inevitable, but it is our job, as the human race, to improve the lives of those who are in need. Helen Keller once said, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it" (Keller). Though there are still some obstacles out there, technology has had an immense impact on people with disabilities in their daily lives. When people join together and put ideas out, they have the capability of making a huge impact on the world and in this case that unity has helped millions of people. ■



*(Alanna continued from p13)*

In conclusion, technology has advanced to shape the lives of humankind immensely. Progression in education and transportation has helped many individuals overcome their disabilities as if they had never experienced them at all. New inventions and discoveries in science has led many to happier and healthier lives than ever before. Social media has granted individuals with disabilities a great platform to receive help from others and share their difficult journeys all across the world. Technology has paved the way for an ever-changing wonderful future with the developments and progressions necessary to remove the barriers and improve the lives of individuals both with and without disabilities. ■

*(Dylan continued from p11)*

Visual impairment is a large ordeal plaguing many people around the world. According to the World Health Organization, 285 million people worldwide are visually impaired in one way or another; 39 million of those are completely blind, and 246 million have low vision. (Strauss, 2013) The Braille Smart phone was a major invention created to assist them. The phone has a grid of pins that go up and down that creates shapes and objects. When a message arrives, the pins create characters that a person who is visually impaired can read. This technology is known as Shape Memory Alloy technology. These phones can also make sounds and vibrate while performing certain functions. The "RAY" phone, created by Qualcomm, offers phone calls, text messages with vocal read-out functions, navigation, object recognition, social networking services, remote assistance, audio-book reading, and other entertainment services. "The user touches any position on the screen and that position becomes the starting point for selecting an audio-book, messaging or other activity," says Boaz Zilberman, CEO of Project RAY. "Navigation is enabled by a few simple finger movements in different directions. The phone's built-in vibration capabilities and voice prompts provide user feedback and the UI learns to adapt its behavior based on users' preferences and usage patterns." ("Breakthrough Braille Smart phones for the Blind," 2013)

Another quandary effecting humans worldwide is the inability to move around by themselves. A mother, by the name of Debby Elnatan, has

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*(See Dylan next column)*

*(Riley continued from p7)*

to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Technology has removed barriers and improved the lives of people with disabilities. This is especially true with mobile devices. Mobile devices are extremely popular due to the quick access to the Internet and social media. "For people with disabilities, however, these devices have the potential to unlock unprecedented new possibilities for communication, navigation, and independence" (<https://www.scientificamerican.com>). The company Apple has embraced the community of people with disabilities through creating accessibility options such as VoiceOver. This is an iPhone screen reader that says what is happening on a phone when a person cannot see the screen. The company also created Made for iPhone hearing aids which allows a person with a disability to manage audio levels from the iPhone and have clearer conversations when in loud places. iPhones can be set to "Type to Siri" mode which allows a person with a hearing disability to type questions instead of speaking into the iPhone. People with learning disabilities can have text read to them through the Speak Screen option. iPhone also has a Sip/Puff option which is a type of assistive technology that sends signals to the device using air pressure by inhaling or exhaling. This is life changing technology for people who do not have the capability to use their hands. While Apple is a leader in the field of technology for people with disabilities, many other companies are making great strides in removing the prejudice that people with disabilities are inferior to the non-disabled. Another ground-breaking technology that was created is eye tracking. Eye tracking enables a person with disabilities to move a cursor just by moving their eyes and head. This eye tracking was created by an Israeli man named Oded Ben Dov. He created it initially for use with a video game. He then received a call from a man interested in the technology for use on a smart phone. It was then that Ben Dov said he realized he could change lives. Google is also very committed to helping lives of people with disabilities. They want the technology to get so efficient that it just works for all people and no one should even know if a person has a disability. There are even technology sensors that have been created for people in wheelchairs to help prevent pressure sores. The sky is the limit in the kinds of technology that can be created. When there is a need there is a way.

Through the continued efforts to assist people with disabilities, barriers have been removed and prejudices have been lessened. There is still work to be done, but people with disabilities have more assistive devices now than ever. Technology has played an enormous role in many assistive devices and will continue. Investing in the future of people with disabilities can only benefit our society as a whole. ■

*(Dylan continued from previous column)*

a son who was born with cerebral palsy. She was told by doctors and physical therapists that her son was not to be encouraged to crawl or walk. Elnatan, however, couldn't stand the thought of her son not experiencing these things. By the time her son was three years old, she invented the Firefly Upsee which is a harness that straps a child next to their parents, or caretakers, and allows them to "walk" with them. Elnatan continued to work on this project as her son grew, changing it and perfecting it. Her son used the Firefly Upsee all the way until he was seven; therefore it is ideal for children from three years to eight years old. Another invention created to help the movement of people who cannot move by themselves is the iBot Stair-Climbing Wheelchair. The iBot was created by Dean Kamen, who was a segway inventor. It can climb stairs, and raise to "stand" at eye level. It uses self-balancing technology and can

*(See Dylan p15)*

*(Cassandra continued from p9)*

For example, the same student has had some teachers, as well as peers, who were not receptive to these accommodations. Some teachers have complained that it is not fair that he is writing less or has access to voice to text technologies whereas others do not. Some of his peers, even friends, have “Been jealous of me using things like voice to text,” but he tells them, “Well, I will trade you my dyslexia any day.” Still, even if slowly, these barriers are being lifted as learning disabilities continue to be recognized and understood by more people.

Social media has helped to bring about the change in attitudes towards those living with LDs. Learning disabilities were once a major stigma; even worse—referred to as an invented diagnosis used to mask laziness, low intelligence, and the like. Now with the advent of social media, people living without LDs are becoming more and more aware of what having a learning disability truly means. There are still minds that need to be changed, but no longer does having a learning disability mean you are lazy, unable to learn, or unwilling to work. Simply by hearing the stories of those living with LDs and how they can be accommodated, people without disabilities are beginning to understand that by having a learning disability, it simply means you learn differently; if you find the right accommodations that work for you, you can accomplish what many in the recent past thought impossible.

Blogs are another means of technology use improving the lives of those living with learning disabilities. Blogs connect students, parents, teachers, and care providers all over the world. Whereas once a student living with a LD felt isolated and alone, now there are multiple outlets to find someone like you to connect with and find emotional support. A parent once felt at a loss for how to help their child with a learning disability, now there are multiple blogs connecting people and sharing tips, strategies, coping techniques, and emotional support. Teachers now share strategies and have countless resources at their fingertips for helping students with learning disabilities succeed in their classrooms.

For example, a fourth grade teacher explains that in previous years just understanding a specific learning disability was a challenge, yet alone figuring out how to accommodate one. Trainings were few and far between, were not in depth enough, and failed to provide support for the teacher as well as the students when success was not achieved with initial accommodations. She now claims when she has a student with a particular LD, “I can go online and find multiple accommodation tips and techniques—so when one means of accommodating doesn’t work so well, there are many other ideas out there to try.” She can easily gain support from other professionals. Technology has opened up a new world and has given much needed emotional support, strength, and courage to those living with LD as well as those who work with them.

Technology has improved the lives of those living with disabilities in a myriad of ways. Despite the physical, mental, and emotional barriers that have yet to be overcome, it has greatly transformed the lives of those currently living with disabilities. It provides day-to-day assistive technologies, accommodations, inclusiveness, and coping mechanisms as well as greatly needed emotional support for those with disabilities. Not only has technology improved the lives of those living with disabilities, it has also helped those who care for, work with, parent, and love these individuals. ■

*(Andrew continued from p12)*

given every opportunity as everyone else. While they still face discrimination and bigotry, they have been given tools for success. Hopefully the future will see less hate and more progress toward technology and unity. ■

*(Maria continued from p8)*

One of the most exciting inventions discussed in the blog is something that was designed to help people with disorders or diseases that cause shaky hands as with Parkinson’s disease. It is a device that fits on an eating utensil and will help cancel out jerky hand movements. The device is called Liftware. (Agus, n.d.) Just imagine the feeling of independence and pride if someone who had become dependent on others feeding them, could begin feeding themselves!

I’ve discussed only seven of the ten amazing inventions or applications that the blog addressed. The others can be explored by visiting the blog website. The devices and apps featured in the blog not only improve the lives of people with disabilities, they also improve the lives of people without disabilities. They help break down the barriers of communication between the two groups—and with the communication barriers gone, then people who are friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances and even strangers can have more fulfilling interactions with those who have disabilities. The devices and apps can empower those with disabilities by giving freedom and independence. As more people become aware of devices and apps like these, maybe they will be inspired to develop or invent even more. Maybe I’ll be one of those people. I hope I am. ■

*(Dylan continued from p14)*

ravel at a steady walking pace when in its “standing” function. Although this invention was very helpful, it was way too expensive for the regular market and was discontinued in 2009. It is, however, being brought back with the help of Toyota. Lastly, the Kenguru Electric Car was invented by Stacy Zoern. This car allows those in wheelchairs to remain in their wheelchairs while entering the vehicle. The entire back of the car opens up where they can roll right in. The car only goes twenty-five miles per hour, therefore it is only optimal for inner city use. It is extremely lightweight, and cannot be classified a car. It is only classified as a scooter, and as a result, only a scooter license is required to operate them.

Throughout the past few centuries, we’ve come a long way in not only technological advances that improve the lives of people with disabilities but also in our attitudes

*(See Dylan p16)*

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## SUPPORT INDEPENDENT LIVING

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*(Dylan continued from p15)*

towards them. We have come to realize that a disability should not exclude a person from living a full and productive life but that they deserve a little assistance to realize their full potential. There are many projects with more inventions in the works to assist those considered disabled. For example, the DARPA project is working on a robotic arm that can be controlled with the user's mind. All of these technological advances have contributed to improving the lives of people with disabilities and will only continue to progress. ■



*Marion Steele - WV Statewide Independent Living Council Vice Chairperson, presenting Maria Hughart with her prize money at the Senior Awards Ceremony.*