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Interface and CAAC Newsletter

August 2015

Centre for Augmentative and
Alternative Communication
(CAAC)

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**Centre for Augmentative
and Alternative
Communication**

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

National Newsletter

We greet a gentle giant—Dr Cival Mills

**This Newsletter is dedicated to
our colleague, the late Dr Cival
Mills, who tragically passed away
on 4 April 2015.**

It is with sad and heavy hearts that the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) and the University of Pretoria say farewell to a great man and colleague, Dr Cival Mills.

After a car accident in 2000, at the age of 26, Dr Mills was diagnosed with the rare locked-in syndrome, but this did not stop him from living life to the fullest.

He authored three books, entitled *This too will pass: an autobiography of events*, *The truth about wheels* and *This will still pass*. *This too will pass* earned Dr Mills the award for best debut author from the Fundza for Fun Project and the printing of the first edition was sponsored by the Centre for the Book in Cape Town.

Dr Mills worked as a researcher, for short periods of time, at both Momentum Health and Discovery Health. Since 2014, he was employed at the CAAC as a disability consultant.

He was also an inventor and designer. His first device, called Thingy, is registered and a grant was approved by the Department of Trade and Industry for its development and marketing. Thingy is a mouse combines with a keyboard that can be accessed with minimal finger movements. In combination with a computer-based voice output program Dr Mills used it in conversation situations or to address audiences.

Dr Mills was a popular motivational speaker. He delivered multiple speeches at the CAAC, and also spoke at the de-



partments of Occupational Therapy and Physiology at the University of Pretoria.

He had the honour of a private visit with President Nelson Mandela and delivered papers and motivational talks at Tape Aids for the Blind, the Paraplegic Society of South Africa, First National Bank, book clubs and various Rotary Clubs.

In November 2008, Dr Mills received a Laureate Award from the University of Pretoria in recognition of his writing and design. He participated in two Quads4Quads trips from Johannesburg to Ballito and qualified as a level C scuba diver with the Handicapped Scuba Association.

His life story and his resilience continue to be an inspiration to many. He was a true gentleman and a champion of people with disabilities, but most of all, he was an amazing and wonderful human being.

*We shall miss you, Dr Cival Mills. May
you rest in peace.*

**Prof Juan Bornman
Director: Centre for AAC**

Interface promotes communication for people with little or no functional speech by supplementing existing communication with gestures, communication boards and assistive technology (thus, augmentative and alternative communication)

Here are comments from some of Cival's colleagues at the Centre for AAC:



Cival lived life to the fullest. He did not let anything hold him back and did many more adventurous things than I will probably ever do in my lifetime! He had a fantastic sense of humour and used it wisely to encourage people to become reflective of their attitudes and practices towards a person with a disability. He was an amazing role model and activist. Although he must have been dependent at times, he never complained - rather, he problem-solved. I am very grateful for everything he taught me and I miss him a lot.

Kerstin Tönsing

Cival ... I will always remember you as a gentle giant with a wicked sense of humor.

Shakila Dada



What a privilege it was for me to get to know Cival. His courage and strength to handle the curveballs life threw his way were an inspiration to many of us. Cival was a man who embraced life despite his disability. His motto "never ever give up" became an inspiration for many of us. I will never forget his sense of humour and how he enjoyed the responses to his jokes. I will miss

him a lot, but know that he is happy where he is—reunited with his beloved mother. Rus sag Ou Grote.

Ensa Johnson

Dear Cival,

You have been the most special person I have met in such a short time. You have taught me a lot in that moment of time we have spent. I now know more deeply the meaning to life from the encouraging words you shared with us. There was never a dull moment with you around, your sense of humour was always at "on mode". You made sure when you are around everyone must have something to smile about.



You were a true inspiration, a friend, a brother. With this poem I am saying REST IN PEACE. You are dearly missed colleague. You are forever in our hearts memories are forever.

Constance Nthuli

Today I woke up missing a true hero and an inspiration.

Terrence Mahlangu (on Facebook)



Interface Branch News

News from KZN

Our therapy and training team has experienced further changes this past year, when in October 2014 Pree Parumaul requested a leave of absence due to ill health. Jocelyn Mngomezulu and Avishana Sewrajan now form our core therapy and training team. Interface KZN continues to offer individual therapy, training and communication circles from our centre and intervention and training at hospitals, schools and homes in the Durban area, depending on our clients' needs.

The Resource Library space at the end of the passage has becoming too small for functional use and through funding received from the Iqraa Trust we have been able to purchase a pre-fabricated unit. The Interface KZN Resource Library space is currently being furnished and Trudi and our therapy team are in the process of sorting through existing resources in order that they can be transferred and stored for access to our library users. We have had new signs made to clearly demarcate the Library, and our Donor Wall is now on the outside of the Library. Ramp access is also being finalized. We were also fortunate to receive an offer of second hand office furniture from CADIZ for our Resource Centre.



Avishana presented Saturday morning workshops in December 2014 and January 2015. The focus was on using AAC strategies in the home environment and these were very well attended by between 10 and 17 parents. Feedback indicated that the workshops were enjoyed by all and found to be of great value. Further workshops are being scheduled for next month, with the theme "working with facilitators".

The therapy team Journal Club is aimed at providing a platform for professionals in the field of AAC to support each other and share information. There are currently approximately 6 therapists who meet every 2 months at Interface KZN. Accreditation has been

approved through SASHLA, and we are currently looking into having this via Skype in order to include outlying therapists.



The isiZulu Literacy and Resource Project has now entered the four-phase awareness and community outreach campaign designed to overcome identified challenges of accessing the resources and using them appropriately. A sample pack consisting of a selection of each of the different types of resources in a hard copy format has been assembled and constructed ready for use. Accompanying the pack is a short training/demonstration DVD which takes the recipient through the steps required to prepare the resources for use as well as demonstration on how they can be used in practice. The distribution and implementation phase of the Project is currently being undertaken. Two of 11 identified districts in Kwa-Zulu-Natal have already been visited, with the remaining 9 visits planned for the remainder of this year, ending in May 2016. The goal is to distribute 380 resource packs.

The distribution and implementation of the isiZulu AAC resources will be undertaken at under-resourced schools, hospitals and crèches in many rural areas of our Province, namely Amajuba, Uthukela, Zululand, umkhaNyakude, Uthungulu, ilem-Be, Umzinyathi, umgUNGundlovu, Sisonke, Ugu and ethEkwini. Our isiZulu-speaking Therapist will undertake the distribution and implementation of the Project and a competent isiZulu AAC user (advocate) will accompany her on several of these visits. We have found young advocates extremely effective in motivating AAC users, teachers and caregivers. /....



News from KZN (cont.)

Our Communication Circle programs for Teenagers/ Young Adults and Toddler / Pre-School AAC users continue and have been well supported by our funders. Each of the groups meet once monthly and follow a unique programme to build the communication and social skills of children who require AAC. Dan and France continue to participate in the group as Mentors. The programme is open to any child between the ages of 3 and 18 years and includes children with apraxia of speech, autism, cerebral palsy dysarthria, oral motor dysfunction, developmental and severe language disorders. The programme is unique firstly in that it is co-facilitated by older children and young adults with disabilities who are themselves effective augmentative or alternative communicators.

The outing for the older group at the end of 2014 was a great success and included a visit to the Sky Lift at Moses Mabhida Stadium followed by lunch at the Sun Coast Casino. In 2015, we were happy to welcome a new member to the group, Uyanda, who is a scholar at the Open Air School.



2015 has been a year of growth and exploration of new horizons for the participants of the pre-school group. Three of the children have subsequently started school and one child is in the process of applying to a school. This is a major achievement for these children as finding an appropriate school placement due to their complex communication needs has been challenging for the parents. However, the opportunity of attending a regular pre-school group where the children need to use their communication systems meaningfully has contributed to preparing the children for this new experience. Furthermore, it has also encouraged parents to take the next step forward in their children's growth as all the parents were apprehensive about sending their children to school. The supportive environment of discussing and addressing these fears and concerns was provided within the group where parents provided support and advice to each other.

Interface KZN welcomes any assistance from persons with an interest in AAC, as well as volunteer support. Should you wish to become involved in any aspects of our organisation, please feel free to contact Trudi Louw at our centre on 031 7084237.

Felicity Jonck
Chairperson of Interface KZN

School news

Pathways – Polokwane

Debbie Coetzee—an inspiration to all

Our College students were treated to the deeply moving experience of witnessing Debbie Coetzee, stand, walk to the podium and tell her story. What's so amazing about that? Debbie's parents were told that she

would never walk, talk or for that matter, be capable of any academic accomplishment at all.



Through extraordinary courage and some extremely lonely places, Debbie succeeded in not only learning to walk and talk but also to obtain two diplomas in business management and IT.

Her challenge to us? If she could overcome the odds that she was and still is up against because of the degree of cerebral palsy she faces, how much more are we able-bodied people capable of accomplishing? She knows that it is God who has given her this strength. She has always believed that she is special and loved by Him. We too are special and loved by God. What are we doing with the gift?

Thank you Debbie for the gift of your life and story of tenacity and courage.

Life Skills investigating vegetable box gardens

The Life Skill Class has been on an exciting journey this term. We started investigating the possibility of vegetable box gardens. Our initial plan was to build eight wooden boxes (+ - 2m x 1m), thus allowing for a box for each of our students. We were advised that wood would not last for very long and that it would be better to build using concrete fence slabs. People from the community assisted with this project, and although we still have a long way to go we feel as if this exciting project is moving forward. Watch this space!

Pathways Polokwane

Pathways – Kloof

Most of the students at Pathways – Kloof are non-verbal, therefore we make use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) throughout the day, during ring times, group sessions, one on one sessions, socialising etc. We use many modalities including visual schedules, body language, gestures, facial expressions, signs and communication devices. Following are examples of the students at our school making use of AAC:



Here Jefta makes choices using the GoTalk4—a speech generating device

Markos is crafting a mosaic doorstep, following a visual schedule



Andile has progressed from using a head pointer and communication board to a laptop with Smart Nav tracking. He is so excited with his new found independence! Although here he was too interested in the camera!!!

These little people are finding their way around the iPads



Although Tariq uses an iPad effectively, as his computer during lesson time. communication tool, he will often choose to use his alphabet board. Here he is in a group lesson learning signs.

Nomonde is using a switch to activate his computer during lesson time.



It's so much fun being able to participate with friends in an activity! Mnqobi is activating the switch to choose his fruit and then validating his choice using the eye gaze frame.

Pathways-Kloof

Well done to the staff and students from Pathways-Kloof who successfully implement AAC in the classroom and beyond. We are so proud of you! Keep up the great work! - Eds



CAAC news

Visitors to the CAAC

The Centre for AAC hosted numerous high profile visitors this year. They conducted workshops, met with students and staff to discuss research an investigate possible future research collaborations.

Dr Kobie Boshoff

Dr Kobie Boshoff, a qualified occupational therapist from the University of South Australia recently visited the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. She was invited by Ms. Refilwe Morwane, a staff member at the CAAC, to share her expertise and knowledge in the field of Systematic Reviews. This was made possible by the NRF KIC Grant.



Dr. Boshoff's visit to the Centre for AAC has assisted the Centre's staff, Phd students and librarian with valuable information to start working on systematic reviews. Dr. Boshoff also presented a Systematic Review seminar at the CAAC which was attended by a wide range of professionals at the University of Pretoria, including colleagues from Departments of Physiotherapy, Marketing and Informatics.

Refilwe Morwane
Centre for AAC



Prof. Ralf Schlosser

Professor Schlosser, a well-published researcher in the field of AAC from Northeastern University, Boston, visited the CAAC for 3 weeks in February. Prof Schlosser's

areas of expertise include AAC technology for children with developmental disabilities in general and autism spectrum disorders in particular, speech output technology, evidence-based practice, research methods, and systematic reviews.

In an applied field like Augmentative and Alternative Communication, practitioners make intervention decisions every day. But what is the evidence for these decisions? Do we do what we do because we've always done it that way or because there is a research based evidence for what we do? These were the critical questions Prof Schlosser asked during his two thought provoking

seminars.

The central theme of these seminars was evidence-based practice and the movements towards ensuring all clinical decisions are based on evidence. Practitioners were challenged to question the evidence base for their clinical practice. He further challenged researchers to ensure that their studies address relevant clinical questions.

Prof Schlosser also provided invaluable input into staff and student research projects. As an absolute expert on research methods, his ability to set novice researchers on a straight course will continue to bear fruit in various studies and projects.

Dr. Shakila Dada
Centre for AAC

Prof. Brenda Louw



The CAAC had the honour of hosting Prof Brenda Louw, Head of the Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology at East Tennessee State University from 8–21 March 2015. Prof Louw is the co-recipient, together with Prof Juan Bornman, of a Carnegie Foundation African Diaspora Fellowship, with CAAC as host institution.

During Prof Louw's visit she presented two lectures on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) as a framework. Furthermore, she conducted a half-day seminar titled, 'The ICF-CY: the new global common language for communication disorders'. It was attended by approximately 40 therapists, some of whom came from neighbouring provinces. The aim of the seminar was to disseminate information and increase the skills of South African practitioners regarding the ICF-CY, as well as to share the clinical measures that are used as part of the project. It was clear from the evaluation feedback that the seminar was judged to be novel, interesting and internationally relevant.

The staff and students at CAAC thoroughly enjoyed Prof Louw's visit and would like to acknowledge the mentorship that she provided. Her vast knowledge of the discipline and her approachable manner made it easy for staff at CAAC to engage with her and benefit from her visit. The cascading effect of her visit will be a greater uptake of knowledge and skill than originally envisaged.

Robyn White
Centre for AAC

Prof. Rajinder Koul



The CAAC was honoured to host Prof. Rajinder Koul for 5 weeks. Prof Koul chose the CAAC as his destination for his second Fullbright scholarship—a scholarship awarded to well-established researchers with international recognition.

Prof. Koul is currently a professor and chair in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and Associate Dean for Research for the School of Allied Health Sciences, and a well-published researcher in the field of AAC and acquired neurogenic communication disorders

Prof. Koul was the recipient of the Neville Cohen Memorial Award, bestowed by the Centre for AAC, for his outstanding contribution in the field of AAC and severe disability. His Neville Cohen Memorial lecture entitled, “Experimental and non-experimental research in behavioural sciences: Implications for practice” was presented at the 26th Annual AAC Research Seminar and provided an excellent summary of research methodologies in the field and implications for clinicians and academics.

Prof Koul furthermore presented two seminars about neurogenic communication disorders at the CAAC. His ability to blend theory and practice spoke to a diverse audience of practitioners and researchers.

During his stay Prof. Koul assisted with mentorship and guidance to Masters and PhD Students, visited and gave presentations at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, George Mukhari Hospital, Sefako Makgatho University and at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The staff and students at the CAAC thoroughly benefited from Prof Koul’s visit and his vast knowledge of the field of AAC.

Robyn White
Centre for AAC



CAAC staff visits to Sweden

The staff from the Centre for AAC had the privilege of working with researchers from the CHILD research unit at the Jönköping University in Sweden over the past 12 years. CHILD stands for Children, Health, Intervention, Learning and Development, their five key focus areas.

Professor Juan Bornman visited the CHILD research unit during May 2015 for ten days to lecture and to plan upcoming joint research projects. Ensa Johnson also visited the unit for one week in June 2015 to work on a collaborative research project with Drs Stefan Nilsson and Margareta Adolfsson on pain management and communication of children with cerebral palsy in school settings.

Both Prof Bornman and Ensa gave lectures for a Master’s programme at the university. Prof Bornman’s lecture dealt with assessment and intervention when working with children who show challenging behaviour. An intervention and prevention model was discussed. Ensa shared findings from her PhD studies with the students.



The CAAC and CHILD unit plan joint projects, namely “Participation as an outcome of spending time in pre-school”, for children with and without need of special support, as well as a project that concerns human rights. To date the research projects were financed mainly by the Swedish VR-Research Link. As part of the planning of upcoming research projects, the researchers are applying for new funding.



This photo was taken at 21:45 next to the lake in Jönköping by Ensa on her way home after a long day of work on a manuscript with Stefan and Margareta.

Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC

Staff matters



Prof Bornman publishes international book

Prof Juan Bornman is the co-editor of a recently published book entitled *Stop the violence against people with disabilities: an international resource*. Prof Bornman and Prof Diane Bryen of Temple University in Philadelphia, USA, are the editors of this valuable resource.

The book breaks new ground in bringing to attention the need for an accessible criminal justice system for one of the most vulnerable groups in the disability sphere – those who have little or no functional speech. Their voices have been silent for too long.

The book provides an international perspective on violence against children and adults with disabilities. It focuses on promising practices and approaches that can reduce the risks and occurrence of violence while providing intervention and access to justice. In addition, it increases awareness, knowledge and understanding of the violence, rape and sexual abuse committed against people with disabilities, with the emphasis on people who have little or no functional speech.

If you would like to purchase this ground-breaking read, please contact Liza at saak@up.ac.za.



Prof Ronski to receive prestigious award

Prof MaryAnn Ronski will be awarded the Honors of the Association by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) in November 2015.

Prof Ronski is an Extraordinary Professor at the University of Pretoria's Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC), as well as a Professor of Communication and the Associate Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences for the College of Arts and Sciences at Georgia State University (GSU) in Atlanta, USA. She holds joint appointments in the departments of Psychology and Educational Psychology and Special Education, and is the Director of GSU's Center for Research on Atypical Development and Learning (CRADL).

The Honors of the Association recognises members for their distinguished contributions to the discipline of communication sciences and disorders, and is the

highest honour the Association can bestow. Individuals who are nominated are typically well known throughout the world for a lifetime of innovative clinical practice, insightful and rigorous research, creative administration, effective legislative activity, outstanding teaching and other distinguished professional contributions.

Congratulations, Prof Ronski. The CAAC is very proud of you and all the outstanding work you do.

Dr Alecia Samuels to Sweden for post-doctoral fellowship

Dr Alecia Samuels was accepted for a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at the Jönköping University, Sweden, and commenced her position there last year November.

Part of her responsibilities are to be programme manager of the research project "Participation as an outcome of spending time in pre-school", a project that involves five countries worldwide, namely Sweden, South Africa, Australia, Portugal and the United States of America. Although we miss her dearly, we are proud of her for being accepted for this position and look forward to her sharing with us all the valuable knowledge and skills she is gaining.

Training and seminars

Aided AAC in classrooms

Dr Kerstin Tönsing, gave a workshop entitled "Communication using graphic symbols: Challenges and solutions for classroom contexts" to therapists and teachers from LSEN schools in Gauteng. The workshop formed part of the FUNDA Continued Professional Development (CPD) group of Pretoria School. The focus fell on optimizing the use of graphic symbol-based AAC systems to assist learners with expressive difficulties to participate in classroom contexts. Both non-electronic and electronic AAC options were discussed, including iPad-based Apps. Participants were very interested and indicated a need to know more on this topic.



Kerstin with Mrs Nolette Maree, head of the speech therapy department at Pretoria CP school

Training Clinicians in AlAin

One of our staff members, Ensa Johnson visited the Amana Healthcare Medical and Rehabilitation Hospital in AlAin, UAE where two of our students work on 1 June 2015. Juanita Scheepers completed the BA Hons (AAC) last year and works as a teacher who specializes in AAC at the hospital. Karien van der Mescht an occupational therapist is enrolled in our Master's in ECI programme.

Ensa's research focus is on the implementation of AAC in hospital settings. She was invited by the management of the hospital to discuss how AAC could be implemented at their hospital-setting. The patients in the hospital are long-term patients some of whom are in need of AAC. Juanita has started with the implementation of AAC. During her visit, Ensa met some of the paediatric patients and she suggested to Juanita and the other clinicians more AAC strategies that may suit the individual patients. During her presentation, Ensa shared the outcome of her PhD studies with the clinicians and provided them with practical ideas on how to implement AAC in the hospital setting.

Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC



Provincial AAC workgroup

In March, two CAAC staff members, Dr Shakila Dada and Dr Kerstin Tönsing, were invited to present a talk on AAC assessment to hospital-based speech – language therapists. The talk formed part of a two-day -long workshop organised by the AAC provincial workgroup of hospital-based therapists from Gauteng. This workgroup is doing an excellent job of assisting therapists based at hospitals to plan for and set up AAC-related services, including the budgeting and provision of high technology AAC devices. Other presentations during the two-day workshop included the making of low-tech AAC resources and a presentation by Inclusive Solutions on assistive technology. We are so pleased that AAC is being put on the map in a more definite way in public health services in Gauteng.

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC

The 26th Annual AAC Research Seminar & Neville Cohen Memorial lecture

On 31 July the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) hosted its 26th Annual Research Seminar which included exciting and ground-breaking research presentations. The programme boasted three international speakers, including Prof Rajinder Koul from Texas Tech University, USA (recipient of the Neville Cohen Memorial Award), Dr Dana Donohue from Georgia State University, USA, and Dr Rubini Pasupathy from Texas Tech University, USA.

The Seminar began with the Neville Cohen Memorial lecture entitled 'Experimental and non-experimental research in behavioural sciences: Implications for practice', presented by Prof Raj Koul.

Other interesting presentations included the following:

- *Where does language come from? Exploring our early origins* by Prof Juan Bornman
- *An investigation of graduate Speech Pathology students' clinical self-efficacy beliefs* by Dr Rubini Pasupathy
- *An examination of compassion and self-compassion in different social classes* by Dr Dana Donohue
- *Shared storybook reading interactions between Sotho-speaking preschoolers with complex communication needs and their primary caregivers* by Miss Refilwe Morwane
- *The effect of non-powered, self-initiated mobility on engagement of young children with severe motor impairment* by Dr Kirsty Bastable
- *Families raising a child with autism spectrum disorder: Determining the relationship between family routines and family quality of life* by Dr Liezl Schlebusch
- *Use of consumer wireless devices by South Africans with severe communication disability* by Mrs Enid Moolman.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the above presentations, please contact us at saak@up.ac.za

Robyn White
Centre for AAC



Awareness events

Disability Awareness Day 2015: Pathways Pretoria and St Mary's DSG School

The Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) in collaboration with the University of Pretoria's Drama Department hosted a Disability Awareness Event for the learners from St Mary's DSG and Pathways Pretoria Stimulation Centre for children with disabilities.



Fifty-four learners in Grade 6 from DSG St. Mary's School and twenty-three learners with disabilities from Pathways School joined the CAAC team (led by Dr Shakila Dada and Dr Kerstin Tönsing) and Drama department's students for a fun-filled morning including, games, activities and singing Katy Perry's "Roar" song very loudly. A group of 3rd and 4th year Drama students put on a performance with simple yet striking visual effects depicting how lack of speech can isolate people, but how, with the help of supportive friends, the loneliness can be broken.

The aim of the event was to raise awareness around AAC and to create opportunities for interaction and forming acquaintances among the learners, those with and without disabilities. Learners from both schools were involved in activities focusing on key word signing and the use of graphic symbols as alternative forms of communication for individuals with communication disabilities.

Fun was had by all, including the teachers and everyone involved. There was not one person who did not walk away with a smile on their face.

Robyn White
Centre for AAC

The forces of silence: A soirée with a difference!

**Silence is all we dread.
There's Ransom in a Voice -
But Silence is Infinity.
Himself have not a face.**

by Emily Dickinson

With the haunting words of this poem, Dr Kerstin Tönsing introduced a soirée with a difference presented by the Centre for AAC in collaboration with the UP Drama Department.

The evening commenced with a stirring drama production entitled 'String Theory', after the theory co-conceptualised by Stephen Hawkins, the famous physicist using AAC. Drama students (under the mentorship of Mr Rian Terblanche, lecturer at the Drama Department) portrayed in a visually creative way the dreadful silence – the barriers, the restrictions, the emotions - but also the breakthroughs and victories which people with communication challenges experience. The audience was captured as students effectively used strings to connect, restrict, bind and loosen in a visual analogy of the effects of not being able to speak.

The production was followed by an address by Mrs Constance Ntuli who, as a person using AAC, shared her personal thoughts about some of the themes which the play touched on.

The evening concluded with the launch of the book Stop Violence against people with disabilities, co-edited by Prof Juan Bornman. Prof Bornman shortly shared with the audience what led her and Prof Diane Bryen to compile this resource that aims to expose and address some of the societal ills particularly affecting people with severe communication challenges.

The evening served to once again remind everyone that the dreadful silence experienced by people who cannot speak can and should be broken.

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC



Student news

Autumn Graduation 2015

Graduation is a time of joy and happiness. A time of fulfilled dreams and excitement at the possibilities that lie ahead. It is also a time to thankfully reflect on the supportive and enabling environments at home and the support from the people at the institutions where we chose to study. It is furthermore an opportunity to sigh and feel the relief of completing a demanding task. It is a time of reflection on how to embark on the journey of lifelong learning. Graduation marks the beginning of learning and not the end. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi "Live as if you were to die tomorrow and learn as if you were to live forever".



The CAAC celebrated the graduation of its postgraduate students on 22nd and 24th of April 2015. The Autumn graduation saw 15 Honors AAC graduates, 2 MAAC, 16 MECI and 2 PhD students receive their qualifications.

The two PhD studies were completed under the main supervision of Dr Shakila Dada. Dr Tracy Naude's study focused on the effect of an aided language stimulation program on the mathematical world problem solving of children with intellectual disabilities. Dr Kirsty Bastable developed a non-powered, self-initiated mobility program that facilitated engagement in children with severe mobility impairments. Both these studies focused on efficacy of interventions which are of international appeal. At the same time, both developed low cost interventions for children with disabilities which are particularly relevant in the local context..

Shakila Dada
Centre for AAC

Mandela Day: CAAC Master's students give of their time



"Disabled children are equally entitled to an exciting and brilliant future." These words were spoken by Nelson Mandela during the opening of the First Annual South African Junior Wheelchair Sports Camp in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 4 December 1994.



In honour of Mandela Day on 18 July 2015, the CAAC's Master's students spent their '67 minutes' adapting children's books for children with disabilities. This project is consistent with the Mandela Day theme of 'Education and Literacy'.

"In a world where knowledge truly is power, education and literacy are the basic building blocks that unlock the gates of opportunity and success. We all have a responsibility as parents, as caregivers, as educators, as leaders and as citizens, to instill in individuals, children and communities, the critical drive for literacy and learning so that we can give them the chance to fulfil their dreams." — Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015

Books are wonderful tools to introduce young children with disabilities to literacy. They can open up whole new world to older disabled children, who can have experiences through what they read that they may never have themselves. The Master's students added page 'fluffers' (items that enlarge the spaces between pages) and various textures and picture communication symbols to the children's books. These books will be donated to Zodwa School for learners with severe mental disabilities in Atteridgeville, Pretoria.



All the staff and students at the CAAC are inspired by Nelson Mandela's legacy and hope that this small contribution to Zodwa School will change the lives of these children.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." — Nelson Mandela

Robyn White
Centre for AAC

Technology

Edit Microsystems “talks” technology at SANDTA AGM

Edit Microsystems was recently invited to speak at the Western Cape SANDTA (South African Neurodevelopmental Therapy Association) AGM. A biting cold wind met members as they gathered together at Vista Nova School to participate in a presentation around the latest developments in AAC and AT technology.

The presentation started off on a musical note with a demo of one of Edit Microsystems newest products, The Beamz. The Beamz is an inclusive, interactive music maker that persons of all abilities can create music on by ‘breaking’ beams of light. A popular tool in schools and with therapists across the UK, the upbeat demo of the Beamz set the tone for the rest of the evening.

The rest of the presentation focused on both previewing **new communication software** and apps and demonstrating some of the increasingly affordable accessibility devices. The range of communication software that Edit Microsystems previewed included **Matrix Maker for print communication**; Clicker Communicator App and the Free Ablenet Sounding Board app.



The new Integra Mouse and Eye-Gaze technology were two of the ac-

cessibility devices that Edit Microsystems chose to demo at the AGM. The Integra Mouse is an alternative mouse controlled by the mouth of a person. As demonstrated during the presentation, the Integra Mouse can even be used to play computer games. The latest Eye Gaze technology demonstrated was the IRISBOND Precise Precision which can be used by persons with severe mobility problems.

The presentation finished with a brief look at the other technologies



that Edit Microsystems offers including the Real-Care babies used for teenage pregnancy prevention and substance abuse campaigns; and software that aids with dyslexia and dyscalculia.

Edit Microsystems is always interested in connecting with like-minded professionals in the field. If you

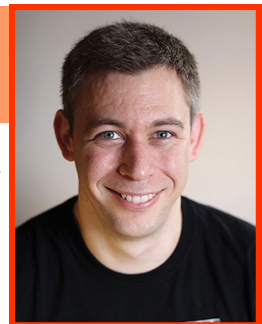
would like us to speak at a conference, AGM, focus group or any other event you are involved in, please do not hesitate to contact us at Tel +27 (0) 86 111 3973.

Tessa Venter
Education and Public Relations Specialist
Edit Microsystems

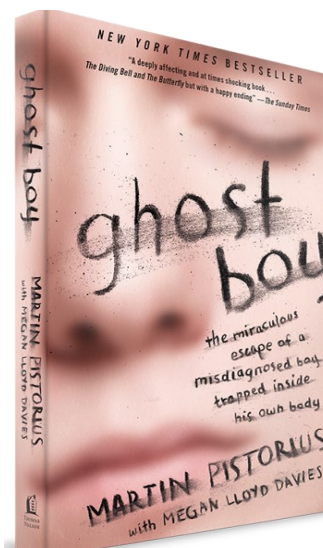
User forum

Dreams do come true

Dreams at first seem impossible, then seem improbable, and finally when we commit ourselves, become inevitable – Mahatma Ghandi



Dreams become inevitable when we commit to them and, perhaps equally important, when those around us also commit to them. Dreams are an important part of our lives. They help give direction to what we do with our time and lives. We all have dreams. Many are able to realise their dreams. Many do not dream, some are afraid to dream, many do not dare to dream because they have a disability. They do not even dare to dream simple dreams of being able to express their feelings, emotions and thoughts, and of developing relationships.



The book Ghost Boy tells a story that demonstrates the importance of dreaming and of committing to the dreams even if you have a disability. Martin Pistorius' autobiography, co-authored by Megan Lloyd-Davies, is now on the New York Times best-seller list. Ghost

Boy is the true story of Martin, a South African who now lives in the UK. It tells of his sudden illness at the age of 12, his gradual loss of speech and ability to walk and perform simple activities, and then of his gradual awakening and improvement. It is an inspiring story of hope, love and perseverance. The reason for his illness is unknown to this day. Martin's story serves as an inspiration for many who are able to hear but unable to speak.

/...

Dreams do come true (cont.)

My first contact with Martin was in 2001 when he was referred to the Centre by an aromatherapist who believed in his potential. The Centre provides consultative services about the best ways to improve communication among the person with the disability, his or her professional teams and family members.

At the initial consultation, it was evident that Martin had not communicated for many years. He had not had many opportunities to make choices or express his views – simply because he was unable to speak. The approach I adopted at the consultation was that he could communicate, and my assumption was rewarded with tiny signals hinting at his desire and ability to communicate, signals that were not always tangible or consistent. I could see it primarily in his eyes, a 'look' that expressed his understanding, a light grasp of the hand that indicated a choice, and eventually a smile. Gradually the look, the smile and the light grasp of the hand became more consistent and meaningful.

Years of intervention, primarily coordinated by his parents, followed. First, Martin had to overcome not only his physical disabilities, but years of being invisible imposed on him by an environment that assumed he was incompetent. He also had to overcome the fear of becoming 'visible', of claiming personhood, autonomy, choice and a voice after having been denied these for more than a decade. He succeeded gradually and slowly became more competent in using line drawings and his infra-red head pointer to communicate. His abilities improved and later he was able to use text and to use his finger to generate messages on a simple paper-based communication board.

The success with which Martin acquired communication skills and his praiseworthy achievement of writing his autobiography raise the following questions: 'What facilitated the change in his communication outcomes?' 'What made Martin such a competent communicator?' 'What can we learn from Martin that has the potential to be replicated?'

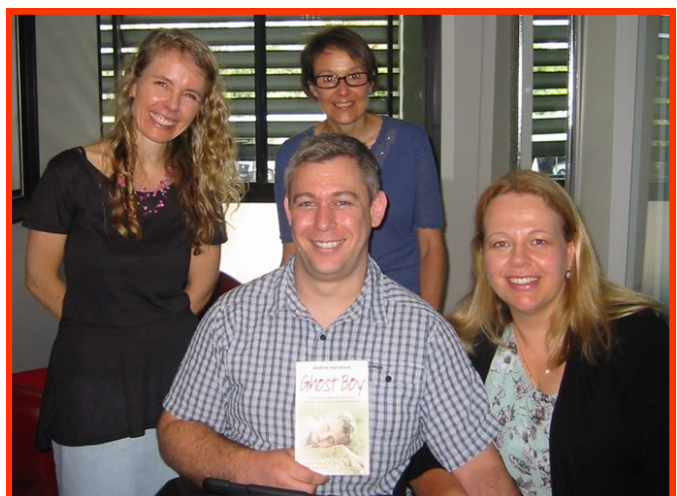
Studies have postulated that a variety of factors, including contextual factors, social support, personal characteristics and services offered as well as the effectiveness, versatility and sustainability of the intervention, can contribute to better outcomes for people who use AAC. In theory and practice AAC posits that everyone can communicate. The role of AAC strategies in providing an individual with ways of communicating and sharing information, expressing thoughts and needs, and developing relationships is pivotal. Everyone has the right to communicate, convey their convictions about the conditions of their existence, request or refuse objects and events, express personal feelings, make choices, access systems that enable communication, and to be spoken to directly. It cannot

be contested that communication is a basic human right and the essence of life.

As far as Martin is concerned it must be emphasized that his parents were there for him and that he had great social support. His parents believed in his abilities and had high expectations for him. Families play an important role in ensuring that a child's right to communicate is heeded, in demanding accountability in terms of the providing interventions, and in ensuring that their expectations of the child are adjusted continuously. The roles played by Martin's family, facilitators and knowledgeable professionals who were trained to assist him in his development and communication were pivotal. In Martin's case, the interventions occurred over an extended period of time, which ensured their sustainability and success.

Finally, Martin's personal characteristics played an indisputable role in his successful recovery. He persevered patiently and remained dedicated while he learnt how to communicate using AAC. His ability to dream was inspiring. Martin had many different dreams. Initially he dreamed of communicating his needs, wants, preferences, likes and dislikes independently, and then of using his communication skills to develop social closeness and relationships. He dreamed of being more visible and expressing his personality using AAC; he dreamed of being employed, developing his literacy skills, obtaining a degree, finding true love and getting married. He gradually achieved each of these dreams, and now he is dreaming new dreams ...

Shakila Dada
Centre for AAC



Martin visited South Africa in February 2015 and was interviewed together with Dr Kerstin Tönsing by Pretoria FM. On the photo below is Martin with Kerstin (left), his wife Johanna (right) and Marianne Breytenbach from the radio station.

AAC Resource Manual

Thank you, Jill



"Editing the AAC resource manual was such a challenge and a privilege. I just realised the depth of knowledge and experience we have in this country and feel privileged to have been part of making all of that widely available."

Jill Rose

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Jill Rose. Jill has been involved in the AAC Resource Manual and has been the co-editor since its launch in August 2011. After a lot of hard work, Jill has decided to step down from this position.

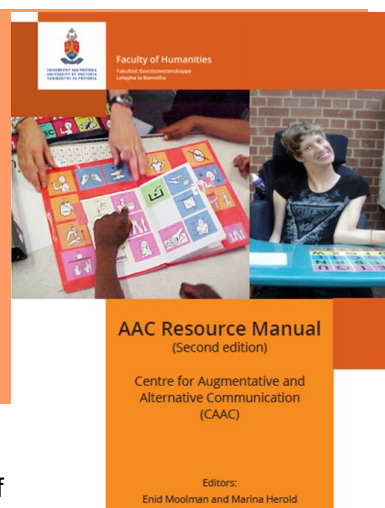
This dynamic woman, who is a physiotherapist by profession, is however definitely not sitting around wondering what to do with her time. She has a very busy schedule and is currently involved in two projects in the KZN area. Jill and a friend started a movement group in a small Respite Centre run by The Hillcrest Aids Trust. According to Jill, small miracles seemed to happen right from the start of this group, as people who thought that they couldn't do anything, discovered that they could have lots of fun by moving around to the beat of the music.

Jill is also involved in a church-based Early Childhood Development project, where their focus is education and training. They are planning on presenting accredited ECD training as well as informal workshops in future, establish a toy library and run a home-based early literacy programme. Jill said: "The story is a long one but also comes out of the rich learning and teaching experience I had at the Centre for AAC (CAAC). There is no better place to learn how to work in a transdisciplinary team; no better place to learn to work hard; no better place to learn about possibilities and no better place to make friends!"

We are so thankful and forever grateful for the time that Jill took to help with the AAC Resource Manual. Thank you for the truly excellent work that you did, especially with the editing of the content of all the contributions, Jill! Thank you for sharing your wisdom, insight, knowledge and years of experience with all of us. May you be richly blessed with all your new projects.

Enid Moolman
Co-editor
AAC Resource Manual

Watch this space..... Second Edition of the AAC Resource Manual



The second edition of South Africa's very own AAC Resource Manual will be available in September this year. If you are working with people who have little or no functional speech (LNFS) or complex communication needs (CCN), then this manual is just for you. More than a hundred useful and practical topics are covered, all written by South Africans who are involved with the provision of AAC services.

The manual consists of 15 chapters, dealing with topics such as assessment, AAC strategies and tools across various settings and populations, technology access and interventions, etc. There is also some free resource material or links to resource material.

Orders for the AAC Resource Manual (available on CD only) can be made from the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) at the University of Pretoria. Please contact Liza Siefe at (012) 420 2001 or liza.siefe@up.ac.za to order your CD.

Enid Moolman
Co-editor
AAC Resource Manual

For your diary...

Write to life

Inviting all interested writers and poets—particularly those using or having interest in AAC.

We are planning to publish a book of poetry, photographs and short inspirational pieces of writing. It does not matter what you write about, but the general idea of the book is for people using AAC to share their talent of writing with others and change negative perceptions about people with disabilities.

The winning authors will receive a R300 gift voucher from Takealot.com

The Centre for AAC in collaboration with UP English Department and TUT Faculty of the Arts: Department of Visual Communication: Photography would like to invite you to a 'literary' event:

Words and beyond

Young people using augmentative and alternative communication will be sharing their creative work (poems, photographs and pieces of writing).

Come and be inspired by these AAC ambassadors, and see the person behind the disability.

Date: 11 September 2015
Time: 09h30 – 11h30
Venue: University of Pretoria Conference Centre Foyer

Light refreshments served afterwards
 RSVP to Liza (liza@up.ac.za or 012 420 2001) by 4 September 2015

Notes:

SEPTEMBER

07 September: Final date for FOFA Write to life submissions—for more information contact Constance Nthuli at constance.nthuli@up.ac.za

07 September—11 September: FOFA week at Centre for AAC

11 September: FOFA presentations 2015: "Words and beyond" at 09:30 1– 11:30

OCTOBER

31 October: Closing date PhD, Master's and Hons in AAC applications

Do you want to study in the field of AAC?

If you are interested to do an Honours, Master's or PhD in AAC or Master's in ECI, follow the link to find out more about these programmes:

<http://www.up.ac.za/centre-for-augmentative-alternative-communication/article/56213/postgraduate-degree-programmes>



NBNBNB:

For future contributions to this newsletter, please contact the editor, Ensa Johnson at ensa.johnson@up.ac.za

Next edition: December 2015

Due date for submissions: 15 November 2015