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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

## Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotho



## Interface and CAAC Newsletter

**December 2015**

**Centre for Augmentative and  
Alternative Communication  
(CAAC)**



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## Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

### CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

## National Newsletter

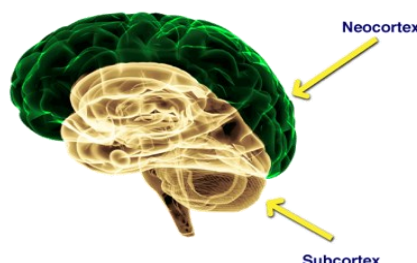
Pick your brains.... think about possibilities...

### "The brains you choose are the brains you get" Dr Barak Morgan

(The following is an extract from a lecture by Dr Barak Morgan, a neuroscientist and research fellow from the University of Cape Town)

You are your brain – nothing happens in your mind without first going through your brain. Infants' neocortex (part of brain involved with higher functions in the brain such as sensory perception and special reasoning) is immature at birth and it cannot regulate the subcortex (that control information going in and out of the brain). Their subcortex is controlled by adults.

### Cortical and Subcortical Functions



By as young as 20 months, children should be able to identify their emotions, and know how to react upon it. Typically this is possible due to a loving, caring person who responds to the children when in need for example, they change the babies' nappies when it is wet or give them a hug when they are upset. These positive influences of caregivers, who respond affirmatively to the children's needs, have a lifelong effect on the children – as research has shown that these children are typically achievers who make a success of their lives.

Sadly the opposite is also true. Non-responsive caregivers result in the chil-

dren to respond with "fight, flight and freeze, reactions of the brain. Stress hormones, cortisol and adrenalin are bad for the body. Due to this toxic stress, the infant is overwhelmed by anxiety fear and panic. They then act out in negative ways. A glooming future was presented for these children as previous research highlighted that due to risk factors these children may end up in jail or regarded by society as "bad".

*How is this related to us? What about children with disability who often do not receive the care they need? Should we accept that they are now doomed for life with no hope for them? Should we accept that there is no future for these children because they never had loving caregivers from birth to around 20 months? No, we at the Centre for AAC have a different approach. Although research may show the contrary, it is important for us to always have hope, try out new things and never ever give up on impossible situations. We want to find those pathways in the brains needed to make a difference in people's lives.*

People with disability may further struggle with communication difficulties and we are there to support them and give them means to communicate and thus have hope for the future.

We empower ourselves by doing research and attending conferences to know how to 'pick the brains' needed to ensure a future for all—those with and without disability—despite poverty, neglect or abuse that may have directed their lives in the potential wrong direction.

/....

**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)**



This December edition of the Newsletter is filled with information about the work and achievements of staff, students, granduandi, branch news, schools and friends of the Centre for AAC. In the User Forum we introduce Mr Graham Clarke from Cape Town to you. Graham is a person who uses AAC and an advocate for people with disabilities.

When we reflect on the year 2015, we are grateful by God's grace for all the achievements and successes our staff members, students, the schools and friends who use AAC have had.

**Ensa Johnson**  
**Editor,**  
**Centre for AAC**

## CAAC News

### Visitors to the CAAC



#### Prof. Erna Alant

Prof Erna Alant, founder of the Centre for AAC and currently employed by Indiana University (IU) in Bloomington, USA, paid a visit to the Faculty of Education (UP) as well as the CAAC in

May this year. She co-presented a seminar entitled 'The art and science of empathetic communication' with two colleagues from IU, Beth Lewis Samuelson, and Lindsey Ogle. The visit was made possible by the Mellon Innovating International Research, Teaching and Collaboration (MIIRT) Innovative Curriculum Development Fellowship at IU.

Prof Alant discussed her current research interest, empathetic communication, and highlighted theoretical perspectives relevant to empathy and communication. During the visit, videos were made depicting natural communication between users of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and their communication partners. The videos will form part of a library of material that Prof Alant is compiling for discussion and analysis of empathetic communication. Participants in the video interactions included Constance Ntuli, Carla van Nieuwenhuizen and Crystal van Dyk.

According to Prof Alant and other leaders in the field, communication competence is an important outcome of AAC. The focus has been on operational, linguistic, social and strategic competence, as outlined by Janice Light in her seminal 1989 paper. These should be considered within the social context of communication, including developing relationships and friendships, and could be used to reduce social isolation and make interactions meaningful. It is important to listen to and 'be with' a person who has a communication vulnerability, and to focus on strategies that build on empathetic communication in order to create meaningful interactions.

**Shakila Dada**  
**Centre for AAC**

You can watch one video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0y8c5PuJs9Q> —Red

## Season's Greetings



***The Director and Staff from the Centre for AAC wish you peace and joy this holiday season and a prosperous New Year! May God protect you during the holidays and may you rest well for the new tasks ahead in the New Year!***



## CAAC News (cont.)

### Staff matters

#### **Dr Sadna Bolton appointed as chairperson of Professional Board of Speech, Language and Hearing of the Health Professions Council of South Africa HPCSA)**



My journey as a Speech Therapist & Audiologist started without any clear idea of where I was heading as I didn't even apply for Speech Therapy & Audiology when I matriculated. I stumbled into the Speech Therapy Department one afternoon, observed students giving therapy and thought maybe this is something I could do! My 4 years in the degree was challenging as these were during the Apartheid years and as a Black student there were many challenges that I had to deal with. After graduation I did not apply for any jobs as I felt that something would come along when I was ready. Two of my friends who started working at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital informed me about a vacancy there. I attended the interview with no expectations but almost 25 years later working at Bara, the hospital still continues to inspire me.

When I joined the department we were a staff of only 6 and today I work with an amazing team of 32. As the Head of Department it was my dream to transform the Speech Therapy & Audiology Department into a center of excellence where patients and their families would receive the best management possible and be treated with respect and dignity. My team and I continue to strive to achieve this vision.

My completion of my Masters in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) at the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) provided me with an opportunity

to further my knowledge and skills in an area I have always been passionate about. I was part of the first group to graduate from this course under the guidance of Professor Erna Alant. It was Professor Alant who encouraged me to pursue my PhD which was a challenging feat, especially finding a balance between motherhood, full time work and studies.

I love sharing my passion for ECI and my part-time appointment at the CAAC has provided me with an excellent platform to inspire students in this area. My recent appointment as the Chairperson of the Professional board of Speech, Language and Hearing of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has been exciting but very daunting at the same time. I know that working with the current board which consists of a remarkable group of people as well as the guidance and mentorship I receive from the outgoing Chairperson, Prof Shajila Singh, will make it possible for me to move ahead successfully.

**Sadna Bolton**

**HOD: Speech Therapy Department,  
Chris Hani Baragwanath  
Academic Hospital**



## Dr Kerstin Tönsing obtains Y2-rating from the NRF



The Centre for AAC is proud to announce that Dr Kerstin Tönsing recently obtained a Y2 rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF).

A Y2 rating is given to a young researcher who is recognised by all, or the overriding majority of reviewers, as having the potential to establish him/herself as a researcher (as demonstrated by recent research products).

Dr Tönsing's research interest is in the field of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Her focus is on the way in which graphic symbol-based AAC systems can enhance communication and language development, particularly in children with severe disabilities and limited speech. She is also interested in the implementation of AAC systems in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

**Robyn White**  
Centre for AAC

## Dr Ensa Johnson receives prestigious award

Dr Ensa Johnson, from the Centre AAC, received the Margaret McNamara Education Award for women who make a difference in the lives of other women and children. Dr Johnson is one of only two South Africans who received bursaries from the Margaret McNamara Memorial Fund (MMMF) in 2015. The other seven recipients were from Nigeria (two), Mozambique, Eritrea, Zimbabwe (two), and Kenya.

The grant was awarded to Dr Johnson to facilitate the completion of her PhD studies. In her thesis, titled 'An exploration of the common pain-related vocabulary typically developing children use: Implications for children who use augmentative and alternative communication', she used a mixed-methods ap-

proach to develop a vocabulary list that children with significant communication difficulties can use to express their pain. She also developed a model for the process of selecting vocabulary for sensitive topics. As a follow-up to her PhD studies, Dr Johnson will now investigate the implementation of augmentative and alternative communication in hospital settings.

The MMMF was founded in 1981 in memory of Margaret Craig McNamara, who dedicated her life to improving the lives of underserved women and children around the world.

The MMMF awarded its first educational scholarship in 1983 and in 1987 it achieved official status as a non-profit public charity. For more than three decades, its Board of Directors has worked – with ongoing support from the World Bank Family Network (WBFN) and many volunteers – to expand the programme to four universities in South Africa (one of them being the University of Pretoria) and five Latin American countries, and to increase the annual number of grantees. As of 2014 the MMMF has awarded grants to more than 250 outstanding women from more than 60 developing countries. The recipients are women who are committed to returning to their countries and working to improve the lives of women and children.

The staff at the CAAC congratulate Dr Johnson on this wonderful achievement.

**Robyn White**  
Centre for AAC



Ensa Johnson (2nd of left) and the three other UP students who were awarded the MMMF grant with Dr Elna van Greuning (middle), MMMF Board Member.



## Research projects

### Research is boring, right??



And most of it is irrelevant, pie-in-the-sky.... At least that is the impression of many people! As a researcher, I have to, of course, argue most vehemently against this perception, and so I

thought to share a little something about some recent and current AAC research projects of staff and students with you!

**Message banking** is a process that can assist people with motor neuron disease (MND) to 'speak with their own voice' via an electronic AAC system even after they have lost the physical ability to speak naturally. But which messages should be recorded? Imke Oosthuizen, an MA (AAC) student is investigating what people with MND, their significant others and service providers think about message choices.

**Will using AAC stop my child from speaking?** Anxious parents ask this question regularly when therapists suggest the introduction of AAC. Kim Brewis, an MA (AAC) student, is analysing hours of video recorded interactions of children with motor speech disorders using no AAC, using communication boards and using speech generating devices to determine how the introduction of an AAC system influences the children's vocal productions in the short term.

**Eina! Ouch! Eish!** Typically-developing children use these or similar pain-related words frequently to tell others that they have been hurt. But how do children with little or no functional speech tell others about their pain? Existing core vocabulary lists contain few to no pain-related words. Dr Ensa Johnson successfully defended her PhD thesis on the topic of determining pain-related vocabulary for use by children who need AAC. Thanks to her work, a list of pain-related

words validated for the South African context is now available as a resource for AAC practitioners. Together with Swedish colleagues, Ensa also investigated the pain management strategies which are used for children with cerebral palsy, and a paper has already been published in the journal *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*.

**Bedtime stories.....**Besides being a fun bonding time, joint story reading can be an ideal context for fostering language development. But how do caregivers of children



with severe communication difficulties engage in this activity with their children? Refilwe Morwane, a speech language therapist, observed Setswana-speaking caregivers reading stories to their children with severe communication challenges. Understanding their practices may assist in harnessing this context for AAC intervention.

**Can a child who cannot speak testify in court?** With the high rates of abuse and neglect in this population, this is regrettably a question we are asked more and more often. Robyn White, a staff member at the Centre for AAC, found out what stakeholders in the justice system perceive to be the needed vocabulary to give children with limited speech a voice in court.

**Do people with severe communication difficulties use cell phones?** Prof Juan Bornman and Mrs Enid Moolman asked 30 adults with severe communication difficulties to complete questionnaires about their cell phone use. They found that cell phones were very important to this group to increase independence, social participation, education opportunities and to call for assistance in emergency situations.

**Kerstin Tönsing**  
Centre for AAC

## Student news

### Spring graduation

The Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) is extremely proud of the three PhD Graduates who graduated at the University of Pretoria's Spring Graduation on the 2nd September 2015.



Dr. Alida Naude's PhD study was titled, "Exploring ethical sensitivity in the South African context: Developing and implementing a measure in the therapeutic sciences". This thesis was prepared under the supervision of Prof Juan Bornman.

Dr. Ensa Johnson's PhD study was titled, "An exploration of the common pain-related vocabulary typically developing children use: Implications for children who use augmentative and alternative communication". The study was completed under the supervision of Prof. Juan Bornman & Dr. Kerstin Tonsing.

Dr. Liezl Schlebusch's PhD study was titled "Families raising a child with autism spectrum disorder: Determining the relationship between family routines and family quality of life". The study was completed under the supervision of Dr. Alecia Samuels and Dr. Shakila Dada.

Dr. Johnson and Dr. Schlebusch completed both their Honours degree's in AAC and their Masters degree's at the CAAC.

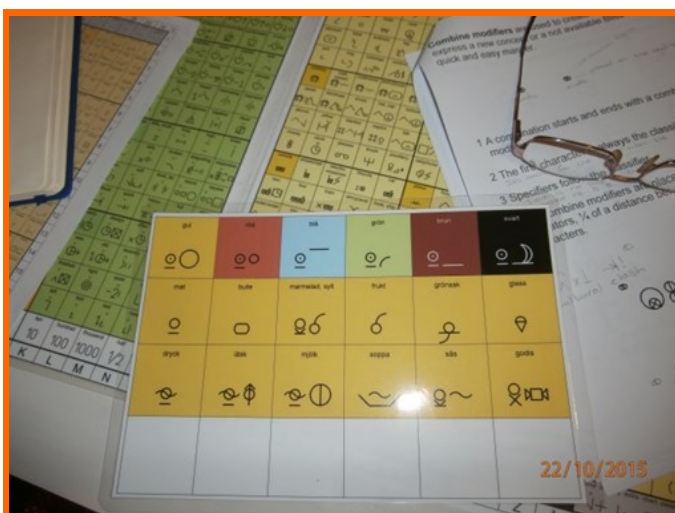
Congratulations to the three PhD graduates! They have set great examples for all the students and staff at the CAAC.

**Robyn White**  
Centre for AAC

## Blissymbolics The Wonder of AAC

As an honours student, during the onsite week in 2012, Drs Johnson and Tönsing, overviewed the most prominently used symbol systems and symbol sets by persons with little or no functional speech (LNFS), as an alternative or augmentative form of communication. One of the symbol systems that they introduced was Blissymbolics.

I, a Home Economics teacher, at Platorand School in Belfast, Mpumalanga, basically 'tripped and fell' over Blissymbolics, because it is a lot like language and could be taught as such. The realisation was so great that I still don't remember much about the rest of the lecture given to us. The only thing I wanted to do was to get back to school to see if it can assist verbal learners who struggle to read and write.



For the readers that are not familiar with Blissymbolics, it is a symbol system that currently consists of 5,588 graphic symbols. It was designed by Charles K. Bliss, who got his inspiration from the Chinese symbols. Each of these symbols represents another thing or concept. All the symbols can be used in combination to create symbols with new meaning. All Blissymbols are copyrighted and suggested symbols from countries all over the world must first be accepted by the Blissymbolics Communication International board. Blissymbols can be read in any language.

I tested Blissymbolics on one of my learners, whom started crying when she found that she could read. A milestone for her and a twenty-four-hour job for me typing lesson plans for her. After I've accumulated enough evidence that Bliss really worked, I presented it to our HOD of the Language department, who presented it to our Principal and the SGB. They granted me a centrum and the first ever in South Africa's Blissymbolics classroom, opened its doors in April, 2014.

I had to learn everything I could about Blissymbolics from the internet and fast, for once a child with a reading and/or writing disability finds that he can read or write, that's the only thing he wants to do, read and write! Dr Johnson from the Centre for AAC got me in contact with Dr Jennische, an Associate Professor from the Department of Neuroscience, Speech and Language Pathology, Uppsala in Sweden. Dr Jennische lectured me via the internet over the past year in how to use Blissymbolics correctly. She corrected each of my mistakes with an explanation and never gave up on me. I'm truly blessed to have her as my instructor.

I was privileged to attend the BCI International course, "The structure and use of Blissymbolics presented by Dr Jennische and Britt Amberntsson, a Teaching Materials Producer, during October this year. Most of the course material was presented in Uppsala. We were then whisked off by train to Stockholm to learn more about Blissonline. Blissonline is a program in which Blissymbolics can be typed. It is much the same as typing with, e.g. the Arial font on your computer. The only difference is that where you start your word document with the Font of your choice, you now start your document with the Language of your choice. As you type, the Blissymbol appears on top of your typed word. Readers who are interested in using the program can go to [www.blissonline.se](http://www.blissonline.se)



*Louisa with Dr Margareta Jennische celebrating Louisa's success.*

After the course, Kristin van der Merwe, a PhD student in Linguistics at the Rhodes University in the Cape Province, and I translated the English Blissymbolics vocabulary to Afrikaans. It was then e-mailed to Dr Johnson, for editing, from where it will go back to Sweden for publishing. The Afrikaans vocabulary will ap-

pear on Blissonline, as soon as it has been approved by Mats Lundälv, President of the BCI Board. Once it is integrated in Blissonline, Afrikaans will be one of the many languages (glosses) you can choose from that will appear underneath or on top of the Bliss word as you type.

My dream was to introduce Blissymbolics to all special needs schools with learners, who are mildly intellectually impaired, thus all LSEN schools in South Africa. It seemed impossible for I didn't know where to start. Dreams can come true though. Our principal, Mr Matshika informed me that I was nominated for the National Teachers' Awards. It gave me the break I needed to introduce Blissymbolics to the Department of Education. Although Blissymbolics is still a brand new concept and not used in any other LSEN schools, I won the First finalist in the Nkangala District Award in Excellence in Special Needs and Inclusive Teaching and gained third place in the Provincial Awards.

With all that said, I just want to extend my gratitude to Bhubezi Projects, South Africa, who sponsored my flight to Sweden.

Thank you all, happy 'Blissing'

**Louisa Alberts**  
**Blissymbolics teacher, Platorand School**



*Louisa with some of the learners in her class who use Blissymbolics.*

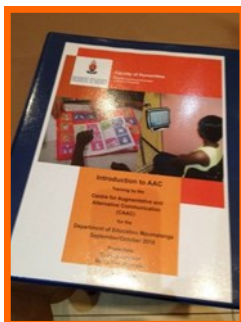


## Training

### Mpumalanga teacher training

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

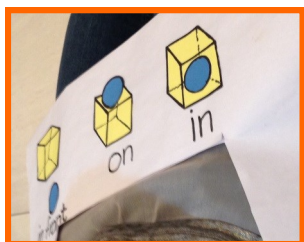
From 28 September to 2 October 2015, the Centre for AAC conducted training in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) at Badplaas, Mpumalanga, for 30 teachers and five departmental officials from full-service schools of the Mpumalanga Department of Education.



The training programme, given by Dr Ensa Johnson and Ms Refilwe Morwane, featured modules such as, 'Introduction to AAC', 'AAC assessment', 'AAC technology' and 'Implementation of AAC in the classroom'. Practical activities were included to give the teachers hands-on experience in accommodating learners with communication disabilities in the classroom. The aim was



to empower the teachers to put into practice the statement by Nelson Mandela that 'disabled children are equally entitled to an exciting and brilliant future'.



Some of the teachers expressed how valuable the AAC training was, saying:

*'I gained knowledge on how to deal with learners with communication disabilities by using symbols and devices.'*

*'The use of AAC was foreign to me, but the training provided insight in what AAC is and how to implement it, as well as practical knowledge of various devices and how to use them in class.'*

*'The training was very useful to me because I have two learners in my class who cannot talk. I have learned what AAC is and how to help and involve learners with communication disabilities.'*

*'I find the communication boards and other devices useful because I was clueless as how to communicate with learners who cannot speak.'*

Inclusive teacher and disability training is offered by the CAAC. For more information, please contact Dr Ensa Johnson at [ensa.johnson@up.ac.za](mailto:ensa.johnson@up.ac.za).

**Ensa Johnson**  
Centre for AAC



## Conferences

### SASLHA conference

What do you get when you put over 50 speech therapists into one room? Well, certainly not silence! The Durban International Convention Centre was abuzz for five days as delegates of the 2015 ENT/SAAA/SASLHA conference enjoyed interesting presentations, networked and participated in think tanks about better serving our South African communities with communication vulnerabilities.

Prof Juan Bornman, director of the Centre for AAC, was one of the invited plenary speakers, and reminded the delegates that communication is a human right, and that affording someone access to it is a matter of social justice. With statistics for access to even basic education still looking grim for children with disabilities in SA, there is still a lot to be done in terms of granting appropriate access to communication to all. On a related topic, Prof Bornman shared ideas about providing access to justice through the use of AAC in court, based on an example of a client who used AAC and needed to testify as a victim of crime.

/....



Dr Shakila Dada presented an invited workshop on the use of AAC in intensive care units, and gave the participants lots of practical ideas and useful resources. The ICU is a unique setting as many



patients present with a temporary loss of speech due to intubation and other factors. AAC can help to reduce medical risk as well as anxiety and frustration and therefore be to the benefit of the patient, staff and family members.

Staff and students from the centre also presented some of their research projects at the conference, with topics ranging from the use of aided language in enhancing mathematical skills in children with intellectual disabilities, the shared story book reading practices of Setswana-speaking caregivers and their children with severe disabilities, the perceptions of teachers at special schools about implementing communication aids as well as the effects of communication boards versus speech generating devices on the production of symbol combinations as well as on speech and vocalizations of children with limited speech.

Overall, a strong focus on local relevance was evident throughout the conference. Clinicians and researchers alike agreed that finding appropriate solutions to serve the whole spectrum of diverse clients in South Africa is a challenge which we need to persist in addressing in creative, innovative and sustainable ways.

**Kerstin Tönsing**  
**Centre for AAC**



*Dr Michal Harty (UCT and former CAAC staff member), Dr Kerstin Tönsing, Ms Refilwe Morwane, Dr Shakila Dada and Prof Juan Bornman*

## FOFA 2015

The Centre AAC, in conjunction with the Department of English (at UP) and the Department of Visual Communication (Photography) at Tshwane University of Technology, recently hosted an extraordinary event called 'Words and beyond'.

'Words and beyond' was inspired by participants in CAAC's annual Fofa course. Participants in this course are exceptional individuals with a difference: they are men and women with limited or no capacity for verbal speech. They utilise specialised equipment to help them communicate with the outside world by translating their thoughts into words.

Fofa is a Northern Sotho word that means 'to fly' and the participants in the course spread their wings soared to new heights.

Seven young adults from five provinces (together with their personal assistants) were hosted on campus for a week.



The week was filled with training, workshops, presentations and, of course, social events. At the beginning of the week, final-year students from Tshwane University of Technology's Department of Visual Communication: Photography, facilitated a photo story activity, aimed at helping the participants to express who they are and how others see them through photographs. Marlene Le Roux, from Artscape Theatre in Cape Town, gave a thought-provoking presentation on Tuesday about how to express yourself through dance and about embracing your disability as an ability. Also on Tuesday, Graham Clarke, a person who has been using AAC for more than 15 years, gave a motivating talk via Skype that enthused all participants and care-givers. On Thursday morning, the three mentors each gave encouraging and informative talks about 'Why writing skills are important', 'Social media: Do's and don't's' and 'Living life to the full'.





## FOFA 2015 cont

The master's students from the Department of English presented exciting creative writing workshops throughout the week – on topics such as poetry, crafting powerful descriptions through words and joint story writing – to arouse the participants' inner writers and poets. They even aroused the inner poets in the participants' personal assistants and the CAAC staff members.

Thursday afternoon was a special, eventful afternoon that saw the FOFA participants receiving glamorous make-overs by the talented Ranaa Patel (<http://rmfashionary.blogspot.co.za/>), followed by a glitzy photo shoot by the brilliant photographer, Marike Uitenweerde from EYEscape Photography (<http://www.eyescape.co.za/>).



Thursday night ended off with a beautiful 'fine-dining' experience at EAT@UP, where the participants enjoyed a lovely evening filled with delicious food, soft music and pleasant company.

On Friday, the young adults presented their creative works (photographs, poems and stories) to an open audience, showcasing their creative abilities and demonstrating that lack of intelligible speech does not prevent them from expressing who they are or from

using words and pictures to change mind-sets and negative perceptions about people with disabilities. The participants clearly benefitted greatly from the project and their growth in skills and confidence was visible during the week. The workshops afforded them new ways of expressing who they are and sharing their thoughts, dreams and ideas with others. The week also served to create awareness of the abilities and achievements of people who use AAC and to showcase the achievements of the participants to the broader community.

Together with additional contributions from other individuals who use AAC, the creative works are planned to be published in a coffee-table book that showcases the talents of people who, despite not being able to speak, can share who they are through various media.

It was an unforgettable week that impacted on each and every individual involved. We would like to take this opportunity to send a special thank you to the following individuals without whom this week would not have been possible:

- **Momentum, who generously sponsored the event,**
- **Mariki and Lourens Uitenweerde from EYEscape Photography,**
- **Ranaa Patel from RMfashionary,**
- **Marlene le Roux from Artscape Theatre,**
- **EAT@UP,**
- **Vilene Jacobs for taking photographs of our participants,**
- **the master's students from the Department of English at the University of Pretoria,**
- **the final-year students from the Department of Visual Communication: Photography at Tshwane University of Technology, and**
- **all the dedicated staff at the CAAC who so freely and willingly give of their time during the week.**

**Kerstin Tonsing  
Centre for AAC**



## Interface Branch News

### News from KZN

Our new Interface KZN Resource Library space is slowly taking shape and continues to be a project that is well supported by donors. We have had a lovely sturdy amp fitted and are now in the process of adding an awning to provide shelter from the rain, as well as an aircon unit to ensure comfort during the hot summer months.



Our pre-school Communication Circle has been on a brief "hiatus" as the participating children have all now moved on to enrolment in various schools..... this in itself is very exciting news! We are considering hosting this group of children in a new Communication Group on an afternoon in 2016, due to school routines. A new group of young children aged 3-4 years old have been identified to start in January 2016, all of whom are currently receiving AAC intervention at Interface KZN. In addition there has been a request by parents of young adolescents on the Autistic Spectrum to consider hosting an additional Communication Circle suitable for their needs. This will be explored in greater detail in 2016. The young adult group is currently deciding on their regular end of year outing.

"Parent Workshops" were successfully hosted in October and November, and were once again useful and welcomed platforms attended by parents, facilitators and caregivers.

An Introduction to AAC workshop was hosted in conjunction with the Pinetown School District and hosted at the Browns School. Tamarin Waring and Avishana Sewrajan, Speech / Language Therapists. The workshop was attended by 35 participants, comprising Educators and Therapists. Avishana was included as a Presenter at the day Action in Autism workshops hosted in October. These were well attended by parents and relevant networking and marketing of Interface services and resources were carried out. There is greater trend towards parents requesting more information on using Tablets and

iPads as devices, in keeping with the general trend elsewhere in the world.

The isiZulu AAC and Literacy Resources Outreach and Awareness Phase began in earnest in June 2015. There is much travelling involved, often beginning before the crack of dawn and ending under star light. Two locations in each district are being visited which has found our team in outlying and more developed areas. Some schools have buildings of bricks and mortar with history while other are prefabricated from the class room to the bathroom. Other schools visited are under intensive renovation. At each outreach and awareness event, the essential nature of AAC is explained interactively in terms of the functions of communication and how AAC can be influential for those who cannot rely on natural speech. Dan Ngcobo and France Mgence engage the audience and field questions while using their AAC systems and then either Phyllis or Rose (Dan and France's mothers), present their perspective and also field questions. There have



been some lively moments throughout as the audience begins to realize the impact that AAC has to enable communication and interaction. The AAC sample packs are reviewed in full with live and video demonstration of the items contained, before being distributed.



So far the visits have impacted on the UMzinyathi district (ProNobis School in Dundee); Tugela Ferry (Ukukhanya Komsinga in Msinga); Sisonke

District (Vulekani Special School and Pholela Special School); Zululand (Zamimpilo and Inkanyiso Special School); and Ilembe District (Stanger Training Centre and Ethel Mthiyane Special School). The final trip of the year was to Ugu District hosted by Harding Special School and Schola Amoris.

**Felicity Jonck**  
**Interface—KZN**





## School news

### Pathways – Pretoria

**We had a dream...**

As Martin Pistorius says in 'Ghost Boy'....

**"Dreams can be any size you want them to be but the important thing is that you have one that is yours."**

Our poet Marina van Staden, who has a degenerative disease, realised her dream this year by publishing her own collection of poems and also illustrated it. She also published with other writers a collection of poems and essays for the Centre of AAC. She had a wonderful sponsored black-tie event at Imperfect Perfection in Pretoria where she launched her book. We are very proud of her. Her other dream is to have an eye tracker as her speech is becoming more incomprehensible.



Mpho Phala also has a dream... to walk, to have a wheelchair with good support and to do a handstand in heaven!!!



Sponsors, friends and class mates helped him realise one of these dreams. They contributed by selling peaches, having a second hand sale, raising money and praying!!!

He will receive his electrical custom made Wheel chair on the 4th December just before the Christmas holiday!!!

Our young adults at the Pathways studio Also had a dream .....to become actors and for the past three years they are making their own short movie every year....



**Danita Nel**  
**Pathways Pretoria**

*PS: We hope that you will share these movies with us! Red.*

### Pathways – Polokwane

Exciting things are happening at Pathways!

#### **Life skills: vegetable garden**

In the previous newsletter we reported on the vegetable garden the learners in the Life Skills group in partnership with the mainstream Gr 8 boys established. This project is still going on and some of the boys even made a number of scarecrows to keep the birds away! The Gr 8

boys are responsible for marketing the produce and the Life Skills group to keep the garden growing. It has been a beneficial project all round and it has been wonderful to see some inclusion happening.



#### **Concert**

The Junior class produced the Wizard of Oz which gave plenty of opportunity for our children



to be included. They all did such a sterling job and we are ever so proud of their outstanding performances!

#### **Colour run**

We hosted the colour run—a first for us! This successful event was organized by the Mitchell House team who did a wonderful job.

The learners from the Life Skills

group had to count out an amazing number of safety pins; punch holes in the runners' numbers and attach the pins to the numbers as part of the preparation necessary in completing the runners' packs— this was a great activity to put their fine motor skill put to good use!



**Pathways Polokwane**

## User forum



### Graham Clarke

**"My AAC life motto is: Our life is planned, the only thing we can not master."**

In 1984, Graham Clarke worked on Marion Island as a team leader of 14 men when he fell ill. The original diagnosis was meningitis, but as his condition deteriorated, he was transferred to Cape Town where further tests were performed and it was established that he suffered from a massive stroke. His condition was called locked-in syndrome and his whole body was paralyzed, except for his eyes. Fortunately, by God's grace, his neck started moving a bit again so he is now able to use a chin controlled power chair and AAC device.

Graham lives in the Eric Miles Cheshire Home in Milnerton. Cheshire Home is a home for a number of people living with a disability. Graham was introduced to AAC by another lady with a disability, Annalu Waller, who was at that time studying in the biomedical department of Cape Town's university. (Annalu is currently a Professor at the University of Dundee in Scotland). She assessed Graham to determine if he would be a suitable candidate for a portable, voice output communication device. His comment on this was: *"I passed her 'test' and the rest is history! I've never looked back. Thanks so much Prof Waller!"* Graham first used an alphabet chart from about a week after being admitted to hospital in 1984. The chart has progressed from a single line of letters to more involved charts, for example, phrases were added and by adding numbers to the board, he was able to select a phrase by using a number. He started using a chest brace that had two little switches near to his chin which were connected to an old BBC computer. He have also then used eye switches and micro switches to access the computer. He started to use his first voice output device in 1998.

The best thing for Graham about using AAC is being able to express himself to all people through speech or text, being able to call and get people's attention and having a device which can emulate remote controls and thus, being able to control hi TV, DVD machine, Hi-fi and, most of all, enabling him to access a

desktop computer, and everything that comes with having a computer at your disposal.

When using AAC, he experiences challenges such as keeping up with the conversation, trying to talk in direct the sunlight and people that walk away while you are composing a sentence!

His motto in life is:



**"I might be dumb but I ain't stupid."**

## New AAC Software

### Communication Board Making Made Easy – Matrix Maker

Matrix Maker Plus is the latest advancement in AAC board making software, designed to be the simplest and most affordable software for making communication overlays and educational resources. The software has an easy to use intuitive interface, allowing you to start creating and printing straight away with no need for training or previous experience.

Matrix Maker Plus includes Widgit, Symbolstix symbols and IT Pictures, simply categorized and searchable in the media library. You can also insert pictures from your computer, the internet or even your webcam. Editing images, text, layout and formatting is easy with drag-and-drop and editing features.

The software includes tablets for communication books and boards of multiple sizes, dedicated communication devices, AAC-supported certificates, signs and labels, games and even blank grids or various sizes to create your own templates.



For more information please visit <http://editmicro.co.za/product/matrix-maker-plus/>

**Tamryn Smith**  
**Edit Microsystems**



## AAC suppliers

### Edit Microsystems – a Year in Review

This year seems to have come and gone in the blink of an eye for the Edit Microsystems team. 2015 has seen many exciting changes and developments at our company.

#### Innovations in Inclusion

Edit Microsystems is always on the lookout for the latest innovation that will make education easier to access. In line with this, we launched several new products in 2015 that we believe will make a world of difference in making inclusive education a reality for all.



The Beamz Interactive Music System is definitely the most entertaining product that we launched this year! Play the piano, put your DJ skills to the test or make music with your family using the Beamz. An inclusive tool designed to appeal to all ages and abilities.

The low vision game-changer, the Prodigy Connect 12, came to South Africa in October this year. This remarkable new device is an integrated, digital magnifier that is portable and perfect for the connected classroom. The device is completely portable making it easy to move from classroom to classroom and from home to school.

The Equil Smart Marker is the load-shedding proof device that allows any surface to be smart. Notes written on a whiteboard, wall, floor or door can all be captured and delivered to your smartphone. A great tech tool for teaching!



#### Recognition

Edit Microsystems was honoured to receive several prestigious awards through the course of 2015.

At the beginning the year we were awarded a Frost and Sullivan Best Practices Award for e-Learning in South Africa. Pieter and Jenny

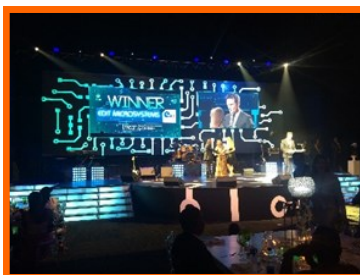


Labuschagne travelled to Monaco to accept the award on behalf of the team and in August this year we were re-awarded it in front of a South African audience.

African EduWeek is one of the biggest events on the calendar for the education industry. This year saw the launch of the EduWeek awards and Edit Microsystems was thrilled to walk away with the ICT Supplier of the Year award. The judging panel, made up of experts in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and education, said of Edit Microsystems “over the past two decades Edit has rendered an excellent service to schools and education departments throughout South Africa.”



In October Edit Microsystems scooped a prestigious award at the inaugural SITA (State Information Technology Agency) Govtech Awards. We were presented with the ICT Innovation and Transformation Award for Large Companies.



Edit Microsystems was honoured to be nominated as a finalist in 2 categories for the My World of Tomorrow Innovation Awards. Among the thousands of applications from all over the country, the innovation that caught the attention of the judges was the eBraille project.

#### A Big Thank You

A huge thank you must go to all our loyal supporters and partners for making 2015 such a fantastic year! We look forward to working with you in 2016.

#### Looking Forward

2016 promises to be one of our most exciting years yet as we celebrate 25 years of Edit Microsystems. Check our website and follow us on Facebook to see all the exciting events we have planned to mark this momentous occasion.

**Tessa Venter**  
**Edit Microsystems**

*PS: Congratulations with all these wonderful achievements, Edit Microsystems team. Looking forward to a new year of collaborating with you. Red.*

## Advertisements

## For your diary...

### AAC Resoure Manual

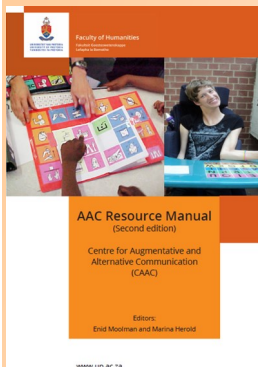
#### The second edition of the AAC Resource Manual is now available

The second edition of South Africa's very own AAC Resource Manual has been released. 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, practical topics are covered, all written by South Africans who are involved with AAC provision.

The manual consists of 15 chapters, dealing with topics such as AAC 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](mailto:liza.siefe@up.ac.za) to order the CD.



### Notes:

#### JANUARY 2016

15 January— extended closing date for postgraduate applications of Master's programmes

20 January—extended closing date for Honours programme applications

25-29 January—MAAC2 student onsite week

#### FEBRUARY 2016

1-5 February—PhD student onsite week

8-12 February—MAAC1 and MECI2 student onsite weeks

22-26 February—MECI1 student onsite week

#### MARCH 2016

29 February-3 March—**AAC training workshop**—come learn about AAC symbols, assessment and use of AAC strategies in the classroom

29 February—4 March—BA Hons (AAC) 1 student onsite week

9 and 10 March (dates to be confirmed) - AAC training workshop 2—AAC intervention strategies for the classroom

7-11 March—BA Hons (AAC) 2 student onsite week

### 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>

### AAC Consultation services by CAAC?

The CAAC offers **AAC consultations** for potential candidates in need of AAC as well as for **Medico Legal** purposes. Please contact Liza Siefe at (012) 420 2001 or [liza.siefe@up.ac.za](mailto:liza.siefe@up.ac.za) for more information.

### NBNBNB:



For future contributions to this newsletter, please contact the editor, Ensa Johnson at [ensa.johnson@up.ac.za](mailto:ensa.johnson@up.ac.za)

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