



NEWSLETTER

**CENTRE FOR
AUGMENTATIVE &
ALTERNATIVE
COMMUNICATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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CENTRE NEWS

Life has been anything but boring here at the Centre this year. We kicked off this year with the 'inauguration' of our new building, as a small thank you to the University for the big privilege of such wonderful facilities. Especially our new lecture hall has been put to good use since. The first occasion for which people crossed its threshold was the

**INTERFACE
Pretoria
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MENLO PARK
0102**

Interface/CAAC parents' open day in February. So many parents attended that even the new hall proved too small! The great need for support groups for AAC users and parents of children with little or no functional speech once again became apparent. Many people were put in touch with each other and in touch with Interface, and hopefully many support networks were created.

Prof Lyle Lloyd and Dr Carol Gossens' visit was next on our calendar. Prof Lloyd from Purdue University is a familiar face at the Centre, and has given the CAAC a lot of input especially regarding research in the field. Dr Carol Gossens' will be fondly remembered by the many attendants of her 2-day-presentation on facilitating communication within the classroom context.

The AAC research seminar in February was opportunity for all those dedicated researchers to get together and share their findings. It was as always inspiring and challenged us to reflect on various aspects in AAC intervention.

The second year Masters students in AAC, first year Honours students in AAC and first year Masters students in Early Childhood intervention have all had their 'run' at the Centre for the first semester. After these contact weeks it is usually difficult to say who is more exhausted: The lecturers or the students!

Our Block course group this year was small but very enjoyable, with people traveling as far as from Pietersburg and Port Elizabeth. Should you be interested in getting to know a bit more on the AAC

basics, remember to diarise this event for next year. The advanced block course (which can be attended after you have attended the 'basic' Block course) is scheduled for the 7th to the 11th of May this year.

On our staff scene: Jill Rose, our Physio, is back from England (missed the sun too much). It is a real blessing to have her back! She and Elaine Cobb, our occupational therapist, are involved in an adult literacy project at Casa do Sol school, which is being enjoyed by participants and facilitators alike.

We were sad to say good-bye to Elmarie van der Merwe, who worked for more than 2 years at the Centre. Elmarie's dedication and motivation will be sorely missed. Elmarie will spend some time working in the UK - we wish her the best of luck for her new job and hope she thoroughly enjoys her overseas stay.

Derrick Poremba- Brumer is our new research assistant since 18 April 2001 - the first ever male staff member (a very brave guy, needless to say; having to cope with eight females!). Derrick is also a first year AAC Honours student.

That just about sums up the Centre News for the first quarter year. Remember that we are here for any AAC-related queries, and (drum roll please) we all have our own extension lines now! In case you need to give us a tinkle, here they are:

Munyane Mophosho	420 3851
Yasmin Opperman	420 4728
Shakila Dada	420 4729
Jill Rose	420 4729
Elaine Cobb	420 4729
Juan Bornman	420 4728
Kerstin Tönsing	420 4727



INTERFACE - PRETORIA

At the beginning of the year a very successful open day was held at the Centre for parents and other interested parties to become more aware of the facilities that the Centre has to offer. It gave the centre a chance to show off its new building and so great were the number of people that attended that our new lecture hall proved to be too small !

This open day was also aimed at trying to spread more information about Interface and the work that they do. Interface is currently looking at expanding so that it becomes a Gauteng branch representing not only the Pretoria but Johannesburg and surrounding areas. If anyone is interested in becoming involved please contact Theo Gallon at 082 5731872 or Elaine at CAAC.

INTERFACE: KWAZULU-NATAL

Interface KZN held our AGM on 26 March 2001 at the ICC in Durban. The AGM was made an important event taking the form of a dinner and speech by Mark Banks who had kindly agreed to be our Main Attraction. He was introduced in the most effective manner by Grant Oosthyzen, with his Delta talker. The large audience were amazed at how successful Grant was at accessing the device with his foot. Mark's talk was enormously encouraging to everyone. He spoke about how all of us have obstacles to overcome in life, and these obstacles are what help us grow. Mark is a very successful computer businessman, and also a successful motivational speaker. In his life he has overcome many obstacles, not least of which being his Cerebral Palsy. Mark is also very funny and had the audience "in the palm of his hand" He said that it is very easy for him to capture an audiences' attention, because they have to concentrate so hard on his speech to understand him! He certainly knows how to work an obstacle to his advantage.

Mark was thanked by Chris Engels who is now a fluent user of his Delta Talker, and had everyone impressed with his use of the head pointer. Later Emile told everyone of his wonderful experience of attending the ISAAC conference in America last year.

Interface KZN, through the efforts of fundraiser, Jeanette Oosthyzen, had raised funds to purchase a second hand device to young Sno. Sno and her parents were delighted to receive the device, and people in the audience were visibly moved to tears at the presentation. Sno has waited a long time for a device.

Margi Lilienfeld ended the evening with a short informative talk on AAC, and showed some simpler AAC devices. Margi also stressed the importance of the multi modal nature of communication, and the importance of the use of gestures and signs. Many people in the audience had not heard of, or seen AAC in operation before, and came away from the evening inspired!

GENERAL NEWS

GRADUATIONS !!!

The CAAC is proud that our Honours in AAC students graduated on the 30th of March 2001. Congratulations to all of you!

This years we had 2 students graduating 'cum laude' (with distinction) Yasmin & Anneri Steyn.

The winner for the Mayer Johnson Best Student award is *Yasmin Opperman*. We are proud of you Yasmin.

The winner for the Anderson Best Progress student is *Michael Mabena*. Well done.

AAC TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Annual AAC training workshops were held from the 26 to 30 March. We had 1st year Honours students with other participants attending. The workshops were informative and the participants were active all the time. We enjoyed having you all hope you will be coming for the advanced AAC training workshops.

MASTERS STUDENTS NEWS

A building alone does not tell a story – but the story is rather told when looking at the people who make up the building. This is also true for the CAAC in 2001. Not only do we have now wonderful new facility, we also have a record intake of Master's students – a total of 13 new people! They come from diverse backgrounds (teachers, speech therapists, physio's and OT's) and they are spread all over the globe – from the UK through Africa all the way to Saudi Arabia! At the moment they are working on their first assignments and are battling through the reading material. As one student put it "*At first I thought it was Greek and as I progress I am convinced that it is actually French, but slowly I am seeing some light...*"

We would also like to congratulate all the students

who graduated at Tukkies' 19th summer graduation ceremony on the 30th of March. We salute Elmarie van der Merwe (Cum Laude), Danita Nel, Tracy-Kim Pye, Almeri Scott, Frances Slabber and Sanet Opperman. Sanet also recently got married – so your congratulations are double!

To all the second year students keep up the good work! We are looking forward to see how your research will enhance the development of knowledge in the AAC field...

First Conference Announcement and Call for Presentations/Papers/Posters On:

“ PROMOTING THE RESILIENCE OF INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN AFRICA ”

3 – 5 OCTOBER 2001

AT THE

**Regent Hotel Conference Centre,
East London, South Africa.**

Jointly organised by Disabled Peoples of South Africa (DPSA), Down Syndrome South Africa (DSSA), Disabled Children Action Group (DICAG), Office of the status of Disabled People (OSDP) and Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (REHAB) .

Contact: ABO Facilitators

Tel/Fax: +27 43 7210607

E-mail: abofacil@iafrica.com

Website:

<http://www.geocities.com/abofacilitators>

AAC RESEARCH SEMINAR

The annual research seminar has finally outgrown it's child's school days and is moving into adolescence.

With that comes a rebellious inclination and a questioning of things that had in the past been accepted as gospel. Who would have thought that the words at the bottom of a PCS picture can in some cases actually cause confusion! Teenagers also believe everybody (except their own parents) and thus we were fortunate enough to have Prof Lyle Lloyd visit us and challenge us with "*best practice*". "*How can you know you're doing best practice if you haven't even started defining good practice?*" he asked. This surely got us all thinking! We want to invite all of our Newsletter readers to join these questioning teenage years of AAC research in our country. The research seminar is usually held in February each year. See you there next time!

AAC IN POLAND

Prof Erna Alant and Juan Bornman will be attending the 3rd Central and Eastern European AAC conference in Kwidzyn (Poland) from 7 – 9 June 2001. Juan will be presenting a talk entitled "*AAC in emerging countries : Where should we start?*" For more information about this conference, contact them at konferencja@aac.pl Watch the July Newsletter for some feedback!

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION PROJECT

The first research seminar in Early Childhood Intervention for 2001 was held on the 13 and 14 March at the centre. It was an informative program with speakers from both the national and international scene. Topic covered included: Evidence based research by our international visitor Prof. L.Lloyd as well as Tubercerlosis and its significance by Prof. Edginton from Wits University. There were also a diverse presentation of the research project. There is a strong emphasis on building research capacity and this will be the bias of research seminars for the rest of 2001. The next research seminar is scheduled for 19 and 20 June and promises international experts from the field of Early Childhood Intervention.

We have also had a successful first on site week for the Masters in Early Childhood Intervention students. It was a challenging experience getting students "on board " with technology and its glitches. However, overall students and staff are feeling up to the challenges to what promises to be an interesting and relevant course with great potential to make impact in the South African context.

AAC IN ACTION

NUWE WENDING SCHOOL BEGIN MET BLIS-LEESPROGRAM

Gedurende April 2000 is die Blis-leesprogram in die junior fase geïmplementeer. 'n Aantal van 25 leerders het twee keer 'n week bymekaar gekom om die basis van die leesmetode aan te pak. Die leerkrag het dan daagliks die tekens ingedril.

Die leerders het woorde aangeleer wat ingepas het by die programorganiseerder. Drie programorganiseerder is met groot sukses aangepak en voltooi en +- 90- 100 is aangeleer. Die woorde en later die sinne is in boekvorm gebind en elke leerder was trots op 'n eie leesboek. Die leesmetode is op 'n proefbasis aangepak en ons is dankbaar teenoor Mev. Baby van der Walt en Mev Maria de Beer, wat bewys het dat die alternatiewe leesmetode KAN SLAAG.

Hierdie jaar word voortgegaan met die leesmetode en ook na 'n volgende fase uitgebrei. Daar word baie uitgesien om weereens nie-lesers bloot te stel aan 'n leesmetode wat hulle geniet.

Petro Kruger
Nuwe Wending Skool

THE CASA CLUB LITERACY PROJECT.

We are delighted to be involved in an adult literacy project at Casa do Sol Enterprises. The level of enthusiasm of the adult workers and staff is quite infectious and makes our sessions a great deal of fun.

This project is aimed at developing literacy skills amongst adults with mental, sensory and/or physical disabilities. Worldwide there is a move towards teaching **functional literacy** skills. The fact that so many adults have not yet acquired these skills does not mean that it is not possible to do so. In the past many children with disabilities were not exposed to literacy teaching at school as it was assumed they would never learn to read and write.

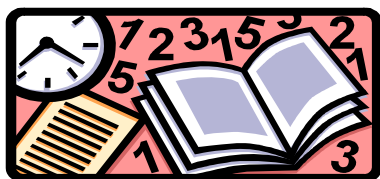
What exactly do we mean by the term **functional literacy** and why are we so concerned about exposing everyone to reading and writing? It is because we are serious about improving the quality of life of individuals with disabilities. Functional

literacy would include areas such as:

- ◆ the skills to read a TV guide, a shopping list, a recipe, order from a menu, street names, recognize symbols in the community such as the Ladies and Gents toilet signs, identify poison or danger signs on labels, to participate in board games etc.
- ◆ the skills write down a telephone number/message, make a shopping list, send a birthday/postcard and many more
- ◆ the skills to handle functional numeracy i.e. money skills, page numbers, street numbers etc.

Several members of the staff at the CAAC were privileged to attend a conference in Washington DC in August last year. One of the keynote addresses was delivered by David Yoder where he emphasized that no one is **'too anything'** to benefit from the opportunity to develop in the area of literacy. What do we really believe? Are the adults with mental disabilities maybe too intellectually impaired, too physically disabled, too visually impaired, too old, too.....? Of course many of the adults in Workshop settings are literate – and should we not give them opportunities to use and further develop this skill?

The essence of the functional literacy approach is that all literacy activities are presented within daily activities or routines. In order to do this we have, together with the Casa do Sol staff, identified 4 activities in which the adults can be involved – getting the coffee shop up and running, planting and caring for a herb garden, writing a newspaper/newsletter and writing 'My Story'. Each participant has volunteered for one of these activities and the fun has begun.



FEEDBACK ON DR. CAROL GOOSSENS' VISIT (19 – 23 February 2001)

I am sure all of you who attended Carol Goossens' workshop are still raving and I hope that your minds are still actively generating ideas to make your classroom environments more interactive. For those of you who were less fortunate and missed out on this great opportunity, we would like to share some

of our own experiences to get you enthused!

Dr. Goossens' is probably one of the most respected classroom implementers of AAC worldwide. She continues to work extensively in New York schools and really practices what she preaches. The results of her dynamic and supportive training programme are evident in her pre- and post- intervention videos.

Upon the first day of her visit, she was inaugurated into a visitation to a few special needs schools to experience some of the conditions our teachers and pupils are exposed to. Children seem instinctively attracted to her warmth and spontaneity. The next two days were invested in staff training. This was a real indulgence for the team, as there always remains new skills and knowledge to be acquired. We were truly inspired by the guidance she gave us and we certainly look forward to helping change the scene in classrooms where AAC implementation is needed or where implementation has not been as effective as anticipated.

She also hosted a two-day workshop on ***Engineering the Classroom for Interactive Augmentative Communication***. Over 100 persons attended the workshop, including teachers, parents, therapists, classroom assistants and AAC students. She is a firm advocate of using Aided Language Stimulation (ALS) as a vehicle for enhancing greater learning and participation (using speech together with graphic symbols) The first day of the workshop she addressed the role and modification of the classroom environment. From personal experience, this is one area we have often neglected in classroom implementation and yet it remains such an important component in successful intervention.

Just a quick checklist for those of you who attended

For all of you who were interested in purchasing the Carol Goossens' communication display CD-ROM, it is now available from Elaine Cobb at 012- 420 4729. Cost R50 !

The new Boarmaker programme has not yet been launched and should be made available end April/ May. Estimated cost at time of going to the press R3 200. Please contact Yasmin Opperman at 012 – 420 4728 should you be interested in ordering it in future.

this day.... have you already done the following?

- Changed the *seating arrangement* in the classroom

- Place children in the correct spot
- Know each child's *representational level*
- Created a *clear visual focal point* – removed all the other background distractions for Circle Time
- Bought, stole or received a *moveable chair* to maintain eye-contact
- Selected the correct *facilitator board size*

Not yet? Well these are easy...try them and see if simple, indirect modifications can make a difference!

She also spent time explaining skills that the teacher needs to acquire. So often we hear teachers say that they were trained for mainstream schools and do not know what to do with special needs children. Carol shared some ideas on group involvement rather than emphasis on each child independent of the group and how to enhance participation by all in the group. Regular use of story and song-boards can really increase the fun and learning of Circle Time activities.

Providing special needs children with the right form of input may greatly change their behaviours and performances. The ALS approach used by her emphasizes that we should pay more attention to input in the form of statements than only asking questions or using commands. How often do we not say to these children: *"Show me what you want" or "Show me the picture"*. The role of the classroom assistant was not negated. Often these persons are used only as caregivers in a classroom context and not as communication facilitators as well. They can play a vital role in supporting both the teacher and the children in their interactions.

It was truly a pleasure to have had Carol visiting the Centre and imparting her wealth of knowledge and experience to those who were motivated to see changes happening in the classroom and to become more effective in transforming the classroom environment. Thus far the reports from teachers who have been implementing the knowledge they have acquired from attending this workshop, have been very exciting and

We are seeing teachers out there motivated again!!!



TRAINING PACKAGES FOR 2001

For those schools interested in further training in the field of AAC the CAAC offers the following training packages:

PACKAGE 1:

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

2 day training (parents/caregivers/teachers/therapists)

Aims of the package:

At the end of the training, trainees will be able to:

- ◆ understand the use and the value of using AAC strategies in the classroom
- ◆ understand how to use multi-modal communication systems in the classroom
- ◆ understand the principles and the application of communication boards

Cost: R5 000 for 2 days training

Follow-ups: R2000 (min. 2 days)

This involves CAAC trainers working within specific classrooms and supporting teachers in the implementation of training ideas from the workshop.

PACKAGE 2:

CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

2 day training (teachers/ therapists/ assistants)

Aims of the package:

At the end of the training, trainees will be able to:

- ◆ Modify the classroom environment and enhance participation and learning through
- ◆ group activities
- ◆ Implement communication boards in a variety of classroom activities

- ◆ Understand the importance and use of functional literacy training

Cost: R5 000 for 2 days training
Follow-ups R2 000 (min. 2 days)

**PACKAGE 3:
LIFESKILL AND EMPLOYMENT
PREPARATION**

2 day training including follow-up (2) R6 300
3 day training including follow-up (2) R8 800

Training includes:

- Discussing the concept of lifeskills
- Demonstrating the different areas of lifeskills training
- Developing a personal lifeskills training
- Training lifeskills
- Teaching trainers to train young adults in money and social skills

Please note:

1. Due to difficulties with carryover from training into the classroom context, it is now compulsory that there be a minimum of 2 follow-up visits after training, regardless of the training package selected.
2. The above packages **DO NOT** include travel and accommodation costs.
3. These prices are subject to change.
4. A minimum of 12 and a maximum of 25 participants are required.
5. Should you be interested in any of the packages, please send a written request of our particular requirements for training to the Centre.

AAC ON THE WEB

JOINING THE AAC LISTSERV

This is meant for all users, significant others and professionals – and as a capacity building for us so that we can all do some brain storming together.

If you are interested in joining please contact Elaine Cobb at fcobb@postino.up.ac.za

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