

**"Assistive Technology Reuse: Pass It On!"**  
**June 27, 2013**

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>> KATHY HATCH: It's a little after 3:00 right now so I think we'll get started. Hi, everyone. I'm Kathy Hatch and I'd like to welcome everyone. This IL Conversation is presented by the IL Net, a national training and technical assistance program of the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) and was organized and facilitated by APRIL. So we're happy you could join us and are looking forward to a Lively discussion. I think we have a nice size group so we ought to be able to accomplish that. We have an hour and a half and I'll start out by introducing our speakers and they'll each talk a little about assistive technology programs of theirs. We want to keep this as conversational as possible and I know questions will come up as we go through the material. So presenters will start and we'll open it up for questions and answers following the presentations, but if you have a question that you really need to ask during the presentation, please do feel free to ask. We want to hear from you. Before we start, if you go to [www.april-rural.org](http://www.april-rural.org) you'll see information about this teleconference. There may be documents put up there after the program. There's nothing up there now. We are providing CART today. And, again, if you want to use CART, go to the APRIL web site and click on today's conversation and you'll see there is a link there for CART and you just click on that and you can join us there.

I'd like to ask everyone to put your phones on mute once we begin the presentations. To do that you use \*6. Since this is a bridge line it's pretty sensitive to any kind of background noise, and we already experienced a little of that. Hopefully we'll avoid as much as possible by using \*6. Also want to remind folks cell phones and speakerphones tend to cause some distortion on the line so if you are using either I would appreciate it if you would click off and recall on a land line if you can.

Once we get to the Q&A part, I'll try to moderate the discussion, but if we could all be as courteous as possible and try not to talk over each other, that would be great. We'll try to go one question at a time. Thanks much. Okay, now I'd like to welcome our presenters today. I'll begin by telling you a little about each of them.

Carolyn Phillips is a nationally recognized consultant in the field of assistive technology and disabilities. She has spoken to numerous groups on topics that include assistive technology, advocacy, self-determination and living with a learning disability. Carolyn serves as Director of Tools for Life. This program is operated under the aegis of the Georgia Department of Labor, division of rehabilitation services. She has published articles in numerous journals, a chapter in a book, and poetry focused on understanding and appreciating people with disabilities. Carolyn has dedicated her

time and energy to promoting independence for people with disabilities through advocacy, education, assistive technology and fundraising.

Next we have Tiffany Clifford who is executive director of Walton Options for Independent Living in Augusta, Georgia. WOIL provides the four core services to 16 counties in eastern Georgia and 10 counties in South Carolina. Additionally, they receive funding from Georgia Tech for the Tools for Life program to provide assistive technology as well as an equipment reuse program, STAR, which coordinates with programs throughout Georgia and South Carolina.

Jim Beck has been Executive Director of Access Alaska in Anchorage since 2002. He has worked in disability rights and independent living in Alaska for nearly 30 years. He worked for the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in a variety of positions and came through the ranks at Access Alaska, beginning as an Independent Living Specialist and then an ADA Project Coordinator. Jim has traveled the state and the nation consulting and training on disability rights and laws, accessibility and related disability topics.

So, again, they're here today to talk about "Assistive Technology and Reuse." And now I'd like to turn it over to Carolyn. Can you go with that, Carolyn?

>> CAROLYN PHILLIPS: Absolutely! Thank you so much for having me. When Kathy and I were first talking about this conversation, we were brainstorming and really trying to make sure it was something that was full of content and that everybody would benefit from it. I was glad I got on early so I could hear folks doing their introduction. Some of you I do know, and hello to those of you who I know and those who I don't know I look forward to getting to know you better.

I'm excited to be presenting today with Tiffany who I'm a big fan of. We do indeed work together. I'm thrilled that Walton Options shares -- we share them in South Carolina, if you will, but they serve South Carolina but also Georgia, and they truly are outstanding in the services that they provide when it comes to reuse, but also the quality of the services, and I appreciate your leadership in that, Tiffany.

One little change to my bio we are indeed at Georgia Tech. I'm sorry you grabbed an old one. It's the same program that works with Walton Options. And, Jim, I as you know am a big fan of your work too and have been thrilled to be in Alaska a few times and watched this program grow. So you all are in for a treat and you're going to be learning from two of the best and most creative. That doesn't mean they haven't made mistakes. We all make mistakes and we learn from them and the thing I like is they're willing to share some of those things.

I'm with the Pass It On Center. The Pass It On Center, was created in 2006. It was an initiative that was developed from recognizing, and this was Department of Education recognizing, that there are a lot of folks doing assistive technology reuse whether in

classrooms or through various government-funded programs, but especially through the Assistive Technology Act program. It's actually written into law under the Assistive Technology Act, and all of the AT Act programs are supposed to be doing reuse and all of them are in some capacity. There are various activities that these states are doing in reuse, but there wasn't anybody providing detailed technical assistance in this area. In 2006 there was a big competition, an RFP was released. We went for it and thankfully we got it and the Pass It On Center was born. And it's grown and grown and grown. Our last big activity that we did was in December of 2012, and we were still the partner with APRIL for this conference that was focused on Centers for Independent Living and assistive technology reuse. I kept it up on our homepage for those of you following the conversation and have access to the Internet I wanted you to make sure you were able to access this. It's the first thing you see on our homepage. If you click on the conference page it tells you about the conference itself, the description, and then you can get quickly to all the presentations and handouts.

The conference agenda was really shaped by folks within the independent living community. We asked, "what is it you want to hear about?" We worked with [indiscernible] and other folks, leaders in the AT community and also within the independent living community and a lot of those folks are one in the same. So we looked at where we are with assistive technology and what have we accomplished. We had a really good keynote that was provided by some folks in California and obviously some folks in Georgia. And then also Misty from Alaska talked about what does AT reuse and independent living mean really. What does that look like? So if you want to see some of those details you can find them on our web site.

Then we also talked about different models. Those of you who might be interested, either you're doing an assistive technology reuse program right now and you're curious as to who else is doing it and how. You can get on and look at the different models out there. Then we had a bunch of concurrent sessions that talked about how to start and improve reuse programs, what policies do you need to look at, what procedures, what are some of the regulatory issues that exist, and then one of the things that I know a lot of you are paying attention to the national conversation, but also participating in it, and a lot of us keep being asked: "What is the return on investment for this activity?" and a lot of other activities that we're doing. It's an interesting time that that's the conversation. And so we actually developed with the Pass It On Center some return on investment tools. You can go once again (to our website) and see a whole presentation that was presented at this national conference about return on investment and measuring outcomes.

Then we also got really practical, and this is where Tiffany -- and I appreciate she weighed in on this and talked about staffing solutions. Really logistics. How do you make these things work? Then we got creative collaboration information and matching equipment to people, promising practices when it comes to tracking inventory. And then it gets even more detailed into specifics when it comes to nursing home transition and how AT reuse plays a part in that.

So there the website is packed full of information, and all the presentations are there, and so -- if you have more questions, we're happy to answer them.

With the Tools for Life program, we do assistive technology reuse, but what we really do is look at our partners around the state and learn from them. And so with the Pass It On Center, we were able to transfer that knowledge, and realize that there are things that we're doing really well in AT reuse in Georgia, and there are things that other states are doing really well. What we found is -- and one of the things we wanted to do with the Pass It On Center is make sure that we could transfer that knowledge easily and quickly.

So we pulled a bunch of folks together and created an online tool and you can get to that tool if you scroll down to the bottom of our web site, and it's called the "indicators of quality for AT reuse." We wanted it to be kind of a play on the idea of raising your IQ when it comes to assistive technology reuse. This is an online assessment for your program. If you're either starting a program or if you have a reuse program, you can go on and go through this very simple tool. We don't track your answers. Nobody's getting a grade for this necessarily. But what we wanted to do is actually give you a tool that would help you when it comes to thinking through the process of what is it you need to think about when it comes to assistive technology reuse? Do you have an accessible program. Do you have policies and procedures? Do you know the difference in different insurances you must have whether you have volunteers or employees? Do you have policies for getting equipment and policies for getting equipment out? How do you train the people that are repairing the equipment. All of those things are addressed in here.

Then the cool thing about this tool, if you take it online, as you answer it will actually point you directly to resources within our knowledge base, and you can also download this tool, and several folks have done that. We track how many people access this and we've had over 250 folks download this tool. And we've had another -- about 135 people actually in programs access the online aspect of this. So it's very active when it comes to helping folks increase the efficiency and effectiveness and also the safety factor within assistive technology reuse.

The thing about this knowledge base that it points to is if you actually go in there and you take the tools, as I said, you can -- it will give you answers and then you can click, and you can get to these resources. Those resources are -- it's amazing, really, how in-depth our knowledge base is. When I was first working on this program on the Pass It On Center, I was hoping -- you know, I thought, gosh, it would be really great if we had 100 different checklists and PowerPoints and things like that, videos that folks could access. And so we started collecting these. We sent out a call and said, "hey, send us your intake form so we don't have to reinvent it." Does anybody have a checklist for wheelchairs? Does anybody have a video on how do you clean casters? Does anybody have an inventory system, a database they'd be willing to share? And the community has been incredibly generous and we have well over a thousand

different resources within our knowledge base.

The modules are really simple and very easy to navigate, and the first one is emergency management. Then we have a whole module on finance and accounting to make sure that you stay compliant. There's a program that I was working with that was just giving out equipment and they were giving -- they were creating donation slips and giving these out, and I said, you know, "How are you doing that?" I knew that this group -- they're not a 501(c)(3) and they hadn't thought about that. They're just like "We're giving receipts for donations." Actually I said you don't want to do that since you're a 501(c)(3). We pointed them to resources to explain it.

We also have human resources, how do you manage the volunteers, as I said. Some great PR and marketing ideas, and even some thoughts -- Kansas did some pilots up there you can copy and they're fine with that. Alabama has some billboard layouts that you can take. We've got lots of folks who have shared fliers. And then we also have organizational structure type things. How should you lay out your reuse program?

Sustainability is a big thing, and so how do you think about sustainability? Click on that and it will take you to resources. And then the two of them that I really want to make sure that you're aware of is program operations, and when you click on that it actually will take you to equipment evaluation and how to create a checklist for how you evaluate various equipment? How do you track your inventory? Then it gets into very specific things as far as sanitization practices and what should you think about when it comes to that. Once again, this is an area where I believe that Jim and Tiffany have excelled in their program operations because they've looked at their states and they've looked at their regions and they've looked at who they really need to serve. So you'll hear more about that from them.

You'll also find hints and strategies for transportation. I know, for example, in Colorado they've gotten very creative in the AT program with getting equipment distributed and this is for demonstration but I think it could transfer to reuse through the library system. Very creative. I know there's somebody on the call from Colorado.

There's another state that's using the Greyhound Bus system and getting wheelchairs, walkers, things like that transported around the state on Greyhound. So creative the way they've done that.

Then it also gives you some ideas as far as the differences and definitions -- a lot of people say they operate a recycling program, but if you're really doing assistive technology reuse, when you're getting that equipment back out to people it's reuse. In the global definitions of the reuse world, recycling is an activity under reuse and recycling means it's end of life, like you're taking that wheelchair and you're turning it into something else. You're tearing it apart and the plastic is going to be made into carpet, if you will, and the aluminum will be turned into something else. So if you are running a program you want to make sure you're using the right terminology because

we're finding that there are people who will donate money if they understand what you're doing, including beautification, like keep Georgia Beautiful or Idaho Beautiful. The vet organization did give the reuse program in Kansas money and a couple other states, California, I know they've gone after that money, too.

Point is, we want to make sure you can get resources at your fingertips in real time and when you need it, especially if you're looking under user services. Making sure that you're serving folks and that you're really running an effective program, that you're meeting goals and that you've defined your outcomes, what you want to accomplish and that you're actually able to do that. And so if you go into that you'll find things like an intake form. Like, how is it -- I don't really like that term. It sounds very medical to me, but it's one of those terms that a lot of people understand. How do you match equipment effectively? And who needs to be involved in that process. So you'll find strategies for that.

Then also user training, making sure -- and one of the indicators of quality is making sure that everybody who gets equipment is trained on that equipment. I was in a reuse program with an independent living center but this could happen in any center that does reuse and a person came in and they said, "oh, I need a wheelchair." And the person said, "okay. What color?" And I was like, huh? What color? And they didn't even think about the size and all that. They said, "I really want a blue one." So, they brought out three different size blue ones and I was like "no, no, no." We need to be much more about matching because we want to do no harm. And so we've got some great tips about that.

One of the cool things about the Pass It On Center is that we embrace the whole idea of universal design for learning. So we have extensive videos and we actually traveled all throughout country capturing these excellent ways of doing business, and we were at Paraquad and captured part of the work being done in Missouri. We have a YouTube channel. If you go to our homepage you can actually find that very easily right on our homepage. And you can click on that and go to that. You can also find these videos in our knowledge base easily and then go through there and navigate that. We also have a bunch of webinars that we've done, and so you can go and get credits for those of you who are interested in getting credits but also navigate and see what topics, like what areas do you really want to brush up on. The last one we did, just did one yesterday -- actually the 25th, it was on Tuesday, and it's called "Raising the Bar: All you need to know about certification for AT reuse." A lot of people would say do I really need to get certified for reuse. The programs I have found that are really considering this, it's primarily -- they're looking at very specific certifications. So, for example, once again, Paraquad was certified for Jayco, which is a complex process. Not everybody has to do that. So if you listen to that webinar you can hear folks figuring out do you need to do this, would you want to do it and why you wouldn't want to. We have a whole bunch of webinars coming up and they are specifically designed from your input. From people saying, this is what we want to hear about. So if you go to our web site you can find all of that.

You can also find over 63 different webinars that we've done on very specific topics and it's pretty much the same topics I was talking about before. But then you'll see twists on it like using social media to extend your message and marketing. Or how to get equipment to refurbish. Or using your program web site for more effective communication, things like that. Succession planning. I encourage you to keep this conversation going, really, keep in touch with us. I hope this indeed is a dialogue and that our time together is the beginning of a connection where we can keep the conversation going.

One way that you can get involved with the Pass It On Center and get information, up to date information, and become a part of the larger network is if you go to our web site, ([www.passitoncenter.org](http://www.passitoncenter.org)) and over on the left-hand side it says "find reuse locations" and there's a map there and you can click on that map, and if you're doing reuse we want to make sure that you're actually listed there. We communicate actively with the folks that are within the network and people that have listed their reuse programs with us. We're looking at developing a co-op program where people can actually buy in a group and in bulk so that we can all get batteries at the same cost or reduced cost or mattresses if you're into hospital bed reuse, or tools, any number of things, tires. And the only way we can do that really is if we work together. So that's one of many things I'm hoping we can do with this National Network of reuse centers and programs and projects.

One other little side note that I am excited about is the way that this community, our community, has stepped up and united and helping during emergencies. Just this past weekend we had two calls that we were involved in with FEMA and with the independent living centers and networks within specific regions. One in Oklahoma and one in Tennessee where we were working on getting assistive technology either reused, gently used and appropriate to folks in need. So I'm thankful and very happy to say that actually we were able to meet those needs. It's the whole network, it's everybody working together. We had folks from as far away as California and Minnesota and then all the way up to Maine that are working together to get equipment to folks during emergencies. So it's exciting to see this grow. I could talk a lot about data if you're interested in that and the movement is actually growing. We've seen folks just since 2006, the national data was about 5,000 pieces of reused equipment being given out to folks with disabilities in the United States through the reuse network all the way up to now, well over 41,000 pieces of equipment, and that's just captured within the AT Act program. I would love to see within our whole community, within the independent living centers, the net data coming in, and that would be a really powerful story.

One other little tidbit that I think is helpful that's become a big part of our network, if you visit our web site, you'll find we put recall information on our web site and we do really try to keep things up to date. So I would love to turn this on over to Tiffany and to Jim so that they can share more of their stories, and I do hope that you learned something today about what we're really trying to do to help you all. I see us as your Pass It On

Center and truly a national effort to improve and make reuse safe, appropriate and effective. With that I'll turn it on over.

>> KATHY HATCH: So Tiffany is going to go next. Tiffany, go ahead and tell us about your program.

>> TIFFANY CLIFFORD: Well, again, I'm Tiffany Clifford with Walton Options, I'm the director, and our program is actually an adjunct to the Georgia Tools for Life program. A lot of what Carolyn just shared with everyone is a lot of the information and resources that we depend very highly on to develop and grow and maintain the program that we have.

So just a little history, which is kind of interesting is that Walton Options as far as a Center for Independent Living was actually an assistive technology resource center prior to becoming a CIL. It was actually the impetus that created the center. So we've had a relationship with the Georgia Tools for Life program prior to having a relationship with RSA. So it was the access to technology and barrier removal and things of that sort that brought the center into being because it started with assistive technology being provided to patients being discharged from the hospital that we had a relationship with and creating that access further into the community to consumers. That then grew into a home mods program with the area agency on aging and barrier removal and keeping folks at home, specifically seniors. So those were the two starts for the CIL and then we applied for the federal money. So our background started with AT.

With that first part of the grant, through Tools for Life, was as an ATRC, primarily a lending library and traveling display of various equipment. It was for lack of a better way of putting it, kind of the touch and feel part of a CIL. Sometimes I know lots of us in centers, have a hard time explaining to people what it is that we really do because it's so individualized to the person and it's about their individual accomplishments and what they want for themselves. And sometimes people like to see -- you know, we have this need -- like a physical representation of something, and AT was kind of a natural fit for that because people who were not within our industry or field could see a person with a disability utilizing a piece of equipment and the independence they gained from that, whether it was at home or at work, play or what have you.

So the display was kind of an open door opportunity for us to travel to different places, different agencies, partners, whether it be a hospital, senior center, school, what have you, and talk about AT as well as independent living philosophy.

We kind of naturally grew into reuse, as a need. What I mean by that is having our home modifications, which also included distributing durable medical equipment, basic equipment such as bathroom devices to seniors, we constantly had people asking for those, and the list was growing and growing. So back in the days when there were only a few of us, whenever we would be in a thrift store or a yard sale or anyplace we



saw a tub bench or a grab bar or anything like that, we would be grabbing it up for pennies on the dollar, bringing it back to the center, trying to clean it and give it back out to folks so they would have access to it.

And this led to conversations in Georgia, as Carolyn said, when the state applied for both the Pass It On grant as well as the STAR network. RSA made those funds available for conversations, though, about whether that was healthy and protocol as far as the distribution of that equipment, risk, because we hadn't really thought about the risk of buying things at garage sales, etc. We were just thinking about, "Oh, my gosh, this is a need people have. Here it is. Let me buy it and give it," but not all the sanitization and things that go along with it. Was it a recall item? Was it properly cleaned, etc. So as we grew the STAR network, a lot of the things that Carolyn spoke about as far as policies were developed amongst the directors in this group and set precedence across the country through the Pass It On Center.

As far as additional funding and support, we had kind of gotten creative because the truth is once we had the reuse center and so many donated items coming in, it really started taking over the center, and sometimes it still does. We had lots of traffic coming in on a daily basis asking for different items. Philosophically we've tried to approach that because we struggle all the time with not wanting to look like a store where people think they can just show up and buy something or get it. We try to reiterate constantly that this is a donation-driven program and it's about what we get in the community and what's available. It's not just somewhere you can come shop and just get something. So we got overwhelmed with that.

We had to kind of back up a few times, and as funding has come and gone, look at how we deliver. One of the things we decided was working best for us was to limit the days in the week that we actually concentrate or have staff concentrating on STAR for people to come in, and we tried to make sure that's communicated as best as possible so that it's not like an emergency-driven program and it fits with consumers' goals and their objectives and their independent living plan.

As it kind of took over, one opportunity we had was to work with AmeriCorps through the University of Georgia. As long as they had the funding there, we utilized AmeriCorps volunteers to actually support much of what we did with STAR. They started managing the database and reaching out for contributions, meeting with consumers who would come in and have this as a need and connecting it to our IL coordinators on staff. That worked well because we were able to pay a minimal amount to have a pretty good, strong staff support system.

Additionally we're fortunate that we're in a medical community in regards to having an OT and a PT school. So we've utilized OT students and PT students to help at times with the training and the communication with professionals outside of Walton Options as to services. They connect donations to us from people who want to redistribute or donate the equipment so that we can redistribute it.

We've found that one of the strongest things in having a STAR network was allowing us to connect on a state level because we're obviously not the only center who was doing the utilization, but also working with Pass It On in Atlanta, which was primarily a redistribution site for equipment and technology. Being in the Atlanta area they had a larger collection of donations, and so we've been able to refer requests to Atlanta, which is 200 miles away for us. On a monthly basis, while the grant was running, they would make deliveries over to us. So we could connect into a larger provider base.

For a time we were able to work with South Carolina. There were funds available that we were actually able to do networking across the state and we still do that on a minimal basis if we have funding available, but the most expensive piece that I find of this program is always transportation. Carolyn mentioned earlier that they are really interested in not just what we're doing, but what all of you are doing to help people get access to equipment. Especially when it may be 50 miles away or 100 miles away and transportation is already a barrier for many of the people that come to the center. So it's a costly endeavor.

While we had money we were able to connect through Ryder truck and we set up a route and we had the center's request and then we delivered. But once that funding changed, unfortunately there wasn't a way we could sustain it as far as actually purchasing transportation. So now we just kind of get creative, and if I'm going to a meeting in Columbia or Charleston or Savannah, you know, I'll take it along, but the unfortunate part of that is that sometimes equipment might sit until somebody is going that direction. Those are some of our struggles.

Just with the make-up of where we've been with the general cuts and looking at other resources. One thing that we did was we asked the customer or the consumer to make a contribution, and in the olden days I used to be very opposed to that idea because I always heard how the consumers had little means, but then I realized that most of the time, or a lot of time, it's important to them to feel some ownership and to have some piece to contribute. So we created a Request Contribution List based on a majority of the items we tend to see the most frequently and that tend to go back out. And, again, we've tried to make it very clear that you're not buying the item but you're paying towards the cost we've had to clean it and prepare it and store it. Because we're trying to separate some philosophical issues as well as some business issues and the liability aspects of being a store or vendor versus redistributing donated items to folks.

It's not required but we do ask for it, and that has actually generated, just as an example, last year, approximately \$18,000 for the center. And on average we have probably about 600 people a year who access the STAR network and a minimal 1200 items. I asked Kathy earlier today what the numbers were since the beginning of our fiscal year and as of right now its 260 people and 400 items since October. So we're at three quarters of the year. So the math on that is pretty close to what we're used to. And now on Tuesdays and Thursdays it's pretty busy kind of in and out the door thing with people coming in. We've also seen a lot more increase actually from provider

agencies who are referring patients or consumers they have to the center for connecting because of lack of financial resources or insurance at this time.

Our latest thing we've been trying to get better about -- we've talked about it for years since we started the program -- we're just trying to get to it because there's more physical involvement in it, has been, in truth, the definition of recycling as Carolyn said earlier. It involves breaking down equipment that has no use as far as redistribution but taking the metal off the plastic and separating out the pieces so that we can funnel it either for cost reimbursement through a recycling center or to some other source that might need the parts. But as I said, it's time consuming, and it takes a bit of physical capabilities to do that, especially with some of the power chairs and the larger pieces of equipment.

One of our other barriers, and it kind of goes back to transportation, is that we have lots of people who call us wanting to make donations, but not many of those people are able to bring the items to us. So for cost purposes, we've established a once a month kind of pick-up time. Unfortunately, sometimes folks don't want to wait that long so they might end up calling Salvation Army, Goodwill or some other agencies to come get the items because they're just ready to get rid of it. So that's a loss to us and it's just something that we haven't been able to overcome at this point because of the costs involved and the physical piece of having staff who are able to go in and lift a hospital bed or a power chair.

Carolyn, anything specifically about our program you wanted me to hit on?

>> CAROLYN PHILLIPS: I -- actually I thought -- I was taking some notes as you were talking because you're always evolving and you've got some great points there. As I've said, I think you all have done a great job, really evolving and changing with what your folks need, and I appreciate you mentioning the part about how your philosophies have changed, because I know I continue to grow, too, in that area. I just thought it was very creative, the employment opportunities you've created for folks.

>> TIFFANY CLIFFORD: Thank you for reminding me. When we first started with STAR network we took that opportunity with money to match to some other money that was available and also working with our VR office, and some of these ideas have only been as good as the people who are in place to keep them going. I don't mean within our agency. I mean within VR or the other institutions. And so at that point we applied for the CDBG, Community Development Block Grant, to purchase specifically, two machines called Hub Scrubs. If you've done any kind of equipment reutilization, you've heard of these. They're like very large dishwashers that equipment goes into for cleaning and sanitization. We were able to use that CDBG money to purchase these machines as well as a couple of trailers, and along with that we developed a *cleaning and sanitization of durable medical equipment curriculum*. Because -- one of the services we have is also as an employment network which is a separate component of

the CIL, and so as we develop classes and opportunities for folks. We were looking for how we could build it around the mission of the things we do such as wanting to provide service as well as creating opportunities for people perhaps in a career. So we took this opportunity with having to do the cleaning and sanitization with the redistribution to create a training class for individuals going through the employment network. Once they go through the basic job development skills component, they can go on to a next level that we call the scrubs class. In that we talk about basic durable medical equipment, customer service, cleaning, sanitization, using the Hub Scrub and using a pressure washer for other aspects. It also includes some basic repair components on some of the common equipment that is redistributed, testing batteries, installing batteries on power chairs and those kind of details, with hopes that maybe a career option for them might be with a DME business or some other customer service type venue. Part of it at the time when it was -- now we only run the class twice a year. Then the next piece they actually did some shadowing at a DME dealership that we work with in exchange for the DME business providing us with some discounts. So that was just a different layer of partnerships. So that was kind of connectivity that we did with our employment skills, as well as getting VR involved in -- like through work trials for people with disabilities to come to the center or to be placed in other agencies for work opportunities.

>> KATHY HATCH: That's really good. So you think -- are you finished, then, Tiffany? Can we move on, then?

>> TIFFANY CLIFFORD: Yes.

>> KATHY HATCH: Does anybody have any questions for Tiffany quickly before we move to Jim? You need to do \*6 to come off of mute.

No questions...

>> JIM BECK: Are you ready for me?

>> KATHY HATCH: Yes, nobody seemed to have questions, so go ahead.

>> JIM BECK: I thought you were talking to me about mute. Anyway -- sorry, Kathy. I really appreciate being able to be a part of this conversation. I think that -- I'm here to represent the distant country cousin of the super creative and professional organizations like Pass It On and Walton Options. So not everybody feels bad. I'm always amazed at these programs and the creativity that goes into them and the different ways and directions that people go to get the job done and how to resource these programs. Really inspirational! And I wanted to give some comps to Carolyn because our reuse program would be absolutely nowhere if we hadn't received a lot of assistance from Carolyn personally and from the Pass It On Center and I still use the web site constantly and probably will for the next many years. So we sure appreciate that.

Access Alaska is like a lot of centers around the country and I think pretty much we've dabbled in equipment loans and reuse since we were started in the early '80s. I've worked at various jobs at this center since 1986 and we were doing equipment loan way back then and it got called the Loan Closet. It remained under that label as a Loan Closet until only really very recently, even though over the years, the last time I kind of did an analysis before our most recent change, we had about 1100 square feet taken up by just equipment loans inside of an 8700 square foot little suite of offices. We had equipment in nooks and crannies and corners that eventually took over our conference room. So we no longer had a conference room.

We had separate off-site storage too and it was really just getting completely out of control because it's such a popular program. So we were really fortunate that Access Alaska was able to purchase a building of its own about a year ago and we've been building it out and just moved in in April of this year. Thanks to the Pass It On Center, we were able to take this kind of raggedy Loan Closet operation with questionable practices at all levels, except for customer service and consumer happiness, and really try to take it to the next level. Part of that is we're not calling it a Loan Closet anymore. We're calling it a Reuse Program until we have a fancy name. But it's been an amazing journey.

We basically took the Pass It On Center's recommendations for a sanitization room and tacked that on to kind of a layout we already had happening inside of our building to try to not have equipment everywhere. And so now we have about 1500 square feet dedicated to this program out of about 15,000 available, and our sanitization room looks almost exactly like the prototype sanitization layout that you can find on the Pass It On Center web site. We just got our Hub Scrub about two weeks ago, which was probably one of the most exciting things that's ever happened at Access Alaska. But the saddest thing was that it was broken, it was maybe broken in shipping, but the guys were so excited, they plugged it all in, got it hooked up to the water and turned it on and it just started squirting water everywhere. So that was a huge disappointment but we got it back up and running pretty easily. It was just a fitting that went a little goofy.

But it's really incredible. Some of the things that I've noticed over the years about this program, and it's sort of hard to know not knowing the audience out there, whether or not everybody is super expert at equipment reuse or there's some novice programs out there or programs trying to make the leap, because we're really in the middle of a huge transition right now at Access Alaska trying to go from a Loan Closet model to a professional, well-run equipment depot/reuse model. So hopefully I can be somewhat relevant here.

The thing that I think really helped us out over the leaner years of the Loan Closet was us trying to focus on what equipment was useful in the community and what people needed, but also what people wanted. Because once people find out that you will accept donations, you'll get in the position of being offered stuff that you probably

shouldn't take, and one of the problems being in Alaska is we also have the mentality, especially among most of us who have been here a long time, you don't ever throw anything out. So it's really hard for some of our people to say no to things, but we've had to learn the hard way over the years that there's some stuff that either you should say no to right off the bat or you should say yes with thanks and make sure that it never goes anywhere near your building and take it to another recycling center or to the dump.

And so when we have analyzed the equipment that's the most useful and meaningful to the people that we serve in our big city, in Anchorage, manual wheelchairs are absolutely the most requested item that we get without a doubt and we can never keep enough of them in stock. We get a lot of power wheelchair requests and a lot of power wheelchair donations, but they're often broken and they can be really expensive to fix. But generally we feel like they're worth it because the need is so high.

We have a smaller equipment reuse program in our Fairbanks office and Fairbanks is a much smaller community, about 35,000 – compared to Anchorage which is a relatively modern City of 300,000. In Fairbanks we don't get many donations of power chairs. It's a completely different market. I'm told in Anchorage we probably get more hospital bed requests, so that's a super popular item. We probably deal with about three hospital bed requests a year and really try to use like a drop ship model with those where we connect the donor with the donee and don't necessarily bring the item into our shop because we don't have transportation capabilities at Access Alaska.

One of the things that I've found really intriguing with equipment loan is for us, anyway, it's really brought in a whole different kind of group of consumers. It's no biggy for us to outfit our kind of general consumer, consumers with independent living goals, that sort of thing, but we see probably the majority of folks who use equipment loan in Anchorage are people who would not normally be consumers of the center. They're like hip replacement people and knee surgery people and all -- all sorts of weird kind of temporary disabilities. Definitely -- the majority are eclipsing regular disabilities.

That's also brought in a lot of professionals, mainly PTs and OTs who come to us first when they have a need for their patients, which also is an interesting thing because then that means that there are many times when we never see the end user of the equipment that we loan out because we're loaning it directly to one of these medical professionals.

One of the bridges I'd like to make on that point is, so not only do you have these consumers who aren't consumers, and just a whole different crowd of people coming in, but what it's created for me, and I wish I had numbers for you and I don't, it's creating a donor development opportunity for centers. And if you've been in the independent living business a while, you've probably come across how hard it can be to have a meaningful enough elevator speech about why disability rights are important and why independent living is well worth filling your checkbook out to support.

Those centers don't always have a fuzzy puppy like you really need for cool fundraising and, of course, in the movement we're careful with our fuzzy puppies because none of us want to work for a charity center, either. Equipment loan turns out to be something that you can explain to Joe and Jane Public really quickly. They can always understand it right off the bat. It's very tangible. And it provides really quantifiable data.

For instance last year Access Alaska loaned out about \$400,000 worth of equipment. So we can tell everybody from legislators to Grandma who just borrowed a walker that we've saved private insurance Medicare and Medicaid about \$400,000 in the state of Alaska. We really noticed this when Grandma started giving us 20 bucks across the counter, before we even ever asked for money because we've solved problems and, of course, at centers we solve problems all the time. But this is such a good, tangible problem solver that has a start and a finish for many people that people are really willing to put their money where their mouth is. Like Tiffany said, if they're asking for a fee from users of the program, it's really not a big leap, and it's especially not a big leap when your customers are PTs and OTs who as medical professionals we're doing some big-time problem solving for those folks.

So we haven't even begun to explore or exploit, and I mean exploit in a good way, the donor development opportunities through equipment reuse. That to me is a really, really exciting area for centers to get into.

I wanted to just talk a little bit more about our new space because -- we do the typical what most of the reuse centers do in terms of sanitizing, repairing and getting stuff then back out the door, but we actually did build some retail-type space, which we've only been in our building since April so I'm not sure how it's going to turn out yet, either. But it's sort of an interesting twist and I was intrigued with what Tiffany said about how they're overrun by people and have to limit the access.

We actually have a little storefront with retail lighting and shelving and display. For one, it's a really amazing way to show off what a reuse program looks like. It's a great way to show funders the front end of the program. It's just a nice presentation. It gives people a nice place where they can fill out forms, where we can do matching and look at various equipment available. So that's been kind of an interesting twist. We hadn't planned that originally.

We became really focused on sanitization because before we met Carolyn we were using a shower that somebody had built, you know, a human being shower that somebody had built in our old office, and at least we were doing something, but, boy, did we have room for growth there because we had really neither the heat nor necessarily the hot enough water, nor necessarily the understanding of chemicals we should be using if we couldn't make water hot enough. So I'm really excited we're going to bring our sanitization into the new century.

As somebody who uses durable medical equipment that we loan out, I'm really, really sensitive to kind of how creepy some of this stuff is that we bring in, and would I want my mom to be sitting on this bath bench? Would I sit on this bath bench? Would I bring this home? And what would my wife say about it? So I appreciate that the Pass It On Center talks a lot about sanitization because I think it's a really weak area for a lot of Centers for Independent Living.

Repair is probably another one. And I certainly would not say that Access Alaska is at the top of the heap. We have huge room for growth in all of those areas. We have yet to really fully understand and adopt all of the sanitization policies and procedures that are out there and available, but we're working on it. Another area for growth for us as a center is repair certification. We happen to have some guys in our center who are just really great with a wrench or welder or whatever you need, so I know their work is good, but I don't tell our insurance company about it, either just because.

But if you have certified repair people then, of course, you can be pretty loud and proud about your repair. And I'm really jealous of Paraquad who have OT on staff. So we have one foot in the Loan Closet and one foot in the Center for Reuse. We're working to make the transition. I just could not encourage centers more to work on it. You can really start small if you want. You can focus on a small amount of really relevant and useful equipment and do a bang-up job at getting it, cleaning it, repairing it and getting it back out the door, and slowly, slowly expand.

It just doesn't have to be a firestorm program. It can be done slowly and carefully. And I think that's a really important point...you have to do it that way because you're putting people's health at risk, frankly, with all of this equipment, whether it's from a sanitization standpoint or the risk of something that's poorly repaired or even poorly fit.

A blue wheelchair, that's such a great story. I want a purple one, too. I know I've used equipment from other centers and one of my favorite centers, a sister center here in Alaska, lent me the crappiest, most ill-repaired wheelchair I have ever borrowed and I swore I never would use their reuse program again, and I talked to their director about it next time I was in town. I gave them another try, and the person brought over a wheelchair for me that was -- it was a kid's wheelchair. It made me think, okay, you guys should not be doing wheelchairs because you don't know about them. You need to loan like maybe crutches or something. You need to start slow, forget about wheelchairs because you can't do them right. The one they lent me would have hurt the next person who borrowed it. That looks terrible for all of us when you get it wrong.

I think, looking askance at equipment reuse and it could put all of us at risk, whereas what I would like to portray equipment reuse as this is going to be an important part of America's response to a growing senior population and to figuring out long-term care over the next 50 years if we don't deal with durable medical equipment reuse, we're going to cost this country money we don't have to spend. So I just think we need to do



every bit that we can to really professionalize these programs. I think centers have a responsibility to be in the game and do it well because we have access to the folks who need this stuff and there's just so many benefits to Centers for Independent Living with equipment reuse.

I could go on and on, but I think I would maybe stop here, Kathy, and see if there're questions or conversation.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. I think that's a great thing. Thank you very much, Jim, and Tiffany, and Carolyn all. This has been super so far. In the audience, folks, if you've got a question, you hit \*6 to come off of your mute and then please do ask a question. Let's keep going make this a conversation now, okay?

>> CAROLYN PHILLIPS: This is Carolyn. I wanted to say, Jim, I'm so thankful for the opportunity to have worked with you and to continue to work with you, and I'm so glad you're my cousin and you're doing a great job. So good job.

>> JIM BECK: Thank you.

>> CALLER: Can you guys hear me okay?

>> KATHY HATCH: Go ahead, Adam.

>> CALLER: This is Adam from Life Center in Farmington, Missouri, and I just love the conversation. Thanks for taking the time to help out a new guy like me, and on the I have a page full of notes and ideas just kind of flew around in my head while you guys were talking.

A couple of things here that I wanted to mention. I mean, first of all, I really appreciate -- I guess it was Jim, the last gentleman there, that talked about starting slow and pick stuff that you know about and kind of grow from there. You know, we're a small center, and we don't have a lot of space. We don't have endless resources. I know nobody else does either. It's pretty much me in charge of a lot of things. I'm doing the TAP for Internet, TAP for telephones, in the durable medical equipment, et cetera. So it can be very overwhelming. So I guess I just wanted to ask while I had a few people on the line here who it seems like are doing a lot and doing a good job at it, what advice would you give to a guy like me who's been doing this for a year who's limited a bit physically, also limited in terms of finances and space, and also in knowledge. I have nothing but passion. I mean, that's my only tool here. So I just wonder what advice you might give in terms of learning when you're fresh -- real fresh, real green to this.

>> KATHY HATCH: Carolyn, do you want to take that one? That sounds like -- you might be able to help. \*6?

>> CAROLYN PHILLIPS: Actually, this is Carolyn. I appreciate the question and definitely the passion. I was thinking actually that it might be good if Jim or Tiffany, if one of you all jumped in first with this, and then I'll be happy to add on.

>> TIFFANY CLIFFORD: This is Tiffany. I was going to say part of what you heard today, two things, one that Jim said, and that is start slow with what you have and what you get. Just make sure it's usable and available the way it needs to be so that you're not putting risk out there.

The second piece is the web site for the Pass It On Center. Absorb as much of that information as you can and understanding, you know, best practices and how to protect your mission. Because while you have the passion and all, and that's kind of what I said that got us started, you know, we had the passion and the desire to make sure people had what they needed because they weren't getting it from other sources, and we went at it with good intentions by grabbing things up where we could but we hadn't really thought beyond some of the risk pieces with it.

I think that site will help you do that so that you can take your mission and what your heart is geared towards and make it functional. Because then as we open a door -- and I heard part of what Jim was saying, too, as far as having the site and the availability, you know, for the storefront, we've got that set up here, too, but then I didn't have the staff to manage it because we have so many people kind of coming to get it. That's why we had to go to limiting it to the days that we do, so that I have staff assigned to actually be able to provide good customer service to people so that they weren't showing up on a day when I didn't have anybody available and wasting their time and I would feel bad about that. So that web site is an amazing resource and the webinars they do and other things they do, too.

>> CALLER: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I really do think the starting small kind of thing is really good advice, especially since it's just me, and I already went on the web site and kind of looked around a little bit. So I definitely do appreciate that.

Now, also, one other thing I wanted to mention, I ran real quick to get a cup of coffee and came back at the tail end of one of you ladies talking about that you -- let's see. Let me look at my notes here -- something about that -- somebody had a cost or a donation that was attached to the things that were being reused. I missed that, and I kind of felt like that was important because, again, we're a small center here, so every dollar counts. And I know that's true of everywhere but somebody said about attaching a cost or possibly a donation and I wanted to know a little bit more about how that worked. Does that ring a bell to any of the presenters?

>> CALLER: Can you guys hear me? Am I on? I'm with Kansas City coalition for independence here in Kansas City, and I might -- I had a suggestion for the guy in Farmington. There's -- I know they're part of the same region. I don't know if I've met him, but they're part of the same Missouri assistive technology kind of co-op thing,

advisory council that distributes some grant funds to operate those kind of programs, and so Missouri assistive technology, specifically David Baker there, could help with some training for the reuse part of it, learning the equipment or whatever it might be, what they're looking for kind of thing. So I would recommend Missouri Assistive Technology for the training part. You know, if the webinars and whatnot are not completely -- I mean, kind of to supplement it.

>> CALLER: Thank you. I appreciate that. I know David Baker a little bit. You know, just to be frank, I'm sometimes a little bit frustrated by inability to be able to connect with those guys like I would like to. Seems like they're always wanting to -- they're obviously very interested in high-tech stuff and I've said it before, I'll say it again, I've never served anybody in a year and a half that has an iPad. So I have a little bit of trouble connecting with them. I love them. I think they're great people but they're kind of far away and it's a bit hard for me to connect with them. And also, you know, I think that they just have maybe been in the game so long that they can't understand maybe how it feels to be new and with limited resources out in the middle of the country somewhere. So I definitely appreciate that and I'm not knocking them whatsoever, but -- and David has taught me a lot. So I appreciate that and I just wanted to let you know that.

>> CALLER: If I can help in any way, let me know. I name is Matt Rumsey. I'm in Kansas City also, so I'm little way away.

>> CALLER: I appreciate that, Matt.

>> TIFFANY CLIFFORD: Matt brings up a good point. I don't know that Carolyn hit on this necessarily, and I don't want to assume that everybody knows, but we talk about at the Georgia Tools for Life program and that is part of the Tech Act program and all states should have Tech Act and some sort of program, but each is delivered somewhat differently. Georgia has been through various partners across the state to deliver services, whereas South Carolina is more centralized to the actual recipient of the grant for their services.

Carolyn, do you kind of want to make sure folks know how to access who their state program might be for that?

>> CAROLYN PHILLIPS: Absolutely, yes. Thank you for bringing that up. I did want to let you know that I get it when you're talking about the difference between serving folks in a rural area versus major urban areas, and the resources that are available, and one of the things I've really enjoyed about working with you, Jim, and with Tiffany and other folks that are serving rural areas is how creative we can get in trying to help. So I did want to let you know if you want to reach out to me, you can, and I will be more than happy to go into detail with you about some of the solutions that are out there.

And my e-mail, I'm sure, Kathy, you'll give it to everybody, but it's simple, but it's

[Carolyn@passitoncenter.org](mailto:Carolyn@passitoncenter.org) .

The AT programs, Tiffany, you're right, that's one of the things in Georgia I'm really proud of. The person who created Tools for Life started relationships early on and her name is Joy, and she is the PI for the Pass It On Center and also wrote the grant. But she insightfully started working with independent living centers 20 years ago when we first started, and so that model definitely has served us well over the years. And we've increased activity with the independent living centers. Not all ATI programs have done that same model. Just like Tiffany is saying, everybody is different. But to get more information about your AT Act program you can go to the [www.RESNA.org](http://www.RESNA.org) web site and you'll see Catalyst Program and if you hit that it will give you a listing of every program and I encourage you to get in touch with your AT Act program. If you need my assistance in making an introduction I'm happy to do that. I know all the AT Act directors or people on their staff. Some have switched up recent but I have positive relationships with almost everybody within our AT Act community. I hope that helps in answering some of your questions.

>> CALLER: Thank you. I appreciate that. One last thing, and then I'll let somebody else jump in here. But, again, I was interested in that attachment of some sort of cost with the product provided. Is that how that works, like when somebody comes in to get something, you just simply ask them for a donation but there's not an attached or fixed cost? Is that pretty much how you have that working?

>> TIFFANY CLIFFORD: We established an Estimated Cost List based on the value of the product and so we developed a portion of a reasonable cost, and it's usually about 10% or less of what the cost would be retail and estimated based on what it's costing us to clean it and redistribute it, and, again, it's a requested contribution from the consumer. Then along with that, though, we've also worked with some organizations or vendors to provide at-cost items for folks so we connect them to that, and that's not, those are not used items. They're new items.

>> CALLER: Okay. Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: Any other questions out there? Lots of folks interested in AT. Got questions? No? Well, presenters, is there anything else you would like to add in closing?

>> CAROLYN PHILLIPS: This is Carolyn, and it was really and truly great connecting with all of you, and I loved sharing the conversation, obviously, with Tiffany and with Jim. I would encourage you all -- I'm one of those that likes to process things. I don't always ask questions live on webinars and these types of forums, but I do hope we do keep the conversation going, and so feel free to reach out to me if you have more questions. Navigate our web site. I'm happy to hear some of you have actually done that and I actually received a couple e-mails from people who are on this call now. So I'm glad you're reaching out already. And I would encourage you really and truly to

learn from what Tiffany and Jim have done and continue to do. Jim, I hope to see you again someday. I absolutely enjoyed that. And Tiffany I hope to see you a lot, lot sooner. So thank you. Yes, thank you, for including me in this conversation.

>> KATHY HATCH: Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay. Well, I'd like to thank everybody for coming on the call today. Especially, I would like to thank our presenters. You guys did a great job. I really appreciate this. And also thanks to our CART folks and to SKIL for recording this call. Just so you know it will be on the APRIL web site within a couple days, both in audio format and as a transcript. So thanks for being here today.

Again I would like to invite you to our web site where you'll find documents discussed today and I'm going to add a few of those links that were talked about as well. Let's see. And just look for IL Conversations and if you have any questions, contact me at [kathatch@charter.net](mailto:kathatch@charter.net).

This IL Conversation is presented by the IL net which is operated by the Independent Living Research Utilization program at TIRR Memorial Hermann in partnership with the NCIL and the APRIL. Support for the presentation was provided by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. No official endorsement of the Department of Education should be inferred.

Again, thanks, everybody. And good-bye and take good care! So long.

[end of webinar]