

## Interface National Newsletter



**Centre for  
Augmentative and  
Alternative  
Communication**

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**Interface promotes  
communication for  
people with complex  
communication needs  
by supplementing  
existing communication  
with gestures,  
communication boards  
and assistive  
technology (thus,  
augmentative &  
alternative  
communication)**

### Individual Highlights

|                        |           |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Interface South Africa | Page 2    |
| Regional News          | Page 2-3  |
| School News            | Page 3-5  |
| This and That          | page 6-7  |
| Aided Language         | Page 7    |
| For your diary         | Page 8    |
| CAAC news              | Page 8-9  |
| Users' forum           | Page 9-10 |
| Technology Talk        | Page 11   |

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### Editorial

**A year to remember!**

2004 is drawing to a close, what a year it's been! We South Africans have much to feel proud of! Ten years of democracy, Olympic and world records in swimming, not to mention the gold medals! The 17-year old Oscar Pistorius, a double amputee stunned the world in the Para-Olympics, breaking countless world records. He even fell at the start of one of his races, got up and finished first! To mention but a few!

It's been an incredible year for AAC in this country, beginning in February with the highly successful Regional African AAC conference, the first of its kind in Africa. The approximately 250 participants came from all over South Africa and the world. AAC users, their families and friends, AAC researchers, therapists and teachers came together to learn, exchange ideas, network, see old friends

and make new ones. In all, 84 presentations were made. However, there was of course some time for fun! Everybody, young, old, in wheelchairs, **everyone** danced the night away to the sound of the Phenduka Jazz band! Even though Mother Nature blessed the conference with rain throughout the three days, I'm sure everyone there would agree the sun was and still is shining very brightly for AAC in South Africa.

In July Bruce Baker graced our shores, strengthening ties and presenting very enlightening workshops in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria. He enjoyed his trip so much that he is set to return in March next year.

In October a few South Africans made their way to Natal, Brazil to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> biennial ISAAC conference. From all accounts South Africans

now seem to have acquired a cult-like status within the international AAC community, complete with groupies! Everybody is keen to visit and/or collaborate with us!

Meanwhile here at home the tremendous work by many families, teachers, therapists and others continues. Great strides are being made towards inclusion, as demonstrated by Pathways Polokwane and Mitchell House.

On a personal note I would like to thank everybody for their contributions throughout the year.

2004 has truly been a year to celebrate. We all look forward to all the potential the New Year holds. May you all enjoy the much welcome rest and the company of family and friends. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a blessed and joyous festive season!

**Martin Pistorius**  
Editor

[martin.pistorius@up.ac.za](mailto:martin.pistorius@up.ac.za)

### Chairman's report

It is hard to believe that we are already in the month of November, it is only about 6 weeks to Christmas and the year 2004 is rapidly drawing to a close. There has been limited activity by the Interface SA committee during the past three months but the branches have continued with their regular activities.

We still need to appoint a treasurer. I again **appeal** to any Interface member (preferably from the Gauteng area) who has a flair for financial matters and is willing to assist us with this aspect of our organisation, to please contact us. I believe that we could co-opt such a person onto our committee.

Most of the things we have been able to achieve relate to distribution of funds to the branches. After reconciling the income from the Silent Auction that was held during the First Regional African AAC Conference, during February 2004, the proceeds are being distributed to the various branches. The balance of the Lottery funds, which remained after finalisation of the conference costs, is also being distributed to the branches. The funds are to be used to purchase equipment required by the branches to enable them to create awareness of AAC in their respective areas, as well as materials to be used for development of low level AAC systems and training. There were also some funds made available to contribute toward the costs of running awareness programmes in the regions served by the branches.

The Lottery Fund Distribution Trust has moved to another

building and have reorganised their staff. Because of this, it has been difficult to contact the correct person who would be able to advise us on the status of the joint application, that was submitted earlier this year by the CAAC and ourselves, for the allocation of funds for the 2004/2005 period. We are uncertain of whether any funds have been allocated to us.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the readers of our newsletter, a joyous, peaceful and blessed festive season and everything you may wish for in 2005.

**Rodney Pistorius,**  
*Chairman*  
**National Coordinating Committee**  
**Interface South Africa**  
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## Regional News

### Interface KZN:

Interface KZN has wonderful news! We are presently looking for new premises for our Interface office and AAC resource centre. This is a direct result of the generosity of the Community Care Centre and we would like to thank Rod Colenbrander and Mike Strong for submitting our proposal to the board of Community Care. Di Maitland and Felicity Jonck, Interface KZN committee members, quickly formed a "housing sub committee" and are busy "house-hunting" in the Pinetown area. The timing was perfect as Hirsch's Appliances had approved Interface-KZN as one of 25 non-profit organisations to benefit from their 25<sup>th</sup>

anniversary and have donated household appliances including a fridge and a microwave to Interface KZN. Other equipment donated by Hirsch's included a digital video camera. We have so often wanted to videotape children and adults using AAC in daily contexts, in the community and during AAC and literacy intervention so we are thrilled with this and hope to show some videotapes in our next workshop. Our grateful thanks to Allan Hirsch for approving Interface-KZN as a beneficiary and for this generous support.

with a retired gentleman who had a stroke two years ago. In addition, the devices are available for use on a trial basis for individuals requiring AAC as well as for training purposes.

We would like to thank the Chemicals Division and in particular, Edwina Baxter, Human Resources Manager and Transformation & Communications Advisor, for this amazingly generous donation.

Our congratulations to Chris Engels, Interface KZN committee member and DetaTalker user. Chris was awarded the coveted Monty



*Back: Brendan Bowdler, (Devices SA), Edwina Baxter, (Shell) Ben Jonck (Interface-KZN chairman), Candice Susman (devices SA) holding the Springboard.*  
*Front: Chris Engels and Daniel Ngcobo (Interface-KZN)*

Additional wonderful news is that the Chemicals Division of Shell South Africa Energy (Pty) Ltd, donated two speech generating devices, a Springboard and a Lightwriter to Interface-KZN. These are our first substantial devices and within days of their arrival during AAC evaluations, the Springboard during the assessment of a young girl whose home language is isiZulu and the Lightwriter

Goldstein Memorial Prize at Open Air School's recent prize giving ceremony. Chris was awarded this for his determination, perseverance and self control. Chris also attained half-colours for his achievement in the National Boccio Championships where he received two silver medals. He has been chosen for the games in March from which the National Boccio team will be selected. Way to go, Chris!

It was heartening to see the dedication of therapists and educators who attended the combined Interface-KZN and Comm-Links workshop on the AAC software programmes, Boardmaker, Speaking Dynamically Pro and Writing with Symbols on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Our thanks to Celeste Mukeibir of Inclusive Computer Solutions who loaned us a copy of Speaking Dynamically Pro for the workshop. This programme has subsequently been purchased by Interface-KZN and parents, therapists, educators and anyone who may require this programme may now try it out on our computer. We also have a Demo CD available of the Sensory Software programmes including The Grid, WordWall, AllWrite, Windbag etc.

*Margi Lilienfeld*

### Interface Western Cape:

Interface Western Cape has a dynamic group of committee members working together to promote AAC in the Western Cape. Our focus this year was on getting the branch up and running again, but we still have a way to go in becoming more effective in promoting AAC and supporting AAC users in the Western Cape. Graham Clarke has been busy with a learnership programme, which has been a wonderful opportunity for him, but he has been sorely missed in the committee discussions. We wish him everything of the best in his studies. Maureen Casey has been a valuable addition to the branch and attended ISAAC

2004 in Brazil (*lucky fish!*). She has a great deal of knowledge and experience to share, starting off by teaching us the Boardmaker programme. Making AAC boards is now so much easier!

We will be having a High Tea on 20 November as a fundraiser as well as a closing function for the year. We hope to have some prominent people there to champion our cause. The money raised will be used to help purchase a computer for one of our young AAC users from a disadvantaged community. Fundraising is one of our priorities for next year to assist AAC users in obtaining AAC systems.

We have a number of training events planned for next year. These include a follow-up workshop by Bruce Baker on Minspeak, workshops on using "Clicker" and a workshop on AAC devices where we hope to have the CAAC involved (I'm sure we'll find an excuse to get them to Cape Town ☺).

We definitely need more members and support and would warmly welcome anyone interested in joining. Thank you to everyone who has given their time, energy and resources this year to support us.

*Nicky Eyre*

### Interface Gauteng:

The parent group at Nuwe Wending is going from strength to strength, with a dedicated core of parents who have really shown initiative in expanding the symbol booklets together with their children.

Our most recent addition to the booklet has been a Thakalani Sesame board with all the favourite characters.

We have also had our first awareness campaign – we decided to start back home at the ranch and hold an open day at Nuwe Wending School for teachers and parents to find out more about AAC. Heidi, the speech therapist of the school and Corneli (CAAC) explained the basics of AAC and how it is being implemented in Nuwe Wending. The boards and posters were exhibited. The highlight of the programme was, of course, the song item of the learners with LNFS who sang/signed 'Bana ba sekolo'.

We hope to expand our awareness activities in the next year. Information sessions are also planned for parents, for example to find out more about tax benefits which parents of children with disability are entitled to.



This year we will still hold a Christmas party to end 2004 off on a fun social note. We hope that all Interface members are looking forward to a well-deserved break and we wish everyone a very blessed Christmas time

*Kerstin Tönsing*

## School News

### News from Pathways Roodepoort

Very exciting news for Pathways Roodepoort! Not only have we finally received our NGO Registration Number (034-468-NPO), but we also have a new and permanent staff member called Balisa who is currently undergoing training at Pathways. She has already proven to be indispensable to Fay (our Principal) and is a really fast learner. Her obvious love for special needs children makes her the ideal person to assist Fay.

Our biggest problem is that we do not have a little bus to transport our children but we are working feverishly in order to address this huge source of concern. It is not as easy as people think to get a vehicle, new or second hand, "donated" to even such a worthy cause, so we are going the route of finding a deposit for a 2nd hand vehicle and selling advertising in order to try to make the monthly payments. Watch this space for progress on obtaining wheels.

In September 2005, my husband Chris and I will be climbing Kilimanjaro, leading "Team Pathways" to the summit to raise money for Pathways Roodepoort. Wild Frontiers is busy arranging the climb and has planned that we'll summit two days before full moon. I am busy negotiating with Kyknet who seem interested in sending two cameramen up with us to document our climb. Once Kyknet have committed themselves, it will

be easier to encourage big business to support the climb for their own exposure by sending representatives of their companies to join our team while donating money to our precious cause. Those adventurous souls out there who have toyed with the idea of taking on the challenge of this giant volcano are welcome to contact me for details.

The flag of Pathways Roodepoort will fly at Uhuru Peak! We are climbing the highest mountain in Africa and the largest free-standing mountain in the world for severely disabled children who will never climb Kilimanjaro but instead climb their own mountain every day just in their struggle to improve, endure and live.

*Julie Botha*  
Cell: 083 653 5655

### **News from Pathways-Polokwane**

Pathways-Polokwane has had a very busy time over the last few months. Our Inclusion programme has continued and the positive effects thereof are heart-warming. Naldo amazes us each day with his love for reading and we are extremely proud of Kgaugelo who has now joined him with her new found ability to read three letter words! They make quite a formidable reading team! One would expect the children to be tired and weary near the end of the year but our children continue with their boundless enthusiasm to learn and discover the world! Babi is discovering the wonders of division and is quite thrilled with the entire concept. Due to relocations and other Family matters we found

ourselves with three openings... these were however very quickly filled and we delight in our new children and their unique and exceptional personalities which are now part of our family!

AFROX Polokwane included us in their annual Bumbanani Day and treated our children to a day of fun. Kuda took our breath away when he independently decided to entertain the crowd with his dance moves! Naldo, as usual, felt the urge to say a "few words" and ended his spontaneous speech with a resounding AMEN!

AFROX were kind enough to donate two wonderful hammocks, a mini hi-fi system and chalkboards for our new school. We were also extremely fortunate to receive kitchen appliances from our local Vryburger Society, which we will use to equip our kitchen unit at our new school. We are most grateful to both organisations that have so generously assisted us.

We look forward to our upcoming annual Christmas concert and know that our children will woo the crowd with their angelic performance. We wish you all a Blessed Christmas and much joy over the festive season.

*Sue and Ruth and all at Pathways-Polokwane*

### **News from Pathways-Kloof**

What a busy year this has been, we can hardly believe that we are coming to the end of 2004. We have had so much fun learning about musical instruments, the

different countries around the world, the sea and all the creatures that live in it and now we are learning about the wild animals of South Africa. This year we did not have a sports day but decided to go to Salt Rock beach to enjoy the morning seeing sea creatures. We were lucky enough to see some dolphins that really put on a show for us. Some children enjoyed exploring the rock pools while others enjoyed playing in the sand building sand castles. All who were there for the morning had fun. Thank you to all the parents who helped to transport the children, it was well worth the time. Thank you to Reena Makhani who provided lunch for all of us.

In July this year Bridgit Wren came from Cape Town to train 8 therapists for Level 1 NCR. This is a therapy designed by NILD to help Learning Disabled children. Jenny attended this two-week intensive course and is implementing all that she learnt. Thank you Jenny for giving up your time in the Holidays to train.

In August this year Pathways began presenting the Course in "Early childhood intervention" for people who wish to train as paraprofessionals. Nine Students attended lectures twice a week and the lectures are prepared and presented by Shaelene. The students are presently completing the practical module of the course at Pathways.

We were very sad to say goodbye to Wendy Pollecutt our Speech Therapist who has gone to Madagascar to run a school, but we welcome Kirsty Nourse who

has taken Wendy's place. We would also like to thank Shelly Broughton, an Occupational Therapist who has been coming in to assist us in setting up appropriate Sensory Motor Integration programmes for our children. We really appreciate the insight and advice she has shared with us.

We will be having a pageant during school, on the 3rd December at 9:30. All our children will be participating in the pageant so we hope that all parents will be able to attend. We will also be having our usual Carol Evening on the 3rd at 18:00 and everyone is invited to attend.

Finally we would like to wish you all a very blessed and safe Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

*From all at Pathways-Kloof*

### **The Key School for Specialised Education**



The Key School has been in existence for 35 years and is situated in Parktown, Johannesburg. It is one of seven schools in the country that specifically caters for children with autism. Not all the children who attend the school however, are autistic. The overriding problem that most of our children experience in their young lives is a variation of communication disorders.

A very highly qualified staff that comprise of teachers, a psychologist, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, a music teacher and class assistants is currently working with seventeen children. Many of the staff are trained in augmentative and alternative communication and class activities are enriched with PCS symbols which are very visible in all the classrooms. Intervention is based on Individual Development Programmes (IDPs) and the emphasis is on life skills training which allows the children the opportunity to be as independent as possible.

There are termly themes (this term it is "Transport") and each week is geared towards one aspect of the termly theme. There are weekly outings that enhance the themes and which offer the children real life experiences and enjoyment.

The age range of the children is between three and a half and fourteen years. The older children are being introduced to vocational training. Computers with touch screens and special needs software are shortly to become part of the curriculum. We are busy practicing for the concert on the 3 December when we will also have a prize giving.

We are excited about our Open Day on the 17 November because our new patron Mr Saki Macozoma will be visiting us for the first time. We are hoping that his association with us will benefit us greatly as we rely heavily on donations.

**Jenni Gous**  
Tel. 011 726 2445

## In the Classroom

*Wil jy nog hê?  
Nee ek is klaar.*

### **Augmented communication for a boy living with HIV.**

About a year ago I started working at St Joseph's Home for children with chronic and terminal illnesses. One of the first characters I met was Yonela (not his real name) - a short, round, four-year old with a crooked smile. An infection of his facial nerve left the right side of his face paralysed. He also had a moderate hearing impairment after suffering from repeated middle ear infections. I realised that his speech was not very intelligible and that he experienced frequent communication breakdowns.

I started using key-word signing informally during natural routines such as mealtimes and outdoor play. While speaking to him, I used a manual sign for the key words in the sentence, focusing on early developing words (core vocabulary) such as "more", "finished", and "no", "good", "open", etc. The preschool teacher was taught the signs and used them during class activities. Specific vocabulary, such as body parts, numbers, animals and food was taught, used in sentences with core vocabulary. At first, signs had to be prompted, but now he uses the signs spontaneously. Yonela's favourite new word is "olifant" - he points to a picture on the wall and says "Daa olitat", making the sign. Using signing to augment his speech has increased Yonela's expressive communication.

I hope this has inspired others to try manual signing as a strategy for developing the communication of children with developmental delays.

*Nicky Eyre (Speech Therapist, St Josephs Home)*

### **Thoughts on assessing literacy skills of young children who use AAC**

As it gets to the end of the year, when decisions have to be made about children's placement, we have had several requests from educators in LSEN schools asking about ways to determine the reading and word recognition skills of children in the early grades who do not have functional speech and require AAC.

An alternate reading assessment battery is being developed by David Yoder, Karen Erickson, David Koppenhaver and Janet Strum in the USA but until this assessment tool (Reading: ABC) becomes available we need to rely on other ways to assess a child's literacy ability and in so doing, validate the progress that these children are making.

One procedure that has been extensively used and is applicable from a first grade reading level is the Maze procedure. In this procedure a reading passage (about 120 words long) is adapted by deleting selected target words (approximately every 5<sup>th</sup> word) leaving blank spaces in the story or sentences. For each word that is deleted, three choices

are provided, including two alternate choices and the correct word. One of the alternate options should be an incorrect word that is the same part of speech as the correct word and the second alternate word should be from a different part of speech. Alternate words should be similar in length to the correct word. These options must only be presented visually to the child and the child can make their selection using the method that is motorically least taxing for them. Options can include eye gaze or using a switch with scanning etc. A percentage of accuracy is obtained by dividing the number of correct responses by the total number of responses. Should the child achieve an accuracy level of 85% or higher it is time to move to a higher reading level. An optimal instructional level is at 60 – 70%. This procedure provides a systematic way to assess and monitor paragraph or sentence reading informally and both David Yoder and David Koppenhaver have described ways to use this method with children who use AAC.

1. Standardised formats of reading tasks can also be adapted as follows:  
Single word reading comprehension: the child matches a printed word with a choice of pictures/picture symbols e.g. from an array of 5 choices. Include pictures of words that begin with the same initial letter as the printed word. As with the maze procedure the words must not be read aloud by the educator. Once again, the easiest mode of selection should be used by the child. Alternatively, if a child uses

manual signing they can sign the printed word. Similarly a child who uses Minspeak can select the icon sequence to show they have correctly read the word and in these instances the pictures may be superfluous.

2. Reading words: This technique can be applied to both regular and irregular words. In this instance the educator reads or says a target word and the child is required to identify the word from an array of at least 3 printed words. Karen Erickson suggests that the difference in results with this type of presentation is less than 6 months compared to the child reading the word aloud so a reasonably accurate "word recognition reading age" can be determined.

3. Sentence reading comprehension: The child is presented with a printed sentence and has to indicate "yes" or "no" as to whether the printed sentence makes sense. The child reads the sentences using their own method e.g. some children make vocalisations or form the appropriate manual signs as they read. In this format it is clear the "examiner" must not read the sentences aloud.

4. Passage reading comprehension: Child "reads" passage and then responds to questions about the content. Questions should vary in format from "yes/no" questions to single words and short phrases, once again using a selection method appropriate for the child from a limited array of options.

Phonological awareness tasks can be adapted as follows:

1. Blending words: The "examiner" presents a word

by saying one sound at a time and the child then identifies the word from a choice of at least 3 pictures.

2. Phoneme analysis: The "examiner" gives a stimulus sound e.g. the short "a" sound and the child indicates which of two or more pictures/picture symbols e.g. "rat" and "red" contains the "a" sound. Make sure the written gloss is not included on the picture/picture symbols and that the meaning of the pictures is clearly depicted or known to the child.

So often educators have an excellent idea of how well the child in their class can read despite the limited intelligibility of the child's verbal output. However, they may have to validate their evaluations using one or more of the above strategies. As an AAC interventionist I have been amazed at the ability of children, with severe disabilities who require AAC, to learn to read despite limited time and opportunities to read compared to their peers as well as limited tuition. In conducting a literacy assessment we need to be able to guide intervention, so it is of prime importance to look at environmental factors including literacy opportunities (e.g. how often can the child read books that they have chosen?), accessibility barriers (e.g. can the child turn pages?), attitudinal barriers (e.g. do the parents and/or educators have the expectation that this child will be able to read?), knowledge barriers (e.g. what strategies are used to allow this child to ask questions about what is being read), skill barriers (e.g. what approach to

reading will best suit the learning style of a child who is having difficulty linking the grapheme to the phoneme?). So often these children have less reading time and tuition when their need is actually to have more.

*Margi Lilienfeld*

## This and That

### Origins of the word Handicap

The following is taken from The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

HANDICAP - First recorded usage 1653 [Apparently from the phrase "hand i' cap" or "hand in the cap". Formerly the name of a sport described under the name *Newe Faire* in *Piers Plowman* where it appears that it was a custom to barter articles, and to give "boot" or odds, as settled by an umpire, with the inferior article. All the parties, including the umpire, deposited forfeit-money in a cap. The name refers to the drawing out of full or empty hands to settle whether the match was accepted or not.]

1 - The name of a kind of sport having an element of chance in it, in which one person challenged some article belonging to another, for which he offered something of his own in exchange.

The dictionary gives no definition which specifically covers the concept of a "handicapped person" in the sense of a person with a disability. However, definition 2b is;

b. Handicap race (shortened handicap): a horse race in

which an umpire (the handicapper) decrees what weights have to be carried by the various horses entered, according to his judgement of their merits, in order to equalise their chances. 1786.

And also;

4 - The extra weight or other conditions imposed in equalising the chances; hence any encumbrance or disability that weighs upon effort. 1883

So it is clear that the derivation is not rooted in the concept of begging at all. It's a gambling term. In light of all of that.....I guess I want to ask: Is the term any less offensive for being rooted in the concept of "encumbrance" (being weighted down) rather than "dependency" (begging to survive)?

*Pam McLaren*  
*Disabilty Action Research Team (DART)*

### A thought and a half

I often take inspiration for my position at the Key School from Jean Vanier, a Jesuit priest, who started the L'Arche communities in Canada in 1965. These communities offer residential care to adults with special needs and he writes regularly about his experiences with those who would otherwise be rejected by society.

He says: "They (individuals with special needs) have been chosen by God to confound the powerful and the intellectually capable, through their simplicity, openness and love. I sense more and more the vocation of our people and the mission of L'Arche: to create

communities, networks of friends, with and around the weakest. There we learn to love and carry one other, to share our life together and thus become a sign in a world of competition and individualism, that love is stronger than hate. This is our way of struggling for justice and peace day after day.”

Now that is a thought and a half isn't it?

*Jenni Gous*

**When I go to the Himalayas, I utter these words to myself:**

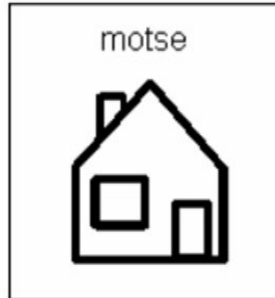


You are the most beautiful thing on this beautiful planet. Your magnitude attracts people from around the world. You cannot be conquered without your permission. You have the right to reject those people you don't like. Those you like, you bring them back year after year; to those people whom you love most you give them the ultimate paradise and you keep them forever! You gave life to India. You show your beauty in full moon nights, in broad daylight. You absorb the first rays of the sun. O you look so beautiful that your beauty cannot be compared with anything of this planet. I bow, bow and bow in front of your magnitude.

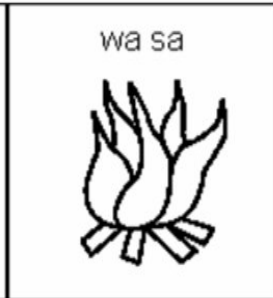
*Sayomdeb Mukherjee  
(from his Words +/ISAAC Outstanding Consumer Lecture; 2004)*

**Aided Language Stimulation Corner**

This song was taught to CAAC staff at the recent training event by teachers from the North Western province. If you need to know the melody, you are welcome to phone the CAAC; staff will gladly sing it to you over the phone.



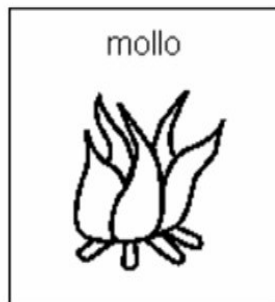
Motse  
The house



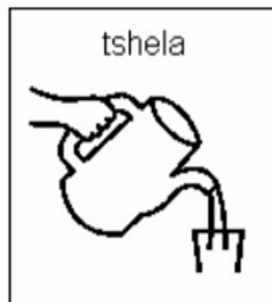
wa sa (2X)  
is burning (2X)



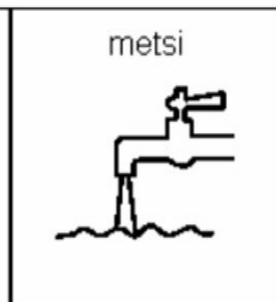
Gadima (2X)  
Come and see (2X)



Mollo, mollo (2X),  
Fire, fire (2X)



Tshela  
Pour



metsi (2X)  
water (2X)



The house is burning (2X). Come and see (2X)



Fire, fire (2X)



Pour



water (2X)

## CAAC Open Days and consultations

Do you want to find out more about AAC? About devices? About resources for the classroom or for home? Why not come round to an open day at the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC), at the University of Pretoria (Lynnwood Road entrance).

Parents, AAC users, educators or therapists can attend a free presentation by the CAAC on services, resources and activities. A demonstration can be given on high and low tech communication aids. Programs are tailored to your special area of interest. Open days take place on a monthly basis, usually on the last Friday of the month, starting at 9h00. If you would like to attend, please confirm with Liza (012 420 2001) in order for us to tailor your program.

Apart from open days to give a basic overview of AAC and the Centre's services, the CAAC also offers consultations to persons with complex communication needs.

In order to schedule a consultation, please contact Mirinda (012 420 4728) or Liza (012 420 2001), Consultations cost R500.00 to be paid on the day of the consultation. We operate on an in-contracted fee, so claims can be made from the medical aid.

For your diary

**CAAC research seminar – 7 & 8 March 2005**  
**Book early:**

Liza (012 420 2001)



## CAAC news

Since July this year, the CAAC has been active in training in Middelburg with the parents, teachers and therapists at Bethesda School of Hope and training North West preschool teachers (this will continue in 2005). We are once again amazed at the innovative ideas of people who work in this field!

In August PhD students and staff visited Malardalen University in Sweden as part of a collaborative project. This was a most wonderful experience as Mats Granlund and his students shared ideas and experiences in research in the fields of disability and early childhood intervention. We are hoping to receive them at the CAAC in March 2005.

The Annual AAC research seminar will be held concurrently with their visit – so those of you interested in research, keep the following dates open: **CAAC research seminar – 7 & 8 March 2005.**

Four CAAC staff also went to 11th Biennial conference of ISAAC in Brazil in October – and came back greatly enthused to once again tackle the challenges in AAC intervention!!

Last but not least, we have a new staff member in the CAAC: Gloria Madiba, educator and busy with her MA in AAC - we wish her lots of luck and happiness as part of the CAAC team!

Also Juan Bomman has now joined Shakila Dada in Sweden to work at Malardalen. Needless to say, the rest of the staff feel very lonely! Fortunately they will both be back early next year!

Erna Alant

## FEEDBACK: ISAAC CONFERENCE BRASIL 2 – 12 OCTOBER 2004



Brasil (by the way, spelt in the authentic way it has an "s" and not a "z") is a country that brings to mind vast images: the famous Rio de Janeiro carnival, beautiful beaches, lots of sunshine, friendly people and lots of laughter. These are all true, but we added a few more impressions to our mental image of Brasil: *rodizio* (you can either have it with meat in the southern part of the country or with seafood in the northern part of the country. What basically happens is that the waiter brings you at least 9 different dishes, one after the other. We ate until we really couldn't anymore!), *forro* music and the samba (*forro*, loosely translated means "everybody" and all joined in the dancing), *caipirina* (a local, very refreshing drink) and cashew nuts (*the largest cashew nut tree is in Natal – it covers 800m<sup>2</sup> They also use the flowers of the cashew nut trees to make a fruit juice...*).

What we didn't expect, though, is how few people speak English. The majority can only speak their mother tongue, Portuguese. This obviously caused a lot of interesting catastrophes, but that is a story for another day! Suffice to say that the 50 young people at the conference who had "May I help you?" badges (*they were English speaking*) became our favourite people!

ISAAC itself was a wonderful event with approximately 450 participants from 33 countries including 22 persons who use AAC. The South African contingent was quite large – 8 people

people attended, including a former Master's student at the CAAC who now lives in Hong Kong, and a current honours student. Sayomdeb Mukherjee (*nick named Den*) won the Words + AAC User lecture and gave an inspiring talk on the Himalayas. His focus was on the Himalaya that we each have to climb in our own lives, and that we each need to find our own courage and strength to move further than base camp. It is sad when people get stuck at base camp for their whole life.

Two days before the conference started, there were 15 instructional courses to choose from. The topics were very diverse (e.g. *advocacy issues, literacy, auditory scanning*), making sure that there was something for everybody's taste.

The main conference started with a bang! The local government presented 3 athletes that had won medals at the Para-Olympic Games, 2 weeks prior to ISAAC, with their medals. What a joyous, proud moment! When the lectures started, all 330, presented at 8 simultaneous venues. We know that choice-making is a skill that we always aim for in AAC intervention, and all these presentations certainly challenged our skills in this regard! Again the topics were diverse, and to give a synopsis here is almost impossible.

The Editor said that he couldn't dedicate half of the Newsletter to ISAAC feedback! However, literacy seemed to be the one topic that stood out, and it will be interesting to see how we,



## **User forum**

### **Paul Burdett - Interface-KZN's new committee member**

as South African's take up this challenge in the next 2 years. At the closing ceremony a play was presented "Alon's Smile". It is written by the mother of a child with cerebral palsy, and her sister is the actress. It gives an account of the mother's emotions – sometimes having one roar with laughter and the next moment bringing a tear to your eyes.

We are trying to see if we can bring this play to South Africa for the CAAC's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday next year, so watch this space!

However, when looking back at ISAAC it is not necessarily the presentations that stay with you (*although some of the really good lectures stand out*), but it is the people that one meets. The networking that takes place and the informal discussions with people from all over the world, some of whom share your ideas, and some who have very different ideas, which is what shapes your thinking.

ISAAC is about the friendships, renewing old ones and forming new ones. If you would like to see for yourself what happened at ISAAC, go to: [isaac2004@fee.unicamp.br](mailto:isaac2004@fee.unicamp.br) and type "selected photos" in the subject box.

ISAAC is truly an experience that changes ones thinking. Try and see if you can't make the next one. It is planned for 29 July – 5 August 2006 in Düsseldorf, Germany and is entitled "Communication bridges". [www.isaac2006.de](http://www.isaac2006.de)

*Juan Bornman*

Being born with cerebral palsy was probably not the best start I could have had in life! The odds were stacked against me and the doctors were convinced that if I survived I would never get off my back. Thirty five years later I'm still here and, though maybe not standing, I am vertical. I was fortunate to go to the Browns School from the age of 9 months and so benefited both physically and mentally. Besides school I have a family who don't see me as disabled first and secondly as a person. Everything they did I did, so having to settle for a dull life was never an option. The frustration I suffered was in not being able to support myself financially and not being of service to my family. I am not able to walk, talk or use my hands so it is fair to say that the job market was not open to me. My sister suggested that I should work as a tester of "lazy boys" as my passion for my chair in front of the TV is well known. Her second suggestion was more useful and we decided that I should have a market stall where I would sell plastic-wares. My father, who is retired, offered to help as I can't set the stand up or assist the customers. My part is to monitor stock levels, the prices of my stock and the purchase of new stock.

I love every minute of it as I have made a profit every month. We are based at a local shopping centre and although some people think that they must offer us charity money as they obviously can't understand that being disabled and

being a "charity case" are two different things, most of the people treat my stall as a proper business and this experience has changed my life as I now have a job, something I never truly believed would happen.

The confidence that I now have in myself has also allowed me to fulfil another dream. I have written a book about my experiences of being disabled from childhood to the present. It is in the process of being edited and so I can't wait to see the finished product.

The other good thing to come from my new found confidence is my joining Interface. I was fortunate to go to the conference in Joburg this year as an invited guest and since returning a lady by the name of Marilyn has not only helped me to get a computer, but is teaching me how to use different software programmes.

A whole new world has opened up for me and so I believe that as long as you can dream about achieving your goals you have hope and if your hope is looking a little tired, think about me and know that most things are possible.

*Paul Burdett*

### **INCLUSION FOR ALL!**

"I don't know how this is going to work" was my first thought as I left the principal's office in November last year (2003). Our principal, Mr Duncan Buckthorpe, who believes in

mainstream schools, had just informed me that Samuel Byrne, a boy who is CP and uses a wheelchair, would be joining my Grade 1 class in 2004.

What made matters worse, was the fact that Samuel could not vocalize his thoughts and had to make use of alternative communication skills in order to express his needs. (*It's surprising how I can use words like "AlphaTalker" and augmentative and alternative communication with such ease now while at the beginning of the year I did not even know their meanings.*)

To get the wheels rolling (*excuse the pun*), I scheduled a meeting with Sam's mother, Elaine Byrne and Jackie McGregor, Sam's facilitator, with whom I worked very closely throughout this year. Elaine spoke with such enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding during our meeting that she quickly convinced me inclusion was the right thing to do.

I left the school that afternoon, knowing that 2004 was going to be a challenge, but that Sam, Jackie & I – through trial and error – would succeed. I also knew that inclusion was not only for Sam's benefit, but that I would lose out on an opportunity for personal development if I did not pursue this challenge. Sam came to Grade 1, equipped with a computer (loaded with 'Clicker 4 software), a switch and his AlphaTalker.

The other children in the class soon accepted Sam as one of them and I learnt very quickly to respond to Sam's questions and phrases, which he accessed through

his AlphaTalker. Being a Grade 1 teacher, I had to devise a reward system to ensure that the learners worked effectively, and as soon as I discovered that Sam's special situation was the 'carrot' dangling in front of the other learners, I used it to my advantage. They all asked to push Sam when we went to the library; they encouraged Sam to find the right answers on his computer using his switch and Clicker grids; they enjoyed playing card games or dominoes with him on the carpet, and at reading-time everyone wanted to sit next to Sam to turn the pages for him, as we read along together.

Sam has worked diligently throughout this year and has developed most of the skills that are fundamental to Grade 1. With Jackie's expert help, worksheets were quickly converted into computer-accessible screens. Often while I was still busy giving the oral lesson, Jackie would quietly set up Sam's computer with the appropriate work. Sam sometimes preferred not to use his computer and would then use yes/no signals to find the correct answers. In these instances Jackie helped Sam to work directly on the worksheets, thus making sure of "real" inclusion in a mainstream school. Classmates would also look out for the yes/no signals from Sam during discussion lessons and they became very aware of the various ways in which Sam communicates.

Sam's range of work is extremely varied. It includes working with concepts such as addition, subtraction, grouping and sharing of objects, number names and values, phonics, reading,

sentence construction, language development, telling/writing weekend news, art and physical education skills (such as swimming and participating in sports day events).

Apart from learning general educational concepts, Sam has also been exposed to the usage of symbols for communication and has been using these effectively during the year.

While inclusion is certainly beneficial to all parties concerned, as I have experienced this year, there were some obstacles that we had to deal with as they occurred. Obstacles will be part of the inclusion process as Sam moves through the schooling system, but with open-minded efforts these can be overcome.

Some of the problem areas which we experienced were:

- **Reading:** The only way of testing Sam's reading ability was through asking him comprehension questions.

- **Word problems:** Sam had the advantage in solving word problems as he had Jackie's help in selecting the correct amount of counters to work with

- **Formation of letters and numbers:** Sam is unable to write and could not participate effectively in formal writing activities.

- **Telling news:** Jackie had to be informed about Sam's weekend activities in order to help him to tell news, or set up his alpha-talker/computer with the appropriate symbols/words.

There were also other disadvantages to overcome. Sam had to have easy access to the classroom and a nearby bathroom. He needed a desk of at certain height in order to work effectively on the computer.

He needed space on the carpet to lie down at story-time and during lunch-breaks. Many of our sports events had to be adjusted so that Sam could participate in his wheelchair. Sam often took much longer than the average child to access his clicker for spelling or math problems, and therefore, we always reduced his workload in comparison to other learners. There were days when Sam's muscles were so fatigued that he was unable to work constructively but then we assumed that he was still absorbing information simply by listening.

I also had to make some adjustments in my assessment criteria when I had to evaluate Sam for report purposes. Before I even started the first round of



assessments, I listed the necessary skills: basic mathematical skills, reading skills and having a good general knowledge. I also decided that if I were unsure about some assessments, I would always give the benefit of the doubt to Sam, keeping him positive about his progress at school. I relied heavily on Jackie's input as well, as she was the one working closely with Sam at all times.

### INCLUSION IS THE WAY TO GO!!!

I developed so many skills in dealing with Samuel that have expanded my horizons and changed my viewpoints about disability in general. The rest of my Grade 1 class learnt the valuable life skill of accepting one another unconditionally – and I can't even take the credit for teaching them this. Jackie learnt some teaching skills which helped her to work better with Sam.

Sam, the boy with CP who "rocked the boat" at Escombe Primary School, KZN; learnt that even though he is different to the other children, he could still be included in a productive day at school, sharing ideas and thoughts with his classmates.

Thank you to Sam and his parents, Elaine and Roger, for persisting with the idea of inclusion. Without their efforts and the support of our principal, Escombe Primary School would not have become the diverse "melting pot" of cultures, languages and (dis)abilities that it is today.

**ALTA FISHER**

*Sam's class teacher: 2004*

## Sending Text Messages with The Grid

Sending a text message with an on-screen keyboard (alphabet or symbol based) is very easy, and is no different to using any other software. In fact, it is very much the same process as creating a document in a word processor and printing it. You start by launching the program i.e. The Grid, then open a document to edit, and finally "print" it to your mobile phone.

### What you need:

First of all, you need a

**cellphone** that supports Bluetooth. Most of them do these days, but Sensory Software International used the Nokia 6310i in their tests. Next you need a **Bluetooth adaptor** for your computer. There are various adaptors available - Sensory Software used the TDK model, which connects to the USB port of the computer. However Bluetooth PCMCIA are available and the relatively new Intel® Centrino™ CPU chips in most laptops these



days have Bluetooth embedded (built-in) in. I use a Mercer USB Bluetooth adaptor I got at a local PC shop.

**Some software** - Sensory Software used the software that came with the TDK Bluetooth adaptor. The TDK Mobile program that talks to your phone is very good. They also suggest downloading the latest version of the TDK program from the TDK website. You will need to do this anyway for newer phones such as the 6310i.

As my Mercer Bluetooth adaptor didn't come with Mobile phone software I just used the software which came with my Nokia 6310i.

**A custom grid** to make the program easy to control with The Grid. Sensory Software have designed one for the TDK Mobile program, it can be downloaded for free at: <http://www.sensorysoftware.com/overload/0018/downloadgrid.html>

### Getting Set up Install the driver

The CD that comes with the Bluetooth adaptor will install the driver that allows the Bluetooth adaptor to work with your computer. It also installs some applications.

### Install Mobile software

This is the program that you will actually use to control the phone. TDK supply one with their adaptor, it can also be downloaded from the TDK website [www.tdksystems.com](http://www.tdksystems.com) However at this point in time Mercer don't supply Mobile

software so I installed the Nokia Phone Editor software which came with my phone.

### Get linked

You should now have a new icon on your desktop called **My Bluetooth Places**. Switch on your phone and use the menu to ensure that Bluetooth is ON in your phone. The phone should then be visible in My Bluetooth Places. Run the Mobile software and you will see the connection screen. Select your phone and click the Pairing Wizard button.

The phone should then be visible in My Bluetooth Places. Run the Mobile software and you will see the connection screen. Select your phone and click the Pairing Wizard button.

This will set up a partnership between your computer and your phone. You will be asked to enter a password (numbers only) on both the phone and the computer. A single number is enough. You will now be able to send and read SMSs on your computer using The Grid.

Sensory Software supplied the instructions for using their sample grid, they can be viewed at: <http://www.sensorysoftware.com/overload/0018/downloadgrid.html>

*Martin Pistorius & Paul Hawes*

# Boardmaker

Click on the **Boardmaker Version 5** icon on the desktop.

➤ Click on **Open a Template** (*it is the third block on your screen*).

➤ Click on the **BM Communication Devices**.

➤ Click on the **Open** button.

➤ Click on the **Concept A4 32, 8 or 32**.

➤ Click on the **Symbol Finder** tool (*it is the funny looking head of a man on the left hand side*). (You can also call up the symbol by pressing **Control B**)

➤ Type in the word you are wanting in the **white space** where you will see the flashing cursor. (*Make sure that the third button in the grey row is pressed in*).

➤ Click on the desired block on the board to place the symbol on the board. (*If you don't the programme will automatically place the symbol in the next available space*). If you want to see what other symbols may be available for the word you are looking for, then press (*click*) the button with the square, circle and triangle.

➤ Click on the symbol that you prefer.

➤ Go down to the inverted black triangle. Press on it. Some other words will appear. See if you prefer any of those words. If you want to use the alternative word, click on it. If not click on the original word.

*If you want to change the word to Xhoza, call up the English word. Go down to the inverted triangle. Erase the words in the white space and type the Xhoza word in. Click in the appropriate space on the board.*

If you want to change the size of the font.

Click on the **O—button**.

Click on **Font for Line 1 Size** or **Line 2 Size** if you are using 2 languages. Choose your font size.

*Maureen Casey*

### Other Websites of Interest:

[www.vodacom4me.co.za](http://www.vodacom4me.co.za)

<http://www.autism.org>  
[www.autism-sa.org](http://www.autism-sa.org)

<http://www.isaac-online.org>

[www.sensorysoftware.com](http://www.sensorysoftware.com)

## TOYS FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (INCLUDING BLINDNESS)

All children should have the opportunity to experience the joy of playing – including children with visual impairments. I hope that the few ideas given below will help you rediscover the magic of play and show you how everyday objects can be transformed into exciting playthings! But, above all, play produces the miracle of laughter – a uniquely human gift that is often insufficiently practiced in our modern busy lives. I want to challenge you to look at these ideas and even if you only make one new toy, do so, and have many happy hours of fun.

### Serendipity of fiddle toys (1)

At every age it seems that there are times when we love to “fiddle” – handling something for the sheer pleasure we receive through our hands. Imagine sitting on a sunny beach sifting the dry sand through your fingers, or fiddling with a paper clip in a boring meeting... Activities like these are relaxing and a pleasant tactile experience. Children are master fiddlers, and usually find their own objects. Children with visual impairments may not be able to find their own ‘fiddle toys’ and might enjoy a large plastic container full of bits and pieces – a guaranteed magic fiddle experience! Lift the lid of the container and you will find...

- \*strings and beads and buttons, joined together at the one end
- \*a bunch of real keys
- \*bunch of bendy straws
- \*plenty of rattles and tins to shake
- \*goldilocks pot scrounger
- \*feathers

### Tactile bags (2)

These are similar to beanbags, but the content is chosen for their variety and tactile appeal. The covers are fairly thin so that the contents are easily felt. The idea is to put at least 2 articles in each bag, (e.g. rice and a few buttons or macaroni pieces and lentils), so that the child can separate them by wiggling them about inside.

### Real thing dominoes (3)

This is an excellent game for children who are already used to gaining information from their fingertips. Use rectangular wooden blocks (approx. 10 x 20 cm) and draw a line down the center of each. Arrange the rectangles in a line, and let the fun begin! Leave the left hand side of the first rectangle blank and cover the right hand side of the first rectangle and the left hand side of the second rectangle with fabric (e.g. velvet). Continue in this way, this time using sand paper, followed by doorknobs, woollen pom-poms, corks, hinges, buttons, nylon pot scroungers, sliding bolts, etc.

### Mobiles (4)

We have all seen babies lying in cots or prams looking at a mobile. This can sometimes also be part of the daily life of older children too, and an interesting mobile can soothe, intrigue and help to relieve boredom. There are mobiles of every description in shops, but delightful as they may be, they have their limitations: some are too small or too complicated for children to see; some contain elements that are totally foreign to children and are fairly costly. To hold a child's

attention, a mobile should be changed from time to time, which has definite financial implications! A drip-dry carousel is an excellent alternative as it hangs from a central hook and has clothes pegs already attached. Be creative in deciding what to hang on the mobile e.g. – use Christmas decorations, sequences, feathers, ping pong balls, old CD's etc. Remember that children with visual impairments would also like to touch the items on the mobile in order to explore with their hands, so make sure that the items are not too flimsy or dangerous!

### Feely caterpillar (5)

This peculiar little animal consists of a series of little cushions that are joined together with Velcro circles. The back half of one cushion matches the texture of the front half of the next, and so the fabrics correspond (similar to dominoes). Children love this caterpillar – maybe because they love the ripping sound the Velcro makes!!

### Snowstorm in a bottle (6)

This is an excellent toy to help children use residual vision and to focus. Use a plastic bottle with water with glycerine and use silver glitter for snow and add a few stars (mix bigger and smaller ones). Shake the bottle and get the child to watch the stars fluttering through the water. Great for children who like a low-effort plaything (only one action is required!)

### Friendly rattle snakes (7)

These peculiar rattlesnakes resemble real ones, but have noisemakers distributed evenly throughout their long bodies. Make the snake approximately 1m long as this gives the scope for plenty of interesting innards. Arrange

the different pieces of fabric in an attractive way (alternating a furry piece with a velvety piece, etc) with a narrow strip between each. This gives the snake a pleasing appearance and also acts as a hinge between the different sections, making it a nice floppy toy. Next decide on what will be used to fill each section with, e.g. buttons, rice, marbles, corks etc. Round off the head and tail of the snake.

### Feely mitts (8)

Sorting mitt shapes into pairs can be a useful introduction to other tactile games. It helps children to learn to use their fingertips to gather information. The mitts are large, so there are plenty of pieces of cardboard and cover them with different pieces of textured material (e.g. sandpaper, velvet, fur, etc.)

### Tactile ring game (9)

Make a large fabric ring (in sausage format) with different fillings inside, similar to the rattlesnake. Let the children sit in a circle with the sausage in front of them. Play music, and pass the sausage from child to child until the music stops. Pause for another fiddle with the different sausage piece until the music starts again. The sausage ring makes a good focus of attention and the different “feels” inside each as they rotate around the circle hold the children's interest.

### Story boxes (10)

Story boxes are a great way to enhance children's literacy experiences. A story box is a simple collection of objects that go along with the story line. The objects act like pictures to a blind child, making the story come alive. Start with stories that the child really likes.

**TOYS FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (cont)**

Use early literacy books that are rhythmic and predictable to guide you. Stories that have a repetitive line also work well. Next find the objects that correlate with the story. Be creative – there are no right or wrong ways. The only rule is to make it fun!

*Juan Bornman*

(1) Fiddle toys



(2) Tactile bags



**Acknowledgements**

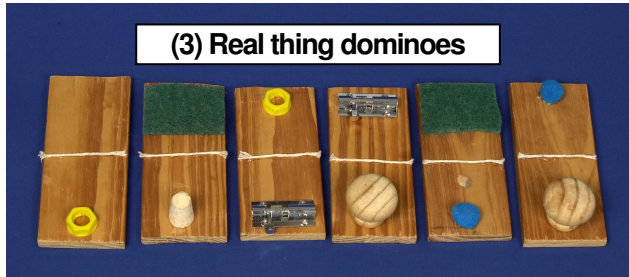
Many of the above ideas come from this wonderful book:

**Lear, R.** (1996). *Play helps. Toys and activities for children with special needs* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

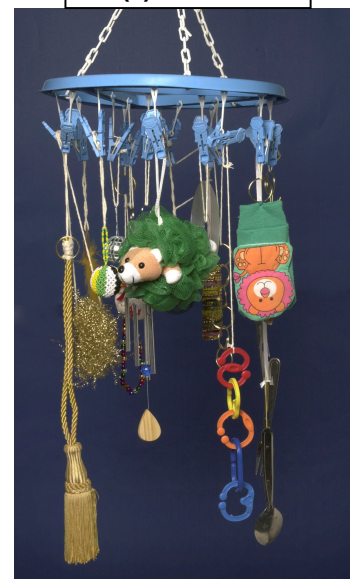
Many thanks to Roma Lear who continues to be an inspiration!

All these toys were made by my dear friend **Engelise Rheeder** and her craft group. May their creativity and resourcefulness act as a catalyst to each one who reads through these ideas and inspire you to make your own toys!

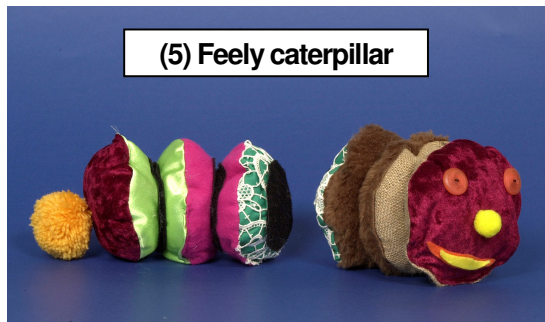
(3) Real thing dominoes



(4) Mobiles



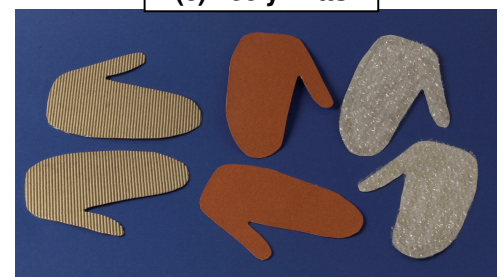
(5) Feely caterpillar



(7) Friendly rattle snakes



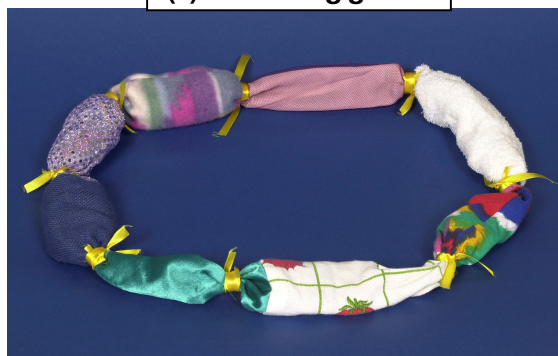
(8) Feely mitts



(6) Snowstorm in a bottle



(9) Tactile ring game



(10) Story boxes





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Annual membership:  
R 65.00 per person or family  
R 100.00 per school or centre

Hereby I include my INTERFACE membership fee or proof of deposit of \_\_\_\_\_ (please indicate amount) for the year 2004

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| <b><i>KwaZulu-Natal</i></b>  | Cheques/deposit slips can be sent, together with this form, to                    |
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| Account Name: Interface Total Communication<br>Bank: Standard Bank, Rondebosch<br>Branch Code: 02-05-09-11<br>Account No: 071439269              | Private Bag X18/ #39<br>Rondebosch<br>7701<br>Or fax deposit slip to: 021-8550582 |

*Your contribution will assist Interface and the CAAC in helping parents, children and other AAC users to face the great many challenges encountered on a daily basis*

**Let's work together to make a difference.**

YES! Count me in as a support of Interface / CAAC in 2004. I would specifically like to support:

Interface (Awareness raising and AAC devices)

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