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## Volunteer Opportunity

The Board of Directors of the Open Access Resource is announcing an exciting volunteer opportunity for 2005. We are currently accepting applications for volunteer committee participation and/or to join the Board of Directors for the 2005 year.

Please feel free to call our office for more information at 949-2430.

## COMMUNICATING WITH AN ACCENT

This story begins in my kitchen. I was about to begin making supper when the phone rang. A neighbour down the street asked if I was still working with those "talking machines". She proceeded to tell me about her uncle Henry.

Henry is a 75 year old with an interesting communication history. English is not his first language and when he immigrated to Canada in 1948 from Russia he began learning English for the first time. Although he has mastered the English language, he managed to keep a noticeable accent. He jokes about his accent being so special that his grandchild would ask him to come for "show and tell" so he could speak to their friends.

Henry and his wife Herta first noticed something changing 3 years ago when he started to have difficulty swallowing. An avid golfer at the time, Henry's golfing buddies also noticed it was becoming harder to understand what he was saying and it didn't have anything to do with his accent. That was when they began exploring what it was that Henry was experiencing. Last January he was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) and they began the journey of coming to terms with what that meant. Henry and Herta were given information about the ALS program at Deer Lodge Centre where they are currently receiving ongoing support. The professionals at Deer Lodge began by introducing the

Derksen's to augmentative communication both with a low-tech alphabet board and various speech generating devices.

In spring Herta ran into their niece (and my neighbour) and expressed her concerns about the difficulty Henry was having with his communication. That's when the phone rang in my kitchen to see if OARC had anything else to offer them.

Later that week I was sitting across the table from Herta and Henry at OARC showing them various devices available in our lending library. Portability and ease of use were definitely the key features they were looking for. After showing Henry the Palmtop Portable Impact (an HP iPAQ Pocket PC with special adaptations) he immediately picked it up and wanted to see if it would fit in his pocket. Without saying much more, Henry also typed in "hello" to see how it sounded and followed quickly with "how much does it cost?"

Henry accessed the OARC Equipment Loan Program and used the Palmtop for evaluation. During that time he was able to tell the contractors renovating the Derksen's new condominium where to place things and what changes they were hoping for. He used it at places like Rona to ask the employees where certain things were located. He really did take the Palmtop with him to many different places and used

it in conversation with many different people. Sometimes people would ask Henry to repeat what he said because they didn't understand him, but Henry smiled and said he was used to that - with his very unique accent he was often asked to repeat things. Henry even went as far as to say that with the new voice (from the Palmtop) his English seemed to have improved and he didn't have to repeat things as often.

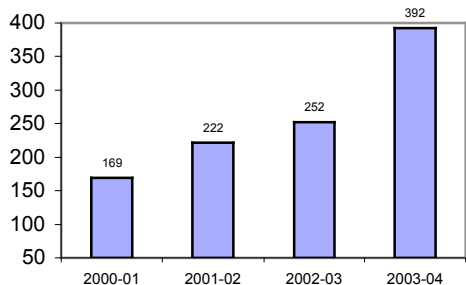
Since Henry and Herta returned the Palmtop their family and friends have asked numerous times "where's that speaking machine". Their hope would be that Henry could get his own machine to use in the future however, with the progressive nature of ALS and unknown future for Henry, they are still uncertain of what would best suit his situation.

Just before Christmas I went to visit Henry and Herta and showed them a new device in our library called a Say-It! Sam. Henry didn't miss a beat and with a twinkle in his eye he picked it up and tried it out by saying "Merry Christmas".

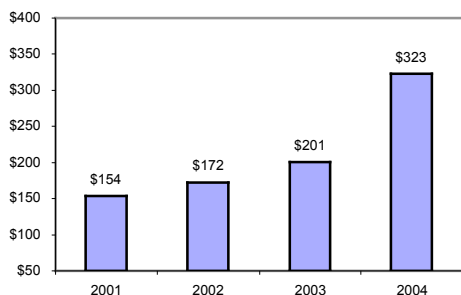


## THE DEMAND KEEPS GROWING

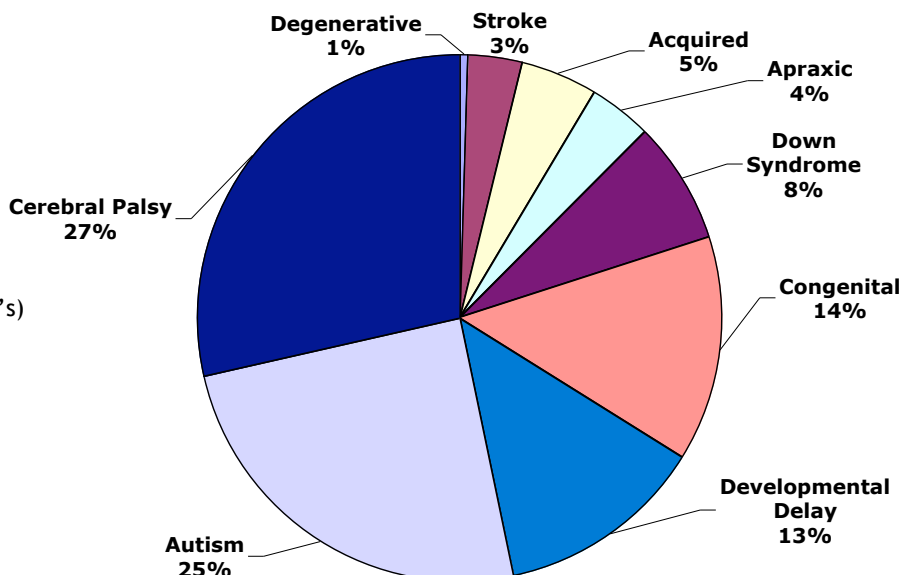
Number of Equipment Loans Per Year



Lending Library Equipment Value (in \$000's)



Individuals Served Last Year

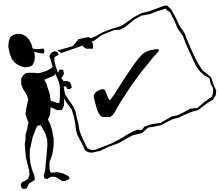


If you no longer wish to receive Newsletters from OARC, please contact our office, 949-2430.



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### Mark your Calendars!

Deanna Wagner will be in Winnipeg presenting two 1-day workshops.

**April 7<sup>th</sup>** -  
AAC in the Community  
**April 8<sup>th</sup>** -  
Access to Curriculum  
Using Creative Visual  
Communication  
Strategies

Call the OARC  
949-2430 or visit  
[www.oarc.ca](http://www.oarc.ca) to  
download your  
registration form.

## OARC Happenings . . .

- At our AGM in June we voted in a fabulous Board of Directors to oversee the operations of OARC (See listing of directors at the side).
- We said goodbye and we said hello. There was a change in Staff at OARC - Doris Fierback replaced Marnie Loewen as Administrative Assistant.
- Summer is a time to slow down but not stop talking. Summer 2004 we sent out a record number of devices from our lending library.
- Thanks to the ongoing work of Jennifer Partridge and the fundraising committee, we have been able to add a number of new devices to our library. Friends of OARC pull through this year making the purchase of a MiniMo possible.
- Currently we are able to loan out 89 devices 6 times during the year.
- Planning for a conference in April 2005 began back in May 2004. Deanna Wagner from Phoenix will be presenting in Winnipeg April 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Ongoing workshops have/are being offered for various devices such as the Portable Impact products, Dynavox products and the ChatPC.
- We had an exciting opportunity to meet with the NDP Caucus members to discuss our funding levels and the need for an increase to support our ever-growing library.

### Impressions of Closing the Gap (Minneapolis) October 2004

"Closing The Gap was a wonderful and exciting first-time experience for me! One of my favorite sessions was presented by Linda Burkhart and her colleagues entitled 'Two Switches for Success: Access for Children with Severe Physical and Multiple Challenges'". - **Val Buisse**









"What a great opportunity to see and experience the newest technology from as far away as Australia and the United Kingdom! Technology varied from creative yet simple cause effect software applications to sophisticated voice recognition and speech output systems. It was a jammed packed, 3 days of information, which left you fully energized and excited to face the challenges of your own clients. I would definitely give the Closing The Gap Conference a 5 star rating." - **Susan Flynn**

"As a first time attendee of Closing the Gap I was wonderfully overwhelmed. This conference demonstrated an exceptional array of High Tech 'dream' devices and software, to low tech 'ready to use' therapy ideas." - **Charlene Mitchell**

"I was impressed by the wide variety of one hour sessions, receiving information on what kids can do if given the opportunity." - **Karen Shanks**

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

### New Additions to the Lending Library

 <b>Kiwani's Club of Manitoba</b>			
 <b>LinkPlus</b>	The LinkPlus is a full sized keyboard with word prediction that speaks what you type in.. Transfer files to either a PC or Macintosh computer to print out or format documents.	 <b>SuperTalker</b>	Built with a selectable 1, 2, 4, and 8 message key grid. The SuperTalker has 8 levels with a total of 16 minutes for recording messages.
 <b>TransCanada Pipelines</b>		 <b>Jewish Foundation of Manitoba</b>	
 <b>MT4</b>	A portable dynamic display device using picture or word communication. Access methods include: direct touch; morse code; scanning; mouse; joystick. It also comes with built in infrared for learning universal remote control and accessing a computer.	 <b>Say-It! Sam</b>	A dynamic screen, hand held communication device that weighs just 10 ounces. The Say-it! Sam uses picture or spelling/word communication. Programming can be done both on the device or on a computer. This device uses DECTalk voices with a built in audio amplifier to project sound.
<b>Friends of OARC</b>			
 <b>MiniMo</b>	Colour dynamic display device with digitized speech (recorded voice) only. Access through direct touch, single or dual switch scanning. Rechargeable battery lasts 8 hours of continuous use.		

**Thank-you for your contributions & support!**