



BRAIN Waves

Good Vibes for the Arkansas Brain Injury Community

VOL. 2, Issue 3, Summer 2020

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE AFTER A BRAIN INJURY

Many of us use technology in our daily lives to help us stay organized and more efficient. Following a brain injury, daily life activities can be significantly impacted. Tasks such as dressing, bathing, communicating, and using a computer can be challenging. Assistive technology devices are designed to make everyday life activities easier. These tools can be a great solution to barriers that people with brain injuries encounter.

Assistive technology devices range from simple and low-tech to complex and high-tech, and can help in most every life skill. Here are some examples:

Communication

- Board or book with symbols and/or words
- App on a tablet or smartphone with words and/or symbols
- Speech-generating device, such as a computer that speaks

Mobility

- Walker or cane
- Wheelchair or power wheelchair
- Ramp

Cognition

- Notetaking, calendar, timer, alarm app on a smartphone or tablet
- Labels on cabinets
- Visual steps to complete a task

Computer Access

- Screen-reading devices for vision or cognition deficits
- Adapted mouse or keyboard
- Eye gaze bar for computer access

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Self-care

- Adapted utensils for feeding
- Buttonhook or special shoelaces to assist with dressing
- Shower or bath chair

When a skill or task is difficult, an assistive technology device option should be considered so the person with a brain injury can be an active participant in their day-to-day tasks. It is important for the assistive technology device to be matched to the user to avoid device abandonment. A rehabilitation provider or team should guide the individual with brain injury and their family through a problem-solving process to match the features of the device to the needs of the user.

ICAN Tools For Life operates an assistive technology program to make technology available and accessible to all Arkansans. Their program can be reached at ar-ican.org.

Easterseals Arkansas Outreach Program and Technology Services operates a loan program to public schools in Arkansas. Find their program at eastersealsopts.org

Suggest a topic! Email us at
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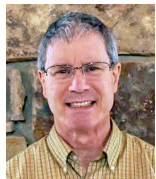
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**Trauma Rehabilitation
Resources Program**

TBI SPP
Traumatic Brain Injury
State Partnership Program



STORIES FROM THE TBI COMMUNITY: KIM KNIGHT AS TOLD TO KIMBERLY LAMB



Kim (left) and Judy enjoying some free time on their boat.

On August 3, 2013, Kim and her partner, Judy, were at the home of friends in Alexandria, Louisiana, celebrating Judy's new job. Because it was getting dark, Kim decided to help a young child take his scooter home. The child ran in a different direction, leaving Kim with the scooter. Not wearing a helmet, Kim decided to ride the less than 2-foot tall scooter to the child's home. However, the brake and accelerator were opposite of Kim's expectations. The scooter tire caught in the grass, and Kim was thrown head first into a brick mailbox at an estimated 40 MPH.

When Kim didn't return home, Judy went to find her. After a few minutes of searching, Judy found Kim lying on the ground by the brick mailbox. Describing the scene, Judy said, "Kim had crushed everything including her nose, forehead, eye sockets, and cheek bones. She had also landed in an ant hill, and she is highly allergic to ants." Judy and their friends kept Kim quiet and stable until the police and an ambulance arrived. They transported Kim to a level one trauma center in Alexandria, where medical staff believed that she would not live through the night. As Kim's co-workers were notified of the accident, the hospital quickly filled with people praying and offering support.

Judy stayed by Kim's bedside until the next morning when nurses convinced her to go home for a shower and a change of clothes. When Judy returned, she learned that Kim had woken up and tried to go home. Kim did not understand what had happened to her. She tried to remove her tracheostomy tube, so staff had to put Kim in restraints and sedate her. After two weeks in ICU, she was sent to a step-down unit.

While under sedation, Kim had a spiritual experience. She said, "I knew that everyone was around my bed, but I also knew that it wasn't my time. After that experience, everything began falling into place."

In the step-down unit, Kim became coherent and was able to start physical, speech, and occupational therapies. After 10 days, she transferred to the Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute (BHRI) in Little Rock. Judy said, "Kim needed to be closer to family." Kim's mother lives in Little Rock, and her sister lives in Hot Springs. In fact, prior to the accident, Kim and Judy had purchased a home in Hot Springs for retirement, which now serves as their primary residence.

Once she arrived in Little Rock and completed rehab, Kim went to Neuro Restorative Timber Ridge in Benton for 59 days. While at Timber Ridge, she became very homesick and left without discharge, which she has come to regret. Because therapy is such an important part of recovery for a traumatic brain injury (TBI), Kim now encourages everyone to go through all the therapy to which they have access.

Kim suffered a TBI in the occipital lobe, which created bilateral (meaning on both sides) optic nerve damage and an inability to manage emotion. Kim responds emotionally through anger. Kim said, "I still cannot cry over the accident". However, she believes that accepting the injury and what happened is important to moving forward in the healing process. Kim also suffers from memory loss. She has no memory of the accident. She sees a therapist, and Judy keeps life



Kim showing off her banjo skills at a support group in Hot Springs

running on a routine, which is helpful. Kim has also struggled through some major periods of depression, but with the proper medications, the help of her medical team, and the support of her loved ones, Kim now looks forward to each new day.

“We have a new normal and we roll with the punches.”

Judy has been Kim's rock through this traumatic experience and new way of life. Judy said, "I jumped in with both feet and took care of things. Leaving her with family was never an option." Judy found a job that fits well with the routine needed to help Kim stay focused. She has also put precautions into place to help ensure Kim's safety while she is at work. Because Kim uses medication to sleep and has no sense of taste or smell, Judy has added smoke alarms, oven alarms, and even an iron with an automatic shut-off. Judy also manages medications, appointments, and anything that Kim needs. When Kim began taking banjo lessons, Judy sat in on the lessons to ensure that the instructor understood Kim's injury, and how to communicate with her effectively. Judy said, "We have a new normal and we roll with the punches. We are dealing with the hand that God has given to us, and I feel very blessed."

Before Kim's life changed so drastically, she worked as a triple board certified medical dosimetrist helping to plan treatment for cancer patients. Although she can no longer work in this field because of the level of multi-tasking required, she spends time each week working through continuing education courses to keep her certifications current.

It has been 7 years since Kim's accident. It has taken a lot of hard work and determination to get Kim to where she is today, including learning how to walk and talk again. Judy said that when they got the transcript of Kim's medical timeline beginning at the hospital in Louisiana and watched it unfold through her rehabilitation in Arkansas, they realized how far Kim has come in her journey of healing. Judy said, "Kim looked at the pictures and couldn't believe it was her." Now, Kim is happy and healthy. She plays the guitar and the banjo, enjoys her Dachshund pups, and living her life. She and Judy are very involved in the local brain injury support groups in both Little Rock and Hot Springs. Everyone loves to see her there each month, and Kim has described them as her hope. Judy enjoys the support groups because she gets to connect with other caregivers.

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Kim and Judy are thankful for the team of dedicated healthcare professionals who have helped them get to the life they are living today. Judy puts it best when she says, "Kim is a miracle".

Kim's Tips for Survivors

- Accept the injury so you can move forward
- Go through all the rehabilitation available to you
- Find a self-therapy, such as music or art
- Stay positive because things get better every day



Kim (left) enjoys pet therapy at the annual brain injury survivors' conference.

Judy's Tips for Caregivers

- Keep a journal - you may think it's a bad day and later realize it was a good day
- Ensure that the medical team supports you and can take care of all needs
- Put things into place for safety and peace of mind, such as alarm systems
- Be patient

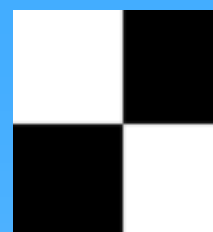
COORDINATION TRAINING

APP HIGHLIGHT

Occupational therapy can be SO helpful after a brain injury. Keep the progress going by using apps to work on your skills at home! Here are a few apps to help you practice coordination, visual training, and cognitive skills.



Dexterity: A fine motor skills app that uses the touch screen on your smart phone to build strength, control, and dexterity in your fingers and hands. This tool was designed with the help of occupational therapists. **\$5.99, Apple & Google Play**



Piano Tiles: This app can help with accuracy and speed of coordinated movement. Plus, the reviews say it is pretty fun and addictive! **Free with in-app purchases, Apple & Google Play**



Rehand: This is a hand rehabilitation app, designed to be used on a tablet. The program is aimed at improving range of motion and hand recovery. The program is set to Spanish for its default language, but that can be changed in-app. **Free on Apple & Google Play. Trial program is free. Work with your PCP or OT to get the full program.**

Don't have a smart device and want one?

You could be eligible for a free phone or tablet. Call the Arkansas Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) for free assistance. 1-800-981-4463 or 501-686-9693 Visit <https://arktap.org/> for more information.

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT



UAMS AR-Connect was created to provide care to all Arkansans dealing with mental-health issues. This service can help with substance abuse disorders, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and more.

The AR-Connect call center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at (501) 526-3563 or (800) 482-9921. The virtual clinic operates Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Who is it for? Arkansans struggling with mental illness but unable to find a suitable provider in their community.

How does it work? Once screened by specially trained nurses, patients can expect to be contacted by an AR-Connect mental health professional within 24 business hours by phone. If clinical treatment is recommended, patients will connect with their care team by phone or, if they have the capability, by video.

Do I need to have health insurance? No, the program is open to anyone in Arkansas, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

24-hour call center: (800) 482-9921

New Assistive Technology Learning Module

Survivors of traumatic injuries often experience accessibility issues with their devices. This new module offers many solutions that may make devices more accessible. Most of these are relatively inexpensive solutions, and some of these items are available on a free loan through ICAN, so you can see if they work for you.

From specific settings on your Apple or android device to head control and eye tracking control applications, this module offers something of interest for almost any traumatic injury survivor or family.

To see the module, visit <https://patientslearn.uams.edu/2020/06/assistive-technology/>

For more information about assistive technology, call iCAN at 1-800-828-2799 or visit their website, ar-ican.org.



Want to tell your story? Email us at trrp@uams.edu



The TBI State Partnership Grant Program (SPP) is a part of the Administration for Community Living, a federal agency created to help people with disabilities participate in their communities. The purpose of the SPP is to maximize the independence, well-being, and health of persons with TBI.

We need your input to learn more about the needs of the TBI community in Arkansas. Please complete a needs assessment survey at our website:

<https://tinyurl.com/ARTBISPP>

To learn more about the TBI State Partnership Program, email Kim at kklamb@uams.edu

15 THINGS BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS WANT YOU TO KNOW

By the Arkansas Brain Injury Support Group at Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute

1. Not all Injuries are visible. I may look the same, but I'm not. I may look healed, but I'm not.
2. Be patient. Give me more time.
3. Brain injuries don't make you less intelligent.
4. You may need to repeat things and check for my comprehension.
5. We may lash out more than we used to.
6. Brain injury impacts the whole family.
7. It gets better, but we need you to accept the change.
8. If you don't like me today, wait until tomorrow.
9. This could happen to anyone at any time.
10. Depression and anxiety are part of my journey, and memory loss is common.
11. Technology is essential as a recovery tool.
12. We may be re-learning our new selves.
13. We sometimes struggle with problem solving.
14. I am still the same person, but I may have a different perspective, attitude, and actions than I did before.
15. This is a life-long journey.

We love to hear from our readers! Have an idea, story, or suggestion?

OR, Want to receive this FREE, quarterly newsletter by mail or email?

Email us at trrp@uams.edu or call us at (501) 295-6576

This project was supported in part by grant number 90TBSG0026-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.



ELIGIBILITY FOR SPOUSE'S BENEFITS

By Phylis Dills, Social Security Public Affairs Specialist in Little Rock

With more than 80 years of service, the Social Security Administration has helped secure today and tomorrow with financial benefits, information, and tools that support you throughout life's journey.

In May, we recognize older Americans' month and we encourage you to participate by learning about available Social Security benefits. Did you know that you may be able to receive benefits on your spouse's record if you have not worked or do not have enough Social Security credits to qualify for your own Social Security benefits? To qualify for spouse's benefits, you must be:

- 62 years of age or older; or
- Any age and care for a child who is younger than age 16 or who is disabled and entitled to receive benefits on your spouse's record.

Your full spouse's benefit could be up to one-half the amount your spouse is entitled to receive at their full retirement age. If you choose to receive spouse's benefits before you reach full retirement age, you will get a permanently reduced benefit.

If you wait until you reach full retirement age to receive benefits, you will receive your full spouse's benefit amount – up to half the amount your spouse can receive. You will also get your full spouse's benefit if you care for a child who is younger than age 16 or who has a disability and is entitled to receive benefits on your spouse's record.

If your benefits as a spouse are higher than your own retirement benefits, you will get a combination of benefits that equal the higher spouse benefit. For example, Sandy qualifies for a retirement benefit of \$250 and a spouse's benefit of \$400. At her full retirement age, she will receive her own \$250 retirement benefit. We will add \$150 from her spouse's benefit, for a total of \$400.

Want to apply for either your or your spouse's benefits? Are you at least 61 years and 8 months old? Visit www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement to learn more about the process.

Are you divorced, but your marriage lasted at least 10 years? You may be able to get benefits on your former spouse's record. Explore more about your eligibility by visiting our Benefits Planner page at www.ssa.gov/planners/retire/divspouse.html for more information.

Suggest a topic! Email us at

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Trauma Rehabilitation Resources Program

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The Trauma Rehabilitation Resources Program offers a Disability Resource Website to connect those with trauma-related disabilities to helpful resources and organizations in the community.

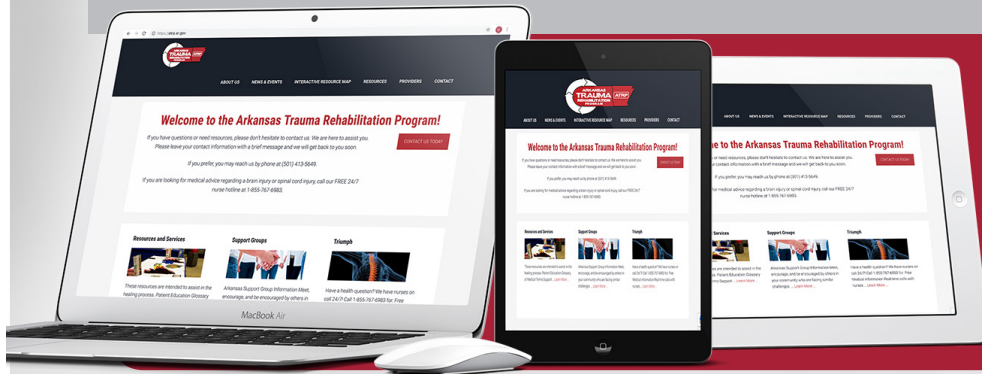
To access the Disability Resources Website, go to:

www.atrp.ar.gov

We also offer a 24-hour nurse call center for people with a brain or spinal cord injury, their caregivers, or medical providers. Call anytime with questions about your health, symptoms, or medical care.

To access the call center, call:

1-855-767-6983



For more information about the Disability Resource Website or the nurse call center, call (501) 295-6576 or email trrp@uams.edu

The nurse call center is a partnership of the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation and the UAMS Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and is funded by the Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program.

