

# 2020 Annual Report

Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP)



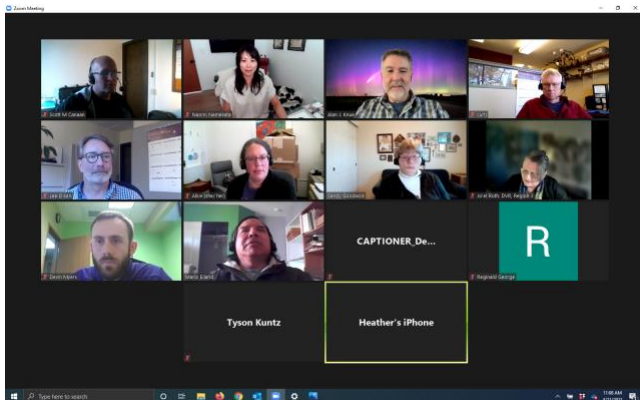
Technology for Independence



*This report is available in alternative formats by request.*

# Thank you!

2020 was a year like no other! We adjusted many of our services to make them available throughout most of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we could not have done it without the hard work of our dedicated staff who stepped up to the plate despite the challenges faced. We owe a great deal of thanks to our partners who also kept their doors open and whose collaborative efforts continue to help us to extend our reach across the state. And last but not least, we offer a big thank you to our Advisory Council members for their on-going work, support, and dedication.



## Partners 2020

- ATAP/AT3 Center
- Bridge Disability Ministries
- Department of Services for the Blind
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Hearing, Speech, and Deafness Center
- King County Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy
- Northwest Access Fund
- Perkins School for the Blind
- Timberland Regional Library System
- Special Education Technology Center
- San Juan Island Library
- UW Center for Technology and Disability Studies
- UW Center on Human Development and Disability, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disability
- Washington AgrAbility/ Washington State University Extension- Skagit County

## Advisory Council 2020

- Mario Eiland - Representative from the Department of Services for the Blind
- Reginald George - Consumer Representative
- Sandy Goodwick - Consumer Representative
- Petra Heppner-Nelson - Representative from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Tyson Kuntz - Representative from the Workforce System
- Heather Meares - Consumer Representative
- Kimberly Meck - Representative from the Centers for Independent Living
- Devin Myers- Consumer Representative
- Lee Olsen - Consumer Representative
- Tyler Schrenk - Consumer Representative
- Bill Youngman - Representative from the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation

# About WATAP

The Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP) is located at the University of Washington Center for Technology and Disability Studies (UWCTDS), within the Center for Human Development and Disability. Our work is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living (ACL) (#2001WAATSG) and other funding sources. WATAP has served Washington State since 1994, providing assistive technology (AT) resources, services, and expertise to persons who face challenges related to disability and aging. We help in the selection and use of AT to help make tasks easier or possible in school, at work, at home, and in the community.

## ***Building Capacity***

Training professionals continues to be a core program for WATAP and in FY20 we delivered trainings to 1,121 participants across the state, which were mostly provided virtually via webinar due to statewide restrictions for in-person events due to the pandemic. Consistent with preceding years, we provided professional development trainings to build competencies, promote the consideration of and proper matching of AT, and explore case studies and best practices, for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). In FY20, 364 participants took part in our DVR trainings including case managers, employment specialists, and community rehabilitation providers.

## ***WA AgrAbility***

Washington State University Extension- Skagit County was awarded a 4-year AgrAbility grant through the US Department of Agriculture to provide AT services and resources to farmers and agricultural workers across the state. WATAP is a partner in the WA AgrAbility Project, providing training and technical assistance focusing on matching functional need with the selection of appropriate technologies, the utilization of everyday off-the-shelf materials to customize and improvise low-cost solutions, and providing appropriate examples of AT and available resources and services.

## ***King County Project***

WATAP began work on a 5-year project funded by the King County Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy to provide AT services and resources to low-income seniors and unpaid caregivers in rural and tribal communities in King County. We created a strategic outreach plan that included participating in community senior health and wellness events and fairs, to provide a venue to connect with the community to promote a healthy independent living, and a means for us to showcase AT and talk about the potential impact in the daily lives of seniors. All of these in-person events were cancelled or put on hold due to the pandemic, so we shifted our focus to providing opportunities to learn about AT via webinar including Adaptive Gardening Options for Seniors; Medication Management Through Use of AT; Low-Cost, Low-Tech Solutions to AT; and AT for Mental Health.

# 2020 Activity Highlights

## Device Demonstrations: 175 demos

253 individuals participated in hands-on and virtual demonstrations that focused on exploring AT options and features with guidance from an experienced specialist.

## Device Lending: 251 devices

185 individuals tried devices at home, work, or school to make an informed decision before purchasing. An additional 7 individuals were able to borrow for accommodation, professional purposes, or as a loaner during repair.

## Telecommunications Distribution: 84 devices

37 individuals obtained devices for telecommunication and internet purposes through the iCanConnect WA program totaling \$52,469.

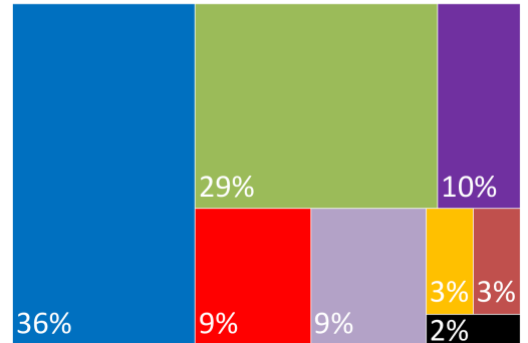
## AT Financing: 121 loans

121 individuals obtained affordable financing for AT through our community partner, the Northwest Access Fund, totaling \$724,692.

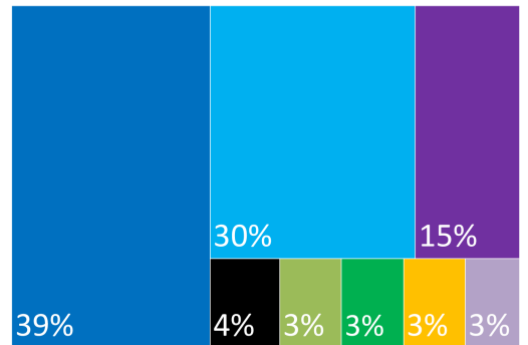
## Device Reuse: 3689 devices

2764 individuals received hearing, durable medical, daily living, and other equipment at a cost savings of \$2,687,302 through our reuse partners and AT Exchange.

Demonstrations by Category  
175 Total

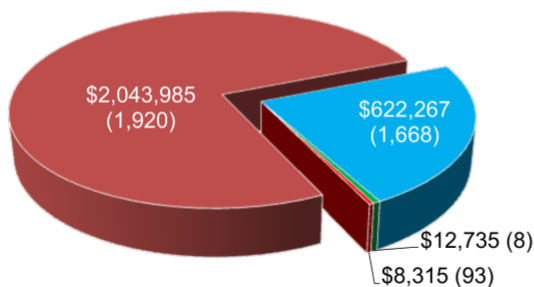


Devices Loaned by Category  
251 Total



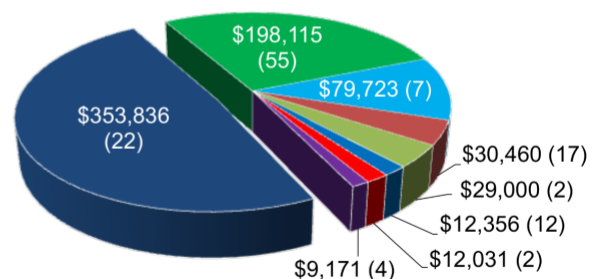
Cost Savings & Number of Devices Reused by Category

\$2,687,302 Total Cost Savings; 3,689 Devices



Loan Amounts & Number of Devices Financed by Category

\$724,692 Total Loan Amount; 121 Devices



### COLOR LEGEND

- Computers and Related
- Learning & Cognition
- Vehicles & Modification
- Daily Living
- Mobility & Positioning
- Vision
- Environmental Adaptations
- Recreation & Sports
- All Other Categories
- Hearing
- Speech Communication

# Stories of Our Clients

WATAP's statewide services start with information and assistance, move through device demonstration and short-term device loans to assist in better decision-making, and lastly provide the opportunity to obtain AT from our device reuse partners or with help from our state financing programs. Wrap around services to professionals and the community include training, workshops, and technical assistance. Here are just a few stories from individuals who took part in our programs this past year.

## ***Device Lending***

"Judith" is DeafBlind and relies heavily on her Freedom Scientific Focus 40 5th generation braille display for distance communication tasks on her computer such as sending and receiving email, surfing the internet, and participating in social media. She was devastated when her device stopped working and it needed to be sent in for repair which would take several weeks. She learned she could borrow the same device from WATAP to use while hers was out. She was so thankful that she was able to continue to use her computer. The was especially important during this period of social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as she is even more reliant on her technology to stay in touch with family and friends.

## ***Device Demonstration***



During the annual Skagit County Agricultural Expo, "Ron" stopped by our booth to review and discuss assistive technology options to help with progressive fine motor deficits in his hands and fingers due to arthritis. He expressed particular difficulty in turning on the hose bib water valve in his calf barn due to gripping and turning requirements. Following a demonstration of the new hose "Y" with ball valve and lever handle, he felt that tool would significantly improve his ability and comfort levels when watering his calves. He was also given a demonstration of a push button hose Y and a hose manifold with lever handles. Hardware purchasing resources were provided, as well as WATAP contact information for future questions related arthritis solutions.



### ***Device Reuse***

Lester, who is five years old, was hit by a car while crossing the street in a crosswalk. Miraculously, aside from some stitches, bruises and lots of road rash, his only major injury was a fractured and displaced femur. When he underwent surgery, the doctors inserted rods to hold the damaged bone together while he healed, and his family was told that he was not to bear any weight on his injured leg for 5-6 months. A wheelchair was needed for him, but the family could not afford the cost of any medical equipment. A friend of the family told them about WATAP's reuse partner, Bridge Disability Ministries Meyer Medical Equipment Center. At first, the Center was able to provide the smallest wheelchair available and this combined with a cushion and transfer board was able to support Lester's leg while keeping it straight. A few weeks later, a lighter junior-size aluminum transport chair was donated. Lester and his family were so grateful for this second wheelchair as it enabled them to load it easily into their vehicle and to transport Lester where he needed to go. Lester could get back to school and to everyday life.



### ***State Financing – Affordable Loan Program***



Jacqueline first heard about WATAP's state financing partner, Northwest Access Fund, during a meeting at her apartment building, when social workers shared information on organizations that offered services to seniors. She needed hearing aids and could not afford the higher quality devices that she required. She had the appropriate hearing aids she needed while she was working, but after retiring, she lost a hearing aid and did not have the income necessary to replace it. Jacqueline instead bought another, less expensive set of hearing aids but had to return them when they did not work well enough for her. She was excited to learn that funding from Northwest Access Fund could help her get better hearing aids.

She says she could not have afforded the hearing aids without the financing from the Access Fund and she tells others about the Access Fund and its important work whenever she can.

For years, Roxanne had been using a wheelchair due to spinal cord injuries that impact her ability to walk and stand. Although she was still able to drive, the sedan that she owned was painful to get in and out of and did not fit her wheelchair. She could not go places as she could not walk comfortably or take her wheelchair with her in her car. Roxanne's children saved up to buy her a new van with good safety features, but it did not come with the mobility modifications she needed. She learned about WATAP's state financing partner, Northwest Access Fund, while researching funding for van modifications. With a loan from Northwest Access Fund, she was able to install a VMI Northstar conversion with an in-floor ramp and tie-downs. The van and its modifications have exceeded Roxanne's expectations. She believes that having the modified van "will probably extend my life," as it allows her to visit her grandchildren and to explore Washington state. Her mental health has significantly improved as a result.





Center for Technology and Disability Studies

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