

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY USER Travis Diller is a student at Rowan College at Burlington County. He uses assistive technology tools to keep up with his classes.

Proper Tools and a Great Attitude This Winning Combo Invites Success

After graduating from the Burlington County Special Services District in Westampton, N.J., Travis Diller wanted to try college. He enrolled in Rowan College at Burlington County and gave it a go.

As a wheelchair user, Travis said he was prepared for the mobility challenges he would be facing. Before starting classes at the Mount Laurel campus, Travis and a friend went to survey the classroom and facilities. The elevator in the building was not working the day he arrived. So, he sent his friend up stairs with an iPad and they used FaceTime to complete their mission. Everything checked out and by the time the semester started, the elevator had been repaired.

In the wintertime, when the button you push to make the doors swing open is iced over and frozen solid, Travis says he's not shy about asking for help. He thinks an electronic eye that opens the door for all students would be a better solution.

Travis, who has cerebral palsy, found keeping up with his assignments physically was chal-

lenging. "I type with one finger," explained Travis. During his first semester completing writing assignments was difficult. "When I would write an essay, my brain would be going a million miles an hour but my finger was hunting and pecking. I would be up until 2 a.m. typing," he said.

Travis contacted the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) to see if they could offer any help with his plan for attending college. When DVRS recommended an assistive technology evaluation, Travis worked with Advancing Opportunities' Assistive Technology Specialist Kristen Russell. After discussing Travis' goals and abilities, Kristen had him

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I Find Energy in the Positive Outcomes We Deliver

Dear Friends,

The end of the year is here. Looking ahead, Advancing Opportunities Inc. has a host of new partnerships and initiatives in the works. We will be developing new group homes. We will be improving technical supports for students with disabilities to promote independence at the college level.



We are expanding the reach of our in-home and community-based respite programs. Our to-do list keeps getting longer.

When I need to assure myself I have the stamina necessary to tackle all the agency has planned, I reflect on some of the successes we celebrated during 2015. And I am very energized.

I think about Noah a bright, energetic 14-year-old. Every year since fourth grade, he attended summer camp with a one-on-one aide. In June, we got a notice from camp that Noah didn't need an aide this year. I imagine how proud Noah felt showing up at camp solo. I don't believe there is a way to accurately quantify the boost it gave his self-esteem. I know it was a milestone in his life.

I think about Travis, who doesn't need to stay up all night typing term papers with one finger any more. He received the assistive technology and training he needs to complete his assignments effi-

ciently. The quality of Travis' school work has improved dramatically because he can get all of his ideas onto the page and organized now. I know the dreams and goals Travis has for his future probably feel much closer now.

I think about a young man who has been living in one of our group homes for the past three years. During that time, he has found full-time employment and took up some hobbies. He has become a responsible adult, in charge of his actions. In 2016, he will be moving out of our group home and living on his own.

Every success our consumers celebrate, big or small, adds to the momentum that is constantly moving this agency forward. I am proud of the work we do and I hope you are too.

In order the further our goal of creating independence, we need your support. Please consider your donation to our agency as an investment that will have a great impact on individuals with disabilities and our communities.

Working together we are making a positive difference in the lives of people with all types of disabilities.

Best wishes for a wonderful 2016,



Jack M. Mudge
Chief Executive Officer
Advancing Opportunities, Inc.



Advancing Opportunities

All Disabilities. Many Services. One Agency.

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Advancing Opportunities, Inc./Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey helps children and adults with all types of disabilities gain independence. We believe people with disabilities have the right to participate fully in society. Since 1950, we have provided services, support, education and advocacy to individuals with disabilities and their families to help them lead fuller lives at home, school, work and play. Advancing Opportunities, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation.

New Residential Services Director Agency Welcomes Paul Ronollo

A 24-year veteran of New Jersey's social services scene, **Paul Ronollo, MSW, LSW**, recently joined Advancing Opportunities as its Residential Services Director.

Paul has dedicated his career to helping vulnerable populations starting as a direct support professional and behavioral consultant in shared living settings and group homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most recently, he served as Director of Network Operations for Devereux, a behavioral health organization. In that role, Paul oversaw 60 group homes and managed a staff of over 700 individuals.

"We are fortunate to have Paul join us at this juncture," said **CEO Jack Mudge**. "Our Residential Services are primed for growth. Paul brings a wealth of experience and expertise gained firsthand at all levels of operation. I look forward to having Paul guide our efforts to improve and expand our programs in a manner beneficial to both the agency and the men and women we serve."

"I love the wide array of services Advancing Opportunities offers," said Paul. "I also like that the agency is willing to try new and different things. I think that is the right

***WELCOME** - Paul Ronollo gets a fist bump hello from one of the residents in the Robbinsville home. Direct Support Professional Tara Warren looks on.*

approach for providing quality services in this day and age."

In addition to his work with people with IDD, Paul has a wealth of experience in behavioral health services for children. He served as Regional Director for New Jersey MENTOR and worked in the organization's Therapeutic Foster Care program. He also ran Mercer House, a residential program for youth in the juvenile justice system for eight years and was a Clinical Supervisor for Mercer County's Care Management Organization.

Paul holds a bachelor's degree from Dickinson College and a master's degree from Temple University. He resides in Titusville, N.J. with his family.



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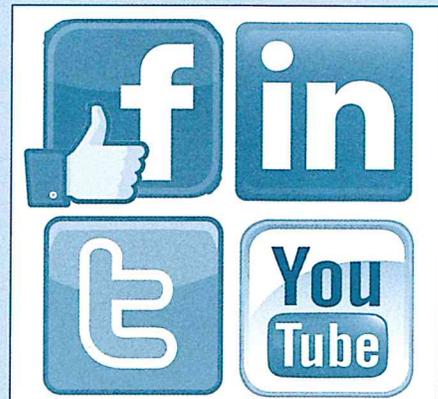
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Assistive Technology Aides for Memory Loss

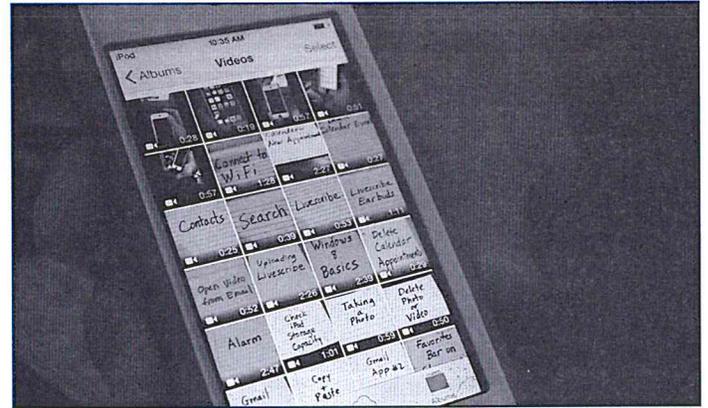
Videos Help Keep Student on Track

A roofer by trade, Sean Powers worked 15 years installing commercial roofs and eight years as an independent contractor on residential roofs. In 2006, an accident at a construction site in Florida changed his world forever. Sean was struck in the head and fell from a beam 15 feet in the air. He broke many bones in the fall and suffered traumatic brain injury (TBI). His recovery included two-and-a-half months in the hospital and another month in a rehabilitation facility.

Nine years later, Sean still has trouble talking about that day and the long journey that has been his recovery. "I am alive. I am so thankful for that," said Sean. Physically, his body has healed. But learning to live with his brain injury has been a big adjustment. Following his fall, Sean has trouble retaining and processing information.

"Before my accident, I was gifted with a good memory and I didn't realize what a gift it was," Sean said, shaking his head. "I owned my own business and I would start my day making a list of the things I needed to do. My thoughts were very linear. I could plot things out A to Z. Today, my brain doesn't process things the way it used to. I can't extrapolate. My mind bounces from A to G to C; things don't connect."

Sean enlisted the services of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRs) to retool for a new career. Currently, Sean is studying political science at Stockton University in Galloway, N.J. To ensure his success in school, his DVRs case manager recommended an assistive technology evaluation. Sean worked with Assistive Technology Specialist Kristen Russell to find tools to help him work around the issues he has with his memory.



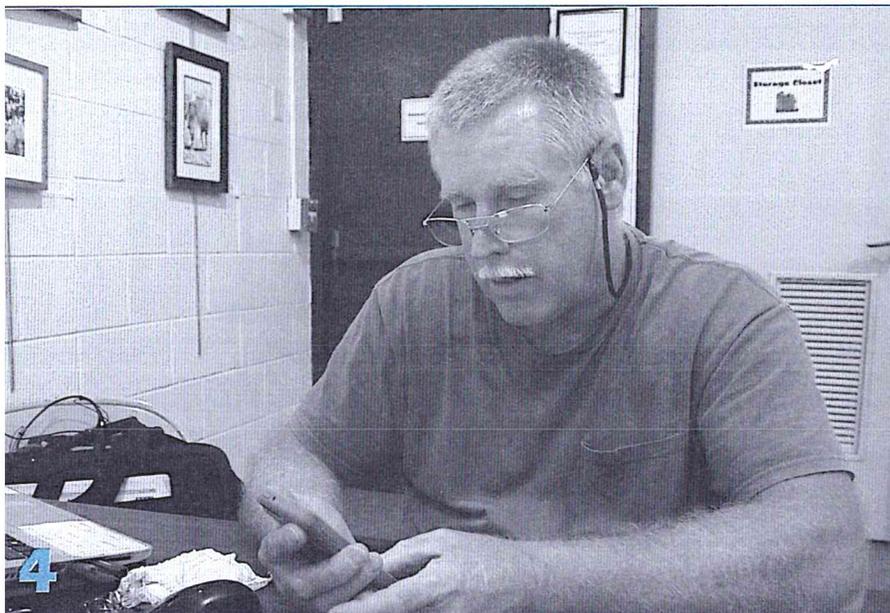
After an evaluation, Kristen recommended several tools, including a laptop with Microsoft Office applications, and an iPod. Once the DVRs purchased these tools for Sean, Kristen provided training. "Kristen was amazing. She showed me how to use everything. She trained me on all the software and answered all of my questions, even the ones I emailed her after my training was over."

Sean uses an iPod to keep his calendar, make notes and send emails. He also uses the iPod to view little videos that show him how to add an appointment to his calendar, make a reminder, or send an email. "I know how to send an email. I've done it hundreds of times, but I can look at my iPod and have no idea how to start. It's frustrating. So Kristen made me a little video that takes me step-by-step through the process of sending an email. She made a bunch of them for all of the things I do on my iPod. And she made some for things I do with my laptop, like connecting to Wi-Fi."

Sean has about 20 videos on his device that he can view anytime he needs help. "I used to have Post-It notes all over everywhere. This thing," he said tapping his iPod to his chest, "is a lifesaver for me. It's got a 32G memory, which is a lot of space. And I constantly back-up what's on here. I have a video to show me how to do a back-up too," he said chuckling.

Sean said he is feeling pretty optimistic about the future. "I am finding life with a brain injury is about learning to adapt and adjust. The tools I have to work with now are really helping me."

LITTLE VIDEOS - Sean Powers suffered a traumatic brain injury at work. Snippets of video stored on his iPod help remind him how to use his iPod, his computer and the other assistive technology he uses at school.





'TIS THE SEASON – Mount Olive Police Officer Bill Galop helped coordinate his department's annual toy drive for the Advancing Opportunities' Respite Holiday Party. He delivered heaps of gifts to party organizer and Parents' Night Out Coordinator Jennifer Palmer on Saturday, December 5th. Members of the Hackettstown Community Band provided festive music for the event.

Tradition of Giving Continues Community Unites to Deliver Holiday Cheer

Twenty years ago, the Family Support Services team in the northwest region of the state decided to throw a holiday party for the families they served. Everyone must have had a really good time, because all these years later, the tradition continues.

This year's party was held on December 5, 2015 at Belvidere High School. As it has for many years, the Belvidere High Leo's Club helped with set up and clean up. The students also made crafts and played games with the party guests. The Hackettstown Community Band set the mood with holiday tunes. The event was so special, Santa Claus slipped away from his duties at the North Pole to join the fun.

In 1995, Mount Olive's Police Chief Charlie Brown, a true fan of giving, pledged his department's support in providing gifts for the children served by the program and all of

their siblings. In 1998, Chief Brown passed the torch to Sgt. Jeff Kalafut who has been coordinating the effort ever since. Sadly, in 1999, Chief Brown died on Christmas morning. But his memory and giving spirit live on each year when squad cars laden with holiday gifts purchased by members of the Mount Olive Police Department arrive for the party.

"This holiday gathering has a history of bringing the community together," said CEO Jack Mudge. "The Mount Olive Police Department, Belvidere High School's Leo's Club and the Hackettstown Community Band have all participated for many years. They make this a warm and wonderful way to kick off the holiday season. The agency and the families we serve appreciate their efforts and are grateful," he said.

Special thanks go to party planner and Parents' Night Out Coordinator Jennifer Palmer; Leo Club members and Advisor and Laura Gardner; and Frank Catanzano.

Welcoming Golf's Greatest Fan

Dave Finn Visits Rothwell Family Golf Classic

Assistive technology offers avid golf fan David Finn, 22, a way to express himself and communicate with family and friends.

For many years, Finn, who has a form of a neuro-muscular condition that affects his speech, used a piece of paper with the alphabet printed on it as his main mode of communication. The sometimes cumbersome system required someone to hold the sheet and read out Dave's message as he tapped individual letters.

Today, he uses a PRC Accent 1200, an augmentative and alternative communication device, and a T-bar stylus to speak directly with others. The device features a dynamic display screen and WordPower software. It is pre-pro-

grammed with many sentences and phrases Finn uses in his day-to-day life. In addition to helping Finn speak, it has built-in environmental controls that allow him to activate his television and DVR.

Last year Dave allowed Advancing Opportunities' Assistive Technology Services (ATS) team to film him using the device for its YouTube channel, AssistiveTechnologyCenter. His video is featured in the AT Stories series which shows people with disabilities using assistive technology to help them live independently.

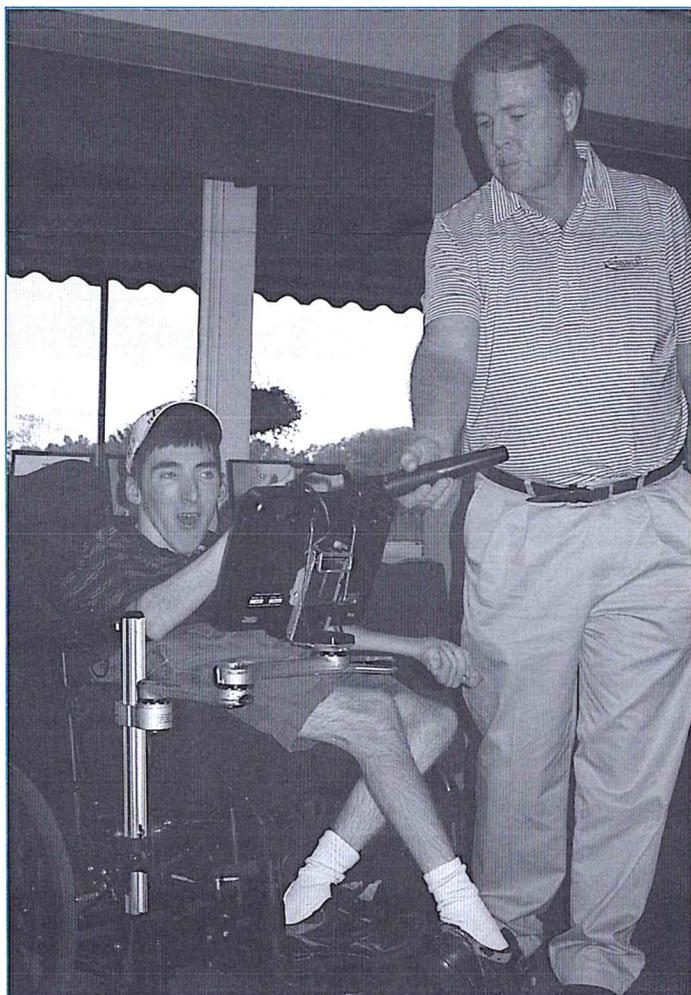
"Our goal in setting up the channel was to give people who are not familiar with assistive technology a look at the kinds of things that are possible," said ATS Director Fred Tchang. "In sharing Dave's story, we wanted to show how this device helps someone with a speech impairment to converse more easily and naturally with others," he said.

In July, David was featured in another video, one produced by the Golf Channel. In it, they dub Dave 'Golf's Greatest Fan' and share stories of how he travels with his parents, John and Vanessa, to Masters Tournaments around the country to see his favorite golfers in action. The five-plus minute clip, details how Dave first met Phil Mickelson and his caddie Jim 'Bones' Mackay and how Dave has become a regular and recognizable figure on the professional golf scene.

In August, Dave and his family participated in a live Twitter Chat hosted by the agency's Twitter account, @AdvOpps. They tweeted about their experience with assistive technology and the difference it has made in their lives.

On Monday, September, 28, 2015, Dave and his parents joined the golfers for dinner during the Rothwell Family Golf Classic at Hopewell Valley Country Club. He and his Dad shared some of their experiences with the world's top golfers and displayed some of the gifts they've received over the years. The golfers related well to the young man and his story. Many took the opportunity to take a selfie with Golf's Greatest Fan. To see Dave's AT Stories video, visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/assistivetechcenter>. You can find his Golf Channel feature here, <http://www.golfchannel.com/media/dave-finn-golfs-greatest-fan/>.

For more information about how Advancing Opportunities' Assistive Technology Services team can help you, call toll-free 888-322-1918 ext. 595.



GOLF'S GREATEST FAN – Dave Finn uses assistive technology to communicate. He visited the agency during the Rothwell Family Golf Classic and shared some stories about meeting some of golf's greatest players.

Proper Tools and a Great Attitude

This Winning Combo Invites Success

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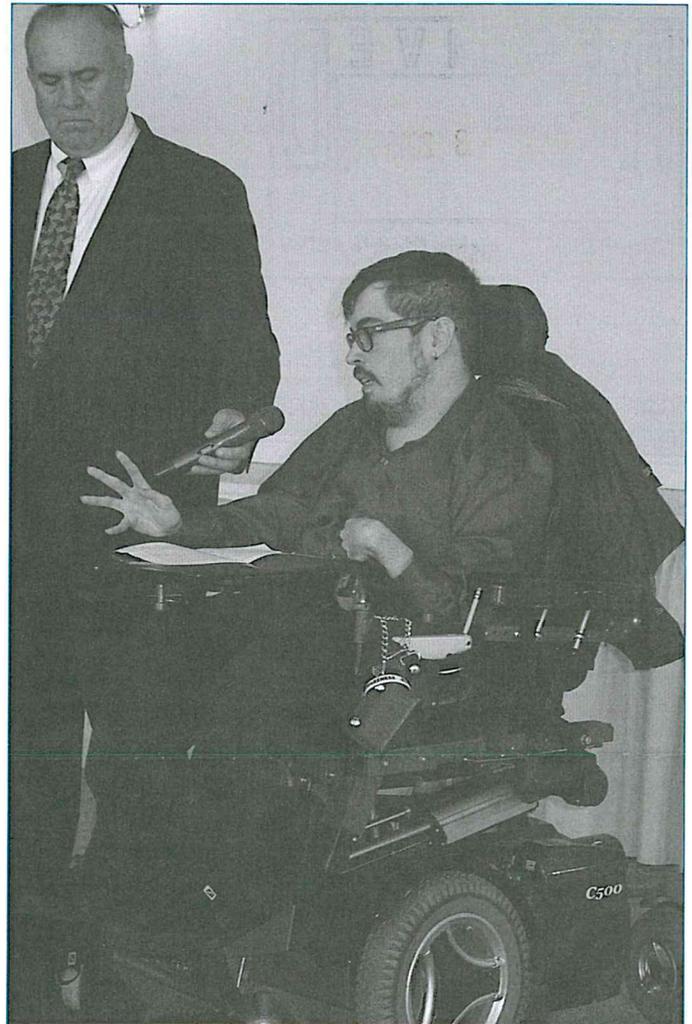
try different tools and types of software to see what would work best for him. To say Travis has an entirely different outlook on studying after the evaluation would be an understatement. "The things you can do with technology today are just amazing," he said.

One of the tools Kristen recommended for Travis was Dragon Naturally Speaking, a speech recognition tool that allows users to dictate to a computer. The more Travis uses Dragon, the better it recognizes his voice and the more accurate it gets. With Dragon, he said he can knock out an essay for class in about an hour. "I wish I had thought about technology sooner," he said.

Travis has a scribe who takes notes for him in class. The scribe uses an Echo Smartpen, which records audio of the lecture. The written notes are made on special paper that syncs to the recording. Travis can listen to specific parts of a lecture by tapping spots in the notes. The pen also allows Travis to upload the notes and recording from a class to a computer or his laptop.

Another of the tools Kristen recommended was a custom workspace in his home. It features a desk that is tall enough for Travis to drive up to in his wheelchair. It's also got plenty of room for his laptop and desktop. He likes the many built-in slots to keep the cords and wires from getting in his way. He said being able to work comfortably from his wheelchair makes a huge difference.

The key to succeeding in school is keeping an optimistic mind, said Travis. He encountered his share of naysayers when he announced his plan to attend college. He is currently studying Health Sciences and hopes to have a career counseling adolescents. "I like listening to people and my friends tell me I give good advice."



WHAT A DIFFERENCE TECHNOLOGY MAKES -- Travis Diller addressed the friends and supporters who joined the agency for its Community Recognition Breakfast on November 17, 2015 and explained that it is much easier writing a term paper using assistive technology than it is typing with one finger.

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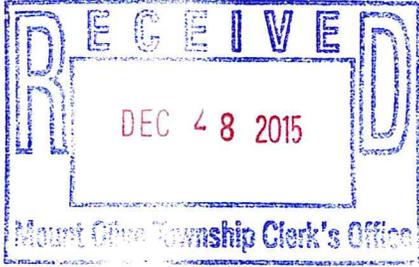
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All Disabilities. Many Services. One Agency.



SPRING HOEDOWN

Howdy Partner!

Advancing Opportunities, Inc. will be holding a Spring Hoedown on April 30, 2016 at the Fieldhouse Sports and Expo Complex in Robbinsville, NJ. **You are invited.**

We will be transforming this unique space into an **old-fashioned barn-dance** and we hope you will join us! **Come and kick up your heels.** There will be plenty of country music, a fully-stocked saloon, line dancing, a fine array of vittles, and a silent auction. Proceeds raised will provide vital services and supports for people with all types of disabilities.

Visit www.advopps.org/hoedown to buy tickets or take advantage of sponsorship opportunities. For more information, contact Liz Graham at 609-882-4182 ext. 511 or via email at lgraham@advopps.org.

We Hope to See You There!

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