



## *Winter News 2025*

*Technology Solutions for Life's Limitations*

### **Greetings!**

Welcome to the Winter Edition of the Assistive Technology Newsletter!

As the snow blankets the world in white and we embrace the coziness of the winter season, we're thrilled to share the latest updates, resources, and inspiring stories in the field of assistive technology (AT). This edition highlights exciting innovations, practical tools, and community events to support independence and enrich lives during the colder months. Read on for updates, product highlights, inspiring stories, and upcoming events in the world of AT.

### **Spotlight on Innovation**

**Advanced Accessibility in Smart Homes** The winter months bring an increased reliance on smart home technologies, and recent updates have made these tools even more accessible. Amazon Alexa and Google Home have expanded their adaptive voice command options, including customized responses and enhanced compatibility with assistive devices. These improvements ensure greater independence for individuals with disabilities, especially during times when staying indoors becomes essential.

**Innovative Mobility Solutions** Winter weather can present unique challenges for mobility. New developments in power wheelchairs and scooters feature weather-resistant designs, improved traction for icy conditions, and remote-control capabilities. These advancements make it easier for individuals to navigate the outdoors safely and confidently during the season.

**Wearable Health Tech for the Season** Wearable devices are now equipped with enhanced monitoring features tailored for winter health concerns, such as hypothermia alerts and fall detection on icy surfaces. Additionally, smart glasses continue to evolve with real-time navigation assistance, ensuring safer travel even in snowy or low-visibility environments.

**Artificial Intelligence: Progress and Potential** Artificial intelligence (AI) continues to make remarkable strides, especially in the realm of assistive technology. AI-powered tools now offer real-time transcription services, advanced speech recognition, and personalized accessibility features tailored to individual needs. Chatbots and virtual assistants have become even more intuitive, providing immediate support and simplifying tasks for users with disabilities. As AI technology evolves, it is increasingly integrated into AT devices, enhancing their functionality and user experience.

## **Product Highlights**

**The Read&Write Toolbar** The Read&Write Toolbar has received a winter update that includes improved multi-language support and expanded tools for creating accessible educational materials. These updates are designed to help students stay engaged and succeed despite potential disruptions caused by winter weather.

**JAWS Screen Reader** The JAWS Screen Reader continues to lead in accessibility, with updates that now include enhanced navigation for complex web applications and improved document compatibility. These updates are particularly beneficial for remote work and education during winter months when travel may be limited.

## Community Stories

**Breaking Barriers in Education** This winter, we're inspired by a college student with cerebral palsy who has embraced assistive technology to excel in their studies. By using adaptive keyboards and voice recognition software, they've overcome physical barriers and are now thriving in their coursework, inspiring peers and educators alike.

**Winter Sports and Accessibility** A local adaptive skiing program is making waves by offering individuals with physical disabilities the chance to experience the thrill of winter sports. Using specialized equipment and techniques, participants are gaining confidence and enjoying new opportunities for outdoor recreation. Here is a link to the application for that program at Great Bear. <https://www.greatbearpark.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Adaptive-Skier-App.pdf>

## Upcoming Events

**ATIA 2025 Conference** Coming up just next week is the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) Conference. This virtual and in-person event will showcase cutting-edge AT solutions, educational workshops, and networking opportunities for professionals and users alike. <https://www.atia.org/conference/>

## Resources and Support

**AT Funding Opportunities** Winter can bring unexpected expenses, but our low-interest loan program remains available to help you acquire the assistive technology you need. Our team is here to guide you through the application process and find affordable solutions. Apply now: <https://www.dakotalink.net/dakotalink-at-fund/>

**Community Forums** Stay connected this winter by joining our online forums. Share experiences, ask questions, and find support from a community of AT users and professionals. Engage with us on platforms like Facebook, ATAP, AT3, ILC, DHS, and DSS. <https://www.dakotalink.net/at-partners/>

**Closing Thoughts** As we navigate the challenges and opportunities of winter, we remain committed to advancing assistive technology and supporting the needs of our community. We hope this newsletter provides

you with valuable insights and inspiration. Thank you for being part of our journey toward greater accessibility and inclusion.

DakotaLink strives to maintain its professionalism through RESNA ATP certification. We currently have three certified staff members and continue to support our team in obtaining this credential. To keep our skills current, we complete CEUs (Continuing Education Credits) biannually, often through webinars provided by ATAP in partnership with ATIA.

Remember to follow us on Facebook for daily updates and insights on our work: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=dakotalink> Stay warm and stay connected! <https://www.dakotalink.net/>

Best,

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## **DakotaLink is the South Dakota Assistive Technology Program**

Our mission is to assist individuals with functional limitations; due to a disability, illness, injury, or the effects of aging; maximize their potential whether at home or in the community, at school, at work, or at play through the use of Assistive Technology.

An assistive technology device is any equipment or tool that helps individuals overcome limitations in daily activities.

Assistive technology services assist individuals to acquire, use, modify or maintain an assistive technology device.