As we head into the 2003/2004 training season, the CRP RRCEP continues to focus on collaboration and partnership building. The team at CRP RRCEP are pleased to announce the following partnerships:

**New York State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA)**
The CRP RRCEP and NYSRA have collaboratively sponsored a highly successful Job Coach Training Series in Albany, New York, serving 30 local CRP staff and identifying the need for additional training as the waiting list indicates. In July 2003 along with CMEP-NYS the partnership hosted a CFR training for CRP financial staff in the NYC area. We are also very pleased to be a co-sponsoring the 2003 Annual NYSRA conference as they celebrate their anniversary.

**Western New York Learning Disabilities Association**
In an effort to address the needs of “new” middle managers, the staff of WNY LDA and CRP RRCEP designed a 7-part module based on Management Skills Development Series. The modules include: Introduction to Management I & II, Recruitment and Hiring, Staff Evaluation and Problem Solving, Team Building, Time Management and Stress Management. Staff who have attended the series will be offered participation in on-going “Brown Bag Lunchtime Management workshops/discussions.”

**New Jersey, New York and National APSE (Association for Persons in Supported Employment)**
The team at CRP RRCEP continues to develop their relationship with APSE. The CRP RRCEP will co-sponsor and manage the registration process for the 2003 New York State Conference (November in Lake Placid). The New Jersey APSE conference committee has invited RRCEP to collaborate on the conference development and lastly staff from the CRP RRCEP participated on the National APSE conference planning committee as well as presenting the full day pre-conference “Practical Skills for Staff Supervision Training” at the July 2003 Conference in San Diego, California.

**Abilities, Inc. (National Centers for Disabilities Services)**
The CRP RRCEP is pleased to announce a developing relationship with the staff at Abilities, Inc., a division of the National Center for Disabilities Services. Together we have co-sponsored 3 workshops serving the head of Long Island CRP staff. Additional offerings such as Mental Health Issues, Job Development and Team Building, and Assistive Technology are planned for the 2003/2004 training year.

**New Jersey & Puerto Rico – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**
In New Jersey, the CRP RRCEP II and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Dan Will and staff) have partnered to host focus groups to identify CRP constituent training needs.

The training staff from the Association for Vocational Rehabilitation in Puerto Rico and RRCEP II will be working together to offer the 2004 Employment, Empowerment and Choice Conference in an effort to bring VR and CRP staff together in your agency, community or region.

For more information, please contact Wendy Quarles at wquarles@buffalo.edu or (716) 829-2875.
Farewell to CRP Senior Trainer David Hartzell

It is with sadness that we announce the departure of CRP RRCEP's Senior Trainer Dave Hartzell. After working with the CRP team for just over a year, Dave has been offered a clinical counseling position within the Erie County (Buffalo) mental health system.

Although Dave’s tenure within Region II was short, he made quite an impact on curriculum and course development. Through his strong commitment to the issues facing CRP staff in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the following workshops were added to CRP RRCEP’s offerings:

- Staff Recruitment and Retention
- The Supervisor as a Coach and Mentor

Thanks to David’s contribution of time and talent to the 2002 and 2003 Employment, Empowerment and Choice Conference’s in San Juan, Puerto Rico. They were a great success! David’s sense of humor and camaraderie will be missed.

RRCEP II Would Like to Welcome Two New Additions to Their Staff

With each departure of a staff comes an open door for new people to join our team. We are very pleased to introduce Jeffrey Dulko and Daniel Yeo.

Jeffrey joined CRP RRCEP’s staff in July. Jeff brings to the CRP RRCEP program a vast background in the rehabilitation field. A native of Queens, New York, Jeff received his undergraduate at St. Bonaventure University and his master’s from New York University. Jeff is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at West Virginia University. He is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and has 15 plus years of experience in the field. His career spans the areas of vocational evaluation and assessment, program management and career and mental health counseling. Most recently Jeff worked in the counseling center at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.

Jeff is excited to “hit the road running” and to make his way throughout the region. Jeff will participate in the revision of the Job Coach Curriculums as well as work on the many collaborative projects that the CRP RRCEP is involved in. Jeff and his wife Teresa live in Fairport, New York with their two children.

Daniel joined RRCEP II in May 2003 as a Graduate Assistant. He recently finished his undergraduate work at the University at Buffalo, and is now a graduate student in the Educational Technology program at UB housed in the Graduate School of Education. He brings to the team a strong background in technology and graphic design.

Daniel has been hard at work doing the layout, design, and publication of our print material. He recently finished up the 2003-2004 Program Catalog, 2003 Fall Quarterly Calendar, and our new brochures. He has also given our website a fresh, new look, revamping the entire site. You can access it at http://www.rcep2.buffalo.edu.

Welcome aboard Jeff and Dan!

Micro Counseling

On September 30 through October 2nd, a micro counseling training will be held in Buffalo, New York. What makes this training unique, is that it is being offered as part of our 121 initiative and will exclusively include participants from Seneca Nation of Indians, St. Regis Mohawk and Native American Indian Living Services (NAILS).

This three-day workshop will focus on basic attending and influencing skills. Participants will engage in multiple role-plays and video taping that will reinforce the basic counseling sequence.
New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services will be coordinating a Project Access Grant designed to increase the accessibility of One Stop sites to customers with disabilities. Architectural accessibility is not the sole issue; the goal is better consumer access to computers, software, and all placement activities available at a site.

Some of the partners in this effort include: the Work Incentive Boards of Bergen, Hudson, and Middlesex counties and the city of Newark; University of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ; ATAC from NJ Protection and Advocacy; Cerebral Palsy of NJ; Garden State Employment and Training Association; the Institute for Community Inclusion; the State Employment and Training Commission; the Heldrich Center of Rutgers University.

Over the two year life of the grant, there will be pilot programs in four One Stops, training of personnel to assist customers with various disabilities, provision of or improvement in technology-based services, holding of a of a “Best Practices” conference, and development of an evaluation instrument to assess the grant’s success in achieving its goals.

A major focus of this grant is training of One Stop staff, which will be recruited to act as Disability Program Navigators within each One Stop site in the state.

Staff training will also be provided by the University of Massachusetts Institute for Community Inclusion on topics related to serving WIA customers, including: understanding various disabilities, appropriate and effective interpersonal skills, identifying and accommodating customers with disabilities, coordinating services with other public systems, and work incentive options.

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey’s Integrated Employment Institute will conduct hands-on, on-site training to One Stop staff to help them implement classroom training into daily work activities. UMDNJ’s Department of Rehabilitation will also assist staff in creation of training manuals, collecting and evaluating data, and devising “implementation strategies” for the pilot projects.

Besides site accessibility assessments, Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey will carry out the training of self-assessment accessibility teams, as well as training in setting up and using technology items and in writing assistive technology proposals.

This collaboration of educational, governmental, and private non-profit agencies and programs is a major step on the road to expanding employment services to the Garden State’s citizens with disabilities.
Students in an upper-level computer software engineering class are helping to solve a real-world problem—and restore a sense of independence to persons with speech and motor disabilities—by designing augmentation communication devices.

The students have produced UB Talker, a laptop computer with a touch-screen interface that helps its users communicate. UB Talker comes in models for both adults and children.

The ongoing project began in March 2002 when senior students were asked by Kris Schindler and Mike Buckley, both lecturers in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, to design a speech-enhanced, computer-aided device that would allow David, a 43-year-old nursing home resident who had suffered a stroke 20 years ago, to communicate.

"David can’t speak; he’s in a wheelchair and has very limited motor skills,” says Schindler. “Mentally, he’s no different than you or I—it’s just very hard for him to communicate. He has a sheet of paper and communicates by pointing out letters and letter groups. It’s frustrating and very time-consuming.”

Even worse, says Schindler, a user like David couldn’t program it—a therapist, often with a busy workload, would have to do it. David can program the Talker designed for him by the students.

Unlike the commercial products, the UB Talker features phrase prediction—words and phrases that are used frequently are automatically stored in the computer—and it is time sensitive. If David wants to go to lunch and begins typing that phrase, a list of phrases appear on the screen before he even has completed the task, and he can finish the thought with one or two clicks or touches. Entire phrases are stored in the computer according to the time of day they are most likely to be used or can be programmed according to time-sensitive needs, eliminating tedious and repetitious typing.

"If you’re talking about food at eight in the morning, it knows you’re talking about breakfast,” says Buckley.
One of the most unique and useful features of the device is its story, or lecture, mode, which allows users to participate in more natural, give-and-take conversations. When David was testing the device, he could input questions, comments or conversation topics into the laptop before the students arrived and play those comments either one at a time and wait for their response or play the entire lecture.

“If he knew we were coming in that day and wanted to tell us there were certain things that were not working with the Talker, or certain things that needed to be changed, he could put these phrases in the lecture mode and when we arrived he wouldn’t have to construct the phrases,” says Buckley.

One of the goals for the child Talker, he adds, is for a user to be able to “speak” a phrase in three clicks or less. “Three clicks and you’ve got lunch,” says Buckley.

In fact, Buckley relates, on the day David first received the UB Talker, he called Buckley at home later that night.

“I couldn’t be there when they delivered the computer to David. Late that night the phone rings and there’s this robotic voice on the other end of the phone talking to me. David had it programmed in the lecture mode. He said, ‘I’m new at using the device so it’s going to take me a little time to (do this). He hadn’t spoken on the phone in 20 years and he calls me,’’ says Buckley.

The Talker, he says, restores a sense of freedom and independence to its users. “It’s a quality of life issue,” he explains. “It restores relationships.”

Soon, the robotic voice will sound much more human and be able to express such emotions as sadness, happiness, anger and even impatience, says Schindler.

Part of the impetus behind choosing the project was to give students some real-world experience, note Schindler and Buckley. And they exceeded expectations in more ways than just completing the project.

“What really impressed Mike and me was how the students felt about the project. It seemed like once they got involved, they stayed involved,” Schindler says. “We had students who graduated in May but didn’t want to walk away from it. We were very impressed with how they worked with people with disabilities. We thought we would have to slowly immerse them in this environment, but the students already had the maturity they needed to work with the clients. They were very patient and understanding with David and the fact that it takes him a long time to communicate,” he says. “This whole thing has expanded beyond what we ever imagined.”

Not only did students have to design a device, they also were required to develop brochures and “pitch” their designs in front of the class. “They had to promote it like it was a real product,” says Buckley.

Schindler and Buckley are excited by the types of problems the project has generated, such as the need to improve speech synthesis and implement emotion into the Talker’s generic, robotic-sounding voice. “These are neat little problems that are small enough for a student to work on but large enough to be significant,” says Schindler.

“It’s been a great experience and it’s socially relevant,” he says. “We are going to keep going and continue to develop the Talker and get into other projects that would help people in the community.”

Buckley and Schindler are pounding the pavement to find the money to give a UB Talker to David. UB owns the current device.

“We want to build and deliver as many of the UB Talkers as we can. There’s no short of people who can use them,” Buckley says.

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Technical Assistance and Customized Training Available!

As agencies continue to face the challenges of serving consumers, marketing programs and balancing tight budgets, the idea of sending staff away from the office to attend training seems daunting. Let us bring the Training and Staff Development to you. The CRP RRCEP II has an extensive history of providing Technical Assistance and Customized Training. Examples have included Team Building, Strategic Program Development, Agency/Program Marketing and Staff Development design.

Let the CRP RRCEP II work with you to assess your needs to assist you with designing a customized in-house or local training or technical assistance. The CRP RRCEP program will bring in local, state, regional or national experts right to your door.

For more information contact Wendy Quarles at wquarles@buffalo.edu or take a look at the Technical Assistance application and process on our website at http://www.rrcep2.buffalo.edu.
in transition since December, our plans for transition to assist in community presentations, and a comparison of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind, (NCLB) legislation.

Our Chief of Program and Planning, Brian Fitzgibbons provided our agency’s focus and commitment to transition services, a wrap-up of our program for the day, and discussed with our Lead Transition Counselors future meetings and other issues of concern. Our Lead Transition Counselors benefited from this meeting and gave suggestions and ideas for future meetings.

**Transitioning involves relationships.** There are relationships we have with our consumers and families and those we have with schools, agencies and the community. Although we have made inroads in the provision of services to our students with special needs, there remains much to do to prepare them and provide for them the future they deserve. In developing these relationships and utilizing what we all have to share, we can improve service provision for these consumers.

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**Computer-Based Tutorials on Culture Competency and Visit-Ability**

The Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Independent Living Management (RRTC - ILM) releases two computer-based tutorials on CD-ROM.

**The Visit-Ability Tutorial**

A recent collaboration between the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Universal Design (RERC on UD) at the University at Buffalo and the RTC-ILM resulted in the development of Visit-Ability, and computer-based tutorial on CD-ROM.

The purpose of this tutorial is to promote and educate independent living center staff, volunteers, and participants on Visit-Ability and community action projects that support the development of Visit-able housing. Universal design on the community level permits full access to social participation in community affairs and interaction with neighbors. Visit-Ability is an important step toward making universal access to community life a reality. This tutorial provides a basic understanding of the concept of Visit-Ability, including good practice examples.
and cost estimates for Visit-able features. It describes advocacy strategies for developing Visit-Ability projects in local communities and contact information for organizations that can assist in promoting those projects. Most tutorial participants already share at least some of the needs and many of the goals of advocacy groups across the country; housing that is welcoming, convenient and usable by every community member.

This program is an adaptation of the booklet *Visit-Ability: An Approach to Universal Design in Housing* created by the RERC on UD.

**Edward Steinfeld**, Arch.D, Director
Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Universal Design Director, Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access

**Douglas J. Usiak**, Director
Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Independent Living Management
Executive Director, Western New York Independent Living Project, Inc.

**Successful Outreach to Foreign-Born Consumers through Culture Brokering**

Since the early 1980s, about 850,000 people per year have come to the United States from other countries. Thirty years ago, about one in twenty Americans was foreign-born; today the ratio is approximately one in ten. Nearly everyone in the U.S. has a cross-cultural story to tell. Independent living personnel are no exception. Stories, however, need to be given meaning, and meanings need to be understood and applied.

**Coping with the effects of a disability can be a challenge no matter where one is born.** For a recent immigrant, the challenge is often magnified. In addition to difficulties with language, housing and employment, the person may also have difficulty understanding and accessing rehabilitation services. Independent living staff often experience frustration that arises from misconmunication and differing cultural perspectives. It is helpful to recognize obstacles that exist in the system for the foreign-born consumer as well as the means to overcome them. This recognition will enable one to design interventions to overcome these barriers.

This computer-based tutorial was developed as a joint project of the Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange (CIRRIE) and the Rehabilitation Research Training Center on Independent Living Management (RRTC-ILM). This program is an adaptation of the monograph *Culture Brokering: Providing Culturally Competent Rehabilitation Services to Foreign-Born Persons* by Mary Ann Jezewski and Paula Sotnik (Jezewski and Sotnik, 2001). The RRTC-ILM adapted the monograph by Jezewski and Sotnik to the context of independent living services for people with disabilities by incorporating terminology, examples and case studies relevant to independent living.

**John H. Stone**, PhD, Director
Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information & Exchange (CIRRIE)

**Douglas J. Usiak**, Director
Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Independent Living Management
Executive Director, Western New York Independent Living Project, Inc.

CIRRIE, the RERC on UD and the RRTC - ILM are supported by grants from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education. We welcome comments that will enable us to deepen our own understanding of ways to enhance people’s lives.

For more information about the programs and services of:
CIRRIE – [http://www.cirrie.buffalo.edu](http://www.cirrie.buffalo.edu)
RERC-UD – [http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/](http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/)

**Obtaining a Copy**

For information about obtaining a copy of the tutorials contact via e-mail: [info@ilm.wnyilp.org](mailto:info@ilm.wnyilp.org)

Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Independent Living Management
The Western New York Independent Living Project, Inc.
3108 Main Street
Buffalo, New York 14214
Telephone: (716) 836-0822 (Voice/TDD)
Fax: (716) 835-3967