What is Assistive Technology

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These old bicycle parts are being re-purposed to create a new mobility device in the CPD's AT Lab. [caption]

Assistive technology, or AT, is any tool or resource that can be used by individuals with disabilities to help improve their quality of life and to help increase their independence. AT can be purchased off the shelf, or modified as needed to produce the desired result. AT can be as sophisticated as electronic communication devices, or as low-tech as a Assistive technology is generally grouped into categories such as augmentative and alternative communication, aids to daily living, home and worksite modifications, job accommodations, seating and positioning, vision and hearing aids, wheeled mobility aids, vehicle modifications and recreational aids. AT devices that could be used by a small child include specially made chairs to help them sit and tables or trays to hold toys, electronic switches so they can interact with toys, or picture cards to help them communicate their needs. Adults may use technologies such as screen readers to help them use the Internet, powered wheelchairs for mobility and a ramp to allow easy entry and exit from their home. Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities offers several ways in which people can find and use assistive technology devices. The AT Lab, located in the Janet Quinney Lawson building, houses a state-of-the-art computer lab and fabricating shop. The AT lab can design, fabricate, modify or repair AT equipment to enable a person with a disability to become more independent. In addition, AT lab staff will train persons with disabilities, parents, family members and professional service providers about assistive technologies. Call (435) 797-0699 for more information.

Citizens Reutilizing Assistive Technology Equipment, or CReATE, refurbishes wheelchairs, power chairs and scooters and make them available to people who need assistive technology at a low cost. Individuals make an appointment for an assessment to determine the type of device needed, fill out the appropriate paperwork and pay a small service fee, which is based on the time spent to repair and clean the equipment. The CReATE lab is located in Salt Lake City. To make an appointment, or to donate used equipment, call (801) 887-9398. The Utah Assistive Technology Foundation is a private, non-profit organization that works with Zions Bank and the Utah MicroEnterprise Loan Fund to provide low-interest loans to purchase assistive technology and telework devices and to start or expand small businesses. For more information, call (800) 524-5152. For more information: Utah Assistive Technology ProgramAT LabCReATE Utah Assistive Technology Foundation