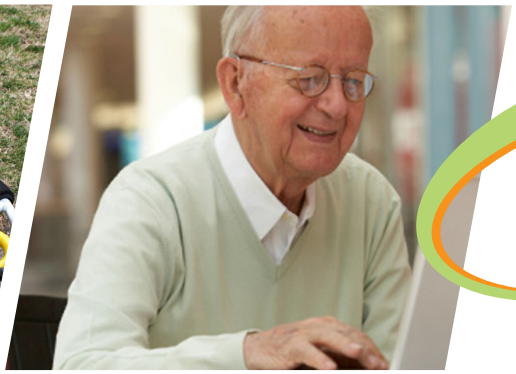
OUR STORIES



PROJECT START
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

In January of 2006, the Project START Advisory Council invited me to be a part of this team because I am Jason's mom. Jason suffers from Duchenne, Muscular Dystrophy. He is now 23, and the progressive nature of this disease requires an ongoing process for our family to frequently review what type of assistive technology is needed to make Jason's life better. My personal experiences have forged an interest in finding and providing support solutions for people with disabilities to make full use of Assistive Technology. I understand the difficulties that arise when it comes to the implementation of Assistive Technology, but also understand the abundant benefits that the use of Assistive Technology can provide.

Mississippi's Project START offers lending libraries, refurbishing programs, training and demonstrations, and the placement of computers in the homes of those with disabilities. Our 2010 annual report specifically addresses the services delivered. Lack of funding often creates a barrier to providing Assistive Technology. Mississippi Project START staff (under the direction of DorothyYoung), along with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation staff (under the direction of Butch McMillan) tenaciously pursue funding through partnerships and grants.

"Empowering Mississippians with disabilities through awareness, education and access to assistive technology is the mission of the Project START Advisory Council. I am proud to be associated with the Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Project START staff, the Project START Advisory team and this mission.

Darlene Oliver
Co-Chair of the Project START Advisory Team

MADISON COUNTY SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL SERVICES

Lynn Slay
Director
Phone (601) 853-1326
Fax (601) 853-7610

212 Sunnybrook Road
Ridgeland, MS 39157

May 13, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like very much to say a very big and special thank you to Dorothy Young, Director of Project Start, for her continued support, leadership, opportunities for training, and the invaluable services she provides with her program.

As Assistive Technology Coordinator of the Madison Co. public school system in Madison, MS I can tell you that the many programs and the wonderful loaner program provided by Mrs. Young serves a tremendous need in our district as well as throughout the entire state.

So often students are in need of expensive, and/or special equipment/devices/systems that a school district does not have or cannot provide. Our district has used the loaner program repeatedly to evaluated different pieces of equipment for language impaired, hearing impaired and visually impaired students before making decisions to buy or seek funding to buy the equipment for a student. By actually using the equipment before purchasing is invaluable in the process of making the correct decision as to what is the most functional and best purchase for the school district or for the student.

Project Start with Dorothy Young's leadership has continued to provide much needed and valuable trainings and workshops monthly by vendors of different assistive technology devices and equipment, as well as providing training on a variety of special programs such as Kursweill, Intellitools, Classroom Suites, Wynn, JAWS, and Zoom Text just to name a few. These trainings are attended by all of my staff that teach special needs students using any kind of assistive technology.

Again thank you so much for a job well done and for the help and support you have provided.

Suzanne Yoste Scanlan
Assistive Technology Coordinator
Madison Co. Schools
601-853-1326

JSU
JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Special Education
College of Education and Human Development

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Dorothy Young, M.S.
Director, Project START
P.O. Box 1698
Jackson, MS 39215

May 13, 2011

Dear Director Young:

Once again, I must extend my sincere appreciation for the support that you have provided to nascent educators in my care. A wider array of learning differences and styles are present in all aspects of life (academic and non-academic); due in part to legal mandates, evolving research-based best practices and a growing national emphasis on the basic civil rights of individuals with disabilities. I often remind my students that they can choose what they will teach and where they will teach, but they cannot choose who they will teach, to any degree of certainty. As such, they need to be prepared to teach all children. With regards to the special education population, assistive technology is a critical pedagogical mechanism/area of study that must be included in their repertoire of professional skills.

The level of professionalism, commitment, cooperation and expertise that you have extended to my students and myself is laudable, to say the least. You, your colleagues, and organization in its entirety provide my students with access to authentic experiences and tools of the trade. I doubt if there is another facility in the state of Mississippi that could rival Project START. I look forward to working with you again next semester. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tracy Knight Lackey

Cc: Dr. Ruby Wiggins, Chair

OUR ADVISORY BOARD

PROJECT START

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

OUR STORIES

To Project START,

My brother, Michael Warren, has been visually impaired since 2006. In November, 2008, we contacted Dorothy Young from PROJECT START / Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services. She discussed the program they offer in regards to loaning out their equipment. We completed the necessary paperwork and were loaned the Pico Pocket Video Magnifier with the carry case and power cord. Michael used the magnifier for a couple of months and it was returned back to PROJECT START in April, 2009. However, this gave Michael the opportunity to use the equipment on a trial basis offer to determine if it would be beneficial for him to purchase that product in the future. The Pico Pocket Video Magnifier did an outstanding job; however, Michael discovered that the portable Amigo low vision portable electronic magnifier was better fitted for his specific needs and that is what he currently owns at this time. We both agree that the PROJECT START program offering equipment and assistance for the visually impaired is a wonderful idea! There are so many different options and choices to decide on and it could dramatically change the lives of the visually impaired in such a powerful and productive way!

Sincerely,
Karen Smith

Jackson State University View

It is a pleasure each year to have Project Start provide a training for our students in the Augmentative and Alternative Communication course at Jackson State Univeristy. The students are exposed to hands on experiences with a variety of low, mid, and high tech devices that you bring from your inventory each year. This is a valuable resource for my course and the students. Your interactive presentation allows them to link their academic knowledge to application. Your services are appreciated each year and we look forward to continuing to partner with you as we advance knowledge and services for those with severe communication impairments who need AAC.

Thank you,
Marisha Speights M.S. CCC-SLP
Instructor/Clinical Super

I was introduced to Dorothy Young of Project Start about 3 years ago through my MDRS counselor, David Greene. I was working on a recording project and my computer crashed. I explained my situation to Dorothy and the urgency I was facing to get the project finished. Within a few days she had loaned me a computer and she let me keep it until MDRS could get me a new one. Now I'm working on getting my certification as a computer technician and need computers to practice on, take parts out and put back together, and Dorothy has donated three computers to me for this purpose. They have the latest assistive technology available for loan at Project Start, and Dorothy is the go-to person for these things.

Sincerely.
Adrian Hester , Madison, MS

Methodist Rehabilitation Center,
Jackson, MS
Speech Therapist

Mr. M was a 64 year old who suffered a stroke. When he began outpatient therapy he was independent with mobility, and he required OT services for strengthening, endurance, and fine motor control. His biggest concerns focused on his communication which was greatly impaired. He was able to answer yes/no questions appropriately, but he had no intelligible spontaneous speech.

Project START was utilized for communication device trials. I selected 3 communication devices to utilize in therapy to determine their appropriateness. The devices were used for one week in therapy and the most appropriate device was determined to be the DynaVox V. I returned the other loaned devices, but kept the DynaVox V to continue to train and practice with during therapy while the funding and ordering process occurred. At the end of the loan term, the DynaVox was returned to Project START, and Mr. M is now a functional communicator with family and in the community with his own communication device!

Project START is a wonderful resource for therapists, families, and teachers. I have utilized their services often with my patients (mostly for communication device loaners). When getting devices loaned from other companies, the wait time can be weeks. Project START is convenient, and I can get devices immediately for use. I feel that I have better outcomes with my patients who are able to have an extended evaluation/trial period with devices and with those patients who are able to use loaned devices during the funding and ordering process which can take up to two months.

Heather Wise, M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist Methodist Rehabilitation Center

Dear Ms. Young:

I wanted to personally thank you for the difference you made in my life. In January this year the unexpected happened to me. I had a head a on collision that turned my world upside down.

I have always been a very independent person, even as a child. Being incapacitated due to the accident was a blow physically as well as emotionally. Having a wheelchair provided through your service helped me to maintain dignity because I was once again able to do things for myself. For my daughter, who is a girl scout, it made all the difference in the world. She had a performance that she was invited to do at the Jackson Heart Study. There was no way I could have attended the performance without a wheelchair. It is not just a question of mobility that makes me so thankful. I learned that even if someone assists you in getting around, there is a considerably greater amount of pain involved when you are injured and you don't have the proper assistive devices.

Thanks to you and the wheelchair you provided, those days were short lived for me. It is wonderful to know that there are caring individuals like you who are willing to heed the call for so many people in need. Thank you so much. YOU MADE THE DIFFERENCE!!!.

Sincerely
Sharon Henderson

Hi, my name is Corey Ladner. I am currently attending Pearl River Community College. A few months ago, my scooter broke down on me and I was without a scooter until I got in touch with Project Start. Project Start was able to loan me one of their scooters until I was able to get a new scooter. Without Project Start, I would have had trouble getting around campus to get to all my classes. It wasn't long after I contacted Project Start, they came to my college and gave me the scooter and told me that I would most likely be able to use it for as long as I needed to. I appreciate Project Start very much for them loaning me a Scooter to help me get to and from my dorm to my classes.

Project START is a great program. I, ***Cindy Singletary,*** an Independent Living Specialist at **LIFE of Mississippi** had a consumer who was in great need of a modified bath seat. He, Ronald C., was a 11-year old boy who has severe Cerebral Palsy. I referred his guardian to Project START. I placed an internal referral on April 2, 2010. On June 2nd, I was notified that Project START would be meeting with him on June 10th. I spoke with Ronald's mother on June 22nd, and she was elated. She stated that everything went great on the 10th. The bath seat was just what they needed. They were very happy

Mrs. Dorothy Young:

I am an exceptional education teacher with students who have speech and language difficulties. It was brought to my attention that Project Start has the software program "Board Maker" which would allow me to create templates for communication/ conversation between my students and myself. I created several templates based on stories we were going to read, as well as, shapes and numbers for math. One of my students used the template/pictures to answer who, what, when, and where questions during story time.

The software program has allowed all of my students to participate in various language and mathematic activities throughout the school year. The templates were actual pictures of characters from each of the stories; representations of words; numbers; colors; and shapes. There is no greater joy than seeing a child who normally would not be able to participate in class, suddenly realize she has the tools needed to answer questions.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to include all my students in the language and mathematics curriculum.

Sincerely,
Diana Pace, Exceptional Education Teacher
Walton Elementary
3200 Bailey Avenue - The address of Excellence!

Dear Director Young:

Once again, I must extend my sincere appreciation for the support that you have provided for three years, to budding educators. A number of individual constructs account for the growing diversity in the student population. Due in part to legal mandates, evolving research-based practices and a growing national emphasis on the basic civil rights of individuals with disabilities; a wider array of learning differences and styles are present in all aspects of life (academic and non-academic). I often remind my students that they can choose what they will teach and where they will teach, but they cannot choose who they will teach, to any degree of certainty. As such, they need to be prepared to teach all children. With regards to the special education population, assistive technology is a critical pedagogical mechanism/area of study that must be included in their repertoire of professional skills.

The level of professionalism, commitment, cooperation and expertise that you have extended to my students and I is laudable, to say the least. You, your colleagues, and organization in its entirety provide my students with access to authentic experiences and tools of the trade. I doubt if there is another facility in the state of Mississippi that could rival The Addie McBride Center and the services that are rendered. I look forward to working with you again next semester. Thank you, thank you, thank you.
Sincerely,

Dr. Tracy Knight Lackey
Cc: Dr. Ruby Wiggins, Chair

Project Start has been invaluable this year in several vocational rehabilitation efforts. Providing Adrian with computer hardware to help him in preparation for Microsoft certification testing has been a great assist. LVA and computer hardware assistance to Ashley and Marquita has helped them stay current in their studies at Hinds CC.

Thank you for your assistance and expediting requests that have positively impacted these OVRB cases.

Sincerely,
David Greene
Sr. Counselor, OVRB

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Project Start for allowing me to access the assistive technology devices I needed to assist my child with his communication concerns.

As the parent of a child who has transitioned into adulthood, I have used several different devices to assist my child. Project Start has always allowed me to borow a device to confirm if it would be suitable before I would consider purchasing it.
I currently have a device that I have borrowed to enhance his communication and I am pleased with it. Project Start and the staff are always plesant and helpful and it has always been a great experience to work with this organization.

Sincerely,
Gwen Brown
Adminstrative Coordinator
The Arc of Mississippi

Project Start has been very helpful to the students and teachers in the Clinton Public School district. Most recently six of our teachers attended a full day workshop that reviewed different types of assistive technology. The conference played an important roll in our district goal of better educating our IEP committee members in order to make more informed decisions with regard to considering assistive technology for each student/IEP. In addition, the regular training sessions from the Dynavox and Prentke Romich companies for teachers and parents is invaluable.

Project coordinator, Dorothy Young, serves as a much needed resource contact. In the last few weeks, she has helped me with information for a visually impaired student in our district. In the fall, I will be getting some devices that she has recommended on loan from Project Start. The loaner program will allow the student to preview different devices to determine what works best for him. As a result, my district will save money because we will purchase equipment that we know will work for him and that he will use.

Lisa Oswalt, M.S.P., CCC-S
Language/Speech Pathologist
Assistive Technology Coordinator
Clinton Public Schools

My son, Elijah, has hydrocephalus and is developmentally delayed. Because of the weight of his head, he needs extra support when sitting in a stroller. We ordered a stroller from Medicaid and when we got it, it was too large for him but could not be returned or exchanged. Since we had already gotten one, we could not order another. So we were stuck with a stroller we could not use and did not have one to help Elijah. Then we heard of Project START. Not only did they have the perfect stroller for Elijah, but I was able to donate the other one to help others who might need it. I am grateful to Project START every time we go somewhere and use that stroller and have a happy, comfortable son instead of an uncomfortable, unhappy one!

A grateful mom,
Teresa

Dear Ms. Young:

On behalf of Ms. Pairlee Washington, I would like to thank your organization on providing a stroller to help her granddaughter, Nicolle, become easier to transport. She has truly enjoyed having this to help her when she travels and Nicole likes the fact she can relax and enjoy the scenery. Ms. Pairlee has stated this stroller is much easier to handle and carry around than Nicolle's mechanical wheelchair.

I hope to bring more clients to your attention in the future to help them move toward a more mobile life.

Thanks,
Teresa E. Thomas
Special Education Teacher/Transition Coordinator

I am so grateful for this program, because it has allowed me the ability to get around. I'm unable to walk at the present time but with the help of the wheelchair I can get around. When I called Project START I was amazing at how fast they provided me with a wheelchair and transfer board. I have been dealing with a lot of issues and almost always being caught between the cracks, so whenever help is provided in these times of need I appreciate it very much. Gog has been great through out this whole journey. God has also led me to Project START. This program is great and I would recommend it to anyone.

Thanks and God Bless
Rita Maxwell

Dear Ms. Young:

Pearl River Community College (PRCC), Mississippi's first public two-year institution of higher learning, has always been a leader in providing quality education. PRCC continues that tradition with a focus on the success of our students, especially the increased number of students with disabilities enrolling in higher education. This letter is in strong support of Mississippi Project START.

The Mississippi Project START program has provided professional development and training for our faculty and administrative staff regarding the needs of people with disabilities, including the latest in assistive technology. For those of us in the educational arena, Project START is the most valuable resource that I have found regarding technical assistance. We have also had an opportunity in the past to partner with Project START for public awareness seminars. However, this year Project START stepped up in a most unexpected way for one of our students. A student who uses a power scooter for mobility had his scooter quit working during the middle of the Spring Semester. The PRCC Campus is a rather large and sprawling campus and although this student was living in the dormitory, he had no way to get to his required classes or the cafeteria while waiting on his scooter to be repaired. A call was made to Project START and within days, the student was loaned a power scooter through the Equipment Exchange Program. If it were for Project START, this student would have been forced to drop out of college and lose a semester of classes.

I have worked very closely with the Mississippi Project START program and I am enthusiastically supportive of this program. Project START is the catalyst to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities, especially in promoting independence and opportunities for further education and I will continue to work with and assist Project START in any way possible.

Sincerely,
Tonia L. Moody, M.S., C.V.E.
Director of Recruitment and Disability Services

I have used the AAC loaner system from Project Start this past year with my home health patient who was in the end stages of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). She had virtually no speech due to the rapid progression of her disease. Frustration was a frequent problem for her as well as her family members as she attempted to gesture with limited mobility. I used a loaner Tech-Speak 32 from Project Start for her, and it greatly enhanced her ability to communicate. At first, she was able to communicate by pressing the keyboard, but soon had to revert to scanning with a tap switch to access the device. Because of the rapid regression in symptoms, she would probably have missed communicating for weeks or even most of the last few months of her life if we had attempted to order the device through regular Medicare channels. I know her family and I are both so grateful for the loaner program at Project START. The staffs are friendly and helpful, and the ability to borrow a device to try with a patient has been a great asset to me in home health speech pathology. Thanks for being such a blessing!

Carolyn K. Lyon, MA-CCC-SLP
Gilbert's Home Health
Flowood, MS

Dear Project START,

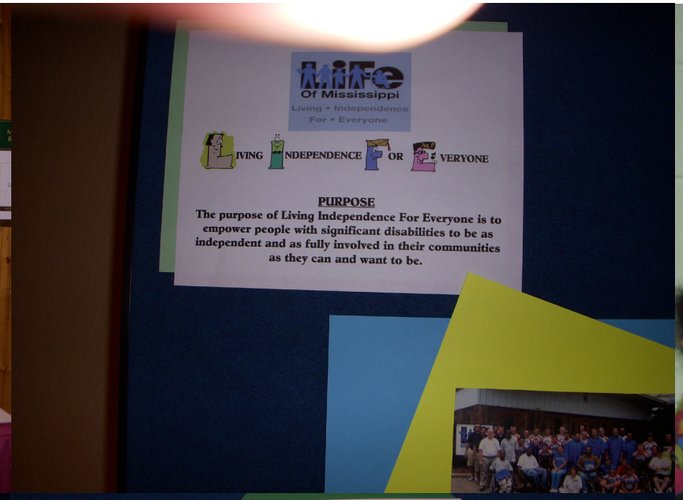
I would just like to say thank you for all your help. The devices I have borrowed from your program have been invaluable. I am a Speech Pathologist at a small non-profit preschool for special needs children. We do not have the resources to purchase a large variety of assistive technology, but many of my students are non -verbal and have no way to communicate when they come to our school. Being able to borrow communication devices from Project START enables me to evaluate their abilities and determine what best works before going to the expense of having the family purchase a device that may not be appropriate. I am always amazed at how much the students begin to interact with everyone in their environment once they realize they are able to communicate. Thank you again for the wonderful service you provide.

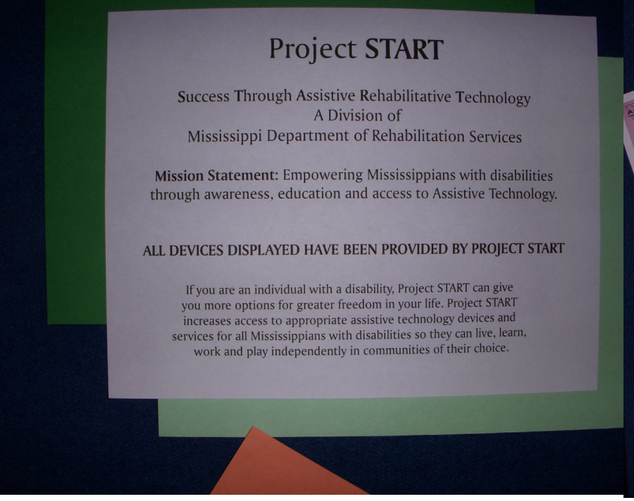
Sincerely,
Terri Kennedy
Speech Pathologist
Little Light House School

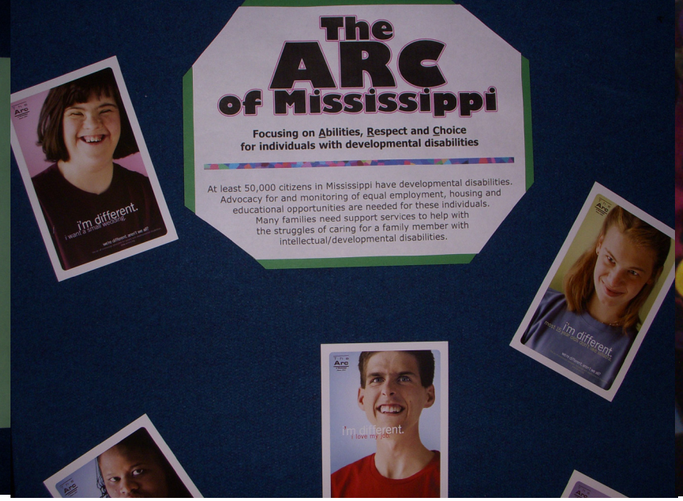
TRAINING

PUBLIC AWARENESS

DEMONSTRATION







Number of Device Demonstrations by Device Type

Vision	214
Hearing	78
Speech communication	568
Learning, cognition and developmental	124
Mobility, seating and positioning	175
Daily living	67
Environmental adaptations	3
Vehicle modification and transportation	84
Computers and related	75
Recreation, sports and leisure	124
TOTAL	**1,512**

Types of Participants in Device Demonstrations

Individuals with disabilities	675
Family members/guardians	78
Representatives of Education	568
Representatives of Employment	57
Representatives of Health and Rehabilitation	87
Representatives of Community Living	451
Representatives of Technology	24
TOTAL	**1940**

Number of Referrals

Funding source (non-AT program)	521
Service provider	185
Vendor	362
Repair service	75
TOTAL	**1,143**

Types of Devices Loaned

Vision	126
Hearing	38
Speech communication	104
Learning, cognition and developmental	71
Mobility, seating and positioning	54
Daily living	12
Environmental adaptations	5
Computers and related	15
Recreation, sports and leisure	31
TOTAL	**456**

Number of Device Loans by Type of Borrower

Individuals with disabilities	261
Family members/guardians	68
Representatives of Education	53
Representatives of Employment	41
Representatives of Health and Rehabilitation	10
Representatives of Community Living	13
Representatives of Technology	9
TOTAL	**455**

Short-Term Device Loans by Type of Purpose

Assist in decision making	391
Loaner during device repair or while waiting for funding	49
Provide an accommodation on a short-term basis	15
TOTAL	**1,143**

PROJECT
START
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services