

# Spotlight

Summer  
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# Cirque du Soleil

by Lynn Bartlett / Frank Walker

On May 12, 2008, a group of residents and staff from Cham-



pion House were able to experience a



very exciting event—Cirque du Soleil!

Brad, Cindy and Kristamae



were thrilled and entertained by this talented, magical group. We would encourage anyone to participate in this experience!

## Mission Statement

*Helping Hands for the Disabled's Mission Statement is to give people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to achieve their potential, build their self esteem and enhance their community involvement. To accomplish this, we commit our energy and resources to developing and maintaining residences and a continuum of program services to meet their needs.*

**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**  
**(Part I of a Series)**  
**John Beswetherick, Board of Directors**

This is the first in a series of Spotlight articles on assistive technology. Recent technological advances are bringing about a new set of smart applications which have the potential for enhancing the lives of disabled individuals. Smart Home technology will be available on a wide spread basis over the next decade utilizing technologies like speech recognition, RFID (Radio-frequency identification) and advances in display technology. Specialized applications using these enhancements may make it easier for disabled users to engage in a wider range of recreational, occupational and domestic activities.

Smart Home technologies are applications that interface with a home server to coordinate system wide and remote activities. Smart home technology has been in the market place for a number of decades, existing technology can control household functions at a rudimentary level. Essential goals for the development and deployment of Smart Home technology are keeping the cost down, assuring user and environment safety, and making sure that the automated technology is easy to use, deploy, maintain and utilize. Critical to the success of the Smart Home is seamlessly integrating the technology with the natural living space of existing homes and not overburdening users with technology.

**Speech recognition** technology has been around for many decades and continues to evolve. As processing power, recognition rates and microphone technology advance, users will be able control many aspects of their home life with voice commands. Currently Dragon Naturally Speaking (Nuance 2008) is the best consumer speech recognition software package in the market place. Recognition errors are reduced by; Using high quality noise cancelling microphones, limiting the recognizable vocabulary to a distinct set of operative words and properly training the system to recognize user voice patterns. As recognition rates increase through training, the number of words and commands can then be expanded.

Individuals that have difficulty speaking can definitely train voice recognition systems to recognize their individual voice patterns. I had the opportunity to set up voice recognition for one of our Helping Hands residents who has limited mobility. After initial training of the speech recognition system, they were able to control a web browser to surf the web with relatively high accuracy. The resident prefers to use their pointing device to control software, but speech recognition proved to be a viable alternative for inputting text and selecting links on complicated web pages. There is a relatively new microphone on the market called the Jawbone microphone (Aliph Jawbone 2008). These microphones are Bluetooth enabled, and simply use vibrations from the user's face to better calibrate spoken language and omit background noise from the signal. Use of such microphones increases speech dictation accuracy in noisy environment.

Virtually any device in the home can be outfitted with an **RFID** reader and a Smart Chip, allowing for simultaneous autonomous action and remote control of the Smart Home. For instance, an individual with an RFID pin would be instantly recognized when approaching a smart faucet in the home, the faucet would automatically adjust flow of the water and temperature to the user's predetermined preference. Faucets like this are beginning to appear on the market, see reference below (Kohler 2008).

Users that have difficulty manipulating and reading physical objects, will eventually be able to utilize the power of a computer inventoried RFID object databases to manage physical belongings in their household. As items from the pantry or refrigerator need replenishing, RFID based inventories will be able to automatically create shopping lists for disabled consumers. The ever ubiquitous bar code graphical tag may still be a mainstay in the marketplace for some time. As such, initial Smart Home systems should also be equipped with bar code readers to read items into inventory, as many home products will not yet be tagged with RFID chips until well into the next decade.

Residents can edit their inventory/shopping lists via voice or touch screen control and scan the consumer community to find the stores with the best selection/prices on currently needed items. With a simple set of voice commands, the shopping list can be sent to retailers and all items delivered to the home. Disabled users can authenticate delivery personnel through their security system on arrival and invite them into their house to stock items in the home.

The percent of US household with broadband internet access has tripled since 2001 and broadband users outnumber dialup users 64% to 36% (WebOptimization, 2006.) A large percentage of homes are already extending their home networks by adding on wireless routers. With a solid infrastructure in place and a clear path to expand coverage, the Smart Home has no real barriers to establish fast wireless or wired connections in the home using 802.11a/b/g/n or electrical current technology. Cisco (2008) is preparing for the next generation of 802.11 technology, "Multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO) is the heart of 802.11n... (and) can reach data rates of 600 Mbps."

*(continued on page 3)*

*(continued from page 2)*  
**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Even if a residence does not currently have a dedicated internet connection, they can use wireless or power line transmission for communications in their own in home network, remote access can still be accomplished by dial-up modems.

There are already a number of Smart Home control systems in place to run the automated home. The most popular systems in the marketplace are Insteon, Z-Wave and Zigbee, which have surpassed the older control technology like X-10. However, these Smart Home control interfaces still have proprietary architectures. Smart home device manufacturers like Leviton, Logitech, Smart Product and others make different lines of control devices that are compatible with the Insteon, Z-Wave and Zigbee control systems. However, the main problem consumers are facing today, is you can't mix and match controls on different controller networks. For instance, an Insteon specific controller would not be able to interface with devices compatible with Z-Wave or Zigbee control networks. (Kiplinger 2006);

“If you want to put in a home-automation system today, products compatible with Z-Wave and Insteon are your best bets. They're easy to install and you have many to choose from. Each uses two-way communication to ensure that the device knows the other received a command. Each also uses a mesh network, which improves reliability and range.”

In the near future each device or appliance in the home will have its own IP address and be accessible from the Smart Home network. This opens up a wide variety of remote control applications for the disabled. Voice command of electronic equipment in the household, including climate control and household information systems for billing, entertainment and communication is available now. Beyond the home, the technology can be used by cities to program in extra long signals when a disabled individual is detected at the cross walk.

We're only scratching the surface of potential benefits for the disabled population, in later articles we'll talk about advances in; **Display, Touch Screen and Projection technology; Safety, Security and Simulated presence; Inventory Tracking; Food Preparation; Nutritional tracking; Entertainment; Scheduling, Control and Notification; Robotic Medical monitoring** and ongoing efforts to increase **Employment Opportunities for the disabled.**

Potential accessibility applications for the Smart Home of the future are virtually limitless. Design decisions on what to automate in the household, should be optimized around non-obtrusive technology that helps to make the disabled users home more efficient, enjoyable and environmentally friendly. Key to the proliferation of Smart Homes in the consumer market is the ability to easily retrofit Smart Home technology into homes and utilize existing in-place accessibility technology. Smart Home technology is meant to provide new levels of efficiency that allow disabled users to complete daily tasks more effectively, freeing up time for individuals to take on new interests and to better enjoy life.

Please send mail to [Johnbes@Microsoft.com](mailto:Johnbes@Microsoft.com) if you'd like to see any particular subject matter focused on in future articles.

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# Community Involvement

by Suzanne Yoder

Most of you are very well aware of Muscles for Charity, especially if you have attended our annual auction. If you have not experienced Muscles for Charity, we encourage you to visit their website at [www.musclesforcharity.org](http://www.musclesforcharity.org).

## Redmond Garden Project

Muscles members from across Washington State, British Columbia, Canada and the UK combined to tackle a large garden project in the leafy suburbs of Redmond, WA following a thousand dollar contribution to our Auction last year.

Combining pressure washing, replanting, pruning and vegetable garden work the thirteen members of the team registered over 90 voluntary hours of work on a beautiful early summer Saturday which coincided with Memorial Day weekend.



## Tour de Cure

Muscles members and family gathered in May at Marymoor Park. The Muscles for Charity team - Chris, John (USA), & John (UK) raised significant finance, stretched their leg muscles and completed their chosen routes on the hottest day of the year. Suzanne joined as photographer for the day - as a horse riding accident prevented her from riding. Her step father John stepped in and rode her chosen route! Lots of good pictures were taken of the exhausted yet thrilled riders crossing the finish line. It was a day to be proud of accomplishments.

## Bellevue Deck Project

Muscles members from as far as Ellensburg gathered in Bellevue on an overcast Sunday in June. Muscles members tore off old decking and replaced with new, and replaced supporting beams. This followed another thousand dollar contribution to our auction last year. Jen bought the project for her parents because her father has Parkinson's disease and was recovering from brain surgery. Words can't express the gratitude and enjoyment from being able to help during such a difficult time.



***Helping Hands for the Disabled would like to thank the Muscles for Charity Team members. You do wonderful things - and all for the sake of helping others. Thank you!***

## Are YOU the Perfect Candidate (or do you know someone who is?)

As you know, our esteemed Executive Director, Barbara Barger, has announced her plans to retire at the end of 2008. This means that Helping Hands for the Disabled now faces the daunting task of finding someone to replace Barbara. Are YOU the perfect candidate for this position, or do you know someone who is? Please see our job advertisement below:

*Bellevue non-profit seeks Executive Director to manage four residences for developmentally disabled adults (DD). Qualified candidates will have experience working with federal, state and local agencies and have past DD work history. Successful grant writing and fund raising skills a plus. BA/BS or equivalent experience required. Strong managerial skills and committed, caring work ethic needed. Salary DOE. EOE. Please send resume to PO Box 6335, Bellevue, WA 98008-0335. www.hhftd.org*

## Helping Hands Lends a Helping Hand!!

By Lynn Bartlett, HHD Employee

[NOTE: Lynn is a long-time HHD employee, and she and her sons have been dedicated and tireless volunteers at our Auction for many years now! HHD helped to sponsor the 2008 Renton High School baseball team as its way of thanking Lynn and her sons for all they've done for HHD.]



The boys of Renton High School's baseball team thank Helping Hands for the Disabled for lending a

sponsoring hand to their young

players! Coached by Mike Johnson and assistants, the team bettered last season's record. Parents I spoke with were excited by the team's improvement. The boys worked hard, showed perseverance and a positive, learning attitude. The games got better during the season and goals are set for next Spring!



Applicants for housing programs or employment are welcome without regard to sex, age, handicapping conditions, religion, veteran status, race, color, creed or marital status.

*If you would like to be notified of our upcoming events by e-mail, please log onto our Website at [www.hhftd.org](http://www.hhftd.org) and give us your e-mail address. We value your privacy. We do not sell or pass your information on to any other agency.*

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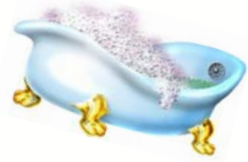
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Bellevue, WA 98008-0335



# Julie Van Ostrand



Julie Van Ostrand of Bellevue passed away at her home on Sunday the 27th of April, 2008. She was 43 years old. Julie had a quick battle with kidney failure. She was born in Maryland on January 15th, 1965. She lived with her family before moving to Halcyon Group Home, operated by Helping Hands for the Disabled, when it opened in 1987.

Julie worked at Northwest Center for 17 years. Julie is survived by her mother, Virginia Van Ostrand of Vientiane, Laos, her father and stepmother Dr. Jim Van Ostrand & Ann

Derleth of Bellevue, her sister and brother in law Kirsten & Dr. Lee Wagmeister of Newburgh, Indiana, her brother & sister in-law Drs. Eric & Juliette Van Ostrand of Sacramento, California, nieces & nephews Aaron, Sarah, Parker & Dylan, and also by her loving housemates, friends & caregivers at Halcyon who provided her with loving care for 21 years.

Julie will be remembered for her love of "The Sound of Music" and Lawrence Welk. Anyone who knew her enjoyed listening to her sing Edelweiss. Julie's family wishes to extend their sincere gratitude to Group Health Hospital, Helping Hands for the Disabled, Providence Hospice of Seattle and the many friends who provided support during hospice care for Julie.



## IN LOVING MEMORY:

### ◇Beth Ann Bowman◇

Barbara Barger & Eva Robinson  
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## IN HONOR:

### ◇Brett Neider◇

Oscar & Ruby Running

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Helping Hands for the Disabled extends its sincere appreciation to Troy Meyers with Epsilon9.com. Epsilon9 is donating the hosting services for our website!

We try very hard to acknowledge everyone that donates to us. If your name has been left off of this list, we apologize and ask that you please let us know: (425) 644-4344.

# Thank you!

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**HELPING HANDS FOR  
THE DISABLED  
2008 AUCTION**

**Save the Date!!**

**When: Friday, October 10, 2008**

**Where: Embassy Suites Hotel  
Bellevue, Washington**



Helping Hands for the Disabled  
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