

Connect Special

 Edition 23

Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

Connect Special pays respect to the two most inspiring personalities the disability sector would miss. Stephen Hawking, who in my words, changed the global perception of Augmentative and Alternative Communication and bought acceptance and respect to it. Javed Abidi, an authoritative voice and noted Disability Rights Activist of India, who has to be credited with leading the movement for the RPWD Act 2016 and making sure it became a law. The loss is immense.

Let's remember always, "For good ideas and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument, debate" - Margaret Heffernan

Awaiting your feedback,

Happy Reading!!

Regards,

Bhavna Botta



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Tech NEXT

GlassOuse Assistive Device Announces its next generation version

Powered by EnnoPro Group, GlassOuse Assistive Device introduces the new GlassOuse V1.2, a customizable hands-free Bluetooth mouse for individuals who has limited moving abilities or who are unable to use their hands to connect to technology.

Shenzhen City, Guangdong, China – February 28, 2018 – Award winner successful Indiegogo campaign concept, GlassOuse Assistive Device announces its next generation version V1.2 today. Genuinely designed for individuals who has limited moving abilities or who are unable to use their hands, GlassOuse has been fondly loved by many during its two years journey.

<https://www.closingthegap.com/glassouse-assistive-device-announces-its-next-generation-version-v1-2-today/>

Advantage Tech



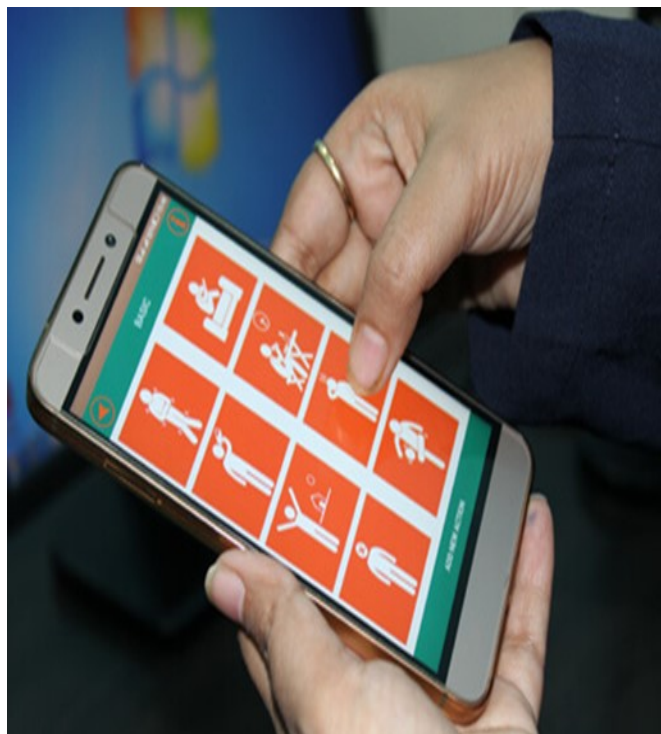
Vaakya, a picture based AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) app promises to facilitate communication for the speech impaired. This path breaking initiative was taken by Mata Bhagwanti Chadha Niketan, one of the largest schools in India for differently-abled. The Vaakya App is landmark effort of MBCN to simplify the lives of people with disability and help them in becoming independent communicators and self reliant.

AAC is a term used to describe various methods of communication that can help people who are unable to use verbal speech.

The Vaakya App, which is also a speech generating device, finds wide usage with individuals who have a condition that has been present since birth, such as cerebral palsy, autism or a learning disability. Other people may find it useful until they are older and lose their ability to speak the result of a stroke, brain injury, aphasia, vocal cord problem or a degenerative disease such as ALS. Even for individuals with such conditions who are unable to read, it works as an effective tool to communicate as it depends on images and audio instead of text.

Some of its key differentiators are:

- **No language barrier:** The app creates a combination of custom images and phrases, which can be related to an individual user in order to effectively communicate.
- **Diverse and Flexible:** It does not rely on internet connectivity and utilizes the phone's own memory only.
- **Easy Usage:** Multiple User Accounts can be created by adding multiple students/patients to the application with unique actions and speech specific to individual user. The speech associated with actions can be recorded and played back in any language providing greater flexibility.
- Images for actions can be replaced with existing images on the device or through the device camera directly.
- Parents/guardians can use the application differently by adding situations instead of users and images associated with each situation for the individual.
- It is available on Google Play Store, free of cost and will be very soon available on IOS (iPhone).



Role Model - Living on her Terms

Congratulations Sophia for receiving The special jury award of Kerala state youth welfare boards " Swamy Vivekanada Yuva Prathiba Puraskar award 2018".

Sophia your profile is very impressive .You are a model, an athlete and a biker -tell us which are you passionate about

All three are close to my heart. I was a national level shotput champion in school and modelling came my way in college after I won the reality show, 'Super Model', competing with other non-disabled contestants.

Tell us about your work as a model ,actress and sports person



I can look back and say I am happy with what I have achieved. I had an opportunity to participate in Miss Deaf India and Miss Deaf World pageants, Prague, Czech Republic. I am an eight time state and three time national champion in shot put. The happiest moment was of course the day when I drove my bullet. I think I must be the first woman with hearing impairment in India, probably in

the world , to ride a Bullet motorcycle

Oh wow, that is a feat !

Yes it is a feat indeed to get a trainer who looks beyond disability and believes in abilities. It is a different ball game altogether to obtain a driving license for a person with hearing impairment light motor vehicle and motorcycle with gear.

what are the hurdles being faced due to a hidden disability like yours

There is no acceptance ,that is the reality. People are confused to talk to a person with hearing impairment even today. There is very little awareness .

what is the one thing you would like to see changed in this community for equity

The biggest challenge for a person with hearing impairment is communication. The dependence on an interpreter builds barriers .Many a times we are frustrated particularly when we want to express our feelings. There has to be more awareness on sign language ,lip reading .

Your support system-family and friends and community in general

My family is my biggest support for both me and my brother who is hearing impaired too. We have been given the best of the opportunities.



Inclusion is the motto



Meet Mrs. Shaloo Sharma, Founder Director- Evoluer Solutions- a Consultancy that works towards promoting Inclusion. She works with Corporate & Industry to help train and hire persons with special needs.

What inspired you to start Evoluer and its journey so far?

I have been working in the field of Education & special needs for 20 years now . It was time for me to share what I have learnt with as many persons & organisations as I could , especially the area of inclusion and open employment.

An interesting area is adapted PE, you have conducted training too, Are there hurdles in changing mindsets and implementing it and how to cross them.

The hurdles are only in the lack of knowledge and the information related to the field of Adapted Physical Education. Once Physical educator, especially students of PE , get access to global practices in the field of Adapted PE. The focus, especially in schools, has to shift from coaching to the educational aspect of PE , and to recognise the fact the playground if the biggest inclusive space for all learners.

Can you share your experience and success in revamping Educational programs?

Evoluer's most recent success story is the induction of two of our students with Autism into mainstream internship and training by the Lemon Tree Hotel. This is a landmark example for all those persons and families who aspire to be in a mainstream workspace.

Another success story is the collaboration between Evoluer and Lakshmbai Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior, India's premier Physical Education University. In January 2018 Evoluer's brought in leaders in the field of Adapted PE from the California University, and we were able to train 90 students of PE and thus ensuring that these future PE teachers are the new workspace armed with knowledge of adaptations and modifications needed to be made in sports that will ensure success to all learners

Most exciting on your face book page which caught my attention was "Top Of The World Camp" please tell us about it

Evoluer believes that the best kind of learning happens in out – of – classroom learnings . I will quote Dr Drama on our camp

“”

Doctor Drama followed Evoluer 's founder Shaloo Sharma into the hills of Saatal and was spellbound by what she found.

Adventure Camping is a very popular travelling trend right now but there are a few people in India currently exploring adventure camps for a person with special needs.

Evoluer has been working with Wildrift Camps over the



Inclusion is the motto

last 10 years to bring alive a rejuvenating, educating, and psychologically-beneficial experience via adapted physical education and expressive arts therapy for their special needs campers. Shaloo and her wonderful team send out an important and thought-provoking message on inclusion and diversity in the current education system.””



You had also conducted Camp for persons with Cerebral palsy, how was it received, any tips

This camp was by far the most challenging and the most rewarding camp as most of these campers had not even stepped out of their rooms unaided, leave aside go for an outbound camp. The Camp for persons with CP was based on the philosophy that all children, regardless of their ability or the severity of their diagnose enjoy being outdoor and having access to new fun experiences. The outcome of the camp was that we were able to truly witness the potential of each camper and thus reshape and re-plan goals for them

What about the Art & Wellness Camp at Coimbatore, any new learnings

The camp was planned for the wellness of both parents and children. New learning was that the most important step is acceptance, followed by keeping a positive energy system around the family

Your views on employment of persons with disability-where is the problem

I would not call it a problem rather it is a challenge, The challenge lies in the lack of equipping the students with the needed soft skills that will get them ready for the open employment. There is a gap in what is needed by the employers and what the students are being trained with. There is also the need to open up to global practices and to find the right match based on the ability /



competency of the student and the need of the industry.



What are your future plans

Future plan are to be able to find a meaningful employment and a way to lead an independent, dignified life for persons with special needs.

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info.connectspecial.com
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botta.bhavna@gmail.com