

Mission

Assist youth with disabilities who communicate using technology to open their voices to the world.

The Inspiration

Imagine you cannot communicate through speech. You cannot ask to join in with a group of friends, you cannot tell your teacher that you know the answer, and you are not even able to let others know you are hungry or thirsty. You are able to think, to listen and to express yourself with facial gestures and eye movements, but you cannot speak sentences or communicate all that is in your mind.

Alternative and augmentative communication gives children and adults who are nonverbal the ability to express their needs, wants, feelings, and opinions. It allows them to interact with everyone around them. There are many ways to access augmentative communication devices: touchscreens, switches, and eye gaze technologies have made it possible for individuals who are nonverbal to express themselves.

For Graham Tresness, a young man with cerebral palsy, speech may not be possible, but imagination, creativity and the ability to learn are boundless through the use of eye gaze technology. Graham is the inspiration behind CHAT. The program was founded by his parents in Spring 2013.

Chat is a program of the Burton Blatt Institute whose mission is to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of persons with disabilities in a global society.



Communication Hope through Assistive Technology
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CHAT

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CHAT Club:

- 💬 Children who communicate using augmentative and alternative devices, meet regularly at Syracuse University for socialization, communication, and fun.
- 💬 Families are supported in their efforts to improve interactions with their augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) user.
- 💬 Education professionals will have instruction on starting CHAT Clubs within schools.
- 💬 AAC workshops hosted by the Burton Blatt Institute.
- 💬 CHAT Clubs are designed to support non-verbal children and their community.



CHAT Camp:

- 💬 A one week camp for children who are non-verbal held on the campus of Syracuse University.
- 💬 Children who use augmentative and alternative communication devices make new friends and interact with each other in a supportive and fun environment.
- 💬 Provides opportunities for non-verbal children to learn how other non-verbal children communicate in different ways.
- 💬 Adult mentors, who are successful AAC users, participate in camp and are very important role models for all.
- 💬 Parent workshops enable parents to learn from each other and share real life experiences.
- 💬 Adult mentors, who are successful AAC users, participate in camp as role models.
- 💬 Parent workshops include guest speakers in the field of AAC.



CHAT Central: a fully accessible website that offers:

- 💬 A variety of fun experiences for AAC users.
- 💬 Blogs about CHAT happenings and related information written from the perspective of a parent, a child, and an adult AAC user.
- 💬 Comedy Club provides timely jokes for children to share.
- 💬 Sports Club enables participation in Fantasy Sports through on-line draft selection.
- 💬 Book Club allows on-line discussion of a fun book each month.
- 💬 Games! Lots of on-line switch games.
- 💬 Resource site for families, parents and the community supporting AAC users.

