

Technology for the Visually & Physically Disabled



by Sarah Mahoney, Lead Librarian - MADL

Do you ever wonder if there is certain technology that could help with your sight or loss thereof? Wouldn't it be great if there was a community location that offered the use of such technology? Well, there is! The Muskegon Area District Library for the Visually & Physically Disabled (LVPD) is a local, community library with all that and more. Although it does exist in part as a public library, with standard books and computers, it is also specialized to help individuals with disabilities to read and access information. This is accomplished through the distribution of the Talking Book program and, more to the point, the use of adaptive technology housed in the LVPD.

A wonderful example of this technology is the LVPD's adaptive work stations. These computer areas are equipped with an array of devices and software designed to assist those in need, such as large screen monitors, adjustable height tables, and JAWS Screen Reader software. Through the use of such equipment, those with low vision, blindness, and/or physical disability are able to access computer programs and the Internet with greater ease.

The Speech Software Room has also one of these stations, as well has a few other features. The computer is equipped both with Dragon NaturallySpeaking as well as the OpenBook Scan and Read System. Dragon NaturallySpeaking to a voice to

text program that turns your words into computer documents that you can then use and share. Open-Book is a special camera that will take a photo of a physical document and then read the text of the document to you, regardless of layout or size. These are provided in a private room, separate from the rest of the library.

In addition to computers, the LVPD also has a few pieces of standalone equipment for patron use. The most widely used are magnifiers of varying strengths and CCTVs, or TVs set up with a magnifying lens. These allow those with low vision to see their documents with precision. For those who are blind, the LVPD has a braille embosser and refreshable braille display available. The embosser will turn any Word document into braille type, ready to be read by those who need it. The braille documents are free and quick to make. The refreshable braille display allows you to connect to any device with Bluetooth and display the text as braille. This opens up the internet and electronic devices to those who cannot see it.

If you would like more information about the LVPD or our specialized technology, please contact us at 231-737-6310 or email the librarian at smahoney@madl.org. Also, feel free to stop in at 4845 Airline Rd, Muskegon, MI 49444 to see these items in person. We work hard to embody the NLS motto, That All May Read.



Partners Come Together to Celebrate the Completion of the Versluis GVSU Campus Segment of the Idema Explorers Trail



Left-right: County Commissioner Matt Fenske, Judge Peter Versluis, Bea Idema, President Philomena V. Mantella, Ambassador Peter Secchia, and County Commissioner Greg DeJong

The Idema Explorers Trail is a component of the Grand River Greenway, a \$41 million dollar project spearheaded by Ottawa County Parks. The Grand River Greenway is comprised of 9,000 acres of public land between Grand Haven and Grand Rapids, with over 2,700 acres protected by Ottawa County Parks. The preservation of this land provides scenic natural spaces, high quality habitat for both wildlife and recreation, and soon, the 36.5-mile Idema Explorers Trail, connecting these two great cities.

Partners gathered on October 23, 2019 on Grand Valley State University's campus to

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celebrate the completion of the Versluis GVSU Campus Segment of the Idema Explorers Trail. This one-mile segment trail connects Grand Ravines to GVSU's Allendale campus, and the Allendale business district. The Idema Explorers Trail will be a 36.5-mile multi-use pathway that connects Grand Rapids to Grand Haven along the Grand River.

Grand Valley State University President Philomena V. Mantella said the Grand River Greenway project improves the quality of life for students, as well as their experience and their access to the river. "Part of what attracted me and many of our students to our great university is the beauty of our campuses, and the settings along the Grand River are a part of that incredible beauty," Mantella said. "This trail system will eventually connect our campuses and be used by thousands of our students and student athletes for training, education and recreation."

Peter F. Secchia, co-chair of the Grand River Greenway Campaign Committee thanked the funders of this segment of trail, including the Ottawa County Parks Foundation, Georgetown Township, and the Versluis family and said it is an example of the importance of preserving nature and green spaces. Secchia and the Grand River Greenway Campaign Committee are working to raise the final \$1.1 million needed for the project.

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