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A Quantum Leap

The ATTAIN Lab at Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) held its grand opening on October 5, 2004 and has since become an integral part of GMHC’s Moving Ahead Toward Career Horizons (MATCH) Program. Jeff Rindler, Director of GMHC’s Terry K. Watanabe Volunteer & Work Center, addressed everyone at the ceremony, “the ATTAIN lab is an enormous gift that we treasure”.

Ana Oliveira, GMHC Executive Director, expressed her belief that the ATTAIN lab will “help individuals to build a sense of autonomy”.

Other presenters included New York State Assemblymember, Deborah Glick, Vijay Macwan, Director, SUNY University Center for Academic and Workforce Development, and Ray Bramucci, President of Instructional Systems, Inc. who collectively described what was involved in bringing this project to fruition and their vision for how it will impact individual lives in the future.

The most inspiring of all speakers was Lydell Williams, a MATCH Program graduate who spoke very candidly, “I came here with no agenda. I was out of work, out of luck, out of it. Then something happened. The lab gave me inspiration”. He described how going from the old computers to

the new ATTAIN lab was a “Quantum leap”. The time spent in the MATCH program and using the ATTAIN Lab led him to greater opportunity, “I have a job now, I have friends and something to look forward to”.

GMHC’s MATCH Program offers comprehensive vocational assessment, training, job placement assistance and retention services to ensure successful transition to work. The ATTAIN lab is a valuable tool for all MATCH program participants for occupational skills development, resume preparation and Internet job search. The manager of the lab, Prakash Bhatia, provides ongoing supervision, assistance, as well as instruction in a variety of topics including Computer Literacy and Microsoft Office.



*Lydell Williams, Graduate
GMHC MATCH Program*

A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste...

By Brenda Paiva, Westchester EOC ATTAIN Lab Manager

A mind really is a terrible thing to waste. Without the Westchester EOC, Mikel Murray’s mind and enormous talent could quite likely have been wasted or destroyed. The last school Mikel attended was in his words, “terrible, the kids were violent and the teachers didn’t care. The students were treated like prisoners.” Granted, Mikel is a high school dropout, but his story reveals more about schools failing Mikel, not Mikel failing anything.

The very opposite is true for Mikel; he is a winner at his core, and seeks out resources, like EOC, to keep that winning streak alive. In fact, Mikel received his first service award, The Community Service Award, from Pathways for Youth in 1995 when he was only ten-years old. Earning a “million basketball trophies” for his skill at point guard never detracted Mikel from his academic achievement. Starting in the fifth grade, Mikel consistently scored in the 99th percentile on standardized tests. While a student at JHS 123 in the Bronx, Mikel volunteered for the Weed & Seed program (planting the seeds for good and pulling out the bad weeds- a program supported through the Bronx District Attorney’s Office), where he coached 9-15 year olds in basketball. His volunteer work eventually led, in 2002, to a paid position with the Police Athletic League.

Mikel’s academic career is back on track, a fast track. After dropping out of high school in October of 2003, Mikel enrolled at EOC in February 2004, and by May 2004 had passed his GED exam. He participated in the Accelerated GED program, working with the ISI software in the ATTAIN Lab. Here, Lab Coordinator, Ms. Brenda Paiva customized a sequence of lessons

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Items to Remember

Please remember to keep CPUs on at all times. This is required for the transmission of software enhancements and for providing technical support.

Each ATTAIN Lab has a site calendar accessible via the ATTAIN website. Please update it regularly.

The more you keep dirt and dust away from your computers, the better they will run. For on-line computer cleaning tips, go to www.computerhope.com/cleaning.htm

One way to avoid having your sunyeoc email account flooded with SPAM is to use caution when entering your email address on websites that ask for your email information.

If you have questions regarding ISI products and services, please contact ISI Trainers, Sonya Maxwell at Sonya@isinj.com or Chitra Badii at Chitra@isinj.com

For the PDF Version of ISIItems newsletters, please see ATTAIN Lab websites or go to sunyeoc.org.

To submit articles, ideas or suggestions for upcoming editions of ISIItems, please contact Chitra Badii at Chitra@isinj.com.

ISI Software Enhancements and Updates

ISI Curriculum Update

Adult Basic Skills Mathematics (Beta/Pilot) is now complete. We encourage you to use the Beta/Pilot courses that meet your needs and please send us your feedback.

Developmental Reading (Beta/Pilot) is nearly complete. Ninety percent of the animation is in place with the rest on its way.

Office Skills and *Introduction to Office Technology* will be updated with new/revised content, graphics and media coming in Fall 2005.

ISI Management System Enhancements

Grade levels for many ISI courses are now available in the ISI Manager Activity and Assessment Reports. For more information, please contact your ISI Trainer.

Developers have programmed a change to allow deletion of a course from multiple students. Previously, deletion was limited to one student or one group.

You may now add all courses to a student or a group. Previously, there was a limit of 50 courses. *Reminder:* the Bundles feature makes the enrollment process quick and easy by allowing you to add a pre-selected list of courses to one student or a group of students.

What's Happening in Niagara Falls?

"I have often taken technology for granted. Now working in the Falls, I realize what an asset the lab is for the community. [It] allows residents to get training and daily hands-on experience working with computers. Parents can assist their child with assignments in the lab. Residents can now manage personal tasks: online billing, applying for jobs, etc.," said Kara Tucina Olidge, the Niagara Falls Housing Authority ATTAIN Lab Manager.

Residents began using the Niagara Falls Housing Authority ATTAIN lab in October 2004 and since its inception, the Lab has established numerous partnerships and served all age groups. After-school programs, Livin' Large and Packard Court's Reading Program, use the lab as a tech tutorial for elementary and junior high school students. Teens use the lab as part of Academic, Career and College Exploration (PACCE), a Niagara County Community College program that helps marginalized high school students transition into college. The Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center and BOCCES have teamed up with the ATTAIN Lab to offer a six-week Pre-Certified Nursing Assistant program allowing adults to work with the ISI Nursing Assistant courseware before joining the BOCCES Nursing Assistant program. A partnership with the IRS and AARP offers VITA Super Saturdays for residents, a Volunteer Income Tax Preparation Program where IRS volunteers do taxes free of charge for residents. Odallom and Fellowship House, which offer



transitional programs for adults who are trying to find their path use Stedman Graham's "You Can Make It Happen" as an alternative support program for their counseling sessions.

Every Friday, Kara works with the Wrobel Tower Seniors teaching general computer skills. They also participate in special projects. For example, they are curating a quilt exhibition with the Sweet Ladies and use the lab to do online research on African-American quilting and to design the exhibition's curatorial statement and exhibition cards. The lab is also open to the public for general computer use.

Seniors on the Move

By Shirese Casenave, Farragut ATTAIN Lab Manager

The end is here and it seems like just yesterday we were starting this 'Computer Basics for Seniors' class. It has been a wonderful ride for me, and I hope my students can say the same.

I didn't know what to think when I started my first Computer Basics class. And with seniors too – that was a stretch for me. I'm used to teaching children in a classroom setting, so I just didn't know what to expect. Now I can say that it was one of the best experiences of my life. My pastor did warn me that once I taught adults, I would find it difficult to go back to children. I can't say that this class has had that effect—because I love children—I can say that there's nothing like a class full of seniors. They come to class so eager to learn and at the same time make every excuse in the book why they can't.

At first, my seniors felt a little overwhelmed, but they quickly settled in. They tend to question their ability to retain information, and the word "QUIZ" terrifies them. But, at every turn, they excelled in everything they did. They definitely don't give themselves enough credit. And when they felt a need to 'take it slow,' we simply hung out a little while longer, just long enough to make things stick.

Yes, they've learned things about computers that they never thought they would. They know what language the computer understands. They know what happens when you turn it on. They know that what they work on in the ATTAIN Lab is a LAN, not a WAN. They even know the difference between RAM and ROM, what a BYTE is, about storage sizes...WOW!!!!...they know lots more.



Ask one of them what a jump drive is and they can tell you. By the way, do you know what a jump drive is? HMM!!!!!!!!!!

Some of the seniors have had computers in their homes for a long time, but just didn't use them. They would have their grandchildren do what they needed done. But now, they don't need as much help. They all have improved so much and they love 'surfing the net.'

There is no doubt that I will miss them as a class, even though they will still be coming in to use the Microsoft Interactive program and various ISI modules. The ISI 'Intro to Office Technology' course will allow them to review some of the material they've learned and will give them the opportunity to learn more—that is, to continue to grow and exercise their minds. As I always tell them..."If you don't use it, you lose it." They always chime back..."I'm old and can't remember like I used to." To the contrary, they're not old...no, not at all. They're simply **GREAT!**

Words from the Farragut Seniors

...I knew that it would be hard for me to learn how to use the computer at my age. However with the help of Ms. Shirese...it was very easy. Ms. Shirese is never too busy to give [you] special attention, when needed. I have completed that Basic Course, and am ready to learn more...

William Thompson, age 75

...The classes were very informative and to my amazement fun. I had no knowledge of the operation of the computer, even though I have one in my home. As a result of [the]...class I have learned many functions, and feel proud of my progress. Young people today learn the computer at an early age, but the seniors came up in a different time. I am happy to finally come into the 21st century.

Carrie Ricks, age 72

I...find the classes...[to] be a very serious matter...[and] I can assure you that I know much more now...than I did...when I first started. To give you an example of what I am talking about...I didn't know what a file...was. But today I can retrieve a file, add to it, or send it back.... Plus I [used to hear]...a lot about being online. I am now able to go online, search,...review the news, and even chat with someone. But...I am still learning.

William Banks, age 80

Flower Memorial Library A Vital Community Center

"This ATTAIN Lab coincides perfectly with our plans of making this library a vital community center" said Barbara Wheeler, the Director of the Flower Memorial Library in Watertown, NY.

The grand opening of this



ATTAIN lab, which was held on October 21, 2004, was attended by many significant members of the community, including the Mayor of Watertown, Jeffrey Graham who said, "in an online world where people like to get knowledge at home, it's important that this library, with its historic nature, become a part of that."

The ATTAIN lab at the Flower Memorial Library will be a tremendous resource to community members of all ages. The new lab manager, Nicole Sinclair, is currently implementing programs drawing on all lab products and resources. Outreach efforts are already underway to educate the community about lab products and services and to establish partnerships with numerous schools and organizations such as Literacy Volunteers, which teaches adults how to read and speak English.

ATTAIN at OBGC

The ATTAIN Lab at the Ogdensburg Boys and Girls Club (OBGC) held its grand opening celebration on October 22, 2004. John Pinkerton, an OBGC Board Member, welcomed everyone and called on the words of Thomas Jefferson, "information is the currency of democracy" to impress upon the attendees the impact that the new computer lab and products will have on the progress and development of the club participants and the community.



Other presenters included Assemblyman Darrel J. Aubertine, Vijay Macwan, Director of SUNY University Center for Academic and Workforce Development, and William Chalmers, Assistant Provost and Director of SUNY Educational Opportunity Centers. Each spoke on the vision of the ATTAIN project and the ways in which the new technology will foster the growth of individuals and the community.

Since its inception, the Ogdensburg Boys and Girls Club has integrated the ATTAIN lab into its "Power Hour" program, which helps children improve their academic performance and rewards their efforts and improvement.

Also in the plans for this lab are outreach efforts to draw in the adult population for occupational training and to offer classes in computer literacy for senior citizens.

A Long History of Service

Founded in 1893 and based in Manhattan's Lower East side, Henry Street Settlement offers New Yorkers a wide range of social service and arts programming. Henry Street works to combat urban poverty by helping individuals and families gain the skills and opportunities necessary to live more fulfilling lives.

"Placing the ATTAIN lab at Henry Street was a great decision. This agency with its long history of serving the community is the perfect partner for the ATTAIN lab program", said Charles Mister, the Henry Street ATTAIN lab manager. Since its October 2004 opening, the lab, located inside Henry Street's Youth Services headquarters at 301 Henry Street, has served over six hundred registered participants.

The lab offers regular classes in basic computer skills. An SAT Prep course has been established giving students access to ISI's High School Proficiency series.



Henry Street's workforce development department uses the lab for a variety of occupational and job search objectives.

Other notable activities include the receipt of a grant from Adobe for design software as well as a special fundraising event where employees of Select Equity worked with youth from Henry Street programs to complete a PowerPoint project.

ISI in Atlanta...

By Sonya Maxwell

Charged with overall responsibility for workforce development in the City of Atlanta, the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency has joined the list of government agencies, colleges and community-based organizations utilizing the ISI courseware and management system. Seeking to streamline its operations, while providing value to its array of job preparation and training services, AWDA has embraced computer-assisted instruction as an effective means of delivering employment information and training opportunities to job seekers, as well as qualified workers to employers. Using ISI's list of assessment tools, performance reports, and personal development and other courseware, case managers will be able to chart for each job seeker individualized programs of instruction, each program containing client-specific goals and benchmarks. To date, ISI's developmental courseware in reading and mathematics have been embraced by

out-of-school youth and adults as effective tools for enhancing those foundational skills critical for success in the workplace. In addition, while employers are pleased with the availability of such titles as Workplace Reading, Workplace Math, Customer Service and Life Skills, those in such high growth industries as construction and building maintenance, health care and child care are elated that courseware is available to address their specific needs. Finally, ISI courseware in office skills and office technology rounds out the assortment of job preparation and training programs provided at the Atlanta One-Stop Career Center. To be sure, this assortment of academic, occupational, and life/employability skills program will be an instrumental part of a 30-week career exploration pilot that the Atlanta Housing Association has commissioned with AWDA.

A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste... (Cont. from Page 1)

and test preparation exercises to thoroughly prepare Mikel for the GED exam, which he passed with a very high score! With the hard work and persistence of Professor Margaret Tuitt, by September 2004, he was enrolled as a full-time student at Westchester Community College where he is beginning to prepare for his career goal of becoming an attorney. Mikel is taking four courses and doing very well-maintaining a B average at midterm. When asked what made the difference? Why did you succeed here at EOC? Mikel's spontaneous response was "You guys!" meaning the faculty and staff at EOC who have been both supportive and challenging to him. But Mikel's personal growth is not limited to academics. He works at WARY, the college's radio station, where he has his own spot from 8-9pm playing music, interviewing guests, and reading the news. WARY has a listening audience of about 200,000 people. In preparation for this work, Mikel took and passed the FCC test which is required for broadcasters. Additionally, Mikel works 15 hours a week at EOC as a work-study student. Here, he is primarily assisting Del Hillgartner, the LAN administrator, but he often shows up at Student Services where he is always welcomed with open arms, and willing to do "whatever you guys need help with".

How many high school dropouts like Mikel are out there? If they don't find a place like EOC- what then? Don't we all really lose a lot? Can't you imagine Mikel wowing a jury in a few short years!