

**USSAAC**  
The voice of AAC

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**USSAAC**  
The voice of AAC

# SpeakUP

The Official Publication of USSAAC  
United States Society for Augmentative & Alternative Communication

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# ISAAC Conference

The 15th Biennial Conference of ISAAC will be held from July 28 to August 4, 2012, in Pittsburgh, PA, USA, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.



## Start Planning to Attend ISAAC 2012!

Join the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the *International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication* and the world's largest gathering of people who believe in the power of communication.

July 28-29: Preconference, AAC Camp, Executive & Council Meetings  
July 30-August 2: Main Conference  
August 3-4: ISAAC Research Symposium  
PITTSBURGH • WOW



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Wonderful—Outstanding—Worldwide

For more information, visit our website at [www.isaac2012.org](http://www.isaac2012.org) and find us on Facebook!



## INTERESTED IN HAVING An Article Published in "Speak UP"?

*Speak UP!*  
The Official  
Magazine of the  
United States  
Society for  
Augmentative  
and Alternative  
Communication  
(USSAAC)

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY: 3 issues a year	PUBLISHER: USSAAC
DUE DATES FOR SUBMISSIONS: March 1, June 1, and October 1	MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS: sent electronically to <a href="mailto:membership@ussaac.org">membership@ussaac.org</a>
TYPE OF PUBLICATION: Electronic and written	PAGE LIMITS: 6–8 typeset pages

**Focus of publication includes all areas of AAC research**, clinical practice, intervention, language, outcomes, articles about (or from) AAC users and/or family members, and cultural/arts/community type of issues related to the field of AAC.

**All papers submitted to *Speak Up* are subject to peer review** by three reviewers, either Editorial Board members or invited reviewers, who have special expertise in a particular area of AAC. To ensure objectivity, authors will remain anonymous to reviewers. The Editor will have final authority over a paper's suitability for publication.

**Clients/subjects and photos:** Real names or initials shall not be used unless client/subject requests their name to be published. Refers to clients (or yourself if you are writing about you) by number or letter codes—for photos, a letter of consent must accompany all photographs of person in which the possibility of identification exists.

**References and citations** should be cited in the text by author and year of publication and include in alphabetical list at the end of the article. Accuracy of reference data is the responsibility of the author.

**QUESTIONS about *Speak UP*** can be directed to:

Alisa Brownlee,  
USSAAC Office Manager.

Email [membership@ussaac.org](mailto:membership@ussaac.org) or phone 215-631-1877

**2012 USSAAC MEMBERSHIP FORM** continued

FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1- DECEMBER 31, 2012

Please Complete All Sections

**SECTION A: Type of Membership** (check only one)

- Professional \$67
- NEW Professional PLUS AAC Journal \$135
- People Who Use AAC & Their Families \$29
- Student (Full-time)\* see below \$30
- Retired\*\* \$30
- Institutional\*\*\* \$330
- Corporate \$1,100

\*Student Membership, PLEASE COMPLETE ONLY ITEM #1 OR ITEM #2:

- 1. "I confirm that the above named is a full-time registered student at:"

Name of University/Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Professor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. "I confirm that I am a full-time registered student and have enclosed a copy of my University/Institution registration confirmation."

\*\*Retired membership is for individuals interested in AAC who are no longer working.

\*\*\*Institutional membership is for non-profit groups such as schools, assistive technology centres, service delivery centres and academic programs in related fields.

ENTER SECTION A \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- CREDIT CARD PAYMENT  VISA  Master Card

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Credit Card (please print name of card holder) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: Official Journal** (check only one)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) 4 issues/year

- Corporate/Institutional after \$25 USSAAC Discount \$ 272
- Professionals after \$18 USSAAC Discount \$ 80
- PWUAAC/Student/Retired after \$9 USSAAC Discount \$ 50

ENTER SECTION B \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION C: Donations**

"I wish to make a contribution to support:"

- 1. People who use AAC & their families  \$25  \$50  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Section C-1 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. People from Emerging Countries  \$25  \$50  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Section C-2 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Support people who use AAC to attend the ISAAC Conference  \$25  \$50  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Section C-3 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. ISAAC Sponsored Membership Program  \$28 CDN  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Section C-4 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- 5. Donation to:  \$25  \$50  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Section C-5 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

ENTER SECTION C TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

ENTER SECTIONS A through C TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

**Greetings from USSAAC!**

2011 is quickly coming to an end – which also means my term as USSAAC President will soon come to a close as well. The new year will not only see changes in temperatures (for most of us) but also changes in leadership - not only at the federal and local level, but also within USSAAC. As the election season heats up – and we all readjust to whatever redistricting occurred in our backyard (is your neighbor still viewing the same ballot this primary season?) – I am hopeful that the 2012 elections will see the same boost in competition as our recent USSAAC elections.

I want to be totally up-front about this: I despised the fact that I ran for President-Elect uncontested back in the fall of 2007. It just did not seem right that I got the position simply because someone asked if I would be interested – nor did it seem right that most of the other USSAAC Board members were elected the same way. After all, why would members even take the time to vote at all if there was only one candidate to vote for in the first place? But I took on the position as President of USSAAC for the same reason I am writing this today – I wanted to see change in USSAAC and the AAC community and so becoming President was one way to turn those words into action and make change happen!

With three officers and two regional representatives who use AAC – along with a family member - USSAAC remained the most active country in 2011 with individuals who use AAC in leadership positions. With the recent elections these numbers are going up in 2012– with EIGHT out of the seventeen Board Members being people who use AAC or family members.

I could not be more thrilled with the fact that 47% of USSAAC's Board

of Directors – including 57% of our Executive Committee – is comprised of the "consumers" of AAC. I am just as excited with the fact that we were able to reach one of my personal goals of finally having contested elections this year – including two individuals who use AAC running for the powerful, and sometimes daunting, position of President-Elect. Yet as my term as President winds down, I still am baffled at the fact that individuals who use AAC have not been, or have not been perceived as being, in leadership positions within our parent organization, ISAAC. When I first heard about ISAAC's LEAD project and the motivation behind it (to help foster/build leadership skills in people who use AAC because there had not been any active leaders in the past), my thoughts were 1) leadership projects are always great, and 2) why in the world hasn't there been people who use AAC in leadership positions before now? I understood that some individuals – whether they have a disability or not – need encouragement and support to develop leadership skills (or just stronger self confidence for that matter). At the same time, I knew that some people are just born leaders and so where were those people? That also led to a bigger question of who is the AAC Community comprised of and how much are we, as organizations, reaching out to those with speech disabilities? Is the lack of people who use AAC in leadership positions in the past because there were not any AAC users who had the skills to run meetings, chair committees, or head projects – or were such people just not being tapped to be part of the AAC Community and organizations such as USSAAC and ISAAC?

Regardless of why there have not been more people who use AAC in

leadership positions in the past, the 2011 elections are proof that USSAAC has the ability to keep being the role model of success on this front. We have many members who possess the personality, skill, and innovative vision to advance USSAAC and AAC to levels beyond what any of us currently envision. And of equal importance, there is a wealth of individuals with speech disabilities residing in the United States who we can

...47% of USSAAC's Board of Directors – including 57% of our Executive Committee – is comprised of the 'consumers' of AAC.

– and must – reach out to. Outreach that not only promotes AAC and all those involved in the "AAC World" but also encourages input and involvement from such fresh voices and an ever expanding leadership base.

At the end of the day, it does not matter if you are an individual who use AAC, a family member, an educator or professional in the AAC field, or part of a manufacturer: we want to see you as leaders – in your community, in your state, at the national level, or internationally. And remember: A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader, a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves.

**Go out and be great leaders.**

Best regards,  
**India Ochs**  
USSAAC President

# BRAIN-COMPUTER INTERFACE: Locked-in and Reaching New Heights



GREGORY BIEKER Portland, Oregon  
Glory Noethe, MPH and Melanie Fried-Oken, Ph.D. Oregon Health & Science University Portland, Oregon

## introduction

My name is Greg, and I had a brainstem stroke 16 years ago. As a result, I have locked-in syndrome (LIS). If you did not know me, you would not guess that my cognition is intact. I am totally paralyzed but I have minimal head movement. I do have the ability to look up for "yes" and down for "no." To communicate, I use eye gaze with an alphabet chart. The chart is broken down into seven rows; the first six rows have four letters each and the seventh has the last two letters of the alphabet (see Figure 1). My communication partner starts with row 1 (e.g., says "1, 2, 3, 4") until I gaze up, which means, "yes, we're on the right row." Next, my communication partner will call out the letters of the alphabet that correspond to the chosen row (e.g., if row 3 is chosen then he will say, "I, J, K, L"). When the correct letter has been called out I will gaze up. This is how I construct full words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages. Just to give you an idea, when I'm communicating with someone very proficient, it takes me about 25 minutes to write a paragraph.

Figure 1



## my history

I grew up with my mom, stepdad, sister, and three stepbrothers. I graduated from high school in 1986. During my high school years, I was active in wrestling, football, and basketball. In 1985, I went to the State Championships for wrestling and placed 3rd. The picture of me with my trophy is still hanging up in my high school, where my nephew will be going to school next year. In football, I played the position of running back. Basketball was always my favorite sport and still is (Go Lakers!). I enjoyed playing the game. My favorite position was guard, because I was good at it.

After high school, I joined the Army where I spent the next three years living in Germany as a Communications Specialist. I was fortunate to be enlisted during peacetime. I was also fortunate enough to be in Berlin when the wall came tumbling down. I brought a rock from the Berlin wall home to my mom, which she still has. While living in Europe, I was able to do some traveling. The Netherlands was my favorite place because of the breathtaking scenery. I will never forget my time there because of the beauty.

## the accident

After leaving the Army, I used my G.I. Bill to enroll in community college. My focus was business management. After completing my first year of college, I was in a devastating car accident that sent me to the hospital in need of surgery. After my surgery, I had multiple strokes and ended up in a coma. When I woke up, I was completely paralyzed. I was in a skilled nursing facility for the next three years. After three years, I was able to move back to my parents' house. This was nice because I could interact with my family on a daily basis, which meant a lot to me.

# BECOME A USSAAC MEMBER TODAY!

RETURN THE MEMBERSHIP FORM or JOIN VIA [www.USSAAC.ORG](http://www.USSAAC.ORG)

This form can be **FAXED** to Alisa Brownlee at 215-631-1878 or **MAILED** to 34 Market Street, Hatfield, PA 19440 OR you can join **VIA THE USSAAC WEB SITE** at [www.ussaac.org](http://www.ussaac.org) and click on the "Get Involved" button. Thank you!

## 2012 USSAAC MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1- DECEMBER 31, 2012

Please Complete All Sections

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address  Business  Home \_\_\_\_\_ Street & Number \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone including Area Code \_\_\_\_\_ Fax including Area Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Web site \_\_\_\_\_

Competency in languages other than English \_\_\_\_\_

Professionals— Please give us a brief description of your job: *(i.e. do you work with adults? children? Do AAC assessments or are in research?)*

### 2012 ISAAC Membership Directory PROFESSION/ROLE

The 2012 ISAAC Membership Directory will be issued to all members internationally in July 2012. It is imperative that your membership enrolment be received by March 31, 2012 for your name to be included in the Directory.

In order for our Directory to be most effective, please indicate below the category (or categories) which best describes your profession or association/role in the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication. LIMIT 3.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Therapist                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augmentative                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Professor                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Specialist             | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychologist                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Author                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation Specialist             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Scientist                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Research                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consultant                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counsellor                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor, Medical                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education School              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineer                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Educator                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family member/ Care Giver            | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech/Language Pathologist/Therapist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geneticist                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Student                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Linguist                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturer                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Profession not listed           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Therapist               |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person who use AAC or Family members |  |

- The ISAAC Membership Directory is published annually. Please indicate if you DO NOT wish your name and information included.
- USSAAC will publish its own directory this year. Please indicate if you DO NOT wish your name and information included.
- Check here if you are interested in serving USSAAC as a committee member.

Please Continue  
Onto the Next Page



# Thoughts from AAC User

## RICK HOHN

...an AAC user commented that it was strange communicating with his friends that he couldn't have done years before...

Sometimes, I run into old friends and even relatives who are used to communicating with me on my low-tech word board. It is funny, as I see them looking at the screen of my Maestro. They think that they will need to see the words that I am pointing. Just when I see them get mentally prepared to retain words in their heads, they are both surprised and relieved to hear a message spoken from the device.

Let me share another memory that I call a twilight experience. It triggered over a few years ago at an USSAAC Conference. During a round table discussion, an AAC user commented that it was strange communicating with his friends that he couldn't have done years before without his speaking device. I unfortunately had to leave to work in the DynaVox booth. However, this comment took me back into a twilight zone of more than thirty years ago. Because of my parents advancing in age, they first took me for monthly visits to a UCP skilled-care residential center. They wanted me to get used to the idea

that I would have to live eventually in such a facility. It was actually a nursing home for people with disabilities. It wasn't being placed in a nursing home that bothered me as much as visiting the residents that couldn't talk like me. We all knew that we were intelligent but couldn't express ourselves. We couldn't even crack a joke. I had my low-tech word board, but the residents couldn't physically pick it up to read where I pointed. The nursing staff was much too busy to help with communication. Therefore, all we did was to sit in a room, trying not to stare at each other. The time came where I had to live in this nursing home and others for eight years. I could communicate with only people that could hold my board for me to point, wishing that I could talk to those residents, as nonverbal as I was.

Therefore, the AAC user a few years ago hit it right on the money by commenting that it was strange to speak to his friends. It was as war veterans gathering to remember the past war stories.

Communication post-accident During my time at the skilled nursing facility, I was introduced to both low-tech and high-tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. I learned how to use a chart compiled of letters to help me communicate. I have been using the same chart reliably for the last 16 years. In the beginning, I also used the KENX system, which was a head switch attached to a computer for row-column scan typing. The system had voice output, which I could take or leave. After a short time, that system became too slow for me and using the chart became the fastest way for me to communicate. Talking for me is spontaneous and the KENX system did not allow for spontaneity. I think the eye chart is much more convenient because I don't have to stay stationary attending to a computer. To date, the chart is still the fastest way for me to communicate for two reasons. First, my communication partner is faster than a device at getting my message out. Second, the set up time for most devices

is strenuously time consuming

and the user is confined or limited in the conversation.

I feel that using the chart with a partner is much more natural than using a device. Some people feel that using the chart to communicate with me is hard, but I've known people who pick it up in a matter of hours. Over the years, I have learned quite a bit about what it takes for people to communicate with me. My communication partner must be patient, understanding, quick, and thorough. They must speak clearly, with good volume, and enunciate. I have come to realize that the one thing that sets a good communication partner, and caregiver, apart from everyone else is their heart; that they can empathize and understand my situation. In addition, when I'm using the chart to communicate, I need someone who uses logic, pays attention, has a good memory, and doesn't make me feel like I'm just a client and they're just here for the money (see Figure 2). There are pros and cons to using the chart to communicate. One downside is that my communication partner always carries the load. They have to work with me to understand me and that can be long and tiring. However, when my communication partners get to know me and my vocabulary, they will guess the words that I want to say which speeds things up. Most of my caregivers are familiar with what I want to say so they rarely guess the wrong words. If they do guess the wrong word, I just look down, which is my signal for the wrong word. If I want to initiate a conversation, I'm lucky enough to be able to make noise to get my caregivers attention.

If I could speak or type my own messages in a timely manner, there would be one less step in the communication process. It's even more work when there is a third party involved who does not know my way of communicating. During these times, my caregiver also serves as my translator.

Having a good communication partner is essential for me because I interact with society every day. I'm always keeping up with old friends and family on Facebook. I communicate, using the chart, to my caregiver what I want to post and she types out my messages for me. I tend to use the same caregiver for personal correspondences. I also enjoy going out on the weekends with my caregiver/friend Mark. We go out and support local bands, including Mark's band. I enjoy writing long emails to my friends and family who don't live close enough to visit me. Again, I do this activity with my caregiver.

Ultimately, what I feel most people in my position want out of the field of AAC is the ability to communicate with

## USSAAC Remembers Member JUNE DOWNING

June E. Downing died peacefully at home July 20, 2011, after ten months with cancer. She was born June 23, 1950 in Washington, D.C. Dr. Downing was Professor Emerita of Special Education at CSU Northridge, where she taught from 1995-2007 and Assoc. Prof. in Special Ed at the U of Arizona from 1987-1995. A student wrote: "You pushed me to think, to ask why not, to problem solve, to make what used to be impossible, possible". June published nine books, 13 monographs and curricula, 14 book chapters, and more than 38 articles. She presented numerous keynotes and workshops on teaching students with multiple disabilities and deaf-blindness throughout the United States and internationally, including: Canada, Australia, Russia and Abu Dhabi. June was on the Executive Board of TASH, an advocacy org. for those with disabilities and was founding member of CHIME Institute, an inclusive school. She supported adoptions through HOPE Animal Shelter, a no-kill shelter. She was known for spinning on the dance floor and for rolling her eyes and joking when life called for it. June was preceded in death by her parents, Philip and Mabel

Ernst. She is survived by her beloved dogs, Nick, Misty and Halle; sisters, Phyllis Brown and Barbara Ernst; brothers and sisters-in-law, John Ernst and Montharee Sone-Umpai and Michael Ernst and Jareya Nualthong; half-brother and sister-in-law, Philip W. and Mary Ernst; brother-in-law, Robert Brown; nieces, Elizabeth and Maria Brown and her many friends and colleagues. A Celebration of Life will be held Sunday, July 31, 2011 at 3:00 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center Heritage Room, 3800 E. River Road, Tucson. June wrote: "My hope is for a kinder world and a place where all children and animals have a safe and loving home". Donations to one of the following will further her work: Hope Animal Shelter ([hopeanimalshelter.net](http://hopeanimalshelter.net)), TASH ([tash.org](http://tash.org)), CHIME Institute ([chimeinstitute.org](http://chimeinstitute.org)). Arrangements by UOFA WILLED BODY PROGRAM.



Brain-Computer Interface 7

## BRAIN-COMPUTER INTERFACE: **Locked-in and Reaching New Heights**

*continued from page 4*

people using a system that's quick, convenient, easy to understand, and reliable.

### revisiting clinic

After 15 years, I thought it would be a good idea to reconnect with my speech-language pathologist to see what AAC options exist these days for people like me. In the past year since we started working together again, we've tried at least four different devices for writing and social networking. So far, I like EZ Keys the best. I prefer it because it allows me to type my own messages, granted I trade speed for independence. I use an AbleNet Specs switch on a universal switch mount near my right jaw. I can move my head a small amount to hit the switch. I use EZ Keys as a row-column scanning system on a Words+ Freedom 2000 speech device. Not everyone with locked-in syndrome has the ability to move as much as I do, which is what makes a switch more practical for me.

I have tried a few eye tracking devices, but I don't like having to look at a screen between me and my communication partner. And it's much slower than the alphabet chart. Right now, I am not interested in all the other functions that the eye tracking devices would give me because it's just too hard for me to use.

### brain computer interface

I was recently introduced to a brain-computer interface (BCI) system, which is under development. The research, funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is developing a noninvasive brain-computer interface. The research team comes to my home weekly to try the system and work out the kinks with me. It takes me hours to get ready and get to my appointments, so home visits are a real help to me. During visits, I wear a fitted cap (like a shower cap) with electrodes on it (see cover). A

display of letters is flashed on a computer screen in front of me. My brain activity changes when I see my chosen letter on the screen. Letters are chosen to spell words. Currently, I am one of two end users and I get to try out the changes in the BCI computer. I collaborate with the team to develop the system into something usable for the public. This process will likely take years. It is fascinating to watch development of the BCI system from the ideas to the implementation. I think it must be frustrating because the team is working from the ground up. I look forward to a time when the BCI computer is on the market for people with disabilities. Throughout this research project, I have had the opportunity to assist the team in understanding things from a user's standpoint. It has shaped my concept of what I think would be most helpful, not only for me, but for others who are locked-in. This has been, and continues to be, a wonderful experience for me.

### what I want from bci

At the very least, I am hoping that a BCI system will help me with written communication. I want to be able to express myself without the help of others at all times. If the system were able to predict text based on how my sentences are formed, that would be helpful. I want to be able to write emails and use Facebook independently. I would also like to be able to turn the pages on a book. For people like me who are completely locked-in, it would also be nice to be able to control simple things in my environment like my wheelchair and

the lift on my van. I would like to turn on lights, the thermostat, the radio, and my television. As I work more with the BCI system, I feel that it has the potential to do an unlimited amount of things in the future. This is amazing research and I feel very privileged to be a part of it. This sort of experimenting will lead to great things and drastically change the lives of the disabled in ways that many people never thought would be possible. A BCI has the potential to control a lot, but a

Words cannot express how much I enjoy being included in this life changing research project. Being a part of this team has enriched my life in so many ways.

person who is locked-in will always need to be interdependent. I can see a BCI system being added to the equation, but ultimately I will still need my caregivers.

So far, with all the testing I've done with the BCI team, I feel like my needs for AAC have been met by having a good switch and an appropriate mount for the laptop. However, if I were to go out in public with those things, that would be a major hassle because the laptop mount is too bulky. Perhaps there are other mounts that would be more practical for public use. The most reliable and accurate switch, a more flexible yet sturdy mount, and the screen being at eye level are all very important. I am

concerned about creating a barrier between myself and who I am speaking with. If there was a way to use a screen about the size of a touch pad (not too big, not too small), then that would be better as far as size goes.

### recommendations for clinicians

I think the best therapist is one who has empathy and understands your unique situation. And you need to know your equipment if you are going to show it to me. I have an opinion on all the AAC devices that I tried, and my opinion is not good if the equipment doesn't work on the first try!

### conclusion

Words cannot express how much I enjoy being included in this life changing research project. Being a part of this team has enriched my life in so many ways. Participating in the BCI study is my way of helping others; not only the researchers, but also others who are locked-in. It makes me feel like I'm really doing something to help those with disabilities who are in a similar position as me. Giving people with LIS the option to use a BCI in their daily life can provide so many benefits. It has the potential to give us a sense of control, the ability to communicate independently, and a sense of depth. The challenges of designing a BCI system for people who are social and intelligent are to make it user friendly, reliable, just as easy and fast as other AAC systems, and unobtrusive. That said, BCI also can open new doors, which is hard to do when you're locked-in.

Address correspondence to:  
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OHSU/CDRC  
707 SW Gaines St.  
Portland, Oregon 97239  
(503) 494-2743  
noethe@ohsu.edu

## Dear Members,

**This letter introduces you to a resurrected issue of the vivacious and spirited SpeakUp magazine, and a new USSAAC administration that is equally active and invigorated!**

The recent year has been one of restructuring and rebuilding. USSAAC, like most nonprofit organizations is constantly striving to heighten its awareness of stakeholder needs, while balancing the realities of budgetary restraints and the constant dearth of volunteers to address planned priorities. Over the past two years, under the tutelage of India Ochs, this organization has maintained a commitment to developing its membership, most critically in the area of individuals who use AAC; has revitalized this publication SpeakUp; and is working to collaborate with AACI and SHOUT on the planning of the upcoming ISAAC Conference in Pittsburgh, PA in July 2012!

**Congratulation and a warm welcome to our newly elected Board members:** Chris Klein as President-Elect and Gabe Gibbons, Pam Harris and Gus Estrella as incoming Regional Representatives. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our many friends and colleagues who have given of their time, energy and other resources to serve on the outgoing Executive Committee and Board of Directors. A special thank you to Tom Reed and Amy Sonntag and all their contributions over the years as Regional Representatives. We will miss your presence on the Board!

**This year USSAAC will continue to emphasize the following priorities.**  
TO INCREASE:

1. membership
2. advocacy activities
3. distribution of the SpeakUp magazine
4. offerings of continuing education units (CEUs)
5. content and usability of the USSAAC website
6. communications to the membership via social networking sites and eBlasts

In order to accomplish these priorities, the EC and Board of Directors will need significant support through volunteerism on the part of members. **I encourage any member with as little as 1 hour a month to volunteer on a USSAAC activity to visit the website at [www.ussaac.org](http://www.ussaac.org) and volunteer your time and/or resources.**

As you prepare your calendar for the new year, keep in mind that the Annual Membership Meeting will be held during the 15th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) in Pittsburgh, PA. Watch for future announcements of the exact date and agenda!

I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to advance USSAAC – and the AAC Community – towards new innovations and growth.

**Pat Ourand**  
*Incoming President*