

# Health Awareness

## Breaking Through Speech Barriers

(NAPSA)—New technology has enabled those with communication disorders to find a voice.

That's encouraging news for the almost 3 million children and adults in the U.S. who are unable to use speech as their primary means of communication because of a severe speech or communication disability caused by autism, stroke, traumatic brain injury, ALS, neurological disorder, developmental disability or a variety of other diagnoses.

The latest speech-generating solutions provide individuals of all ages and abilities challenged by such disabilities a system that supports successful and efficient day-to-day communication, as well as language and literacy development and skill use.

Henry Evans found his voice through a DynaVox V after a stroke at the age of 40 that left him a quadriplegic and unable to speak. His frustration at not being able to speak was profound. In 2006, Henry was introduced to an AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) device that enabled him to once more communicate with his family and the rest of the world.

Generally, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) evaluates the individual and recommends a specific device and supporting equipment to meet the individual's communication and physical access needs. A physician's prescription based on the evaluation may also be required.

There are scores of success stories like Evans', but it's still not enough. Just 6 percent of children



**Talking to friends and family at a gathering is just one of the many ways new speech-generating devices are enabling those with speech disabilities to better communicate.**

and 1 percent of adults who could benefit from AAC technology are using it. Some people don't know it exists.

Others fear that a device will be used as a crutch and the user won't develop natural speech. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Studies have demonstrated that the introduction of AAC can speed the development of natural speech if the ability to acquire this skill exists. And families typically get funding from Medicare, medical assistance and private health insurance providers, or school districts for these speech solutions.

"With advances in assistive technologies, there is less and less of a reason for anyone to have to live without the ability to express oneself," said Evans. "My DynaVox made it possible for me to feel human again."

To get more information about AAC technology and resources for users and caregivers, please visit [www.dynavoxtech.com](http://www.dynavoxtech.com).