

# HUMANIZING TECHNOLOGY: HELPING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

By Frank, *Your Computer Tutor*

It's likely our lives will be impacted by a major life-changing event that will lead us to closely-know some type of disability. Fortunately, we live in an era when modern adaptive equipment and software can ENABLE people with a disability to operate computers, giving them a form of independence and self-sufficiency.

Hidden deep within Windows XP, there are little-known special accessibility-program-features: a *TEXT NARRATOR*, a *SCREEN MAGNIFIER* and an *ON-SCREEN KEYBOARD* – these tools that provide functionality for users with moderate special needs. Users with formidable disabilities will need utility programs and equipment offering advanced functionality (mentioned later). Consider these programs as a starting point to determine the level of assistance needed:

1) ***NARRATOR***: is a TEXT-TO-SPEECH UTILITY for users who are blind or have impaired vision; it *actually* reads what is displayed on your screen: the contents of the active window, menu options, or the text you have typed. *Narrator* is designed to work with Notepad, WordPad, Control Panel programs, Internet Explorer and Windows desktop. *Narrator* has a number of options that allow you to customize the way screen elements are read: the speed, volume, or pitch of the computer voice.

To open *Narrator*: click **Start > All Programs > Accessories > Accessibility > Narrator**.

2) ***MAGNIFIER***: is a monitor screen display utility that MAKES THE SCREEN MORE READABLE FOR USERS who have impaired vision. *Magnifier* creates a separate window that displays a magnified portion of your screen. When using *Magnifier*, you can change the magnification level, the size of the magnification window and the position of the magnification window on your desktop.

To open *Magnifier*: click **Start > All Programs > Accessories > Accessibility > click Magnifier**.

3) ***ON-SCREEN KEYBOARD***: a utility that DISPLAYS A VIRTUAL KEYBOARD ON THE SCREEN and allows users with mobility impairments to type data using a pointing device or joystick. It is intended to provide a minimum level of functionality for users with mobility impairments.

To open *On-Screen Keyboard*: click **Start > All Programs > Accessories > Accessibility > click On-Screen Keyboard**.

The following websites show MAC & Windows users utility programs and hardware with more advanced functionality: **abilityhub.com - assistivetech.com - intellitools.com - madentec.com synapseadaptive.com - freedomscientific.com - maltron.com - liberator.co.uk - cast.org**

## **TALK TO YOUR COMPUTER: Voice Recognition Software:**

*Dragon Naturally Speaking 9:* **1st-dragon.com**

*Dragon* is a speech recognition program claiming 99% accuracy speech to text conversion. It's relatively ease-of-use, allows you to complete complex tasks with a simple word or phrase from Pocket PC's, Palm Tungsten, Tablet PC and digital recording devices.

*IBM ViaVoice:* **306.ibm.com/software/voice/viavoice**

*ViaVoice* for Windows Release 10 product family offers a complete portfolio appealing to every level of user expertise, and *ViaVoice* for Mac offers the first continuous speech products Apple Macintosh platforms in the consumer marketplace.

## **Free Text Reader Downloads:**

**naturalreaders.com - codepoetry.net/projects/textreader**

**DESTINATIONS: wildernessonwheels.org**

Happy Computing!!

MENTOR FRANK HARE, M.A., manages Colorado-based BeyondTech, LCC: IN-HOME SERVICES Offered: Repairs – Networking - Spyware & Virus Removal - 24/7 – Powerful Custom-Built Computers & Tutoring  
Hundreds of Happy Clients 303-575-1774 **frank@beyondtechnology.net**