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Aids for Better Living Assistive Technology

(Friday Harbor, WA) – 1 March, 2017 – San Juan Island Library announced today a new collection of low and high tech “assistive technology” devices available to take home to try. The Aids for Better Living collection includes devices to make life a little easier for people with a wide range of functional needs or disabilities, including mobility, vision loss, hearing loss, difficulty with speaking, or difficulty handling small objects.

Problems with seeing, speaking, hearing, memory, decreased grip strength, diminished ability to reach and bend, as well as other mobility problems can affect each of us. Sometimes it can be short term—the after effects of a surgery. Other times the issues persist for many years. Coping with these kinds of problems now might be a bit easier. The Library’s Aids for Better Living allows you to borrow assistive devices to see if they work for you.

Persons with mobility issues might appreciate borrowing a dressing kit, a reacher for manipulating distant objects, a voice activated switch for turning off a lamp or light, and a handybar that makes getting into and out of an automobile a bit easier. There is also a kettle tipper, a utensil holder, a jar opener, and a clamp that can help with leisure activities such as knitting or model making for those with less dexterity.

Products available for people with vision loss include jumbo playing cards, a big key computer keyboard, and CD players designed for listening to books. Various styles of magnifiers are also available.

Hearing loss is increasingly common in our community, one of the United States counties with a large percent of the population over 65 years of age. The TV Ears system might save a marriage. There is also an amplified telephone kit and a personal amplification device. While products like this are frequently advertised, they can be expensive, and most folks want a chance to try them before making a purchase.

There are two products that might help people who have difficulty with speech—the Go Talk Pocket, and the Pocket Talker Pro can have prerecorded utterances programmed so that a person with a speech impairment can give voice to their wishes.

A catalog of the Aids for Better Living collection is available online at <http://www.sjlib.org/about-the-library/from-the-library/> or you can check out a print copy to take home and review. Products in this collection are made available to Library users through the Washington Assistive Technology Act Program at the University of Washington. Library patrons using the materials are asked to complete a survey about their experience with the devices.

The Library also loans a mix of equipment including a cassette player, DVD players, a Kill A Watt energy usage meter, and electronic devices that detect the presence of bats.

Library cards are free of charge to islanders with proof of residency. In addition to its collections of materials to loan, the Library also provides public access computers and WiFi. Library hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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