TAFE Illawarra to Host Using Inclusive Technologies in Education, Training and Employment Conference During National Skills Week

TAFE Illawarra will host the Using Inclusive Technologies in Education, Training and Employment Conference as part of National Skills Week 2012 on Friday 31 August at Wollongong Campus.

According to Lorraine Watson, Teacher Consultant for students with Physical Disabilities, the aim of the conference is to assist Teachers, Rehabilitation Providers, Employment and Community Service Workers and people with disabilities, to gain up to date information on recent advances and developments in inclusive technologies.

“Inclusive technologies have enormous potential for people who have disabilities in education and in employment. One only has to look at the work of Stephen Hawking, the infamous Cambridge physicist who uses assistive technology to deliver lectures to audiences around the world and write bestselling scientific textbooks, to realise the potential of such technologies,” said Ms Watson.

The key note speaker at this Conference is Greg O’Connor, the Manager of Professional and Consultancy Services at Spectronics, the largest supplier of special needs software and assistive technology in Australia and New Zealand. Greg has been actively involved in supporting the learning of people with diverse learning needs for 29 years. During this time he has worked as a classroom teacher, school executive, district consultant and regional manager with the former NSW Department of Education and Training. Greg’s areas of interest and expertise include supporting people with complex needs, challenging behaviours and autism, and literacy support technologies for people with learning disabilities. He is passionately committed to the use of assistive and instructional technologies to support the learning of all students in school and post school settings.

There will be three additional speakers at the Conference including Jeanette Davies, an Apple Accessibility Ambassador and Apple Distinguished Educator from the Information Communication and Learning Technologies Team at the Catholic Education Office in Wollongong.

“Jeanette specialises in providing inclusive technology solutions to students who have a wide range of disabilities as well as providing training and support to teachers and students on how to use hardware and software. Jeanette’s presentation will focus on how to use the iPad and educational apps to meet the needs of people who have disabilities,” said Ms Watson.

Andrew Downie, from the TAFE NSW eLearning Hub will demonstrate how easy it is to produce materials and resources using universal design principles to meet the needs of all students and will introduce the adaptive technologies collaboration space on the eHub’s eCommunities.

Trish Richardson, Coordinator of the NSW DEC Disability Employment Strategies and Programs will provide information on sources of funding for equipment and technology for people who have disabilities.

As part of the conference there will be various workshops and demonstrations on how to use a wide range of software and hardware including Read and Write Gold (software program that is useful for people who have difficulties with reading and spelling), Dragon Naturally speaking (a voice activated software program), Live scribe smart pens, Proloquo2Go, (an app for people with little or no speech) and JAWS (Screen reading program for people who are vision impaired).

“It is also hoped that this conference will lead to the formation of a community of people who are interested in working together to advance the use of inclusive technologies to assist people who have disabilities in the Illawarra region and that this community will offer on-going professional development programs for teachers in the use of technology for students,” said Ms Watson.

The cost of attending this conference is $75 and includes morning tea and lunch. If you wish to register visit www.itsa.org.au and complete the registration form. A limited number of places will be reserved for people who have disabilities for a reduced fee. If you have a disability and would like to attend the Conference, contact Zofia Laba on 4229 0133 or zofialaba2@det.nsw.edu.au

For more information on how technology can be used to change the lives of people who have disabilities visit http://youtu.be/Uqg-iGoOTto. For more information about Spectronics visit www.spectronicsinoz.com.

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