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Entering a new age of assisted technology

By Andrew Tutty

Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee



Andrew Tutty

My vision has decreased to the level where I can no longer access my computer with my current adaptive aid. As I am no longer able to read text of any size, I needed a different solution.

The Assistive Devices Program allows persons with disabilities to acquire equipment and technology specific to their needs, helping to improve their lives.

Every five years, a blind or visually impaired person can acquire equipment through this program SO I applied for new equipment. The Assistive Devices Program paid 75 per cent of the cost.

This time I received a product called JAWS, which is a screen reader that reads the screen elements aloud.

While Zoomtext has both text enhancement and voice capabilities, JAWS only has a voice component. It's a flexible and powerful tool that relies on keyboard commands to perform all the functions needed to use the computer.

It is "old" school for me as I started using computers before there were mice input devices. In those days, "the stone-age", everything was input through the keyboard. For example, to move from one link to the next, press the tab key. To move back a link press and hold the shift key and then press tab.

To quit a program, press and hold the alt key and press F4. Hold the alt key and press tab to cycle through open applications. These keystrokes work on any computer but JAWS also uses the numpad in combination with other keys to perform functions like current cursor location, next word, current line, paragraph, and other special JAWS operations. It's internet capabilities are excellent.

While it is a bit daunting as there are so many key combinations, you quickly learn the ones you really need.

Andrew Tutty is a member of the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee and writes about issues that affect people of all abilities.

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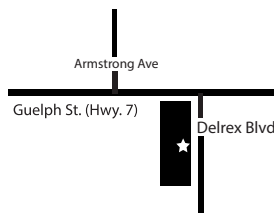
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