



In Methodist Rehab's Adaptive Computing Lab, people with disabilities can test drive a variety of equipment and software specially designed to fit their computing needs. The choices include user-friendly computer mice, keyboards and mouth-operated input devices.

Grant funds improvements for adaptive computing lab

A \$37,000 grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation will expand the capabilities of Methodist Rehabilitation Center's innovative Adaptive Computing Lab.

MRC patients will be able to sample a wider variety of equipment and software, take advantage of timelier training and even test-drive technology in their hospital rooms.

"Our vision is to create an environment that will promote the use of technology and ensure that individual needs are matched with appropriate resources," said Dr. Dobrivoje Stokic, administrative director of research at MRC.

It's a goal that surely would have resonated with Craig H. Neilsen, the late founder of Ameristar Casinos and the creator of the spinal cord injury foundation that bears his

name. As a businessman who managed a successful company from the seat of a power wheelchair, Neilsen knew the importance of technology in his own life.

"Craig Neilsen started supporting MRC in 2004 because he was impressed with the cutting-edge rehabilitation opportunities that MRC offered to Mississippi residents," said Beth Goldsmith, executive director of the Neilsen Foundation.

Methodist Rehab's adaptive computing lab was begun in 2008 with a \$20,775 AT&T Excelerator grant. The money funded the purchase of adaptive equipment, such as onscreen keyboards, voice-recognition software and special trackballs and joysticks.

George Gober, assistive technology associate at MRC said, "The Neilsen

Foundation money will be used to expand that inventory and make training and support services more readily available."

"The Neilsen grant will allow us to secure new emerging technologies to improve our assessment process," Gober said. "We will also be able to develop video tutorials and enhance our training procedures. This will help us better train people while they are in the hospital."

The grant also will make it possible to provide computers for use outside the computer lab.

"This approach better resembles 'real-world' computing, and it also greatly enhances opportunities for in-depth assessment and training," Gober said. "In essence, we will be able to jump-start their computer use in a setting where we can offer on-site support."