

# Forward Access

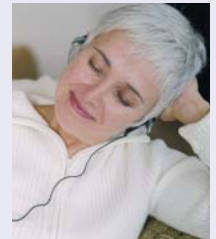
ENHANCING COMMUNICATION FOR VERIZON CUSTOMERS | APRIL 2005



## IN THE NEWS

### Read a Book in a Flash

*The New York Times* reports that some 600,000 visually impaired readers currently get their material—in the form of audiobooks—from the National Library Service (NLS) for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a department of the Library of Congress. The NLS has been significantly behind the times, however, with respect to



technological advances in audio equipment, providing material to its low-vision readers that requires the use of outdated four-track cassette players.

The good news is that the NSL is currently developing a digital audio device that can easily hold books of any size—from *The Cat in the Hat* to *War and Peace*.

By using Flash memory technology, the device's compact size and ease of use make it ideal for readers of all abilities. Visually impaired and low-vision readers will no longer have to rely on machines with inconsistent sound quality to enjoy their favorite novel and will be able to conserve space at the same time—no more multiple cassettes cluttering up your bookshelves. (See page 2 for more information on Flash drives.) ■

## TO OUR READERS

Submit your favorite disability-related travel story to [vcdd@verizon.com](mailto:vcdd@verizon.com). Readers whose letters are published in *Forward Access* will receive a \$50 American Express Gift Cheque.

Verizon has the right to reprint and edit comments for the purpose of advertising, marketing, and promotion in any medium Verizon chooses. Readers waive any inspection of final copy and release Verizon from any and all liability in connection with the use of the comments submitted.

## COVER STORY

## ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL GOES MAINSTREAM

As baby boomers come of age, the travel industry finds itself adopting a more mature approach to making travel accessible to the growing numbers of people with health concerns. And that turns out to be good news for the millions of Americans with disabilities. In increasing numbers, vacationers with disabilities are making their presence felt, whether skiing in Vermont, deep-sea fishing in Mexico, or lounging on the deck of a cruise liner.

Travelers with disabilities are becoming an increasingly profitable demographic, spending an estimated \$13 billion a year on travel-related services. In the past five years, 12% of adults with disabilities in the U.S. have gone on a cruise, compared to just 8% of the general population. What's more, repeat demand for cruises among passengers with disabilities is particularly strong,

with 59% planning another cruise in the next five years.

The travel industry is paying attention. Savvy entrepreneurs are capitalizing on this demand and offering a world of opportunities for people with disabilities. Some are compiling an online marketplace of Internet travel resources for those seeking accessible vacations.

Travel agents with disabilities are putting their professional skills and personal experience to good use—designing ski, safari, scuba, sailing, and spa getaways for travelers of all abilities. And continuing advances in technology and Universal Design are making it easier for travelers with disabilities to see the world independently.

Take advantage of Verizon Online DSL's High-speed Internet to surf the Web and help you plan the perfect holiday escape. Then start packing! (See Web Round-Up on page 4.)



## INSIDE

► **Erica Wilkins** played goalie for her hockey team, was class valedictorian, and has traveled the world. Her new turf is Gallaudet University, the largest university for the deaf in the world. (See profile on page 3.)

# Universal Design: Enriching Life for All

## ► UD Online Resources

Center for Universal Design Web site  
makoa.org

Accessible Gardening  
gardenforever.com

Museum Audio Tours  
acoustiguide.com

Enabling Garden—  
Chicago Botanic Garden

chicagobotanic.org/  
explore/GardenEnable.html

Information site—  
UD for the 21st  
Century conference  
designfor21st.org

Center for Applied  
Technology  
cast.org

Good Grips—  
kitchen tools  
oxo.com

Universal Home  
Design Web sites  
pathnet.org/  
sp.asp?id=1036

The January 2005 issue of *Forward Access* introduced readers to the concept of Universal Design (UD), and to some of the products and services it offers to enhance—and simplify—the lives of people of all abilities.

Fortunately, Verizon is not alone in its efforts. Designers and manufacturers from every arena are responding to this growing demand with a host of products designed to offer convenience, safety, comfort, and accessibility—without sacrificing aesthetics. Here are a select few:

**At Work.** Companies have developed award-winning software that has made the Internet, multimedia programs, and operating systems accessible to everyone. Other products such as ergonomically designed office chairs and alternate keyboards, have helped people of all abilities reach their highest potential in the workplace.

**At Home.** Examples of Universal Design can be found throughout today's homes, from simple, practical

solutions to hot products that are gaining popularity with designers and consumers alike. Strategic placement of light switches, electrical outlets, shelves, and even microwaves at heights that can accommodate everyone equally, ensure safety, comfort, and convenience.



Products such as single-lever faucets, easy-to-read controls on appliances, and accessible cabinetry are a hit with users of all ages and abilities.

**At Play.** Imagine exploring a garden or a painting through a sense other than sight. Or climbing a 9-ft. tower in—or out—of a wheelchair. Recreational environments such as multi-sensory museum exhibits, enabling gardens, and accessible playgrounds are allowing people of all ages and abilities to do

just that. With the help of barrier-free design, which includes features like lowered handrails, tactile maps, audio descriptions, and diverse sensory offerings, families are enjoying their leisure time together in new and exciting ways.

## NEXT QUESTION, PLEASE

I currently have a dial-up Internet connection, but I don't want to miss any calls while I'm online. Any suggestions?



Consider upgrading to **Verizon Online DSL**. By providing a 24/7 Internet connection over your existing phone line, Verizon Online DSL gives you the freedom to talk on the phone and surf the

Web at the same time. To start enjoying Verizon DSL today, log on to **verizon.com/DSL**.

If you prefer a dial-up connection, you can still receive calls while online with Verizon's **Internet Call Manager (ICM)**, which allows you to control your incoming calls while accessing the Internet, using the same phone line. A pop-up

window opens on your screen identifying each incoming call with the number and name, if available.

Simply click on one of the four buttons in the pop-up window to choose what you'd like to do with that call. "Answer" lets you disconnect from the Internet and take the call. "Send Message" plays one of three messages to the caller, pre-recorded in English or Spanish. "Forward" transfers the call to another pre-programmed number—your cell phone, office phone, or another line for example. "Don't Answer/Voice Mail" directs calls to Home Voice Mail, if you subscribe to Verizon Home Voice Mail, or takes no action if you do not. To sign up for ICM, go to **verizon.com/icm**.

## IN OTHER WORDS

### Flash Drive

Flash drives store data in a convenient, portable device. Flash memory chips are enclosed in a plastic card, about the size of a matchbook, that connects to any computer with a universal serial bus port (USB).

Because Flash-based memory consumes little power, Flash drives are ideal for laptops, handheld computers, digital cameras, and audio players.



## Verizon Sponsors 2005 Central Park Challenge



As part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing the lives of people with disabilities, Verizon is proud to announce its participation as a major sponsor of this year's Central Park Challenge, a project of the award-winning YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities (YAI/NIPD) Network. This network of not-for-profit health and human services agencies has a mission to provide people with disabilities with the resources and support they need to thrive in their communities. The YAI/NIPD serves more than 20,000 people with disabilities and their families in Greater New York, New Jersey, Connecticut,

Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico.

On Saturday, June 4, from 8:30am to 1:00pm, more than 5,000 people representing New York City and the Greater Metropolitan area will join the Challenge. Participants include corporate and community teams, individuals with disabilities, families, staff, and celebrities. The event features a 3K Fundraising Walk and a 5K Competitive Run, Children's Races, a Family Fun Area, and entertainment.

Challenge yourself, and have some fun. Join us in Central Park on June 4, and help Verizon make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

► To register or sponsor a participant, call 877-YAI-WALK or visit [yai.org/cpc](http://yai.org/cpc)

### IN PROFILE

"The best part of being a young adult right now? All the freedom and technology we have at hand. Of course I'm going to take advantage!"

# Erica Wilkins

Erica Wilkins is one teenager who has figured out how to capitalize on the many opportunities available to young women today. Her interests and accomplishments are varied—from playing competitive sports to graduating valedictorian of her class to traveling the world. Unlike some of her contemporaries, however, Erica, born to hearing parents, has been profoundly deaf since birth.

"So what?" seems to have been her attitude. She attended school in three states (mainstreamed, with an interpreter, in Massachusetts and Wisconsin, and then at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont). Erica says she was happiest in Fremont, because of its large deaf community and the good friends she made. When she moved back there for the last three years of high school, she really made herself at home. She was class president, editor of the yearbook, played three varsity sports, and participated in the International Studies program that allowed students



to visit the countries they studied during spring break. (She's been to China, Costa Rica, Russia, Sweden, Holland, Germany, "and one town in France.")

Erica has never shied away from her passion for sports. "I never really felt intimidated by my deafness. Sports have always just seemed like a natural thing to me." Choosing the position she thought best matched her abilities, she elected to play goalie for a local girls' hockey team. It didn't matter that none

of her teammates or opponents was deaf—especially when they won!

Now a freshman at Gallaudet University, this very take-charge young woman shows no signs of slowing down. She's trying out for catcher for the college's softball team. Academically, so far, she's leaning toward a career in medicine, or becoming a teacher or writer. And in her "spare time," she can see herself getting involved with programs promoting equal access to people with physical disabilities.

Erica's first introduction to Gallaudet was in high school, when she participated in the Gallaudet Academic Bowl, an annual event which brings together students from schools for the deaf and hard of hearing to compete in a quiz tournament. Verizon was proud to sponsor this year's Academic Bowl in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, which included an Internet café highlighting DSL and the Verizon Centers for Customers with Disabilities.

# Verizon Wireless Offers Universal Solutions



**V**erizon is committed to ensuring that all its customers are given every opportunity to communicate in whatever way best meets their needs. And that means providing wireless products and services that benefit people of all abilities. As part of our ongoing effort to serve the needs of our customers with disabilities, we continue to encourage our vendors and suppliers to help us develop and offer accessible solutions. Here are just a few:

### For Visually and Mobility-Impaired Customers

The LG VX4500 phone offers the latest in mobile technology and is now available at Verizon Wireless Stores. Voice Command allows you to speak pre-programmed names or numbers directly into the phone, which will then be automatically dialed for you. The enhanced LG VX4500 also features text-to-speech and battery and signal readout capabilities.

#### Contact Us

If you are an existing customer and would like more information on wireless services for people with disabilities, call customer service at: **(V) 800-922-0204** or **(TTY) 877-VZW-TTY1 (877-899-8891)**.



### For Deaf and Speech-Impaired Customers

With Verizon Wireless TXT Messaging, you can use your phone to send and receive messages—anytime, anywhere. These services allow you to have “conversations” in meetings, at the movies, or at a party.

### For Blind and Visually-Impaired Customers

Verizon Wireless provides bills, as well as products and services brochures, where readily available, in alternate media formats including Braille, large print, 3.5 diskette, and audio recordings.

For more information, visit **VerizonWireless.com** and click on Accessibility under About Us, or call Verizon Customer Service at **(V) 800-2JoinIN (800-256-4646)** or **(TTY) 877 VZW TTY1 (877-899-8891)**.

### Verizon Online or by Phone—The Choice is Yours

With so many services and calling plans available these days, choosing the one that best meets your needs can sometimes feel overwhelming. Whether you want to add a new feature to your existing package, or figure out which plan is best for you based on the number and type of calls you make each month, Verizon offers two ways to help:

**Do it yourself online.** Be your own detective and use Verizon’s comprehensive Web site to help you determine the best package for you based on your calling habits. Log on to **verizon.com**, click on Product Recommender under Residential, answer a few questions, and in seconds, you’ll have the right plan for yourself.

**Give us a call.** If you have questions about or need to add adaptive equipment, or just prefer the personal touch, call the Verizon Center for Customers with Disabilities at **800-974-6006 (Voice/TTY)** to speak to a consultant.

Go online or call a VCCD representative—the choice is yours. At Verizon, we never stop working for you. ■

### WEB ROUND-UP

- **In The News:** NYT.com
- **Central Park Challenge:** yai.org/cpc
- **Verizon ICM and DSL:** verizon.com
- **Gallaudet University Bowls:** gallaudet.edu
- **Accessible Travel:** miusa.org, ableto.org, sath.org, makoa.org

### WHAT'S AHEAD EVENTS ■ SEMINARS ■ GATHERINGS

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	CONTACT
World of Possibilities Expo	May 20-21, 2005	Timonium, MD	<a href="http://expo.caringcommunities.org">http://expo.caringcommunities.org</a>
Exhibition of Artwork by Children with Learning Disabilities	May 22-June 12, 2005	Boone, NC	<a href="http://ldonline.org">ldonline.org</a>
Big River	May 24-29, 2005	Portland, OR	<a href="http://broadwayacrossamerica.com">broadwayacrossamerica.com</a>
Access/ABILITY	May 29, 2005	Brooklyn, NY	<a href="http://bchildmus.org">bchildmus.org</a>

For specific accessibility information on these events, please contact the organization directly.

### GOING FORWARD

■ **We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Please contact us at:** Verizon Center for Customers with Disabilities **V/TTY: 800-974-6006**  
E-mail: [vccd@verizon.com](mailto:vccd@verizon.com)

Picture credits: Page 1 Clockwise from left: Courtesy of Kline Wilkins; © Dan Sherwood/Stone; © ROB & SAS/Corbis; Page 2 Clockwise from left: Courtesy of the Museum of Science, Boston; Page 3 Courtesy of Kline Wilkins; Page 4 © Corbis; All illustrations by Lutzka Zivny. ©2005 Verizon. All Rights Reserved.



We never stop working for you.