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## **Counselor Discovers Ideal Learning Tool for Herself (and Family) in *TextAloud* Text to Speech**

*TextAloud* PC software provides an essential link between reading and comprehension for one continuing 'learner' and her children

CLEMMONS, NC – **Vicky Greenplate-deStephano** is a counselor by training who has been able to continue a challenging regimen of lifelong studies in spite of dyslexia and ADD. Referring to her conditions as a learning 'difference' – a more accurate and precise term than 'disability' – Vicky has overcome them through sheer force of will along with the increasingly useful technology available to her through personal computing. One major factor in her recent study successes has been ***TextAloud***, the popular Text to Speech software from **NextUp Technologies** (<http://www.NextUp.com>). *TextAloud* not only enabled Vicky to develop her coursework, it even assisted her sons in overcoming their own learning differences, as well.

The popular PC software that easily outputs written text into speech, and from almost any source (e-mails, websites, documents, PDFs and more), *TextAloud* is an ideal study tool, and has proven highly popular with those like Vicky who are battling dyslexia or other hurdles when reading or learning, or who simply prefer to read by ear. The program is affordably priced from \$29.95, and is easy and versatile, able to output and save written text seamlessly as natural-sounding audio files for listening on almost any portable audio devices, from iPhones, to iPods, laptops, Compact Discs and more.

In her lifelong struggles with a form of dyslexia called scotopic sensitivity syndrome, Vicky researched potential tools for her disorder for over seven years. As for so many other sufferers worldwide, Vicky's dyslexia, like other reading differences or disabilities, wasn't about reading or learning skills at all, so much as the way the visual information was processed. Vicky instead had to learn how to creatively circumvent the typical 'visual' reading process simply in order to

recognize the letters and words and to then comprehend their meaning. This meant that Vicky, like so many others, essentially had to work twice as hard to achieve comprehension as those without a reading disorder, and in an often time-consuming and exhausting process. "I became acutely aware of it in my first year at Union Institute and University," comments Vicky, "and I realized that I needed to hear what I'd written read back to me, and I couldn't get that help from the formal learning support options at the university."

After a lifetime of working with her own obstacles to learning, Vicky carefully analyzed her reading tendencies, and soon realized that listening to her reading by ear vastly simplified and improved her individual reading process and comprehension. After experimenting with books on tape and other less helpful options, she eventually discovered *TextAloud* Text to Speech as her solution, and was able to utilize the software easily on her PC, and even to customize its appearance and tools to her own preferences to increase visual comfort and make comprehension easier. "I have an aversion to black and white text, preferring a blue background with white text," she comments. "I wear dark blue-tinted prescription glasses to correct this, so *TextAloud's* ability to work within my own preferences is a double treat while reading any kind of literature."

But even more important than its visuals was the program's ability to read Vicky's work and studies aloud to her, and at her own pace. Vicky especially liked the fact that she could listen in *TextAloud* while reading in other programs by simply using *TextAloud's* hotkey commands. "I used to keep the *TextAloud* commands taped to the top-left side of my laptop screen," she adds. "I don't always need the highlighting, but I always benefit from hearing what I'm reading aloud. I now know the commands without the list!" She points out that *TextAloud* also helps her to hear when she is 'circling' her topics too much in her writing, and that the program's speed controls mean she can also increase the rate at which she hears and processes information.

"My language disorder also directly affects written expression, especially on essays, as I have trouble sustaining the supporting information for the argument I'm attempting to make," adds Vicky. "But I'm getting better with this using *TextAloud*, as it helps me to construct the

paragraphs that support the topic I wish to speak about." In these cases, Vicky listens as the program reads her words aloud back to her, and she uses the program's onscreen "stop" and "pause" buttons in order to review what she wrote, just like a tape recorder. This also allows her to correct any instances in which she did not adequately support her facts (or was too detailed in doing so) the first time around.

"Once I started using *TextAloud*, I realized there was a lot more to a book or an article than I was comprehending," Vicky explains. "I also noticed that I started and stopped a lot as I read and reread. This is a bad habit and can really affect comprehension." Now, during an initial pass through a book, she does not stop and start, but instead just keeps going, saving a closer look for another full read-through once she's done. "I also work at increasing the speed at which I read in order to improve my comprehension abilities," she adds.

But *TextAloud* didn't just prove beneficial to Vicky, but to her family as well, and she turned to the program for support when her stepson as well as youngest son both began to exhibit similar symptoms of a learning disorder. With her youngest son, Philip, *TextAloud* actually assisted him in turning a failing grade into a passing one, allowing him to move forward to the 11th grade. Philip had originally failed the grade, but Vicky scanned in the extra credit school study packets that had been given to him, for English, History, and other subjects, so that he could move forward to the next grade after all. Philip had difficulty with the questions visually, but Vicky soon found that using *TextAloud* eliminated much of the challenge for him, enabling him to actually learn the material (versus just memorizing the facts) and to then formulate his answers quickly and correctly on a question by question basis.

"He passed with flying colors," comments Vicky, "with the administration even stating their certainty that 'he knew the material well.'" Philip even did the majority of his study using *TextAloud* alone, without outside assistance. During this time, when studying on her own, or assisting Philip in his studies, Vicky also came up with a clever way to differentiate between

captions and footnotes in the study material by ear, using a male voice to read the majority of the text, and a female voice for the captions and other side notes, instead.

"Ultimately, *TextAloud* has made a tremendous difference in how I articulate information," comments Vicky, who continues to use *TextAloud* in some fashion every day, from study to correspondence, reading, and beyond. When she eventually achieves her degree, Vicky comments that it will be directly because of *TextAloud* and the access it gave her to learning by ear. "*TextAloud* brings the printed word to my ears, and engages my mind," she comments. "It is truly that missing link between reading and comprehension that I have wished for."

*TextAloud* is available for immediate trial download at <http://www.TextAloud.com>, with a full copy of the program priced from a budget-friendly \$29.95.

### **About *TextAloud***

A highly useful PC program for students, scientists, writers, business people, students and people from all walks of life, *TextAloud* has been featured in *The New York Times*, *PC Magazine*, *Writer's Digest*, on CNN, and more. Hailed by critics and users alike, *TextAloud* is priced from \$29.95, and is compatible with systems using Windows® 98, NT, 2000, XP and Vista. *TextAloud* can even be listened to on TV, using TiVo's® Home Media Option, and works seamlessly with iTunes, for easy synching with iPod®, iPhone™, or other iTunes-compatible portable audio players. Best of all, unlike prohibitively priced gadgets or eReaders, *TextAloud* doesn't require special hardware of any kind. The program is available for fast, safe and secure purchase via <http://www.NextUp.com>.

NextUp.com also offers *TextAloud* with optional Premium Voices from **Nuance®**, **AT&T Natural Voices™**, **Acapela®** and **Cepstral®** for the most natural-sounding computer speech anywhere. Available languages include U.S. English, U.K. English, Indian-Accent English, Scottish-Accent English, Arabic, Basque, Catalan, Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Belgian Dutch, Faroese, Finnish, French, Canadian French, German, Greek, Hindi, Icelandic,

Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Brazilian Portuguese, European Portuguese, Russian, Castilian (European) Spanish, Latin American Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Swedish, Taiwanese, and Turkish.

### **About NextUp.com**

**NextUp.com**, a division of NextUp Technologies, LLC, provides award-winning Text to Speech software for consumers, professionals, businesses, educators, and those with visual or vocal impairment, or learning disabilities.

In addition to *TextAloud*, NextUp.com markets other innovative Windows software designed to save time and deliver vital information. NextUp *Talker* is an easy and affordable program that enables people who have lost their voices to use the latest in high-quality computer voices to communicate aloud with others.

Evaluation copies of *TextAloud* are available for the media upon request. For more information on NextUp.com or *TextAloud*, or for a rich assortment of case studies involving users ranging from firefighters and lawyers, to writers, editors, teachers, actors, students, entrepreneurs, doctors, truck drivers, musicians, and more, please contact publicist Angela Mitchell at **(904) 982-8043** or via [Admitchell@Nextup.com](mailto:Admitchell@Nextup.com).

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