

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – FEBRUARY 16, 2006

Contact: Rick Ellis
rdellis@nextup.com

Angela Mitchell
admitchell@nextup.com or (904) 982-8043



2668 Lewisville-Clemmons Road
Clemmons, NC 27012

Assistive Technology Speaks for Those Who Cannot See *TextAloud brings books, web pages and articles, to those with visual impairments*

CLEMMONS, NC – Most of us take such actions as computing, word processing, reading e-mail or surfing the web for granted. But for those without sight, or who are battling any kind of visual disability, these tasks can present huge challenges (and expenses) – even with all of the sophisticated technology available today. Luckily, Text to Speech software programs like NextUp.com’s **TextAloud** help to provide an alternative, turning visual text into natural and enjoyable speech. With *TextAloud*, a hard-to-read e-mail or website becomes an enjoyable listening experience.

This is why Text to Speech programs like *TextAloud* are becoming more and more essential to the visually disabled and the way they read for work, learning, or simple enjoyment. *TextAloud* is an award-winning program that converts text into spoken audio for listening on a PC, and that can also save text to audio files for playback on the go. The easy to use program is a snap to set up, and works along with a wide array of surprisingly natural premium voices to bring words to life for those who have trouble reading visually. For visually-impaired users, *TextAloud* truly presents an easy and very affordable alternative to high-end machines and software programs, which are too often prohibitively expensive.

“*TextAloud* was specifically created to bring words on screen to the ear in an enjoyable and affordable way,” noted **Ken White**, CEO of NextUp.com. “Visually impaired users were some of the first to discover *TextAloud*, and we are excited to see our program continuing to be such a benefit to those who cannot see.”

Praise from Visually-Disabled Users of *TextAloud*:

Edward M.: “My wife is permanently blind, and *TextAloud* has enabled her to participate again in the various groups in which she is interested. We collect e-mail files and any research material into optical recognition documents that can be read by *TextAloud* using the "speech to file" feature. We then burn a CD from the information in *.WAV format, and this becomes her library (she is able to mark the Jewel cases in Braille for location purposes). It has made a great deal of difference in her feeling of self-worth.”

Carolyn T.: “I'm a 40-year-old blind woman and scholar. Before getting *TextAloud*, I had to pay people to read texts I needed, either aloud to me or onto tape. The tapes were bulky and easily damaged, and the process was time-consuming and extremely expensive. The sheer number of cassettes (as well as bulky recorder) I would have to carry meant that I could not read on campus or when I traveled. While proud of being accepted into a graduate program, these kinds of hurdles made me begin to dread what it would take for me to attain my Ph.D.

“However, not long after starting graduate work, a friend recommended NextUp.com's *TextAloud*, and it was an effective and inexpensive solution to what is normally a costly endeavor for blind people. Now I'm finally able to read when I'm on campus as well as when I travel (with several books' worth of text easily fitting on my MP3 player at one time). In addition, unlike taped texts, *TextAloud* can change the speed at which the text is read without distorting the voice or words. And unlike many adaptive software packages that blind people are told they should buy, *TextAloud* doesn't cost thousands of dollars -- something any college student can appreciate!

“Although I originally purchased *TextAloud* to read books for school, I also use it to read over my own work, grade my students' papers, and access articles and email on-line. *TextAloud* has become invaluable to me, and it's one of the few tools that I've consistently recommended to my students, faculty, and associates when asked about alternatives to ink-based texts.”

About *TextAloud*

TextAloud is a full-featured Text to Speech tool offering direct support for Word, PDF and HTML formats, as well as advanced pronunciation tools, an Internet Explorer Plug-In for easy listening of favorite web pages – and more. *TextAloud* is priced at just \$29.95, and is compatible with systems using Windows[®] 98, NT, 2000 and XP. 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 **AT&T Natural Voices[™]**, **Nuance^â RealSpeak^â**, **NeoSpeech^â** and **Cepstral[®]** for the most natural-sounding computer speech anywhere.

Available languages include English with U.S., U.K., and Indian and Scottish accents, as well as French, Canadian French, Latin American Spanish, European Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, European Portuguese, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, Korean, Japanese, German, Italian, Dutch, Belgian Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, and Arabic.

About NextUp.com

NextUp.com, a division of NextUp Technologies, LLC, provides award-winning Text to Speech software for consumers, business customers, educators, and those with visual impairment or learning disabilities. In addition to *TextAloud*, NextUp.com markets other innovative Windows software including talking personal “news agent” *NewsAloud*[™], *WeatherAloud*[™] (a weather application that lets users select and listen to personalized weather forecasts), and stock updates and related news headlines read aloud thanks to *StocksAloud*[™]. Most recently, NextUp released *NextUp Talker 1.0*, an easy and affordable program that allows people who have lost their voices to use the latest in high-quality computer voices to communicate with others.

Evaluation copies of *TextAloud* are currently available upon request by members of the press. To receive a review copy, or for more information on NextUp.com or *TextAloud*, please contact **Rick Ellis** at rdellis@nextup.com. Meanwhile, for images, logos, box shots, or other information or artwork on *TextAloud*, please contact publicist Angela Mitchell at **(904) 982-8043** or admitchell@nextup.com.

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Media Contacts:

Rick Ellis
NextUp.com
Rdellis@nextup.com

Angela Mitchell
Paranoid PR
Admitchell@nextup.com or (904) 982-8043