



C.A.T.S.

GIVING MOBILITY & OPPORTUNITY TO CHILDREN



Children's Assistive
Technology Service





It's a Wednesday in February, and 12-year-old Kacie can't go to school today.

It may be weeks, even months, before she can get back to school. She is not sick and there is no snow on the ground, but her power wheelchair has broken down. It doesn't fit her well anymore anyway – it's nearly 4 years old – but now it just doesn't operate properly, and the durable medical equipment vendor says it will take several weeks for repairs to be arranged. And, because her family is months into the appeals process to obtain a new chair, repairs to this chair will not be covered by their health insurance policy nor the Medicaid waiver.



But what is Kacie supposed to do right now? Insurance won't even cover the cost of a manual "backup" chair. How is she supposed to get around, go to school, church, Girl Scouts and her adaptive dance class? Though Kacie has cerebral palsy, she has a busy, active and full life. But she does depend on her power wheelchair for independent mobility.

Fortunately, Kacie didn't have to put her life on hold. CATS was able to provide her, at no cost to her family, both a power wheelchair which fit her and a backup manual chair (for situations when the heavy power chair cannot be transported or when places in the community are not accessible to the independently mobile 12-year-old in her power chair).

This is just one example of the nearly 1,000 children and families CATS serves each year.

The cost of raising a child with a disability is 10x the cost of raising a typically developing child.

A child dependent on a power wheelchair for mobility may have assistive technology costing more than **\$500,000** during his or her childhood – **equipment for independent mobility, sitting, standing, eating, exercise, bathing, communication, vehicle and home accessibility.**

Yet, with the opportunities this equipment provides, this individual could attend school, college, get a job, and be a contributing member of the community.

Founded in the Roanoke Valley in 2014 by a pediatric physical therapist, Children's Assistive Technology Service (CATS) is a pediatric assistive technology reuse program which strives to meet the needs of children in Virginia with physical and developmental disabilities, allowing them to access their environment, participate with others, connect socially, achieve independent mobility, and improve cognitive skills.

MISSION

- To ensure that ALL children with disAbilities can have access to adaptive devices which allow them to participate with others, achieve mobility, connect socially, and improve health.
- To promote the economical and environmentally sound practice of assistive technology (adaptive and mobility equipment) re-use.
- To advocate for policy reform so that assistive technology, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is accessible to all children who need it, regardless of family income.



OUR PROGRAMS

Pediatric Adaptive Equipment Reuse

Children grow and their needs are guaranteed to change. CATS collects outgrown or no longer needed equipment, cleans and refurbishes it, and then makes it publicly available, at no cost, to families and health care providers on the CATS website, **www.atdeviceforkids.org**. CATS partners with children's hospitals and other health care providers throughout Virginia.

Founded by a pediatric physical therapist, CATS operates on a medical model and works to make sure that the equipment provided is appropriate and fitted to the child. Through the CATS website, families, caregivers, therapists and physicians can connect with professionals who volunteer with CATS to make sure selections are well fitted and appropriate. Using two transit vans, CATS is able to redistribute equipment between its four locations in order to make a requested item accessible to families and therapists. The goal is to create a statewide inventory available to any child who receives medical care in Virginia.

GoBabyGo

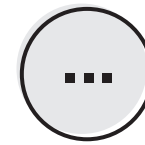
CATS participates in the GoBabyGo initiative of University of Delaware's Dr. Cole Galloway. CATS has teams of volunteers with experience in adapting off-the-shelf ride-on powered toy cars for individual children, to meet GoBabyGo's vision - **all people exploring their world via independent mobility**. Children, ages 2 to 6, can be referred to CATS GoBabyGo program by their physical, occupational or speech therapist. The opportunity to be mobile in a setting enjoyed by typically-developing children provides the chance to move about on their own, explore, and make friends, free of a walker or a wheelchair.





Kids Equipment Paloozas

Kids Equipment Paloozas allow families the opportunity to request equipment from CATS online inventory (referral from child's physical or occupational therapist is recommended) and meet in person with Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) students and local physical therapists to assist with fitting and trials. The University of Lynchburg and Radford University participate in CATS Equipment Paloozas, which received recognition at the American Physical Therapy Association 2019 NEXT Conference in Chicago.



Communication Loan Library

The CATS Communication Loan Library provides Augmentative and Assistive Communication devices. Requested by a child's speech therapist, introductory, low and light tech communication systems can be checked out for a three-month period for the purpose of determining what type of device may best serve the child at home or school, before a purchase is made.



Hallowheels

Through the annual Hallowheels fun(d)raiser, CATS recruits teams from colleges, universities, and other organizations throughout Virginia to create Halloween costumes for children, ages 4-16, who depend on wheelchair mobility. Team members meet the child, plan the design, and build a removable frame to create dream-come-true Halloween costumes. Costumes are revealed in late-October and online voters choose the best costume each year. Hallowheels is a special celebration for our princesses, super heroes, and scary creatures!

"I recently graduated from Franklin County High School in May. I'm currently taking online classes at Virginia Western Community College to get a certificate in IT to become an IT Support Technician. Then I will be working towards my degree in IT Database and Program Developer. Always keep a smile on your face even through the rough times in life!"

Jennifer Bruington
CATS client



GIVE

A donation to CATS is a gift of new opportunities for a child challenged by a disability – the ability to be mobile, to accompany family and friends to places in the community, to get exercise for health, wellbeing, and fun, to be positioned for participation at the family dinner table, or the sand & water table at preschool, or at the computer.

Your gift keeps a child in school, on their feet, sharing their thoughts with family and friends, playing an adaptive sport, going places beyond their front door. Assistive technology can allow kids with disabilities to keep up with their peers, learning right along with them, and give them access to a bright future. Assistive technology provides the means for overcoming a disability and empowering a child to move into productive adulthood.

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer at our workshop in Hardy, Virginia, to build a GoBabyGo car. Repair and refurbish donated equipment at any CATS locations. Join students and faculty and other volunteers from across the state at a CATS Equipment Scrub, cleaning donated equipment for reuse.

Participating colleges and universities include:

- University of Lynchburg
- Radford University Carilion
- Emory & Henry College
- Tidewater Community College
- Virginia Western Community College
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- ECPI University
- South University
- Ferrum College
- Virginia Tech
- Old Dominion University
- And the list is growing!



Jaxson Carson

is a busy three-year-old, happy to be on his feet, yet struggling to learn how to use them. Because his health insurance already provided a standing frame for the toddler two years ago, the gait trainer you see him using in the photo was denied. Though prescribed by his physician, it was provided through

CATS volunteers at no cost to the family. A child somewhere else no longer needed it.



Brandon Lovelace

is suffering from orthopedic problems secondary to neuromuscular disorder. His physician and therapist believed it imperative that he resume use of a standing frame so that progression of leg contractures might be halted.

Though Brandon used a standing frame years ago, his health insurance now denies this piece of equipment which he could use at home. Within a week of receiving a phone call from his physical therapist, John Pero of CORA Physical Therapy, CATS was able to provide it at no cost to the family. We hear that Brandon enjoys using the stander daily and is improving dramatically. He is thrilled to be interacting with people face to face, standing up, instead of always sitting.

PARTNER

CATS collaborates with assistive technology professionals and therapists to responsibly ensure that the equipment fits a child correctly. Some of these generous organizations also financially support CATS.

- Carilion Hospital System
- Children's Hospital at the University of Virginia
- Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters
- CORA Health
- National Seating & Mobility
- NuMotion
- Tycon Medical
- Virginia Assistive Technology System
- Physical, occupational and speech therapists all over the state

If you or your organization is interested in partnering with CATS, please contact Cathie Cummins, Executive Director and Founder at (540) 493-2285.

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BY THE NUMBERS

Since 2014

2,800

pieces of equipment
donated by CATS



2,400+

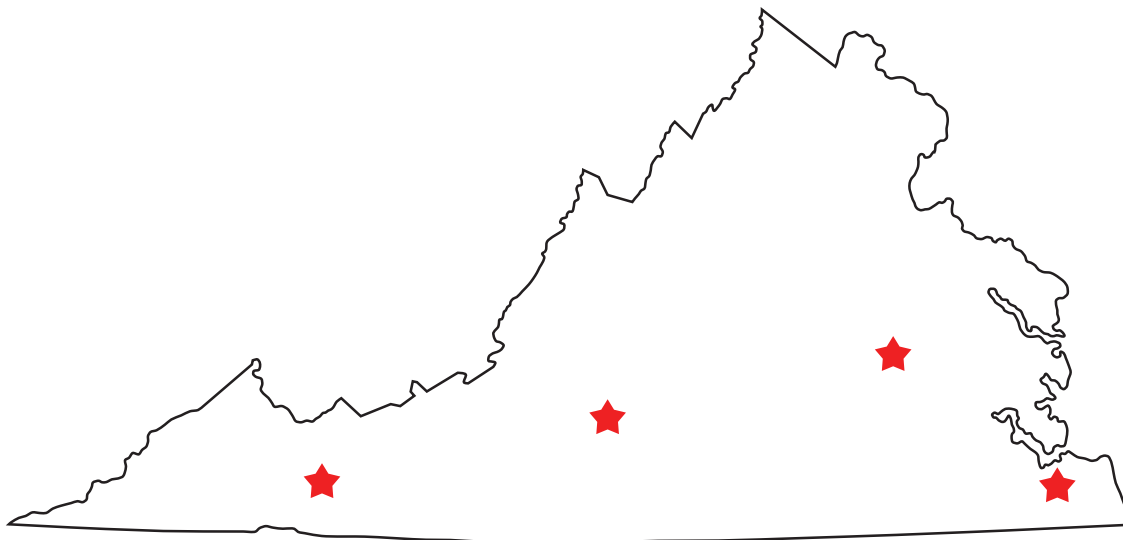
children living with disabilities

saving their families an estimated



\$3.4 million





Locations

Roanoke Valley

(540) 493-2285

Hampton Roads

(757) 763- 8905

Richmond

(540) 420-0554

In partnership with Emory & Henry College Doctorate in Occupational Therapy program, CATS' **fourth location** began operating in **Marion** in 2019. Please contact the Roanoke Valley office for more information.

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PO Box 121

Union Hall, VA 24176

info@atdevisesforkids.org

atdevicesforkids.org