Survivor

After emerging from a landmine injury at 16 years old, Alexey Talai made it his mission to find independence for himself and others. He visited the US in the Fall of 2009 and shared his story with FAAST Access.

My name is Alexey Talai. I am a father, husband and executive director from Orsha, Belarus. My country is between Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Baltic. I am 26. When I was 16 years old, a World War II German landmine blew off my legs and right arm. I was lucky to keep part of my left arm. Maybe I am the last victim of WW II.

My mission, my Dream
It is my purpose to serve the needs of persons with disabilities and child orphans in my country of Belarus. I am near completion on the first shelter of its kind. It is a two-story building adapted for persons with disabilities. When completed, it will provide others the opportunity offer services, feel secure, and earn a living. The shelter will be a source of self-worth rather than pity and alms.

"Cafe Independence"
Since 2007, I have raised 85 percent of the construction costs – nearly $80,000. We're working to raise the additional $20,000 needed for the interior and safety items.

Mobility
What I have found most difficult is to be independent. I have called on Belarus business and government officials for the cafe's funding and they have helped. In every instance I must rely on family and friends to transport me to meetings. Eventually I hope to outfit a vehicle so that I can drive and be less reliant on others. This will make me feel complete which is essential as a good husband and father.

USA Study
I am visiting the US to study nonprofit organizations, associations and chambers of commerce. In Belarus we do not have the same structure of volunteering and charity. I am also here to learn the concepts of barrier free living and universal accessibility. I want
Dear FAAST,

Thank you for your program and thank you for the use of the Silk Chat PC. The use of this device has led to our decision to purchase one for our son, Andrew. He has Down Syndrome and is deaf in his right ear. This device will open many doors for him, as he has grasped its use very quickly!

We will sing the praises of your program who all who will listen! 
Again, many thanks!

Warm Regards-
Karen Peduccia, Sarasota

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to help government officials in my country understand the importance of accessibility.

To learn more about Alexei Talai’s work and Café Independence, contact him at ajo-schatak@mail.ru Alexei (Aliaksei) Talai, Mogilyovskaya Str. 95/2 – 1, 211030 Orsha City, Republic Of Belarus or contact Bob Harris, CAE at bob@rchaes.com

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—Helen Keller

Assistive Technology: Independence at work and at play