

MENUS THAT TALK™ PREVIEWED AT MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE

Portable Talking Menu Demonstrated at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind

Friday, March 23, 2007, Miami, Florida—Taylannas Inc., a Florida technology company, demonstrated Menus That Talk™, a portable hand-held device, to members of the Board of Directors at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired today. Menus That Talk™ uses voice to bring the contents of a restaurant's menu to guests with the press of a button.

The device is a slim electronic tablet about the size and shape of a DVD case. An array of lighted buttons represent major menu categories like DRINKS, APPETIZERS, SEAFOOD... When a button is pressed, the menu describes what's available in these categories. ¿No habla ingles? No problem: just press the language button for Spanish or other languages. When the guest is ready to order, a **Service** button pages the waiter.

The Menu is portable, speaks in two different languages, and features Braille characters to guide the visually-impaired. Guests who can't see the button names or don't use Braille can browse the menu simply by tapping buttons to hear categories. Tap again to hear the details.

In noisy restaurants or for the hearing-impaired, Menus That Talk features a detachable hand-held earphone that can be held close to the ear, and which interfaces with most modern hearing-aids.

Lighthouse President Virginia Jacko tried out Menus That Talk at the organization's headquarters. "We're very enthusiastic about this idea," she said. "It's a great solution to some very real problems." Taylannas later announced plans to conduct focus-group studies under the organization's supervision.

"A menu's job is to communicate without being a challenge to guests," said President and CEO Susan Perry. "Why should anyone be limited to the obvious restrictions of printed menus?"

The idea originated in an Olive Garden restaurant where Ms. Perry was having lunch with her niece Jessica, a pretty 22 year-old with advanced macular degeneration who cannot read a menu from any distance. Jessica asked her aunt to read the menu to her but Susan had forgotten to bring her reading glasses. Although they both laughed about it Ms. Perry thought that restaurant menus ought to be able to talk to guests and not exclude anyone from the dining experience.

She consulted with colleague Richard Herbst, an electronics-savvy designer experienced with hand-held systems. Several design conferences later, the concept became Menus That Talk.

Menus That Talk are customized to individual restaurants' requirements, starting with the names of the buttons, and including descriptions and prices, and finally the languages spoken. Menus are composed in detail online, voices added and the finished product shipped to restaurants for immediate service.

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