

**Tulsa Grandmother Helps Others who are Deaf-Blind Communicate**

***iCanConnect Provides Technology***

“Every time I get to help somebody, it’s like a thumbs up to Momma!” Jeri Cooper says she owes everything to her late mother’s faith. At birth, Cooper didn’t respond well to light and sound. Her vision and hearing never fully developed. Doctors doubted she would live past her 20’s. But, thanks to her mother’s faith and a lot of hard work, Cooper’s proven everyone wrong.

Today, this 55 year old Tulsa grandmother has a master’s degree is helping others who have severe hearing and vision loss receive communications tools like smartphones, computers, or braille displays through the state’s [National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program), promoted as [iCanConnect Oklahoma](http://www.icanconnect.org/oklahoma).

“The biggest impact of the program is being able to communicate. It’s been a huge, huge door opening.”

The goal of the program is to ensure every person with combined hearing and vision loss has access to modern distance communications tools. A wide array of equipment – from braille readers to screen magnifiers to iPads – are available at no cost to people who meet income guidelines.

iCanConnect provides an assessment for all those who apply to the program to determine what communications tools are best for their individual needs. Cooper says you never know what one device will open up a person’s world. Cooper says, the technology provides people with a new sense of independence, confidence and self-esteem. People can call or text their friends and family, make their own doctors appointments, call for a ride or just simply order a pizza online. Cooper says the equipment breaks down the barriers that keep people with low hearing and vision isolated from their world.

And, the program provides one-on-one training so consumers can learn how to use their new technological tools. Not all the trainers are deaf-blind like Cooper but, she says, her life experience can be advantageous for clients because she can relate to their situation, share their frustration and foresee any questions they might have.

You can find Cooper in the office everyday by 7 a.m. But in her free time, she’s at church or at the bowling alley. She and her husband started a blind bowling league that’s nationally sanctioned. Her average: 103.

“Why I have such a compassion for what I do now is because my mom didn’t give up on me,” says Cooper. She shares that spirit with all the people she meets through iCanConnect Oklahoma.

iCanConnect is changing lives across the United States. The program is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. You can learn more at <http://www.iCanConnect.org>: click on “State Partners” to find each state’s contacts. The website accommodates users with low vision, people who use screen readers and features video that is both audio-described and closed captioned. Information about iCanConnect is also available by calling 1-800.825-4595 | TTY: 1-888-320-2656.

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