

**Communications Equipment Helping Kentucky Grandfather Connect**

***“Without Technology, I’d Be Lost”***

If the weather is nice, you’ll find 64-year-old Bobby Begley outdoors. He’s always walking, but his true love is large mouth bass fishing. Begley once caught a bass 25 inches long and he’s proud of it. The Kentucky grandfather of three is pretty active despite the significant hearing and vision loss caused by [Usher Syndrome](http://www.ushersyndrome.nih.gov)—and he credits his new iPad with making life easier.

“Without technology, I’d be lost!” exclaims Begley.

In early 2013, the Hazard man found out about [The National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEP)](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program) and received the Apple tablet. The program, promoted as [iCanConnect](http://www.icanconnect.org), provides communications technology such as laptops, smartphones, and braille devices at no cost to those whose incomes qualify.

The iPad features accessibility tools like speech-to-text, which Begley uses to send and receive email with friends and family. He also uses the tablet to get on the Web which, he says, gives him a greater sense of independence. “If there’s something I want to know about, I get on the internet and look it up. I don’t have to make a phone call to somebody,” Begley says.

A coal miner who spent 15 years working underground, Begley lived with hearing loss his entire life, but lost his eyesight as a result of [retinitis pigmentosa](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) in 1985. That was when he quit work. Not one to stay idle, Begley enrolled at [Morehead State University](http://www.moreheadstate.edu), earning a Bachelor’s, then a Master’s degree in education.

[Eastern Kentucky University Center on Hearing Loss](http://www.cod.eku.edu) administers iCanConnect in Kentucky. Dorothy Brame of the [Kentucky Office for the Blind](http://www.blind.ky.gov) provided one-on-one training for Begley and says he has big plans for his new device. “Bobby’s ultimate purpose for the iPad is to show others in rural Kentucky that by using technology, a deaf-blind person can connect with the world.”

iCanConnect is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at [www.iCanConnect.org](http://www.iCanConnect.org/). Click on “State Partners” to find each state’s contacts. The website is accessible to users with low vision and those who use screen readers, and it features video that is both audio described and captioned.  Information about iCanConnect is also available by calling 1-800-825-4595 Voice or 1-888-320-2656 TTY.