

**New Technology Opens the Door for California Man with Vision & Hearing Loss**

***“****It’s Been a Blessing and a Half!”*

Three and half years ago, life changed dramatically for Jim Cox of San Jacinto, California. Back then, he lived a whirlwind lifestyle—working more than 60 hours a week and traveling regularly for his job as manager at a food brokerage. It was a life Cox enjoyed, but, all at once, severe glaucoma stole his eyesight. That, combined with hearing loss he’s had since childhood, forced him into early retirement. The twist of fate began a chain of heartbreaking events Cox never thought he’d have to endure, including the loss of his home.

“I was really struggling to figure out how to take care of my family,” recalls the 68-year-old Cox. “I could hardly understand what was going on. It was more than I could swallow.”

But even as circumstances were looking bleak, Cox learned about [The National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program), which is promoted as [iCanConnect](http://www.icanconnect.org) and provides modern communications technology to people who have severe hearing and vision loss. Cox received an iPad and MacBook Pro laptop and was also given one-on-one training to get him up and running immediately. Cox learned to use the devices to send and receive emails, look up information on the Internet and re-open lines of communication with his children. He even met a relative on Facebook he never knew he had.

“That was real important to me to have that connection going,” he says. “This has really opened doors for me!”

Not long after he got his Mac, Cox’s son bought the same model. Now, they are learning the technology together. “It’s a connection that he and I now have, like a lot of sons and dads that go fishing together.”

Established in 2012, iCanConnect offers a wide range of technology, devices such as smartphones and laptops, as well as specialized adaptive software, phone amplifiers and braille displays, at no cost to people who meet income guidelines.

With his new tools, Cox now volunteers at the [Braille Institute](http://www.brailleinstitute.org) in Rancho Mirage, teaching others how to navigate computers. He hopes his new equipment and his new skills land him a new career: customer service or motivational speaking.

“I have a whole new opportunity,” chuckles Cox. “I feel inspired to do and try things I would never have tried.”

[Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired](http://lighthouse-sf.org/) in San Francisco administers iCanConnect for the entire state of California. [Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)](http://www.hknc.org) collaborates with the agency to provide assessments and training to consumers in Southern California. Cathy Kirscher, a regional representative for HKNC calls Cox one of the most grateful and enthusiastic recipients of the program and what he calls his “dream machine” [MacBook Pro].

“Jim has persevered and has used the technology to the fullest,” Kirscher says. “The ultimate hope is that this new technology can help him in his job quest to secure his future.”

Cox is nearly speechless when he talks about the positive impact iCanConnect has had on him. “It just gave me some value in my life back. It really boosted me up to a whole new height. It’s been a blessing and a half. Thank you!”

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.

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