

**90 year-old Connecticut author uses new technology to defy her challenges and remain connected**

Agnes Allen of Stamford, Connecticut is 90-years-old. This mother of three and grandmother to nine has experienced a lot in her life—never letting the fact that she’s blind with hearing loss get in her way. But, Allen knew she needed a better way to communicate when the old-fashioned telephone and snail mail weren’t getting it done any longer.

“Everyone now uses computers. They email each other. My mother felt left out of that part of the world,” says Allen’s daughter, Barbara Logsdail. “My mom wanted to learn about this advancement in technology and how important it’s become in everyone’s lives.”

Last year, Allen got that chance, when she got connected to the [National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program), which provides consumers with combined hearing and vision loss high-tech communications tools – such as smartphones, laptops and braille readers – at no cost if they meet income qualifications. Allen received a BrailleNote Apex, with which she can read and write email and access other computer functions.

“It’s opened up a whole new world,” declares Allen. “I’ve been able to get in touch with people on a more regular basis.” Allen also received one-on-one training to ensure she knew exactly how to make the most of her new communications tool.

It’s estimated there are a million people in the United States who could qualify for the program, which is promoted nationally as [iCanConnect](http://www.icanconnect.org/), but is known in Connecticut as [Access Through Technology](http://www.cttechact.com/att/).

When Allen was only 5-years-old, she lost her sight in a playground accident, but still went on to earn a Master in Arts and Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh. She has taught, tutored, volunteered and is a certified braille proofreader. Then, when she was in her 50’s, she started losing her hearing. In 2007 she published a book titled, “Life Without Sight – My Journey into the World of the Sighted and the Blind.” She says she wrote it first as a legacy to her children, but later sold copies as a way to inspire others.

“She thought it could show a lot of families with children who are blind or visually or hearing impaired that it doesn’t mean they aren’t capable of achieving things in their life,” Logsdail explains.

According to the [Connecticut Tech Act Project](http://www.cttechact.com/index.php), which administers Access Through Technology, Allen was the state’s first recipient. “The Connecticut Tech Act Project is excited about the opportunity to serve the community of individuals who are deaf and blind and meet their telecommunications needs,”

Allen has come a long way using her device – reading, writing and sending messages. Her daughter calls it just another challenge to tackle because her mother knows the major benefits down the road.

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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