**DeafBlind Awareness Week Sheds Light on iCanConnect’s**

**Mission to Increase Independence**

*National program promotes access for people with significant hearing and vision loss*

**Watertown, Mass., June 29, 2021 -** [iCanConnect](http://www.icanconnect.org) is on a mission to increase independence for individuals with significant hearing and vision loss. Through iCanConnect, qualified individuals receive the distance communication equipment and training they need to do things like send and receive emails, text messages, make phone calls, participate in social media, and manage life activities and services that are increasingly conducted online.

Also known as the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, iCanConnect has been helping individuals with combined hearing and vision loss stay connected with their friends, family, community, and the world since it was established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2012. Program participants agree the free equipment and training they’ve received through iCanConnect has been life-changing.

[Ernest Gallman](http://www.icanconnect.org/news/icanconnect-helps-south-carolina-man-stay-touch-family-and-remain-independent-during-covid-19) was able to meet his grandson when he was born early in the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to the equipment and training he received through iCanConnect. The 69-year-old Columbia, South Carolina man began losing his eyesight at age ten and experienced progressive hearing loss over the years leaving him feeling isolated. After applying and being accepted into the program, Ernest’s distance communication needs were assessed by his local iCanConnect representative and he received a smartphone, wireless headset, and desktop computer. Using this equipment, he was able to meet his grandson virtually via a video chat with his daughter soon after he was born.

“The equipment and training I received through iCanConnect really changed my life,” said Ernest. “It made me more independent, and I hope anyone struggling with independence and isolation won’t be afraid to reach out and get more information about the program. With everything that’s going on, I can stay independent and stay connected with my family.”

Since its inception, iCanConnect has been helping participants across the United States and its territories increase independence and keep in touch with family, friends and their communities. From reconnecting with old school friends after decades apart, to playing music and games with family over video chat, to continuing therapy appointments virtually during the pandemic, iCanConnect helps meet each participant’s goals to stay connected.

For more information about iCanConnect, or to see if you or someone you know qualifies for the program, visit [www.iCanConnect.org](http://www.icanconnect.org). Find your local contact to apply.

**About iCanConnect**

iCanConnect is a national program with local contacts in all 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2012, iCanConnect provides qualified individuals who have both significant vision and hearing loss with free distance communication equipment and training to help increase access to modern communications. To learn more about iCanConnect, visit [www.iCanConnect.org](http://www.icanconnect.org).

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