**iCanConnect profile for Chris Upton**

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**FINAL**

**iCanConnect Helps Mississippi Man Stay in Touch with Family and Friends**

Chris Upton opens his laptop and starts a new email to his grandson, Logan. He types his grocery list and hits send. Logan, an 18-year-old senior in high school, will pick-up the items after school and bring them home to his grandfather. “Not too long ago, sending that email would’ve been impossible for me to do,” the 64-year-old Picayune, Mississippi man says. “When I lost my vision five years ago, I never thought I would get online again. I considered it a forever memory. Now, I can type-up my grocery list and send it to Logan in a matter of minutes.”

Back when Chris was working in oil fields and later on running a successful trucking and construction business, he never imagined his life would include dealing with hearing and vision loss. After being diagnosed with a genetic eye condition in his late 50s, Chris’ life changed drastically. “I was experiencing hearing loss due to years working next to heavy machinery, but when I was diagnosed with the eye condition and lost most of my vision, everything changed. Things I was accustomed to doing, I could no longer do.”

To help him adjust to living with combined hearing and vision loss, his rehab counselor suggested Chris apply to iCanConnect, the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. “I’ll admit it. I was skeptical at first,” says Chris. “But after my application was accepted, an iCanConnect representative came out to my house to evaluate my distance communication needs and then trained me to use the equipment once I received it.”

Now, Chris uses the equipment he received through iCanConnect, including a MacBook Pro and an iPhone, to stay in touch with his family and friends. “I send text messages and emails to my family and friends all the time, and I use Facebook to reconnect with friends I grew up with. There are so many things I can do now that I couldn’t do before.”

One thing that is especially meaningful to Chris is the nightly FaceTime call with his 15-year-old grandson, Tyler. “He really looks forward to it,” Chris says. “And after he goes to bed, I send an audio message so it's there for him when he wakes up in the morning. Having the ability to connect with both of my grandsons is invaluable.”

Chris acknowledges that most people his age and older are cautiously optimistic when it comes to learning new technology. “It can be intimidating,” he says. “People think they are too old for services that can help them communicate better. It leads to an isolated life. I felt the same way until I dove headfirst into iCanConnect. I’ve learned so much from my trainer, Toni Hollingsworth.”

“If I can do it, other people can do it too,” Chris continues. “I absolutely recommend reaching out to iCanConnect to anyone who has hearing and vision loss. It’s been a real blessing in my life.”

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