

**Mastering the iPhone without Vision or Hearing: *Louisiana Woman Helps Fellow Deaf-Blind Residents Tap into 21st Century Technology***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 17, 2013

Lafayette, LA – Jackie Broussard is both deaf and blind, but thanks to her new iPhone she is constantly connected to the world.

“I can check the weather and dress appropriately,” explains Broussard. “I am able to keep in contact with the news and know what’s going on in the world. In the past I was totally unaware of what’s going in the world and felt very isolated.”

She also needed to rely on friends to send a text on her behalf. Now she regularly trades texts message with friends, coworkers and, best of all, her grown son who lives hundreds of miles away in Florida.

“It’s real exciting communicating with my son,” says Broussard. “When I learned how to send my son a message, it was really thrilling.”

Broussard accesses her iPhone’s many features with a portable braille reader. The device - a Brailliant B1 32 - costs thousands of dollars, well beyond Broussard’s budget. Fortunately, she qualified for the [National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/nationa-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program) (NDBEDP). Also known as [iCanConnec](http://www.icanconnect.org)t, the program provides a wide range of communications technology – including iPhones, phone amplifiers and computers equipped with screen reading software - at no cost to qualified people with combined vision and hearing loss.

iCanConnect also provides intensive, one-on-one training so clients are comfortable using the communications equipment. Broussard received training through her state’s iCanConnect partner agency, [Affiliated Blind of Louisiana](file:///M%3A%5CPerkins%5CPress%20Releases%5CJuly-Aug%202013%5Caffiliatedblind.org).

“I really enjoyed the learning and training process,” says Broussard. “A lot of my friends didn’t know there’s a way to access the iPhone with a braille system. I was able to show them my iPhone and play around. They were shocked at what is out there. “

Broussard has become such an accomplished advocate for the technology that allows deaf-blind people to more effectively communicate that she was invited to become a trainer for the iCanConnect program. She now helps other people with vision and hearing loss tap into the power of communications technology.

“One client is 79,” says Broussard, “and very motivated to learn.”

The iCanConnect program may also one day help Broussard’s 25- year-old son in Florida. He and his mother share a genetic condition called Usher Syndrome. Both were born deaf. Usher Syndrome also slowly takes away vision. Jackie Broussard began losing her sight in her 40’s.

“This program will also help my son in his future when his vision starts to decline,” explains Broussard, “he’ll be making preparations to be part of the program.”

iCanConnect offers opportunity for future generations and, says Broussard, a life-changing experience for people currently living with both vision and hearing loss.

“I notice it makes a big difference in our lives,” says Broussard. “Deaf-blind people can be so lonely and isolated from the world. They end up staying at home and getting depressed. This technology gets people excited to be in touch with other people and in touch with the world.”

Learn more and download and application for Louisiana’s iCanConnect program at [www.icanconnect/louisiana](http://www.icanconnect/louisiana) or by calling 1-800-825-4595 (phone), 1-888-320-2656 (TTY).

Media Contact:

Matt Ellis

Ellis Strategies, Inc.

617-278-6560

matt@ellisstrategies.com

###