

For Immediate Release

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**New Federal Program Set to Distribute
Communications Technology to People
With Vision and Hearing Loss**

*Perkins School for the Blind, Helen Keller National Center, and FableVision
Will Lead the **iCanConnect** Campaign*

Watertown, MA – Many thousands of Americans who have combined loss of hearing and vision may soon connect with family, friends, and community thanks to the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. Mandated by the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established this new program to provide support for the local distribution of a wide array of accessible communications technology.

The FCC is also funding a national outreach campaign to educate the public about this new program. The iCanConnect campaign will be conducted jointly by Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, MA, the Helen Keller National Center in New York City, NY, and FableVision of Boston, MA. iCanConnect will seek to ensure that everyone knows about the free communications technology and training that is now available to low-income individuals with combined hearing and vision loss. From screen enlargement software and video phones, to off-the shelf products that are accessible or adaptable, this technology can vastly improve their quality of life.

iCanConnect seeks to educate people about the availability of communications technology for this underserved population so they can remain safe and healthy, hold a job, manage a household, and contribute to the economy and the community.

As of August 7, 2012, information about the new equipment distribution program will be available online at www.iCanConnect.org or by phone at **1-800-825-4595**. Additional information is available through the FCC at www.fcc.gov/NDBEDP.

“With the right technology, people with disabilities can link to information and ideas, be productive, and move ahead,” said Steven Rothstein, President of Perkins. “Perkins’ most famous student, Helen Keller, exemplified the potential of a person who is deaf-blind. We are proud to have a role in this transformational program.”

The CVAA, championed in Washington, DC, by Congressman Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts and Senator Mark Pryor of Arkansas, acknowledges that advances in technology can revolutionize lives. Nearly one million people in the United States have some combination of vision and hearing loss. Persons with combined loss of vision and hearing as defined by the Helen Keller National Center Act whose income does not exceed 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible to participate in the new program.

"The mission of the Helen Keller National Center is to enable each person who is deaf-blind to live and work in his or her community of choice," explains Executive Director Joe McNulty, adding, "This critical technology access program accelerates those efforts, but only if people know about the resources. iCanConnect is poised to get the word out, coast to coast."

"FableVision's mission is to help ALL learners reach their full potential," said Paul Reynolds, CEO of FableVision Studios. "With this program we advance that mission - helping spread the word about equal access to tools that offer those with hearing and vision loss the transformational power of technology." Reynolds adds, "Now everyone is invited to the technology promise powering the human network."

About the Partners

Perkins School for the Blind, the first school in the U.S. for students with visual impairments, provides education and services to help build productive, meaningful lives for more than 200,000 children and adults in the U.S. and more than 60 countries worldwide. Founded in 1829, Perkins pursues this mission around the world, in the community and on its Watertown, Massachusetts, campus. Learn more online at www.Perkins.org

Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults, authorized by an Act of Congress in 1967, is committed to enabling each person who is deaf-blind to live and work in his or her community of choice. Headquartered in Sands Point, New York, the Center provides support services for youth and adults who are deaf-blind, their families and the professionals who serve them through a network of field offices throughout the United States. Learn more at <http://www.hknc.org/>.

FableVision Studios is an award winning multimedia design and development studio located in Boston's Innovation District. In 1996, founder, Peter H. Reynolds, had a vision: to create a "social change agency" to help move the world to a better place. FableVision is dedicated to helping ALL learners reach their full potential and to telling "stories that matter, stories that move." Learn more at www.fablevision.com.

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