iCanConnect profile for Ernest Gallman

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**iCanConnect Helps South Carolina Man Stay in Touch with Family and Remain Independent During COVID-19 Pandemic**

Like most granddads, Ernest Gallman couldn’t wait to meet his youngest grandson, Carson, when he was born last month. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines, Ernest was not able to meet him in person. “Of course I was sad I couldn’t meet my grandson in person,” said Ernest, “but with everything that’s going on in the world, it was safest to meet him virtually. I did a video call with my daughter while she was feeding him and I could listen to him coo, cry, and burp using my Bluetooth headset. It was nice!”

The 69-year-old Columbia, South Carolina man began losing his eyesight at age 10 and has experienced progressive hearing loss over the years. Now, not only does he use the equipment he received through iCanConnect, also known as The National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, to keep in touch with his family, it’s also a lifeline to the essential goods and services he needs to remain independent during these challenging times. “My laptop is invaluable,” said Ernest. “I use it to order groceries online and have them delivered to my house. And if I can’t get a delivery, I email the list to my daughter and she shops for me and leaves the necessities on my porch.”

In fact, Ernest recently used the equipment he received through iCanConnect to help solve an issue with the thermostat in his home. “I got a new, digital thermostat and had a hard time adjusting the temperature.” said Ernest. “Instead of waiting for someone to come help me - especially right now - I video chatted with my granddaughter and she was able to walk me through using it and helped me adjust the temperature. It was easy!”

Before Ernest became an iCanConnect participant, he used an older flip phone and laptop to stay in touch with his family and friends. “I was pretty good with the flip phone,” he said, “but when I received my new smartphone, Bluetooth headset, and computer through iCanConnect, it was so much easier and faster to get in touch with my family. The equipment and training I received through iCanConnect really changed my life,” Ernest continued. “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 in the world right now, I can stay independent and stay connected with my family. I still can’t wait to meet my grandson in person! Hopefully it’ll happen someday soon,” he finished.

To learn more about iCanConnect, visit [www.iCanConnect.org](http://www.icanconnect.org).