

**iCanConnect Keeps Deaf-Blind Wisconsin Man Connected**

For Billy Hamilton of Appleton, Wisconsin, communicating with family and friends has never been easy. Hamilton was born with [Usher Syndrome](http://www.ushersyndrome.nih.gov/index.html), an inherited condition that has left him with extremely limited hearing and sight. Now 28, he’s old enough to remember the challenges of expressing himself using handwritten notes. “Every time I’d run out of [notebook] paper, I’d have to buy a new one [notebook],” he recalls.

Recently, Hamilton traded in those dog-eared notebooks for a shiny and powerful Macintosh laptop, thanks to the [National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program), which is promoted as [iCanConnect](http://www.icanconnect.org). The program provides a wide range of communications devices – computers, smartphones, braille displays and, even, phone amplifiers – at no cost to low-income people with combined hearing and vision loss.

Now, Hamilton uses the Mac to find information on the Internet and connect to family and friends with email. “It’s easier to do lengthy emails on the laptop,” he says.

Hamilton maintains an active lifestyle; he enjoys sports, skateboarding and biking. He’s an enthusiastic young man, who has also developed strong technology skills, as a result of his love for video games. Those skills have caught the attention of the [Center for Deaf-Blind Persons](http://www.deaf-blind.org/) in Milwaukee, which administers iCanConnect in Wisconsin, in collaboration with the [Public Service Commission of Wisconsin](http://psc.wi.gov).

“The Center plans to utilize him as a tutor/trainer on behalf of the iCanConnect program,” according to Executive Director Joan Schneider.

Hamilton calls iCanConnect an “important program,” noting that the equipment has made a huge difference in his life.

iCanConnect is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.  Learn more at [www.iCanConnect.org](http://www.iCanConnect.org/).Click on “State Partners” to find each state’s contacts. The website is accessible to users with low vision and those who use screen readers, and it features video that is both audio described and captioned.  Information about iCanConnect is also available by calling 1-800-825-4595 Voice or 1-888-320-2656 TTY.

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