

**For Immediate Release** Matt Ellis

August 5, 2013 Ellis Strategies

617-278-6560

matt@ellisstrategies.com

**White House Recognizes iCanConnect as a Champion of Change on the 23rd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act**

Watertown, MA – An innovative program that offers free communications technology to people with significant vision and hearing loss was among the programs highlighted during a White House [Champions of Change](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/07/26/celebrating-23-years-americans-disabilities-act) event with President Barack Obama celebrating the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The [National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program](http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program) (NDBEDP), also known as [iCanConnect](http://www.icanconnect.org), provides technology that enables individuals with significant vision and hearing loss to communicate by phone and internet. The [Federal Communications Commission](http://www.fcc.gov/) launched iCanConnect in 2012 andsince then hundreds of individuals are now leading more independent lives and staying connected with friends, family and community.

“It is an honor to have iCanConnect recognized by the White House as we mark the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ” explains National Program Director Steven Rothstein, who is also President of [Perkins](http://www.perkins.org/) in Watertown, MA. “Technology levels the playing field, offering all people, regardless of their ability to see or hear, the ability to access information and ideas, and to communicate with friends and family.”

Among the iCanConnect success stories:

* An Ohio grandmother, who is deaf and has limited vision, wanted to communicate with out-of-state family. Her new iPad, which has an enhanced retina display, enables her to trade instant messages and emails with her grandchildren.

***“I think the grandkids want me to do Facebook, so that’s next.” – Shirley Rybarski, grandmother from Columbus, Ohio***

* A Louisiana braille instructor who can’t see or hear, now uses her iPhone to check the weather, check the news and, best of all, check in with her son who lives hundreds of miles away in Florida.

***“It’s real exciting communicating with my son. When I learned how to send my son a message, it was really thrilling.” – Jackie Broussard, braille instructor from Lafayette, Louisiana***

* A New York college student, who has limited hearing and no vision, can now communicate with his professors and fellow classmates outside of class thanks to a new braille reader and a computer with screen-reading software.

***“It was great to be able to discuss my needs and have help selecting the equipment that would be best for me. In addition, they gave me training which is very important.” – Mike Conlon, college student from Riverhead, New York***

iCanConnect offers a wide array of communications equipment, along with individualized assessment and training at no charge to qualified consumers who meet income guidelines. The program is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Learn more and download an application at [www.iCanConnect.org](http://www.iCanConnect.org). The website accommodates users with low vision, people who use screen readers and features video that is both audio-described and closed captioned. Information about iCanConnect is also available by calling 1-800-825-4595 | TTY 1-888-320-2656.

###