

January 12, 2005

My name is Jim Hopkins. I'm President of the Capital City Chapter of the Montana Association for the Blind, and former Manager of Blind Volunteer Services at the VA Regional Medical Facility at Fort Harrison. I am legally blind.

I would like to point out an area that we frequently encounter difficulty.

This would be in the area involving operation of computers by people with visual impairment. Quite often, one of these clients will be trained with a particular program for the blind, such as JAWS or ZOOMTEXT and they encounter problems at a later date. Most cities in Montana do not have specially trained technicians for these programs so that person is forced to tough it out alone or retire their computer.

I would like to again recommend that the Blind and Low Vision Services train one, or two, computer technicians in this field and use them to train others at local colleges and schools. This way some classes could be held for several persons at one time, thus reducing the cost of training. At the present time the cost to train one person is about \$700, plus the cost of software. This cost does not include any follow up; these costs are out of reach for most people desiring such help. In addition, the technicians could be used as a base of resources for computer operators at the local level.

In my case, I have had trouble with the JAWS Program, and have had to pay \$80 per hour to get help.

This is help that does not have any idea of how such programs are operated. There are more and more seniors getting computers so the problem only gets worse. If we get these people to use a computer properly they can continue with independent living and possibly stay out of the rest homes.

I believe that this change would be most cost effective.



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