In-Person Training Miles Apart

Glaucoma, the “silent killer of sight,” is stealing Loretta’s vision. But not her determination.

Even in the middle of a pandemic, she is eager to learn to use a computer to remain independent.

She reached out to Cody, to discuss computer training during this time of isolation and social distancing.

Though our staff is used to working in close contact with our clients, either in our office or in their homes, they have developed ways to provide quality training remotely.

One of the ways we do this for computer training is to use a tool called TeamViewer. This service allows our staff to have remote access to a client’s computer. The screen looks the same to the client, but our staff’s computer replicates what is on the client’s screen.

However — and there is almost always a “however” when using assistive technology — TeamViewer shows the client’s screen without the magnification from ZoomText.

So, in order to see exactly what Loretta is seeing, Cody uses a combination of TeamViewer and FaceTime. Loretta sets up her phone with the camera pointed at her computer screen throughout the lesson.

Now, using a combination of these two tools Cody can see the computer screen the

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Walking out their door. Jotting down a phone number. Sending an email.

In-Person Training

same way Loretta does.

So when Loretta is using ZoomText to enlarge her screen to work in Excel. That is what Cody sees. When Loretta types in data in the wrong column, Cody sees that right away.

Cody and Loretta have been working together for three months. They meet for weekly lessons lasting one to two hours, depending on their goals for that day.

“Cody is a very good instructor,” Loretta shared. “At first, I did not know how he would do this remotely. But, the training is going very well.”

So far, Loretta has learned to use ZoomText, the Libra word processor and Excel for spreadsheets.

She uses Libra to communicate with the other members on her condo board.

Loretta has found Excel to be a great tool for keep lists, like her contact lists.

Loretta also learned to access and use My Chart, the system her doctor uses to track appointments, test results and other important health information.

This allows her to keep track of her health independently, without sharing her personal information with others.

Next up is learning to use email to stay in touch with family and friends.

“I am eager to learn more,” Loretta said.
Marv Finds a Way — For Himself and His Clients


Marv has been the lead technology tutor at Second Sense since we started the program over ten years ago.

So, he wasn’t going to let the pandemic keep him from helping our clients learn how technology can increase their independence.

When our office closed for in-person training, Marv offered to continue working from home. And, his clients were eager to continue training.

Adam is one of his regular clients. Adam explained why this remote training was important for him. “For me, blindness is isolating under normal circumstances and the pandemic has augmented my sense of isolation. Being able to order groceries, keep updated on current news or listen to a book gives me a sense of being connected to the world.

“Marv is patient, focused and detailed. He helped me improve my skills on three different screen readers and VoiceOver on my iPhone.

“He has assisted me with issues from starting a podcast on my iPhone to writing a Linux Shell Script with a screen reader.”

Marv feels his training with Adam has even been more productive via phone. “Adam has a long commute to the office. So we would meet at most once a month. Now, we are meeting weekly and making more progress.”

Marv can connect via JAWS to Adams computer and hear every keystroke he makes.

“The pandemic has made us try things we hadn’t thought to try,” Marv explained. “Things I plan to continue even when we get back to the office.”

Marv spends a lot of time teaching the Victor Reader Stream. It is a great media player and digital recorder designed for people with vision loss.

“I love the logic of this device,” Marv shared. “So, I love teaching it.”

Brooke is one of Marv’s new clients. “Working with Marv has truly been life changing for me. I have not had any real training in the 40 years I’ve been visually impaired and to have it during shelter-in-place was even better because it kept me occupied. Marv is quite good at working over the phone and giving me tasks to work on after we were done with our hour. I now am better with my iPhone and iPad. I am beginning to use a Victor Reader Stream for the first time which will be so useful as my vision declines.”

These are just two of the 30 clients Marv has worked with this year!
Ben and Angelica recently welcomed their first child, a baby boy.

Anyone who has a child knows how demanding caring for a newborn can be. And, Ben said, “Angelica was doing 99% of the work. I really needed to step up my game.”

But, his vision loss made him reluctant to take on new tasks, especially when they involved his son.

So after a quick Google search, Ben had three organizations to call. The first two said they couldn’t help him. Then, he reached Second Sense.

Because you believe in the importance of focusing on the needs of our clients, we were able to provide exactly the training Ben wanted.

The first task Ben wanted to take on was changing his son’s diaper. He felt this was something he could do by himself. Giving Angelica a break and allowing him to spend more alone time with his son.

“I was looking for a way to help out and to play a bigger role in my son’s life.”

Siobhan and Cody teamed up to teach Ben how to change a diaper with vision loss. But, they had to provide the lesson remotely, due to the pandemic.

Technology came to the rescue. Siobhan dropped off a “training kit” that included Cody’s old iPhone on a flexible standing base. Siobhan connected to that phone with hers, using FaceTime — an app for video calls.

Ben set up the phone so Siobhan could see the changing table and he could hear Siobhan’s instructions.

Ben first worked on setting up the changing space so everything he needed was in a specific spot and within reach.

Then came the real work. He learned how to clean the baby, check for diaper rash and put on a clean diaper by using his other senses. After practicing with a baby doll — and with some gentle prompting — the client was able to successfully change his son’s diaper.

Future lessons will focus on bottle-feeding and other child-care skills.