



APPLE INC.

“Technology is most powerful when it empowers everyone.” These are the very first words you’ll read when visiting the accessibility page on Apple’s website

“TAKING A FAMILY PORTRAIT. Catching up over FaceTime. Raising the blinds to let in the morning light. We want everyone to enjoy the everyday moments that technology helps make possible, so we work to make every Apple product accessible from the very start. Because the true value of a device isn’t measured by how powerful it is, but by how much it empowers you.”

The inclusivity behind the company’s communications is indicative of Apple’s positive attitude towards people of all abilities. Accessibility isn’t an afterthought following a product’s initial innovation. Instead, it is part of its foundation from the beginning.

In recognition of its inclusion and innovation in accessibility, Apple is the winner of the 2019 Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) Award. This award honours individuals, corporations and institutions that have made outstanding achievements and contributions to the deafblind community. It will be presented at the 15th annual CHKC Award Luncheon, which is being hosted on May 1, 2019 in conjunction with the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP).

“Apple is a true pioneer in accessibility,” says Honourable Vim Kochhar, founder of CHKC and CFPDP, and winner of the CHKC Award in 2010. “The company has gone to great lengths to make its iPhone, iPad and other products accessible and barrier-free so that anyone can use them to communicate, access information and connect with the world around them. They offer a variety of features that can be

easily activated to meet the usability requirements of each individual user. We are proud to honour Apple for its groundbreaking efforts and to recognize the company with this well-deserved award.”

“The majority of our consumers use Apple products because of the built-in accessibility features,” says Jennifer Robbins, Executive Director of CHKC. “They use iPhones and iPads to communicate with friends, reach out to their families, reduce isolation and access information. The fact that they can communicate directly with others just using technology has been a huge advantage when it comes to independence.”

Apple’s commitment to accessibility spans every product line from iPhone to iPad, Mac to Apple Watch, and AppleTV to HomePod. The accessibility features engineered into each include VoiceOver, Apple’s revolutionary screen reader which describes what’s happening on each device, allowing users to navigate by listening, or by using one of over 90 supported models of braille displays. Available in over 35 languages, including French Canadian, VoiceOver is built into the foundation of each operating system so that blind and deafblind users have access to all the fun and functionality that each device provides.

“Apple devices let you write a text or email without seeing the screen. You can take a perfect group selfie just by hearing how many faces are in the frame. Using these features may feel like magic, but it’s very much by design,” Apple explains in its accessibility communications.

For people who require display accommodations, Apple offers the ability to change font sizes, adjust the background colour, create changes in contrast and magnify anything on the screen.

And for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, Apple provides a range of built-in features to support their needs. For example, Apple has worked with many of the top hearing aid manufacturers on Made For iPhone hearing aids which provide a direct Bluetooth connection between hearing aids and iPhones and iPads. This provides outstanding sound quality for phone calls, music and more, as well as easy set up and pairing. Users can “cut through the noise with Live Listen,” which makes it possible to use the built-in microphone on your iPhone or iPad as a directional mic with hearing aids and AirPods.

Additionally, closed captioning support helps Apple users enjoy various entertainment options, including movies, TV or streaming programming. The LED light on an iPhone can also be activated to flash so users will never miss a call, text message, email or app notification.

This is just some of the functionality that members of CHKC’s iOS club may discuss during their monthly meetings. The peer-to-peer learning group was founded more than four years ago and remains extremely popular to this day.

“Once a month, consumers come together to talk about Apple products, their accessibility features and the new apps they have discovered and use in their daily lives,” says Mélanie Gauthier, Provincial Programs Manager for CHKC.

“It’s a discussion-based group and there is also training, where they will test an app together. They’ll go through its challenges and what they’ve learned, which is helpful for advanced and new users alike.”

CHKC also offers one-on-one training in a variety of areas, including iOS technology. These courses focus on devices made by Apple – such as iPads, iPhones, iPods and Mac computers – and how they can be adapted for those with vision and hearing loss.

“If somebody gets a new Apple product and they want training, their first step is to contact me,” explains Gauthier. “I facilitate an introduction to the instructor who best meets their individual training needs. The choice of an instructor is also based on whether or not the consumer has any residual vision. Once a consumer is paired with the appropriate instructor, there’s an initial class where goals are set, including timelines to learn what they want to learn on the new device. There is no waiting time – it’s just about coordinating the instructor and student, then getting them together. This is individual learning versus peer learning.”

“Apple technology makes an incredible difference for people who are deafblind, helping them to lead fuller, more independent lives,” adds Kochhar. “We look forward to future innovations from Apple so that people with disabilities can continue to reach for their dreams, participate in their communities and emphasize their unique and individual abilities.”

“Apple is honoured to receive this award from the Canadian

Helen Keller Centre and the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons”, says Sarah Herrlinger, Apple’s Director of Global Accessibility Policy & Initiatives. “We appreciate all the work that these organizations do to support people with disabilities in Canada and celebrate their long history of promoting inclusion.”

Other companies and organizations previously honoured with the CHKC Award include IBM Canada, ICICI Bank, Microsoft Canada and CNIB. The Royal Ontario Museum, George Brown College and Ryerson University are also past honourees. Individuals previously honoured include Dr. Helena Jaczek, who was formerly Ontario’s Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Minister of Community and Social Services, Joan Mactavish, a pioneer of intervenor services, Jim Sanders, former President of CNIB, the late Bob Rumball, founder of the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf, and Ontario’s former Lieutenant-Governor David Onley.

