

April 13, 2018

TO: Board of Selectmen

FR: Susan Ramsey, COA Director

RE: VIBRANT Center at the CSC

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The Massachusetts Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired (MAB) are partnering with the Natick Council on Aging to bring a VIBRANT Center to Natick. Of note is Natick resident Elaine Ellenbogen is funding the start up of this new assistive technology center for individuals who are blind or visually impaired at the Community-Senior Center. The program will operate on Tuesdays, from 9:00 am – 12:30 pm and on Fridays, from noon – 4pm by appointment.

VIBRANT Centers teach assistive technology to seniors with vision loss. A trained site coordinator oversees each center, and brings in volunteer instructors from the community who are blind or low vision assistive tech users themselves, and volunteer their time to train consumers who are new to assistive tech. Training on everything from iOS, iPhone and iPad to Mac, Windows, screen magnification and audio screen reading text to speech to Amazon's Alexa, Dragon Dictation, Comcast X1 voice system, braille lessons is available. VIBRANT staff are trained and also work closely with (MAB) occupational therapists to work with people with multiple disabilities.

Successful programs are running in senior centers in Worcester and Brookline.

WINTER

# V · I · B · R · A · N · T

Visually Impaired Blind Recipients Accessing New Technologies

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION  
for the  
Blind and Visually Impaired  
CONFIDENT LIVING WITH VISION LOSS



The Boston  
Foundation



Executive Office of Elder Affairs

The VIBRANT program is a program funded through grants from the Massachusetts Councils on Aging, the Highland Street Foundation, The Boston Foundation, with guidance and assistive technology from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and assistance in Worcester County from the Memorial Foundation.

## Program Overview

VIBRANT was established to serve seniors not actively seeking employment. It is also inclusive to other blind and low vision individuals who are not eligible for assistive technology instruction through the standard state-funded programs. A large portion of the disabled and elderly population cannot gain access to the assistive technology training they need, therefore the Vibrant program creates a sustainable model that bridges the gap in access to these resources for seniors.

## Vibrant Culture

A foundational component to vision loss is acclimating oneself by learning assistive technology. Changes in vision requires both cognitive and emotional adjustment. It can give rise to emotions of fear, which can make a person feel emotionally challenged and overwhelmed. Learning a new way to accomplish everyday tasks as your brain and body age, can be difficult. However, the quality of life a person regains through this experience is worth the investment of time and energy required.

We're here to offer guidance and support to our clients. Teaching alone is not sufficient in conveying the message that it is okay to trust this technology. Accepted interdependence toward independence reduces depression and anxiety, thus removing the stigmas attached to vision loss, aging, learned helplessness, and fear.

"You don't have to do it alone. I'm here, and I don't mind if you ask me for something. You can talk to me. I can help **YOU** do it." We teach toward the welfare of the whole person, and self-advocated success defined by the consumer, not the professional--when healthy and applicable". Sassy Outwater-Wright

We're here to take the fear out of learning new technology through repetition, laughter, shared experiences, and conversations. We use all human connections we can to facilitate comfort and trust in technology.

**To find a program near you, or to become a volunteer trainer, please contact:**

**Phone 617-443-6636**

**Email [ATCenter@mabcommunity.org](mailto:ATCenter@mabcommunity.org)**

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