

Krista J Doubek

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JORDY REFERENCE LETTER

Dear Stan, Jordy producers, Jordy users and anyone who is the least bit interested, but nervous about trying Jordy

I have been sitting here trying to figure out how best to convey my thoughts to you, but have come up empty. I do not know how to express excitement, fear, surprise, happiness, nervousness and joy into the same sentence. The only thing I can say for sure is that after over a year using my Jordy's I cannot imagine life without them.

It all started in March of 2002 when my eye doctor suggested that I set up a meeting with Stan Moser to try out Jordy. Fear kept me from making that life changing call for almost two months. During those two months, I researched the product and spent a lot of time convincing myself that I had to at least try it. With the push from a good friend who told me I had nothing to lose but my time if they did not work, but I had the world to gain if they worked. I made that call and one morning in late May my life changed forever. I cannot explain the excitement I felt sitting there in Stan's office. I read an eye chart a whole lot further than I have ever read before. I read a sign across the room and I saw the details in Stan's face. I went home that afternoon more excited than I had ever been in my life and I couldn't put the experience or feelings into words and I still can't. I had just seen for the very first time!!

The very next day I started the process of applying through Vocational Rehabilitation for funding assistance—I had made my decision, now I just had to wait! In June Stan and I set up another test run, but this time it was in the classroom. We invited my Voc Rehab counselor, one of my academic advisors and a MSU math professor came in and did some math problems on the board. I saw things in the classroom that day that I had never seen before: an enlargement of the calculator up on the overhead, a math problem on the chalkboard and the people in the room around me. I found myself instantly more confident in my ability to ask questions and I got my first glimpse of how different things could be. Again, it was an excitement that I cannot explain and the final deciding point in my mind. The only thing left to do was to convince Voc Rehab that it was worth the expense and convince them that I would wear them.

During the wait and until I was able to get back into the classroom with Jordy on the excitement wore off and fear set in. I had spent my life doing really well in school without seeing so why did that need to change? I had no idea what to expect when I

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could see. I did not want to be let down if they did not work as well as I hoped they would. I did not know what changes I was going to have to make in how I did things and I had the fear of losing the best excuse I had—I can't see! Even after a year I don't always know what to expect when I put them on and I'm still nervous about wearing them in unfamiliar situations, but that has gotten a whole lot better and more often than not being able to see beats out fear and nervousness and the frustration that would come from not seeing. I think the most important thing I've learned in the last year is to give Jordy a chance to do his job and I can learn how to integrate it into what I've always done—doesn't always work the first time, but with practice it gets better.

During the last two weeks of summer school 2002 and over the rest of the summer, I had my Jordy and was able to devote a lot of time to practicing. I sat in on an accounting class and learned more in those two class periods than in three weeks of classes without Jordy. I was able to see the class presentations in my strategic management class. I watched my first summer theater play. I saw my first Medora Musical and most importantly, I saw my cousin's wedding. I can see now, that at that time I had nowhere near discovered all that Jordy could do, but I was amazed at all I saw. By the time school started in the fall, I thought I was ready to put Jordy to the true test.

That fall was one of the hardest semesters of my college career and also one of the easiest. I could see, but I quickly learned that I had to learn how to see. I was unable to see, listen, comprehend and take notes at the same time. In the past, I had been so dependent on listening that I devoted all of my energy to listening and now I had to divert some of my attention to seeing. Fall semester I really did not get the knack of seeing, and often had to fall back to what I was used to. However, with practice by the end of spring semester I had gotten pretty good at it and was able to balance my attention between tasks and take notes. School was a good place to test Jordy, but it is outside of the classroom where I have seen the biggest differences and where I am continuously discovering new things all the time.

In October 2002 I attended the State Human Resource Management conference and was able to see the presentations that were being given during the seminars and this also gave me one of my first opportunities to wear my Jordy's for an extended period of time—something that really takes time to get used to. I am now up to about three to four hours continuous use before my eyes get tired. I saw my first basketball game over Christmas break and I really learned how much I had been missing and WOW games are lot more fun when you can see! ! In the spring of 2003 I attended the College of Business Banquet and for the first time ever was able to see my fellow classmates receiving their honors. I wore Jordy to my graduation in May and was able to watch the ceremony as well as listen. I have worn them at Church where I am now able to actively participate instead of being an onlooker. I watched my boss's computer from across the room during my internship—I didn't have to just listen I could see what he was doing. Those are just a few of the obvious changes that I have seen. Those

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changes that are below the surface have turned out to be even more important in some ways than seeing.

I have become a more active participant in life because I can see. I do not feel like I am isolated from the rest of the world or that things are somehow passing by because I cannot see them. My self-confidence has increased because I do not have to guess at what I am seeing and I feel like I can assert myself a little more without fear of not seeing. I ask “good” questions in class or in meetings. In other words I don’t have to battle with the question of whether or not I’m lost because I can’t see or lost because I don’t understand. I don’t have to ask “seeing” questions—“ what’s on the menu at a fast food restaurant?” “What’s so funny?” and “what’s that sign say?” I have the ability, for the first time in my life, to see as well or better than other people in many situations. This makes me feel less like an outsider—no more seeing people and me. In the past year, I have overcome the fear of Jordy, but am also beginning to overcome other fears. I have gained confidence in my self and I am having a much easier time taking a risk or trusting that I can at least try something. The best example is that this summer my little brother talked me into driving a go-cart. In the past, I would have never done it, but this time I did it and had a blast. I didn’t wear Jordy, but Jordy enabled me to try—worst thing that could have gone wrong is running into a wall or being out five bucks. I didn’t battle with the “am I going to look like an idiot” argument.

It is the little things that have made the biggest difference and that I constantly find excitement in. I, for the first time ever, saw the painting that has hung above the bulletin board at the Honors Center—a place where I spent a lot of time during my college career. I can see expressions on peoples’ faces. I am involving myself in things instead of sitting at the sidelines.

The summer of 2003 has brought even more opportunities for me to see. I again wore them the Summer Theater plays and they worked even better. I wore them to Medora and that was the true test of how much I have learned. In one years time I have gone from using Jordy as an extra tool during the musical to being comfortable enough to just wear Jordy. I have gotten to the point where I can make adjustments without thinking and that has added to my ability to participate. Jordy is now part of me not an outside tool. The biggest news is that I spent a week in the Rocky Mountains and I could see the sites. You cannot know what it is like to see the detail of the mountains or to see what someone is pointing at when they holler “Hey look at that! That was the moment when I knew that all of the hard work had been worth it.

I am still working on adjusting to using Jordy outdoors and am trying to get used to using them for up close work, but for what they have done for my distance vision I do not care if they do not work up close. I have used the CC TV set up some and will probably use it more when I get a job. The CC TV became a lifesaver for an accounting project last fall. I was able to get things big enough so, I could see them and then type them into my computer. The CC TV is becoming a necessary tool for computing is taking some getting used to and a lot of practice.

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Now that I have seen what Jordy can do I keep pushing myself to try the next innovation. I started this journey about three years ago when I got a pair of telescopes and that became the first step towards learning to see. I think as a visually impaired person I will always be “learning” to see. Jordy has made that easier and I no longer have the fear of what might come next anymore.

I know I've painted a pretty positive picture overall, and that is my overall feelings. I do however know there are definitely things that are hard. When you first start wearing Jordy you become mentally and physically exhausted. Your brain and your eyes are doing something that they have never had to do before-see. It will take awhile before you can wear them for a long time comfortably. It took me close to six months before I could wear them for more than an hour, and even now it is very dependent on the situation and how hard my eyes have to work to see. On a good day I can go about four hours, but on a bad day I might not make it four minutes. Another thing I ran into is the frustration. Frustration of not seeing when you know you can. Frustration about the little things that became big once I could see. For example I've always had a problem in following lines of numbers up close, but when I can now follow at a distance it makes the up close struggles harder. The frustration that comes when Jordy won't cooperate or I'm in a situation where I can't get Jordy to work well enough to make a difference.

To the new user of Jordy I have a few words of advice. First, don't think Jordy is going to change your life overnight. Some of the changes will come fast, but be patient and practice and you and Jordy will learn to work together. Second, don't ever let anyone tell you that it won't work for you just because it didn't work for someone else. Make people let you at least give it chance. Set up a trial period or a couple of practice sessions like I had. Even trying them just a couple of times in a couple of different situations you will have a pretty good idea of whether or not they will work. You are the expert when it comes to your eyes and your vision so don't let anyone try and tell you otherwise. Three, fight for your sight—you deserve the chance to see and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Finally, don't let anyone force you into something you are not comfortable with. This process took me several years, because I wasn't ready and not because the technology wasn't there. You have to be mentally and physically ready to take on the new challenge and if your not don't try until you are ready.

As I end this I'd like to say a few words of thanks to those who helped me through the process and to those people who believed in me enough to let me try and see. Jordy and I have come a long ways in the last year and as I sit here I'm in the process of embracing new technology once again. A year ago I would have said this works let's leave, but now I'm ready to upgrade my Jordy, which will take me to the next level of seeing and to the next level of being more independent. Jordy has changed my life in more ways than just seeing and to anyone who is reading this who wants to take the next step to see I'd be happy to help you though the process--to help you through the frustrations and share the joy of sight with you.

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Sincerely

Krista J. Doubek and Jordy

PS: Since I originally finished this a few really amazing things have happened and I wanted to share them with you.

First, I was able to wear Jordy to Pride of Dakota Days. It is an event held each year where ND products are on display and for the first time I was able to read signs, see faces at a distance and again be more than an onlooker. I can't walk with Jordy, but I have found a way to wear them high enough so I can still see under them. I've always been uncomfortable in large groups like that because of my seeing limitations and although I thought I'd feel uncomfortable wearing Jordy I wasn't and the whole experience was a lot better. I was able to tell people what they were and may have even helped a woman find something that might help her daughter.

Second and the most amazing thing off all. I recently had an eye exam and did an eye test with my Jordy on. Without Jordy my vision is 20/200 in my good eye and 20/300 in my other eye. With Jordy I was able to see 20/40 at the magnification setting I most often use.

Third and yet another chance to be part of the group, I wore my Jordy's at Christmas. I was able to see what everyone else was getting and didn't have to constantly ask, "Hey, what's that?"

I could go on and on, but I hope this shows you just how much something like Jordy can change your life.