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ReNEW Jersey & Bridging Voice Announce Partnership to Support Communication and Computer Access Technology for every ALS Patient in New Jersey

Will Provide 400 ALS patients with the ability to communicate using their eyes

Today, ReNEW Jersey – a new umbrella organization dedicated to niche philanthropic initiatives – is announcing a first in the nation partnership with Bridging Voice, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to enabling and empowering people with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) to communicate by removing the barriers between them and assistive technology.

The \$1.1 million investment will provide every single New Jersey-based ALS patient, estimated at 400 along with their approximately 4,000 family members and caregivers, with Bridging Voice’s services free of charge. Bridging Voice equips ALS patients with eye gaze technology enabling them to communicate, despite their diagnosis. For late-stage ALS patients who no longer can use their hands or fingers, the eye gaze technology allows them to type, text, email, surf the web, operate remote controls, and most importantly, communicate with their family, friends, caregivers, and medical professionals. Globally, COVID-19 has made us aware of the need for connection and the importance of communicating with our loved ones. Unfortunately, ALS patients experience this isolation every day, and it’s been exacerbated even further by COVID-19.

ReNew Jersey, formed by the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund (NJPRF) leadership, will operate within the Community Foundation of New Jersey. NJPRF CEO Josh Weinreich and First Lady Tammy Murphy – who each made personal family donations to the project – led the fundraising efforts.

“We’ll never get tired of seeing New Jerseyans helping our own. So, when we say we need to make sure that all residents have access to the technology that will make their lives easier, that includes ALS patients, whose isolation has only intensified because of the COVID-19 pandemic,” **said Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy.** They personally contributed to funding the project. “We’re grateful that organizations like Bridging Voice exist to provide critical support so that ALS patients can communicate with their families, caregivers, loved ones, and friends. We’re proud to support this beyond worthwhile cause.”

“New Jersey always looks out for its own, and that’s why we’re proud to announce a first in the nation program to give every single ALS patient in New Jersey access to Bridging Voice’s services. Now, they’ll be able to communicate with their families and friends more easily,” **said Josh Weinreich, one of the founders of ReNew Jersey and a leading contributor to the initiative.**

The ReNew Jersey funding is the first time a charitable organization has underwritten the costs for an entire state’s whole ALS patient population. The New Jersey initiative will serve as a catalyst for other

states to follow as part of a national rollout for a rapid expansion of Bridging Voice's footprint to help ALS patients nationwide.

ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. As ALS progresses, it ravages the body, eventually leaving many patients "locked-in," unable to move or speak, even though their minds remain fully intact. As one Bridging Voice patient noted, "assistive technology is crucial; without it, I can't tell my kids how much I love them."

"Already helping over 750 ALS clients in 45 states, Bridging Voice is proud to partner with ReNew Jersey to bring our technology and expertise to New Jersey's ALS population," **said Peter Bloom, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bridging Voice.** "We're beyond grateful to Josh, Tammy, their families, and this amazing group of people who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of ALS patients in their home state of New Jersey."

To hear more about how Bridging Voice is helping patients in New Jersey already, watch the story of [Sandy Edelman and Dorothy Pao](#) from Jersey City, NJ, and [Bill and Dorothy Diana](#) from Mantoloking, NJ.

To learn more about this initiative, visit newjersey.bridgingvoice.org.

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