

Legally blind man is using crowd-funding to buy e-Sight glasses

When Peter McKeown tried on a pair of eSight glasses, he cried.

The 53-year-old Georgetown man, who has been legally blind since 2004 due to diabetic retinopathy, could see things he hasn't been able to see for years.

"I was on the 15th floor of a building and I could read the phone number on taxicabs on the street. I could read billboards three blocks away," said McKeown.

He learned about the glasses from his brother who saw them on the Discovery Channel. They are made by eSight, an Ontario company, which has only been around for about two years.

Like something out of Star Trek, the glasses are hooked up to a computer system that takes what's going on in the world and translates it into a version that makes sense for each user.

"We use a camera to capture a video that we're able to instantly enhance in such a way that people who are legally blind, their eyes are able to perceive more of the world around them," Taylor West, director of outreach with eSight, said.

It's not for people who are completely blind, but those with "low vision," people who have limited sight but are classified as legally blind. In McKeown's case he only has blurry peripheral vision in both eyes.

The way the glasses work is by kind of like photo-shopping reality but the images are constant and instant.

For example, for people who struggle with contrasts, West said the device adjusts to bring out the sharpness a person wouldn't otherwise register.

After seeing what the glasses could do for him McKeown knew he had to have a pair, but at a cost of \$15,000 he



Peter McKeown tries out the e-Sight glasses, which allows him to see for the first time since 2004.

wasn't sure how to make that happen.

The glasses are not currently covered by OHIP but West said the company has begun the "very complicated process" to be covered under the program.

Fortunately for McKeown the company was able to set up a crowd-

funding campaign for him to raise the funds at <http://www.gofundme.com/help4peter> and in 19 days Peter's friends and family came through and donated the \$15,000 he needed to get the glasses. He's ordered them and is thrilled that he should have them by mid-April.

One donor, who doesn't want to be named, contributed \$7,600 to his campaign.

"I would like to say thank you to each and every one of them, the support they gave me was absolutely fabulous," said McKeown. "For me (the glasses) are going to give me a lot more freedom back."

The significant donor asked only one thing— that McKeown pay it forward.

So he's decided to keep the fundraising campaign going with the hope of bringing in an additional \$15,000 to go toward the purchase of eSight

glasses for an Ontario child who could benefit from them.

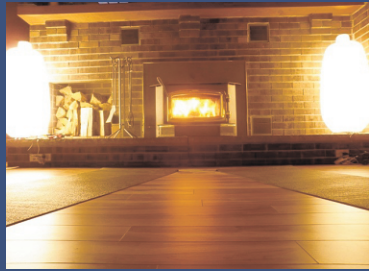
"The best way I can think of is to help a child who is going to have a lot more success in school and through his working career (due to the glasses)," said McKeown.

To make a donation to the fundraising campaign to help a child (nearly \$3,000 has been raised so far) visit <http://www.gofundme.com/help4peter> or send a cheque to eSight, 20 Eglinton Ave. W., Suite 1505, Toronto, ON, M4R 1K8. In the memo line write Fundraising — Peter M.

Also, McKeown says his friend Tracey Quinn of Clara Clark Bedding is donating \$5 from every sale to the fundraising campaign. She will have a booth at the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Health, Home and Happiness Show at Mold-Masters SportsPlex, April 17-18. Quinn can be reached at 905-872-3733.

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