

Livingston Entrepreneur Finds Company While Managing Rare Vision Disorder

Jennifer Ringler, a Livingston resident and founder of ReadHealthy Communications, LLC, launched a health care communications company while managing a rare vision disorder she has had since birth. It is called optic nerve hypoplasia (ONH), characterized as the under-development of the optic nerve.

"In my case, I was born completely blind in my left eye, with limited vision in my right eye that is corrected with glasses to 20/40," Ringler explained.

She said that the visual impairment has had significant impacts throughout her life, including the lack of a driver's license.

"Living without a license impacts decisions from where I can live, to where I can work, to how often I can get together for dinner with friends," she said. "Often times, it is not a person's disability that limits what they can achieve or how they interact with the world, but rather, the lack of accessibility and the inherent societal biases, attitudes, and inability or unwillingness to offer accommodations."

Ringler said that throughout her childhood, her vision impairment has taught her to self-advocate for her needs and to not be ashamed of being different.

Her condition has also caused difficulties in her professional life.

"There have been jobs that were difficult to navigate because of software programs or computer monitors that I couldn't see well because of my limited vision," she said. "There have been managers who didn't understand my needs when traveling alone in airports for business travel. There have been colleagues who repeatedly ignored my requests to increase font sizes or share materials before meetings so that I could use the tools I needed in order to do my job well."

She explained that her visual impairment helped her gain a deeper understanding of different people's characters, both good and bad.

In March of 2023, Ringler founded ReadHealthy Communications, LLC, a communications, marketing, and public relations firm that helps phar-



Jennifer Ringler has been living with optic nerve hypoplasia since she was born. She believes that growing up with this vision impairment has shaped her into the business professional she is today.

maceutical and biotech companies tell their stories and increase their brand awareness. She now has clients throughout the country, as well as in the international markets of Finland and Germany.

Ringler noted that the unique experiences associated with her visual impairment have helped her when counseling clients about how to speak and interact with different patient populations with empathy and respect.

"There have been several instances in my career where I was able to guide my clients on what to say – and what not to say – when speaking about a patient population's disease, disability, or illness, and how to frame their message in a way that resonates with audiences," she said.

Ringler said that in her 42 years of living with a visual impairment, the difficulties mostly fade into the

background and become minor inconveniences.

"People with disabilities are not an 'inspiration' just for existing in the world – for holding jobs, being parents, being spouses, going grocery shopping, and doing the things everyone does," she said. "I am successful because I am smart, determined, well-educated, passionate, and motivated. And what I've achieved is no more or less 'inspirational' than the success of any smart, passionate, determined able-bodied person. My disability is one thing about me; it is not the only thing, or even the defining thing."