Generous Gift to Support Rehabilitation Engineering Center Research Efforts

A major donation from a Fall River family will help the UMass Dartmouth Center for Rehabilitation Engineering expand its research efforts to benefit profoundly disabled individuals. Walter Chang, a retired engineer for General Electric, presented the $50,000 gift to the University in honor of his wife, Betty Chang, and her personal commitment to serving disabled individuals.

With a matching gift of $50,000 from General Electric, the funding will be used by the Rehab Center to provide research assistantships for UMass Dartmouth students to conduct engineering research for the Center. Funds also will provide financial aid to undergraduate students who work in the Rehab Center. One goal is to develop affordable alternatives to expensive systems for profoundly disabled people. Another is to expand the Center’s staff so that it can respond more effectively to the volume of requests for assistance it receives from children and adults both locally and across the country.

The gift is the largest ever received by the Rehab Center, and was inspired by the bonds of family and friendship. Mrs. Chang holds a degree in physical therapy and has pursued her interest in working with disabled people both through career in the field and as executive director of Fall River’s China Royal Restaurant, which has seating and tables designed for persons in wheelchairs. As a birthday surprise for his wife, Mr. Chang made the gift in support of the Rehab Center, whose work he was familiar with through Professor Les Cory, a fellow 1963 graduate of Bradford Durfee College of Technology, one of UMass Dartmouth’s predecessor institutions.

“We are deeply indebted to Walter and Betty for their wonderful generosity,” says Les Cory.
Rehab Center Develops Solution for “Designing” Woman

SHARE’s 1,000th client presented a unique challenge to the Rehab Center’s engineers. Maureen Gaynor, a 29-year-old Cape Cod businesswoman with cerebral palsy, owns and operates a graphics company which offers design services for logos, business cards, stationery, and other promotional materials. She relies on a computer and graphic design software to complete her projects, and had been using a headstick to control the computer.

She contacted SHARE with a request for an alternative device to move the pointer on the screen in a Windows 95 environment, because the constant need to select commands by headstick put excessive strain on her neck and back.

Her idea was to add a modified “keypad” to her computer which would enable her to select commands through the MouseKeys application in Windows 95 with greater physical ease. The MouseKeys feature allows the user to move the pointer by touching keys on the numeric keypad of a typical computer keyboard. Gaynor was looking for a similar, yet oversized device which she could operate despite the restricted degree of muscle control in her arm and hand.

In response to her request, Rehab Center engineer Steve Rowell designed a large rectangular unit, 18" by 22", which is positioned beside Gaynor while she works at the computer. The surface of the unit has eight 2-inch-round, touch-sensitive “pads” which Gaynor now can press with her hand to select specific commands in the MouseKeys application.

“I really love my new mouse—my back doesn’t get tired anymore,” says Gaynor. “I can move the mouse around without taking my eyes off the screen.”

Update from the

UMD REHABILITATION ENGINEERING CENTER LAB

Thanks to the generous support of the Swansea Lions Club and members, the Rehab Center’s research staff will get a firsthand look at computer systems operated by eye gaze when LC Technologies visits the Center to demonstrate the cutting edge technology.

The Lions Club is providing SHARE with funding to bring consultants from the Virginia company to North Dartmouth for several days this May so that they can present the system and its capabilities to local health care professionals and “test drive” the unit with SHARE clients who may be candidates for such a system.

Eye gaze systems rely on sophisticated infrared technology to read the subtle movements of the user’s eye as it focuses on areas of the computer screen which correspond to specific operating commands. These systems are often the only mode of independent communication possible for profoundly disabled individuals who do not have sufficient motor control to operate a computer by other adaptive means, such as using a headstick or moving their eyebrows.

SHARE client Brian Dickinson, an editorial journalist for the Providence Journal-Bulletin and a nationally syndicated columnist, now relies on an eye gaze system to accomplish his writing. Dickinson has Lou Gehrig’s disease, and can no longer use adaptive systems developed by the Rehab Center which he controlled first by bending his index finger and later by moving his eyebrow.

Those interested in seeing this new technology or actually using it should call to reserve a seat at one of the open demonstrations or to schedule an evaluation. Users will be scheduled for two half-hour sessions each with the system.
Thank You to All Who Responded to SHARE's Annual Appeal

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IF WE NEGLECTED TO LIST YOUR DONATION, PLEASE CALL THE SHARE OFFICE AT (508) 999-8482
Gibbs to Lead SHARE Board

Longtime SHARE supporter Paige Gibbs has been elected Chairman of SHARE's Board of Directors. A librarian at UMass Dartmouth, Gibbs held the office of Vice Chairman for the past two terms and has been a member of the board since 1982. Congratulations, Paige—we look forward to a year of accomplishment under your able leadership!

DeWolf Lends Engineering Expertise to Rehab Center

The Rehab Center is reaping the benefits of some extra know-how thanks to SHARE volunteer Walt DeWolf. A retired engineer for Ford Motor Company, DeWolf has been the driving force behind some of the Rehab Center's recent development efforts, and we thank him for sharing his wealth of expertise!

SHARE Welcomes New Members to Honorary Advisory Board

We are thrilled to welcome two new members to SHARE's Honorary Advisory Board. Richard Arthur, Chairman of the Board of Sippican, Inc., was one of SHARE's founding directors. State Senator Mark Montigny is a UMass Dartmouth graduate and a longtime SHARE volunteer.

Both men have a long history of advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities. A hearty welcome to you both.

2nd Annual Car Show Slated for September

Save the date! SHARE's Second Annual Car Show & Fun Day will be held Sunday, September 14 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the UMass Dartmouth campus. Don't miss this day of fun for the whole family!

You're Invited to SHARE's Appreciation Brunch

Saturday, April 19th
9:30 a.m.
McGovern's Restaurant
Shove Street, Fall River

Brunch includes eggs, home fries, bacon, waffles, virginia ham, sausage, muffins and more $7.50 per person

Come Meet and Greet SHARE's Volunteers!

To Make Reservations, Call SHARE at (508) 999-8482

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Our address is WWW.SHARE.UMASSD.edu

A Publication of the Society for Human Advancement Through Rehabilitation Engineering Foundation, Inc.
SHARE Summer Program
Needs Your Support

This summer, SHARE is hoping to make some serious gains on its growing list of requests for assistance, and you can help!

In recent years, SHARE's Summer Program has provided UMass Dartmouth students with employment and training opportunities as they tackle the many projects on SHARE’s waiting list. But to plan adequately for the program, SHARE needs your financial support now to help fund the placement of at least four students in the Rehab Center for the summer months just ahead.

Students who participate in the program will receive a stipend of $200 per week to be applied to their fall semester tuition and educational expenses.

We believe the strength of our summer program is twofold. Our students enjoy career-relevant employment offering hands-on experience, and our clients receive the adaptive equipment and services they need to lead productive lives. Help us put the summer to its fullest use—give in support of the Summer Program!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you contribute $200 or more in support of SHARE's Summer Program, you will receive a “Partnership Certificate” acknowledging the vital role you play in making our program a success. Please consider supporting a student internship for a day ($40), a week ($200) or a full month ($900). Perhaps your employer or your club would like to help with this program as well.

Your gift will help to provide independence through technology for disabled children and adults while providing a valuable learning experience for our students.

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Editors: Jo-Ann Bettencourt & Karen Pragana Writing & Design: Brainstorms, Westport, MA Photos: Les Cory and Pat Cory

SHARE Foundation
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Stellar Student Promises Productive Summer

Soraia Paz is just one of the many UMass Dartmouth students who has strengthened SHARE’s efforts to serve disabled children and adults. A junior computer engineering major, Paz has done an outstanding job of coordinating SHARE’s outreach efforts, acting as a liaison between Rehab Center engineers and clients awaiting equipment and services. Your support will keep Soraia on the job and help ensure efficiency in our delivery of services. Thanks in advance for keeping our Summer Program growing strong!