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The B.E.A.T.

Bulletins in Education and Assistive Technology

EagleEyes: New Friends, New Perspectives

Matty Galligan has accomplished much. Many could extol his academic talents: he is an excellent student, who enjoys history and geography. He can do math problems in his head. But among the EagleEyes buddies, Matty is known for his other talents. Matty is exceptionally good at EagleEyes video games.

With or without the advantage of a mouse, Campus Buddies have a difficult time competing with Matty. In particular, many students marvel at his ability in Othello. The game involves a great deal of strategy. "This game is really hard and Matty is really good at it," says Buddy Kristen Nazar '04.

Despite his reputation for obliterating his opponents, Matty has numerous buddies who vie for his attention. Matty is far more than an excellent video game partner. He is an excellent companion. It is clear that both Matty and his Campus Buddies have gained a great deal from their relationship.

In just one day, Matty was joined by Kristen Nazar, Gaby Ghafari '04 and Sue Mulready '05. "Being Matty's buddy is a privilege. There are limited spaces available in his sessions and I have been lucky enough to find out why," says Sue Mulready.

"Matty makes you feel very special. Not only does he allow us to share his academic journey but he shares bits of his life with us as well as comments on our lives," says Gaby Ghafari.



Sue, Matty, Gaby and Kristen hanging out before Matty's EagleEyes session

Matty's buddies have learned things they can't learn in a classroom. "Matty has been through a lot of physical pain in his life and I cannot fathom how frustrating some of the limits imposed by his condition must be for him sometimes. But, every week he continues to be dedicated to learning," says Kristen Nazar.

Matty has learned from his buddies as well. Matty's mother explains that Matty has gained insight into the life of others his age. Because of his disability, Matty hasn't interacted with as many people his own age as he would like. EagleEyes gives Matty the opportunity to learn about their lives and to share in their interests.

It is clear that Matty enjoys his time with his buddies. "There have been times when Matty has been so carried away with laughing fits that he seems like he is struggling to breathe at the end. He really enjoys his buddies and he definitely makes it known," says Sue Mulready.

At Boston College, EagleEyes doesn't just facilitate learning, it facilitates friendships. Students with and without physical disabilities have had the opportunity to form lifelong friendships with their college peers. Through EagleEyes, both Matty and his buddies have gained perspective about the lives of others their age.

New EagleEyes Program

A new EagleEyes project endeavors to provide those with limited voluntary movement the opportunity to communicate through the computer. The project involves developing customized software that visually recognizes patterns in movement, translating them into computer commands. Like EagleEyes and Camera Mouse, this new project allows those facing disabilities to communicate despite their physical limitations.

This project is part of a new National Science Foundation grant for "Pattern Discovery in Signed Language and Gestural Communication" that has been

awarded to Boston University, with Boston College as a subcontractor. Boston University Professor Margrit Betke, former BC faculty member and co-inventor of the Camera Mouse, will head up the development of gesture recognition software for people with disabilities.

For this project EagleEyes is looking for people who are non-verbal and can make some voluntary repeatable gestures. If you or someone you know might be a candidate, please contact Dr. Philip DiMattia at 617-552-8424 (dimattia@bc.edu) or Prof. James Gips at 617-552-3981 (gips@bc.edu) for more information.

Welcome Maureen Gates!

Maureen Gates may seem a familiar face. She has worked with the EagleEyes project for the past ten years, although in a different capacity. With the departure of Marialice Curran, Maureen has taken on a new role within the EagleEyes program. The B.E.A.T. recently had a chance to sit down and chat with Maureen about her new position.

Tell me about us about your position here at the Campus School. What are your responsibilities here?

I am the teacher and curriculum modification specialist for the EagleEyes program. I have a lot of different responsibilities. Generally I am in charge of the EagleEyes classroom and the students who use the software. In addition, I have a range of other responsibilities. I conduct assessments to see if students are candidates for the system. Classroom teachers come in and we work curriculum modification strategies for EagleEyes and Camera Mouse students. And, I supervise and help train new undergraduate students to work with the system.

Sounds like you are pretty busy! What keeps you going?

I really enjoy being part of a program that has the potential of making such a profound difference in a child's life. That is why I jumped at the offer to come. What more could anyone ask for!?

How did you come to work for the EagleEyes program? What did you do before you came to the Campus School?

After getting my BS in Education from University of Massachusetts at Boston, and my Masters degree at Simmons College, I became a one-to-one educator for Marshfield Public Schools. I was assigned to Michael Nash. Mike was one of EagleEyes' first success stories. He was a severely handicapped little boy, confined to a wheel chair and had no means of communication except for eye movement. With the aid of EagleEyes, Michael was able to take part in academics. I would take notes in his classes then we would travel to the Campus School. There I would work with the staff at Boston College on ways to modify the curriculum so that Mike could access the information and participate in school. I was Michael's one-to-one teacher for ten years (Please see the recent movie, *Michael's Eagle Eyes* for more information on Michael).

It seems like you and Michael had a close relationship. Why did you move on?

(See Maureen Gates, page 4)



Robert and Maureen after an EagleEyes Session

Ken Carpenter: Connected Despite ALS

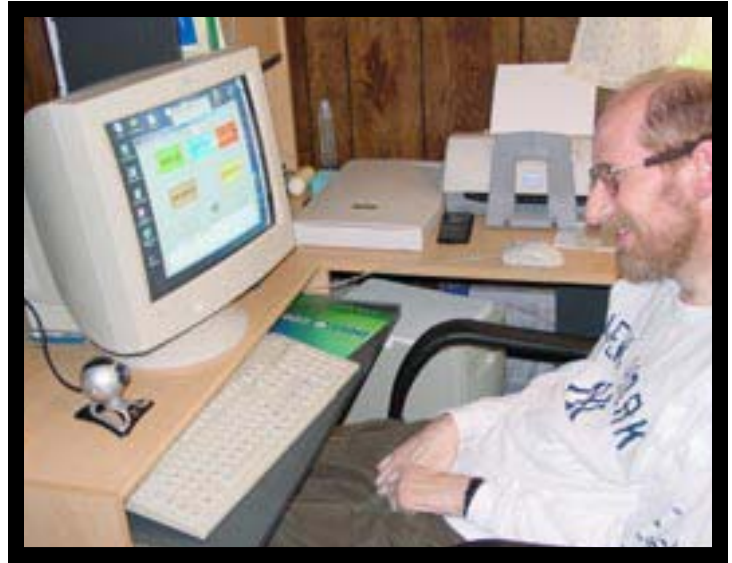
For Ken Carpenter, the Camera Mouse was a link to his past. In late 2000, Ken was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. ALS patients lose control of voluntary movement due to a progressive wasting away of certain nerve cells. The disease does not affect mental functioning; ALS patients suffer no loss of thinking ability.

After Ken displayed symptoms he decided to leave Maryland to be closer to his family in Connecticut. He left his position as a security manager for the Computer Science Corporation. He also left his friends in Maryland. Friendships, however, are not easily ended. Ken kept in touch with his friends in Maryland through the use of the internet.

As Ken's condition began to degenerate, he had a more difficult time using a keyboard and mouse. It became increasingly obvious that Ken would require a different type of technology in order to maintain his friendships. An ALS social worker mentioned she had seen something on television about the EagleEyes program. Ken's family found EagleEyes on the Internet and contacted Jim Gips.

A BC team of Joel Barciauskas '05 and Dan Shaw '05 visited Ken's home in Connecticut and outfitted Ken with a Camera Mouse. He took to it quickly. Right away, Ken was capable of using the on-screen keyboard to type messages. Joel developed a program that allowed Ken to use the Camera Mouse to access email and AOL Instant Messenger.

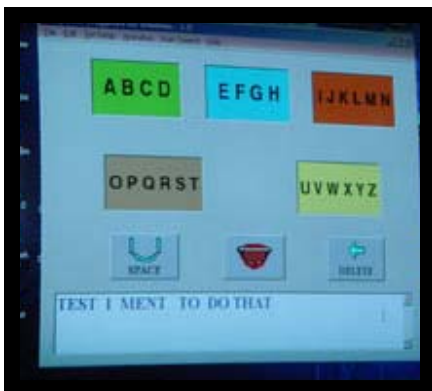
With the aid of these new applications, Ken was able to keep in touch with his friends from Maryland. They corre-



The Camera Mouse was attached to Ken's home computer

sponded about work and his favorite team, the Yankees. Ken was often on the Camera Mouse for hours a day, using the internet to maintain these relationships.

In December, Ken succumbed to his illness. His friends and family suffered a great loss. Ken's family is comforted that his days were made more comfortable with the aid of the Camera Mouse. Ken's family has decided to donate Ken's Camera Mouse to another ALS patient. In addition, they have set out to inform the ALS community of the Camera Mouse project.



Ken used a virtual keyboard developed at Boston College



Ken using the Camera Mouse to access email.



Ken was a Yankees fan. He often corresponded with friends about his favorite team

New Opportunities:

A Camera Mouse system has just been obtained by The Computer Center for Citizens with Disabilities in Salt Lake City. People wanting to try it should contact Craig Boogaard at 801-887-9533 or cboogaar@utah.gov

Irish Education Minister Tours EagleEyes Facilities

The Irish Minister of Education, Noel Dempsey, recently traveled to the US to sign an International Accord on Education. On his way back from Washington, he made sure he visited a place he had heard much about: Boston College.

One of the highlights of the Minister's stay was his visit to the EagleEyes facilities. Mr. Dempsey met with Dr. DiMattia and Dr. Ricciato of the EagleEyes program. He even had the chance to use the EagleEyes system himself. Impressed with the accomplishments of the EagleEyes program, Mr. Dempsey hopes to spread word of the program back in Ireland.

Mr. Dempsey's advisor, Gerry Murray, initially piqued the minister's curiosity about EagleEyes. Mr. Murray attended a policy maker's conference at Boston College's Irish Institute. The Institute brings individuals from Northern Ireland and Ireland together in a neutral environment to collaborate on issues affecting both countries. Mr. Murray was particularly moved by a viewing of *Michael's Eagle Eyes* during the conference. He recommended that Mr. Dempsey visit to see the accomplishments of the EagleEyes program.

Mr. Dempsey has made special education a priority in his administration, forming a special council on the subject.

Mr. Dempsey's commitment to those facing disabilities may be particularly important given his upcoming tenure as the head of education in the European Union. Ireland will have the EU Presidency from January through June 2004. During this time, Ireland will have the ability to sponsor educational conferences for the EU. Mr. Dempsey's visit may bring word of the EagleEyes program beyond Ireland to other EU nations.



Irish Education Minister, Noel Dempsey and Mary O'Herlihy of the Irish Institute at Boston College (Courtesy of the Irish Emigrant Newspaper)

Maureen Gates

(Continued from page 2)

Mike worked diligently and received a certificate of completion and graduated with his class in 2001. The DMR (Division of Mental Retardation) has decertified Mike and he is currently working with Massachusetts Rehabilitation. It was time for Michael to take on the world outside of the Marshfield schools and time for me to take on my position at the Campus School.

Do you miss your old position?

I miss the time I spent at Mike's home and with his family. I miss all the great people I worked with in Marshfield. But I am also excited for my new position. There are a lot of exciting challenges.

Tell me about the job. What challenges you?

There is so much to do and learn. I had the responsibility of one student; now, I have many. Each a unique individual. Each child has his own needs. Each lesson has to be flexible to meet those needs.

Any hopes for the future?

I would like to see this program expanded to provide support on a regular basis for the other one-to-one teachers. And of course, I would like to see the program extended to help as many children as possible.



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