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Testing the Limits

Unlike most 17 year olds, Matt Galligan makes his football picks by moving his eyes. Flanked by Boston College football player Haven Perkins and BC student, Kyle Novellano, Matt concentrates on moving the cursor across a large projected computer screen toward his chosen team. Some of the people around him protest, unhappy with the teams he has picked. Matt just laughs; a major sports fan, his team loyalties are firm and he won’t be swayed by the peer pressure around him.

This is a typical scene from one of Matt’s EagleEyes sessions at Boston College. Matt, a veteran EagleEyes user, has been coming to BC twice a week for the past 6 years. His two undergraduate “Buddies,” Kristin Naizar and Sharif Tai work with Matt regularly to help with the equipment and facilitate the session. Additionally, BC students Haven Perkins and Kyle Novellano have also recently become involved.

During his time with EagleEyes, Matt has made measurable progress in math, reading and spelling. More recently, he’s completed several courses through Barnes & Noble’s On-line University, including two history courses: “Pearl Harbor” and “Personalities of the Founding Fathers.” Matt has an insatiable appetite for geography and also excels in math, despite having to do calculations entirely in his head.

In a recent interview with Sharif Tai, one of Matt’s EagleEyes Buddies who has been working with Matt over the past year, Sharif describes Matt’s attitude: “The best thing about working with Matt is how much he lights up when he scores well on a test or nails 10 out of 10 aliens. He has a huge smile and a terrific laugh. He always seems to be in a good mood and I look forward to seeing him every week.”

In addition to expanding academic horizons, Matt is also expanding social ones. Through the Internet and the Barnes & Noble On-line courses, Matt has communicated and shared ideas with people as far as Brazil.

“Matt’s first encounter with EagleEyes was nothing less than instantaneous enthusiasm,” reports Cindi Galligan, Matt’s mom, who is also never far from the scene. When asked what advice she would share with other parents of students with language-expressive disorders, Cindi responds, “The hardest thing is believing what a kid can do before he even does it...you must TRY [the system] to know its potential. Not everyone benefits from the technology in the same way. You have to

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try different things, find out where you're making progress and then stick with it.”

In other words, you have to keep testing the limits...something Matt Galligan could teach us a thing or two about.

For more information about CM Solutions, Inc., check out their website at www.cameramouse.com.

The hardest thing is believing what a kid can do before he even does it...”

CM Solutions, Inc., a technical start-up company in Dallas, Texas recently obtained an exclusive licensing agreement with Boston College. Under the agreement, CM Solutions has the right to market Camera Mouse (CM) products. In exchange, Boston College earns a portion of CM Solution sales in the form of royalties.

What does this mean for current and future Camera Mouse users? It means that CM technology is entering a new phase of development. Commercialization ensures that the technology will be presented on a much wider platform in the future. Essentially, Camera Mouse is moving out of the research laboratories and into the marketplace where both the number of users and the number of uses can expand.

“One of the major challenges facing CM Solutions is the fragmented nature of the disability market,” says Nick Daley, one of the company’s founders. He expands by saying that the company is currently focusing much of its energies into finding out how to reach the individuals who can most benefit from Camera Mouse equipment. Nick felt confident that the recent “Closing The Gap” assistive technology conference would help the company learn more about the industry.

CM Solutions also believes that it may be able to improve the Camera Mouse technology. Currently, if a user moves too quickly, the camera will sometimes lose registration. By refining the software that controls the camera registration, CM Solutions hopes to eliminate this problem so that users will no longer require constant monitoring while they are on the system.

For Boston College Professor James Gips, co-inventor of the Camera Mouse technology, news of the licensing agreement is welcome. Having necessarily been involved in many of the administrative aspects of bringing the technology to families and institutions, Dr. Gips is now free to return to what he does best: researching new ways to expand technological horizons.
In Step with Marialice Curran

Marialice Curran, a teacher at the Campus School at Boston College, works closely with students who use EagleEyes and Camera Mouse equipment. With her help and encouragement, students are able to interact with their environment and work towards individual education goals. A gifted teacher and long time friend to students at the Campus School, Marialice is constantly testing and expanding the minds of students who, prior to the EagleEyes project, were often considered incapable of participating in any kind of educational curriculum.

Marialice has been actively involved with EagleEyes since the spring of 1999. During this time, she has also played a big part in getting satellite branches of the system up and running. She provides monthly training to three staff members at the South Shore Collaborative, a school similar to the Campus School. And as if all that wasn’t enough to keep her busy, she’s also pursuing a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction at Boston College!

In a recent interview, the B.E.A.T. catches up with Marialice, gaining insight into her role as an EagleEyes teacher.

**B.E.A.T.:** Can you walk us through a typical EagleEyes Session?

**Marialice:** There’s no such thing! Every session is different and session activities vary from student to student. Ultimately, we try and incorporate as much of the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) into the session as possible.

**B.E.A.T.:** Then maybe you could describe the different types of activities that might take place?

**Marialice:** One of the first things we often do is to set the user up on the eye-painting program or the software version of the “Memory” card game. We use this program to make sure that the settings on the equipment are adjusted correctly and the student can reach all areas of the screen. If the student demonstrates that he can reach all areas of the computer screen, we can rule out technical errors when we get to the other programming.

**B.E.A.T.:** What other programming is offered?

**Marialice:** It depends on the age and ability of the individual. With the younger students, we often use the “Living Books” series. This is very interactive software that takes the user through a story. The story is illustrated such that as you move the cursor across the image, things happen. For example, you can move the cursor across the stove and suddenly the pancakes will begin to flip. This software gives the students some practice in cause-and-effect relationships, as well as in controlling their environment. Other software titles we use include: E-Reader, Reader Rabbit and Math CD. But really, with EagleEyes and Camera Mouse, any commercial software will do.

**B.E.A.T.:** What do the older students do?

**Marialice:** They usually have activities that are more specifically related to their IEP. Sometimes we’ll read a passage together and the student will be given a series of questions. To answer the questions, the student will move the cursor within the text to highlight the answer. We also have a couple of students who are completing courses through Barnes and Noble’s Online University. One of my students, Krissy, recently completed a course called, “How to predict the Oscars.” This was a huge hit with Krissy, because unlike most situations where her responses are limited to a “yes” or “no,” Krissy was able to formulate her opinion and share that opinion with other users taking the same course.

**B.E.A.T.:** How do you see EagleEyes evolving in the future?

**Marialice:** We need to get the word out, so that more people can benefit from the technology. When some of these students graduate from high school and even college, more people will understand what EagleEyes is all about.

**B.E.A.T.:** What advice would you share with other EagleEyes teachers?

**Marialice:** You need to establish a rapport with each student; know what they like and dislike. Build up trust and the student will be more willing to take risks. Know that risk-taking is an important part of the learning process and that teachers can act as role models by being risk-takers themselves. I’m not afraid of falling flat on my face or admitting that I don’t know something. This makes it easier for my students to try, regardless of what the outcome will be.

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**Donor Spotlight**

Joe Recomendes ’66 and his wife Suzanne have been major contributors to EagleEyes, enabling the program to expand and reach more students. In a recent interview Joe explains the Recomendes’ special connection to the project:

“We knew we wanted to make a contribution to the school and EagleEyes really sparked something...I thought back to the times when we experienced hospital stays with our own two kids. I remember looking around, knowing that our kids were going to be okay and thinking: that just isn’t the same for every family. By contributing to EagleEyes, we hope we can help level the playing field and help some of those families out.”

Joe and Suzanne were able to see the magic of EagleEyes first hand in a recent demonstration. They described the huge smile of the student and the contagious enthusiasm of the mom.

“Anyone who’s ever been a parent,” explains Suzanne, “understands what it’s like to want your child to be the best he can be.”
Our current students will play a huge part in this consciousness-raising. We've only just begun to tap into their potential and as they continue to grow with the technology, we're realizing more and more that every human being is smart in his own way.

Dr. Philip A. DiMattia, Director of the Campus School, has been actively involved in the EagleEyes Project from the beginning. Along with Drs James Gips and Francis X Curran, he recently coauthored a book, An Eye Control Teaching Device for Students Without Language Expressive Capacity, that describes much of the collaborative research that has been conducted since the project's inception. In a recent interview, Dr. DiMattia explains the long term vision he sees for the EagleEyes Project.

“Now that we’re past many of the technological hurdles, we’re moving into the second phase of the EagleEyes project: educational application. This phase involves several objectives, many of which are centered on raising the consciousness of a world population who could benefit from this technology. Many people are still unaware of what assistive technologies can do and how they can reduce the impact of disabilities on quality of life.

Our ultimate vision for EagleEyes is to create a society that values inclusion, a society in which each individual has a place. There’s a building excitement here and every day we’re mining gold in human potential.”

“There is no song without the singer. Each student, who uses EagleEyes, becomes the singer of their song—"I learn as naturally as I breathe. And that is the simple truth.”

Philip A. DiMattia

For information on trying EagleEyes or Camera Mouse, please contact:

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