

**Quiet Donors of MED's Largest-Ever Gift Step Forward**

*\$10.5M for the Dahod Breast Cancer Research Center*

**IN AUGUST** 2008, a School of Medicine alumna pledged \$10.5 million to her school—the largest gift in its history. But she chose to remain anonymous.

More than a year and a half later, University Overseer Shamim Dahod (CGS'76, CAS'78, MED'87) and her husband, Ashraf, have put a face—or more accurately, two faces—on their contribution, which will establish the Shamim and Ashraf Dahod Breast Cancer Research Center at the School of Medicine. The gift will also endow assistant professor and international scholar positions at the center and support MED's new residence hall.

When they made the pledge, announcing their names "didn't seem appropriate," Shamim says. The global economy was in a tailspin, and Ashraf's mobile wireless infrastructure company, Starent Networks, had been publicly held only for about a year. It was later acquired by Cisco Systems for \$2.9 billion, in December 2009. But this spring, with encouragement from MED, the Dahods decided the time was right.

High school sweethearts and practicing Muslims from Mumbai, India, the Dahods moved to the United States

in the early 1970s. They are closely connected with BU: Shamim, now a primary care physician in Chelmsford, Mass., earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the College of Arts & Sciences, worked as researcher in a MED lab for five years, and received a BU medical degree. Ashraf, a computer engineer turned entrepreneur, whose initial start-up, Applitek, developed the first cable modem, holds degrees from the University of Mumbai, the University of Michigan, Stanford University, Northeastern, and Harvard Business School, and he has several relatives who attended BU.

So, although Shamim, a two-time cancer survivor, had been treated for breast and thyroid cancers at another local institution, when they decided to support breast cancer research, she says, BU was "the logical place."

"Our connection with BU was factor number one," Ashraf confirms. "And number two is the patients that are served at Boston Medical Center. If you look at Boston,

you find that care and treatment can be very different depending on your social status. We could have made this gift elsewhere, but no other place in this city serves the same population that BMC does."

Shamim hopes that the assistant professorship included in their pledge will help up-and-coming breast cancer researchers.

"Professors with tenure already have ample opportunities," she says. "This is an opportunity for the young ones—those who are on the bottom rung and trying to climb. This gives them a chance to show their capacity, and bring out an idea that nobody has thought of about how to take care of this disease."

The \$10.5 million pledge is not the first contribution the Dahods have made to help overcome health disparities. As members of the Dawoodi Bohra, an international Muslim community based in Mumbai, they are charged to "uplift" the needy—in their case, by improving health and



CYDNEY SCOTT

↑ The pledge of \$10.5 million by University Overseer Shamim Dahod (CGS'76, CAS'78, MED'87) and her husband, Ashraf, will establish the Shamim and Ashraf Dahod Breast Cancer Research Center at the School of Medicine, endow assistant professor and international scholar positions at the center, and support MED's new residence hall.

education in Yemen, parts of India, and Myanmar.

They were involved, for example, in the construction of Saifee Hospital, a 280-bed general hospital in Mumbai that offers paid care—in rooms like posh hotel suites, for luxury-minded patients—as well as discounted and free care subsidized by a philanthropic trust. They also helped open a medical clinic in Yemen, where U.S. physicians provide pro bono specialty services on a two-week rotating basis. ANDREA BAIRD

**A Trustee's Challenge Raises \$2.3M**

*Money will go to scholarships, emergency financial aid, and other pressing needs*

**WHEN TRUSTEE** Richard D. Cohen (CGS'67, SMG'69) offered the BU community a \$1 million challenge in April, alumni, parents, and friends quickly rose to meet it. In three months, more than 5,800 Cohen Challenge contributions came in, raising \$1.3 million in new or increased Annual Fund gifts in support of BU students, for a total of \$2.3 million.

Cohen, who says that Boston University "opened his



**WEB EXTRA** The full roster of Cohen Challenge donors is at [www.bu.edu/doubleit/donorroster.html](http://www.bu.edu/doubleit/donorroster.html). Learn more about the Annual Fund and about how BU's schools and colleges use donations at [www.bu.edu/annualfund](http://www.bu.edu/annualfund).

mind" to the possibilities of education, has supported the University in many ways over the years. He serves on the Board of Trustees and has established a scholarship and a professorship. He was also the first donor to the challenge he made to the BU community, increasing his own Annual Fund gift this year, then matching the increased amount. Thousands of others followed his lead.

The money raised through the challenge, which ended at midnight on June 30, will go to a variety of BU initiatives. "The whole point of giving is to make a difference," says Cohen, who designated his \$1 million contribution to scholarships and emergency financial aid that will give more qualified students access to a BU education. The BU community's collective \$1.3 million Annual Fund gift will be used to support the University's immediate needs—within the schools, colleges, and programs chosen by each donor—including financial aid, travel and research costs for faculty and students, career services, student organizations, and improved classroom technology.

Cohen's primary motivation in issuing his challenge

← Richard Cohen says his Boston University education opened his mind. He wants to ensure that students today have the same experience.



FRED SWAY

## Elie Wiesel Gets a Place in the Firmament

*Newly discovered asteroid named for Nobel laureate*

LAST SPRING, A minor planet—also known as an asteroid—discovered by an amateur astronomer was named "Eliewiesel" in honor of 1986 Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Boston University Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities Elie Wiesel (Hon.'74).

R. E. Jones, of Santa Clarita Valley, Calif., discovered the two-mile-diameter minor planet in August 2004 from the small Francisco Observatory. Jones, who provides catalogue information for NASA on potentially dangerous asteroids, was making photographic measurements of another near-Earth asteroid when he spotted the minor planet in his photographs.

After six years of constant observation by professional observatories, Solar System object 2004PC27 was confirmed, and Jones was given the opportunity to name his discovery.

Jones chose the name, he says, because he admires Wiesel's humanitarian work, especially against genocide.

The Committee on Small Body Nomenclature of the International Astronomical Union officially approved the name "Eliewiesel" last May.

NICOLE ROJAS (CAS'12) ■

was to ensure that BU students continue to receive an education similar to his eye-opening experience. "That's important to me," he says, "and that's why I've done it."

ALLYSON GALLE (CAS'12)

## College of Engineering ECE Chair Dies

*Franco Cerrina remembered as warm, personable*



VERNON DOUCETTE

**FRANCO CERRINA**, 62, chair of the College of Engineering's electrical and computer engineering department, died on June 28.

Cerrina was found dead in a Photonics Center laboratory, discovered by a staff member. The death has been ruled noncriminal by the Boston Police Department.

President Robert A. Brown says Cerrina will be sorely missed. "Although he had only been with us for less than two years," Brown says, "Franco had already distinguished himself by his intellect, leadership, and warmth to all who had the chance to know him."

Cerrina was a great catch for BU, says Bennett Goldberg, a College of Arts & Sciences professor of physics.

"He had great experience in many fields, great integrity, and he was incredibly personable," says Goldberg. He recalls often seeing Cerrina in the gym in the morning, where Cerrina would talk about the need to stay in shape.

Wayne Rennie, director of the electrical and computer engineering department, describes Cerrina, who rode his bike to work from Cambridge, as a "wonderful, fantastic, and gentle person, who always had time for you. He always had time for your problems."

Before coming to BU as electrical and computer engineering chair in August 2008, Cerrina taught for 24 years at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he was the Lynn H. Matthias Professor in Engineering and director of the Center for NanoTechnology, a research organization specializing in advanced semiconductor lithography and nanofabrication. At Wisconsin, his research focused on the application of techniques developed for semiconductor nanofabrication to biological problems.

Cerrina, who earned a PhD in physics at the University of Rome in 1974, held 16 patents and was a cofounder of five companies.

He had more than 300 reviewed publications and was a fellow of the American Physical Society, the Optical Society of America, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, SPIE, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. LESLIE FRIDAY AND ART JAHNKE