

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

