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*Boston University*



**Boston University Medical Campus**

# Campus UPDATE

April 1990

Vol. 2 No. 4



## Shape up for spring at employee fitness fair

In response to employee concerns regarding health and fitness opportunities, Boston University Medical Center is sponsoring a health and fitness fair on Wednesday, April 25, and Thursday, April 26, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., on the H2 bridge.

Representatives from three Boston-area fitness clubs will be on hand to describe their facilities and programs and to answer employee queries.

The three facilities represented will be:

- **Boston Athletic Club** Located at 653 Summer Street, Boston. The club

**Fitness**

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## Shooting hoops for Huntington's disease

The 11th annual Hoopathon for Huntington's disease, featuring a two-hour celebrity basketball

shootout, will be held on Thursday, April 26, from 6:30 a.m. to midnight, in the Solomon Carter Fuller Men-

tal Health Center gymnasium.

As always, Medical Center employees and students are welcome to attend the event or to participate as basketball shooters, ball retrievers or scorers.

Those interested in volunteering should contact the Massachusetts Chapter of the Huntington's Disease Society of America (HDSA), which is based at the Medical Center, at 638-8333 (x8333).

To date, there is no cure for Huntington's disease, a degenerative genetic disease of the nervous system; however, researchers are currently working to identify the abnormal gene that causes it.

The money raised from the annual hoop-shoot subsidizes ongoing research and

**Hoopathon**

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*May Long, executive director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Huntington's Disease Society of America (left), staffs the Hoopathon registration table with Florence Pettengill of UH Neurogenetics (center) and Claudia Frank, a Huntington's patient who has long been involved in the Hoopathon.*

## Vernon Truell: The man behind the music

*by Cynthia Paradis*

Chief Pathology Assistant Vernon S. Truell can get pretty low—his voice can, anyway. The founder and director of the Medical Center Choir, Truell has been singing bass since age six. "When I was a boy in Savannah, Ga., I found myself imitating instruments by singing bass. I'm not sure if I'm the lowest [bass] around, but I can get very low."

Truell arrived at the Medical Center in 1969, organizing the BUMC Choir one year later. The idea was a way of bringing staffers together, he says. "I had formed a choral group of 12 people at the Deaconess Hospital in 1964. When I

left there in 1969, the group had grown to about 35 people," he recalls.

Truell organized the group at BUMC as he had at the Deaconess because he witnessed a need for staffers to be involved in "something other than their jobs."

And, as he noted recently from his office, where a taped performance of the BUMC Choir played lightly in the background, "I thought that as many people as possible should be included [in the choir], whether they were black, white, Hispanic, or Asian. I also felt a choir would be good for the Hospital patients."

The BUMC Choir had a modest launch in 1970,



**Vernon Truell**

with a handful of employees singing Christmas carols in the University Hospital's Interfaith Chapel.

Today, the group continues to draw interest,

**Truell**

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**Truell**

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with nearly 30 staffers throughout the Medical Center joining their voices. "I'd like to believe, and I truly feel, that by singing we are enhancing the image of the Medical Center. In addition, we are nurturing the patients by letting them know we care."

With its impressive combination of altos, sopranos, baritones, bass and tenor, the choir can be heard at religious and non-religious events throughout the year, including the annual Black Achievers Program and Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, and, most recently, from the balcony of the Atrium lobby, where the choir capped off Black History Month with inspiring renditions of a number of gospel tunes.

In addition to performances at events around the Medical Center, television broadcasts from the Interfaith Chapel enable patients to enjoy choir performances from their Hospital rooms.

His roots in music For Truell, it would seem that singing is in his blood. "My mother taught me how to sing and every chance I got to sing, I did."

As youngsters, Truell and his three sisters, one of them his twin, formed the Truell Quartet, which later became known as the Truell Trio when one of his sisters dropped out of the group. Amazingly, the trio stayed together for 25 years.

A deacon at the People's Baptist Church in Boston, Truell is also a member and part-time director of the men's, and men and women's choirs; occasionally, he leads the congregation in song.

"Singing makes me feel good because I am doing something worthwhile for others," he comments.

Truell expresses his hope that the BUMC Choir conveys a message of "good will and peace. And that everyone can work together in harmony without pulling each other down." □



**Above:** Under the direction of Vernon Truell, the BUMC choir practice their choral technique. The choir, which performs at events throughout the year, recently capped off Black History Month with a performance of gospel tunes at the University Hospital Atrium.



**Above:** The Truell Trio in 1947 perform on a Savannah, Ga., radio show. (Left to right: James Bignon, Mildred Truell, Vernon Truell and Vera Truell.)



**Right:** Truell directs the Deaconess Hospital Choir, which he founded in the 1960s.

## Air-conditioning: coming soon to a building near you

The unpredictable nature of Boston weather can make a monkey of the most seasoned weather-caster. That's what makes Facilities Management's decision, every spring and fall, to alternately start up and shut down the Medical Campus's heating and air-conditioning systems such a daunting one.

John Clift, Facilities Management's manager of Operations and Maintenance, explains that the air-conditioning system must be operated on a seasonal basis, and cannot simply be turned on during any given day of the year.

"An air-conditioning system for a complex as large as the Medical Campus,"

he explains, "requires thousands of gallons of water, which must be pumped into the system in the spring and drained from the system in the fall.

"The hot air from the various buildings is transferred, through a machine, into the water," he continues. "The water is then pumped to cooling towers located throughout the Medical Campus where it evaporates, taking the heat with it."

The danger, warns Clift, lies in allowing the cooling towers to fill up with water while it is still possible that temperatures will dip below the freezing mark, causing the water to freeze. "If that should happen," Clift notes,

"the cooling towers would be seriously damaged and it would be necessary to shut the air-conditioning system down for extensive repairs."

May 15 and Oct. 15 are the traditional dates of start-up and shut down, according to Clift. "Of course, those dates vary according to the pattern of the individual season," he notes. This season, Facilities Management intends to activate the air-conditioning system in late April.

"The bottom line," Clift concludes, "is that we have to be sure the cold weather is behind us before we can activate the cooling system." □

## Literacy program seeks additional voices to ROAR

There is an unusual sound in the Pediatrics Clinic at Boston City Hospital, and it is gaining the attention of both children and their parents.

The sound is ROAR (Reach Out And Read), a volunteer reading program that offers entertaining stories to children and encourages the process of literacy.

To strengthen and enrich its voice, Reach Out And Read is now reaching out for volunteers, particularly members of the community who speak Spanish or Haitian Creole.

Exposure to books at an early age, even before a child can read, is important to future success in learning to read, according to Robert Needlman, M.D., co-

*'Exposure to books at an early age, even before a child can read, is important to future success in learning to read.'*

director of ROAR and a fellow in the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at the School of Medicine. "By sharing books with children, ROAR volunteers express a love of reading that can help shape a child's attitudes and perceptions. They learn that books are meant to be enjoyed, not avoided," he observes.

### Overcoming obstacles

"For some children, learning to read can be a difficult or even unpleasant experience," Needlman continues. While most children overcome these obstacles, some face an even greater one—illiteracy. By demonstrating that reading can be fun, rather than frustrating, ROAR volunteers help nurture a child's desire to read—an essential contribu-

tion to promoting literacy.

Apart from entertaining children with stories, volunteers also convey a positive message to parents. Says Needlman, "Watching their child react enthusiastically to books can have a tremendous effect on parents' beliefs about reading to their children. It provides encouragement for them to share books with their children and to enjoy the time they spend together reading."

In addition to promoting the volunteer program, ROAR encourages pediatricians to integrate books into their consultation.

According to the organization, the presence of books during the office visit reinforces the positive reading experience in the waiting room and allows parents to ask the pediatrician such questions as what books are appropriate for their children.

### A useful tool

ROAR suggests that books provide pediatricians with a useful diagnostic tool to measure a child's cognitive, as well as emotional, development.

When the pediatrician introduces a book during a visit, it offers a non-threatening means of assessing a child's reading skills and evaluating the parent's interaction with the child, suggests Needlman.

ROAR began a year ago as an initiative of the Child Development Project, a unique collaboration between BCH pediatricians and Boston-area educators to identify and provide treatment for children with developmental problems. In association with the Boston Partners in Education, ROAR encourages community participation in helping Boston-area children succeed in learning, and in life.

For information about becoming a ROAR volunteer, contact Marilyn Rollins in the BCH Community Relations Office at 534-5122. □

## University Credit Union expands member services

The University Credit Union—which recently moved to the mezzanine (D-2) level of the Old Evans Building—is offering several new services to its members. Among them:

- Weekly payroll deductions for B.U. employees, deposited to members' accounts each week;
- NOW checking accounts, available to all members;
- University Credit Union ATM cards, valid at all Bay-Bank, Cirrus, Money Supply and NYCE automatic teller machines; and
- Direct deposit of B.U. paycheck or government check to UCU accounts.

University Credit Union President Bill Sinibaldi notes

that the Credit Union can frequently offer employees better rates on savings and checking accounts, as well as competitive rates on loans.

Sinibaldi encourages employees and their families to explore all the services the Credit Union has to offer. "People should know that we're quickly becoming a convenient source for nearly all their banking needs." □

### Correction

The February issue of *Campus Update* incorrectly reported the hours of Credit Union operation. The correct hours are: Monday and Wednesday, 1 to 4 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. □

## 115 employees turn out for Gundersen glaucoma screening

One hundred fifteen employees and employee-family members were recently ushered through a free glaucoma-screening clinic, sponsored by the Gundersen Eye Center in cooperation with the Massachusetts Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons.

Glaucoma, the second leading cause of blindness in the United States, is particularly prevalent among African-Americans, persons over the age of 35, and those with a family history of the disease. Maryellen Sheehan, assistant clinical supervisor at the Gundersen, reports that African-Americans are eight times as likely to develop the disease than is the general population.

Further, she notes that persons with family histories of glaucoma are 10 times as likely to suffer from it.

Among the 115 employees and employee-family members screened by the Gundersen, 14, or 12

percent, showed evidence of glaucoma; 83 (72 percent) showed no indication of glaucoma; and 18 (16 percent) showed no indication of glaucoma, but were advised to arrange for follow-up examinations due to other findings made during the screening.

The results of the glaucoma-screening clinic, notes Sheehan, emphasize the importance of being tested for the disease, particularly for those individuals who fall within high-risk categories.

Of those participants who showed evidence of glaucoma, 43 percent reported a family history of the disease and a full 50 percent were over the age of 35. Participants were not asked to specify ethnicity.

Sheehan also notes that an impressive 71 percent of those who showed evidence of glaucoma have since made follow-up appointments with the Gundersen, the next step in successfully treating the disease. □

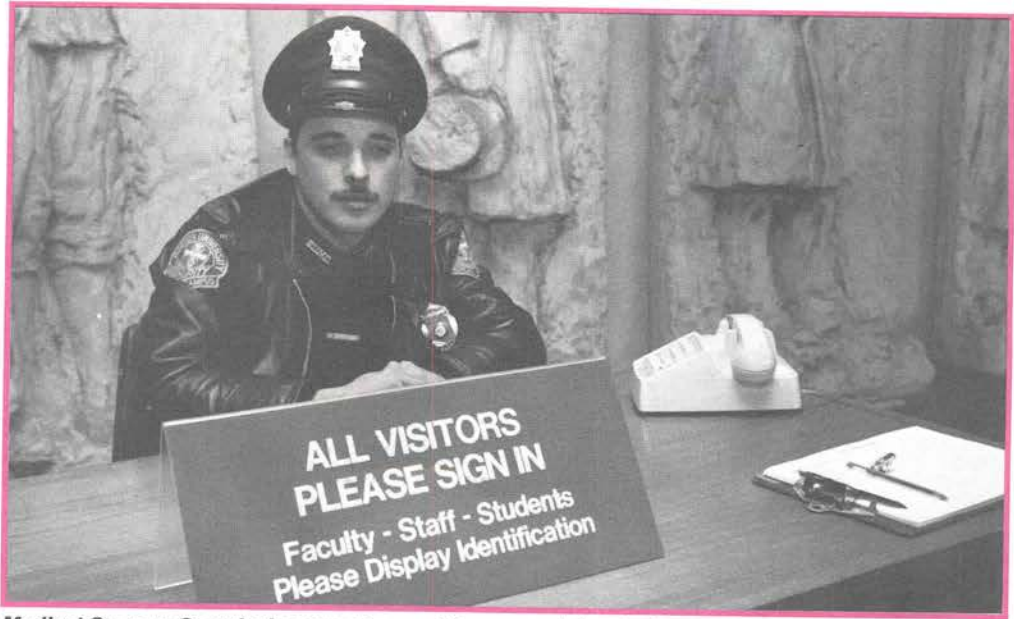
**Hoopathon***continued from page 1*

social-service programs for Huntington's patients and their families throughout Massachusetts.

Participants of last year's Hoopathon raised a record-breaking \$35,000, which allowed for the development and distribution of specially-designed wheelchairs.

During the Hoopathon, basketball shooters try to sink as many baskets as they can from the foul line within 15 minutes. Sponsors donate either an amount per basket or a flat rate per each participant.

A celebrity shootout, featuring WCVB-TV's Jim Boyd, WNEV-TV's Harvey Leonard and radio personality Jim Colony, WXKS-FM (KISS 108), and the host of WBCN's "Tank on Sports," is slated that day for 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. □

**Around-the-clock access control at BUSM**

*Medical Campus Security is currently providing around-the-clock access control coverage at the Instructional Building lobby. In addition to requiring proper identification from all persons entering the building, Security asks that employees and students display picture I.D. on outer garments at all times in order to assist Security in identifying unauthorized persons.*

**Postal vending machines offer greater variety, unlimited access**

Medical Center employees, students and visitors now have a more convenient way to meet their postal needs.

Two recently-installed postal vending machines, located on the first and ground floors of the School of Medicine's Instructional Building, offer around-the-clock access to a variety of stamps and other postal materials.

The new machines replace the Medical Center Mailroom as a source of stamps and other postal materials.

The first-floor vending machine, located just off the Instructional Building lobby, offers books of stamps and individual stamps, and is capable of changing bills as large as \$20.

The postal vending machine located on the

ground floor, adjacent to the current vending area and the BayBank automatic-teller machine, offers a wider variety of stamps and caters to more specific postal needs.

Among the items stocked: aerograms, air-mail stamps, Express Mail stamps, postcards and postcard stamps, small envelopes, seasonal stamps, special-issue stamps, and \$3 and \$5 books of stamps.

Two of the stamps currently being featured are the best-selling "Love" stamps and special-edition Lou Gehrig stamps. This machine is also capable of changing bills as large as \$20.

John Sullivan, director of Medical Campus Auxiliary Services, notes that all stamps are sold at face value, in compliance with Postal Service regulations.

He adds, "The new machines offer a wide number of choices, with the convenience of 24-hour access. In addition, the new system will allow mailroom workers to concentrate their efforts on the sorting, delivering, and shipping of U.S. and interdepartmental mail, since they will no longer be in the business of

selling stamps."

Sullivan is quick to point out, however, that the Mailroom will continue to provide stamps in the event that the vending machines malfunction.

Inquiries regarding the new machines should be directed to the Medical Campus Mailroom at 638-4156 (x4156). □

**Fitness***continued from page 1*

is equipped with a weight room, basketball, tennis, racquetball and squash courts, and a swimming pool. The club also sponsors aerobics classes.

- **Boston University's Case Athletic Center**

Located at 285 Babcock Street, Boston. The center offers a weight room, indoor and outdoor tracks, skating rink, outdoor tennis courts, two astroturf playing fields and a swimming pool.

- **Boston City Hospital's South Block Recreation Facility**

Located at 35 Northampton

Street, Boston. The facility includes a weight room, basketball court, two squash courts, table tennis and a swimming pool.

An arrangement between the Medical Center and the Boston Athletic Club also allows for a substantial reduction in the club's initiation fee.

Michael Donovan, director of the Medical Campus Office of Personnel, points out that the three facilities offer employees a choice of location, amenities and price. Says Donovan, "By providing a wide range of options, we hope to address the health and fitness needs of Medical Center employees." □

*Campus Update is published monthly by the Boston University Medical Campus Office of Business Affairs; William J. Gasper, assistant vice president. Article ideas may be addressed to Mr. Gasper or to Michael J. Donovan, director of Personnel. The publication is written and produced by the Office of Publication Services: Owen J. McNamara, director; Ted Moncreiff, editor/writer. Staff artist is Catherine LeBlanc. Photos by Julie Chen, David Keough, Lucy Milne.*