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Eclectic high-tech firm is expanding

Applied Sciences Group sees niche in medical technology

By Melissa Repko

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When a locally based engineering and software company saw its manufacturing partners leaving Western New York, it seized an opportunity for innovation.

Applied Sciences Group Inc. focuses on three major areas: programming factory machinery, coordinating energy management in department stores, and creating high-technology solutions.

Taking cues from the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and aging baby boomers, ASG executives are seeking to expand through the invention and commercialization of medical technology.

As the Cheektowaga company evolves, it is also looking to maintain and strengthen local ties. One of the founders of the 15-year-old company, Michael Buckley, joined the University of Buffalo's Department of Computer Science and Engineering about five years ago. His presence at the university has helped forge an academic-corporate partnership that has been mutually beneficial. He continues to serve as ASG's chief scientist. His cousin, Paul Buckley, is now ASG's president.

"We hope to hire, develop, and retain Buffalo's brain trust," ASG Business Development Manager Kim Grant said. She said ASG hopes to expand from 38 to 78 employees in the next five years.

ASG helped develop SmartPill's software and has worked with the Buffalo company for the past four or five years. SmartPill is a non-invasive ingestible pill that measures gastrointestinal pressure and chemistry. David Barthel, president of SmartPill Corp. praised ASG for its people, calling it "an excellent company to work with, with strong expertise."

ASG also is developing the software for the Hickey Cardiac Monitoring System made by Scivanta Medical Corp. in Spring Lake, N. J. Buffalo-based Ethox Corp. also is assisting with the production of the device that monitors blood flow, heart pumping, and valve function when a catheter is inserted into the esophagus.

HCMS will soon undergo clinical trials and Scivanta CEO David LaVance said he expects it to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration by the end of 2008 or beginning of 2009. LaVance said that ASG is "extremely well-suited for what we had to develop" and when compared to other software companies considered, "beat them

hands down.”

Most recently, ASG debuted the software Adult Talker and Child Talker for use on touchscreen portable computers. Created by Buckley and his UB students over several years, Talker enables communication by adults and children who have autism, cerebral palsy, Lou Gehrig’s disease or other communication-related limitations by producing computer-made words. ASG representatives will promote the product tomorrow at the Annual Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day conference in the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.

ASG installs software on a 15-inch laptop and users touch icons on the screen to make words. Users can personalize visual and auditory cues for their age, gender, and language. The \$6,700 device has already been approved by Medicaid, Medicare, and Independent Health.

Brian Murphy, an ASG engineer and the father of a 10-year-old autistic son, believes customers appreciate the device and get “satisfaction from knowing its in your backyard.”

Speech pathologist Diane Diminuco selected a Talker for David, an 11-year-old. The device has enabled David, who has cerebral palsy, to call his mom for the first time in his life, to grab the attention of others, and to express his love of Laffy Taffy.

“For those kids who are in wheelchairs like him, it gives them a way to get attention from people,” Diminuco said, calling the device “empowering.” “It’s so easy to walk away from people who are in wheelchairs.”

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