

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1990

THE  
PHOENIX  
GAZETTE

# BUSINESS

## Local firm develops computer system for handicapped

By Peter Hsieh  
THE PHOENIX GAZETTE

A Chandler company has developed a computer system that lets handicapped people use a telephone, tune a TV, turn on lights or operate a word processor — all without using their hands.

The \$10,000 system is on display at "The One Computer Show" at the Phoenix Civic Plaza in downtown Phoenix. More than 40 companies will have products at the show, which ends Saturday afternoon.

"We believe this is the first completely integrated system for environmental control yet produced for the handicapped," said Raymond Powers, senior software engineer for Safko International, a four-employee company that developed the system.

The system has a 288-kegabyte capacity and can be used for numerous tasks, from adjusting electrically operated beds to summoning medical help, he said.

It also can display text from books on a

computer screen and let a handicapped person "type" without touching a keyboard.

Elmora Hospital in Las Vegas and the Veterans Administration in Palo Alto, Calif., both have ordered two systems, according to D. Keith Fischer, Safko's vice president of engineering.

The Swedish government has expressed interest in buying 20,000 of them, said Mitchell Weinstein, of the ComputerLand. See #COMPUTER, Page D8

## COMPUTER

From D1

Corp. of Pleasanton, Calif.

Safko President Lawrence Safko is in Stockholm, Sweden, discussing a deal, Weinstein said. ComputerLand is in a partnership with Safko to market the system.

The system's secret is a "head mouse" — a handheld with three grasping devices that emit inaudible, high-frequency sound waves — and a slim mouth-tube into which the user puffs.

By aiming the beams from the "head mouse" at reflect points on the computer screen — by turning his or her head — and puffing into the tube, the user directs the system to carry out instructions.

Each device — telephone, TV, VCR — operated by the system requires a special actuator module plugged into the house or office electrical system.

The Swedish order — potentially a \$20 million deal — may involve production in Europe. Safko's four employees could not handle as large an order, Weinstein said.

Networking — linking computers to other computers elsewhere and calling up

the information they store — is another area of technological advance on display at the computer show, expected to draw 15,000 visitors. Admission to the show, sponsored by Dataplan, costs \$5.

"Previously, computers weren't able to talk to each other this easily," said Kathy Williams, marketing representative for Informatix Software Inc. of Phoenix.

But recent developments are making possible such things as:

■ Calling up color pictures on computer screens not only of homes or office buildings listed with realty companies, but of individual rooms, along with information about prices, financing, mortgage payments and taxes.

■ Letting a physician call up a patient's hospital medical file — including X-rays — on his home or office computer.

■ Allowing an attorney in court to call up text or pictures of evidence, instant findings, or previous cases on his lap-top computer.

All the attorney requires is the computer and access to a phone — even a mobile phone — Williams said.