

March 6, 2006

During the summer of 2005 I developed severe dexterity problems with my dominant (right) hand. I had a combination of carpal tunnel, shaking and arthritis-like problems. My fingers were constantly folding into a fist. I could not write, eat, tie my shoes, etc. Lifting a small pan of water inevitably led to mopping up the kitchen floor.

I also had mobility limitations with my right shoulder. I couldn't raise my upper arm without severe pain. Sitting at my desk to write checks was just not possible. I dealt only with merchants who accepted debit card or bank transfer payments so I wouldn't have to sign anything.

About this same time I began working with Ellen Theisen, the developer of the Vote-PAD. Ellen had a prototype of the Vote-PAD for use by people with visual impairments. She was interested in adapting the Vote-PAD for use by people with neuromuscular (mobility and/or dexterity) disorders. I agreed to work with Ellen on testing the adaptations.

I was able to mark a ballot using my left (non-dominant) hand because the ballot sleeve kept me from marking outside the bubbles. I also held a pen in my mouth to mark a ballot using the Vote-PAD. Write-in positions were available on the Vote-PAD, so I "voted" for my favorite presidential write-in candidate, Mickey Mouse, without using my dominant hand.

The clamps on the edges of the Vote-PAD pages were easy for me to turn using just about any part of my ailing right hand and arm. I could use the side of my hand or a functioning finger. I also could turn the pages of the Vote-PAD using a pen clenched in my right hand. The coated ends of the clamps kept the pen from slipping.

The Vote-PAD would definitely allow someone with a neuromuscular disorder to vote privately and independently, even if they are not accomplished at writing with a pen or marker held between their teeth. I particularly liked the ability to mark a ballot without leaving stray marks which could prevent my ballot from being successfully scanned by my precinct's optical scanner. The Vote-PAD has my vote!

Sincerely,

Aleda J. (AJ) Devies
Daytona Beach, FL