

# USC Chan

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

MAGAZINE



**IT'S PRIME TIME  
FOR PRIMARY CARE  
OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY.**

**BOOK-ING AN APPOINTMENT** | At the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books — the nation’s largest literary festival hosted every April on USC’s University Park Campus — renowned authors weren’t the only bestsellers. At the Keck Medicine of USC Health Pavilion, sensory-based activities and demonstrations, like DIY stress balls, helped keep attendees well-regulated throughout the packed weekend. “This woman was ecstatic to learn how to make a stress ball and said that she loved that she knew how she could make another, if she ever lost the one she made,” said USC Chan student Julian Prado MA ’19, at right. “I was able to talk to several families about how much they valued OT in their lives, which really fueled my fire as to why I wanted to become an occupational therapist to begin with.”





CANVAS



USC Keck School of  
Dental Medicine  
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

DANIEL BRASS  
Student

Keck School of USC  
Dental Medicine  
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

FESTIVAL OF SCIENCE

## Dear Alumni and Friends,

Earlier this year, I launched the effort to develop a new five-year Strategic Plan, the document which will set a course for USC Chan programs, priorities and growth through the year 2023. To the extent possible, strategic planning engages stakeholders — including alumni, colleagues and friends like you — in an effort to understand where we stand today, and identify where we should be headed in the future. All told, our forthcoming Strategic Plan will empower us to fulfill our mission on campus, in the local community, across the nation and in conjunction with our international partners throughout the world.

Of course, the best laid plans cannot account for every conceivable scenario in a day and age that is predictably unpredictable. Whenever uncertainty rears its head, core values and decisions based upon them are what help any organization stay the course. Whether in research, practice or education, values like compassion, inclusion and integrity are at the heart of all we strive to do here at USC Chan.

This issue of the *USC Chan Magazine* highlights outstanding recent efforts by our faculty, staff and students in primary care occupational therapy. Beginning on page 19, meet a successful patient referred during occupational therapy–family medicine rounds at Keck Medical Center of USC; see primary care policy, education and intervention through faculty expert Ashley Halle’s eyes; find out about new research results demonstrating occupational therapy’s impact on Latino safety-net patients living in the Antelope Valley; and learn how a student fellowship project intersects with patients who have diabetes at the Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center.

Nobody can predict where primary care occupational therapy will be five years from now. But when guided by a values-based strategic plan, rest assured that USC Chan will continue leading our profession there. Thank you for all that you do on behalf of the USC Trojan Family, and for our great profession of occupational therapy and research discipline of occupational science. Fight On!



*Grace Baranek*

**Grace Baranek PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA**

Associate Dean, Chair and Professor

USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

# USC Chan

MAGAZINE

**ASSOCIATE DEAN  
AND CHAIR**  
GRACE BARANEK

**DEAN**  
AVISHAI SADAN MBA '14

**DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL  
RELATIONS**  
MIKE McNULTY '06,  
MA '09, OTD '10

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
HANNAH BENET  
NATE JENSEN  
HONG LE MA '18  
JULIE MA MA '18  
ERIN OFFENHAUSER  
JOHN SKALICKY  
TRACY TANG MA '18  
JOYCE YOO MA '19

#### CONTRIBUTORS

ANA BEATRIZ CHOLO '98  
GELYA FRANK MPW '16  
CAROL HAYWOOD PHD '18  
JOHN HOBBS MA '14  
BRYAN KANG MA '18  
MICHELLE MCCARTHY  
MIKE McNULTY '06, MA '09, OTD '10  
CALEN OUELLETTE MBA '18  
YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16  
TRACY TANG MA '18  
JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04  
RUTH ZEMKE

**DESIGN**  
JHK CREATIVE

The magazine of the USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy is published twice yearly. For questions, comments, updates or story suggestions, contact Mike McNulty at [mmcnulty@chan.usc.edu](mailto:mmcnulty@chan.usc.edu) or (323) 442-2850.



USC University of  
Southern California

## FEATURES

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Remembering the well-orchestrated life of a multi-talented former USC faculty member and administrator.

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PHOTO BY ERIN OFFENHAUSER

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Occupational therapists — including faculty member Janice Rocker OTD '14, pictured above at right — toot the health-promotion horn at the USC Thornton School of Music.

# IN PRIME TIME 19-25

What's new and what's next for primary care occupational therapy at USC Chan.



PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

## CONTRIBUTORS



**MICHELLE MCCARTHY**  
Writer, *Our Better Angels*, p. 16

**Work has appeared in:** *Los Angeles Times*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *The Advocate* and CBS Radio

**Meaningful occupations:** I started playing the drums when I was 12, and it's always served as a perfect source of creativity, stress outlet and cardio workout.

**On writing *Our Better Angels*:** George Benton's resilient journey reminded me when struggles appear in life to never give up my life.



**ANA BEATRIZ CHOLO '98**  
Writer, *Living La Vida*, p. 23

**Work has appeared in:** *TIME*, *Huffington Post*, *Boston Globe* and *Washington Post*

**Writing origin story:** I started learning English in kindergarten; my dream then was to become a foreign war correspondent or actress, but I settled for becoming a big city newspaper reporter.

**On writing *Living La Vida*:** As a Latina who cares deeply about my community, any time I'm given the opportunity to write a story about a meaningful opportunity or program that can help my people, I jump on it.



**JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04**  
Writer, *Public Service Announcement*, p. 24

**Work has appeared in:** *Los Angeles Times*, *Huffington Post*, and *City of Hope*

**Writing origin story:** I won a writing contest in the fifth grade.

**Meaningful occupations:** My 1-year-old son, Kingston.

**On writing *Public Service Announcement*:** Diabetes is a complex disease; it was eye-opening to learn how incorporating OT can truly improve patients' lives and outcomes.



**BRYAN KANG MA '18**  
Occupational Therapy Student and Writer, *With The Tempo*, p. 26

**Why OT?:** My friends encouraged me, saying I would be a great fit in the profession. I ran with it and it's been awesome.

**Meaningful occupations:** I love playing guitar and being involved in music. Let's jam!

**On writing *With The Tempo*:** Occupational therapy offers such a unique and impactful perspective on so many aspects of life. It is good to see OT more involved with music on a practical level!

An illustration at the top of the page shows several hands interacting with various work-related items. On the left, a hand uses a mouse, another types on a keyboard, and a third points at a tablet displaying a bar chart. In the center, two hands hold a pen over an open document. On the right, a hand holds a tablet showing a pie chart. Below the title, another illustration shows hands using a laptop, holding a smartphone, and writing on a document with a pen. The background is a solid teal color.

## USC Chan looking ahead to 2023 with forthcoming strategic plan

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

The USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy has begun the process of building a five-year strategic plan, guiding the division in its educational objectives through 2023.

“This comprehensive strategic plan will account for internal and external opportunities and challenges; for pressing questions affecting the occupational science discipline and the occupational therapy profession at large; and for contemporary issues in health care delivery, higher education pedagogy and research excellence,” wrote USC Chan Associate Dean Grace Baranek in a Mar. 1 announcement.

To help USC Chan through the strategic-planning process, the division is partnering with AMC Strategies, LLC, a professional consulting firm that works specifically with academic medical centers. The firm counts as its clients such organizations as Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles; Stanford University and the University of California–Los Angeles. It has also worked with USC schools, including the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the USC School of Pharmacy.

### Where we are, where we’re going

USC Chan’s strategic planning process, which officially began in early January 2018, is taking place in three different phases.

During the first self-reflective phase, the division looked inward, conducting quantitative and qualitative assessments to better understand where it is today.

USC Chan leadership began this phase by selecting a steering committee to oversee the nine-month process. This group of 25 individuals represents faculty, staff and even doctoral students.

During Phase 1, the division conducted surveys, interviews and focus groups with both internal audiences as well as external audiences, including employers, clinical community partners, alumni and collaborators.

The division has also tasked faculty members Emily Schulze,

“It is vitally important that our strategic planning process be as participatory, candid and transparent as possible.”

Stephanie Mielke and Mike McNulty with assessing the division’s efforts in education, research, patient care and global engagement.

During Phase 2, the division defined its vision for the future and began to set goals. This phase included soliciting feedback from the USC occupational therapy family by holding town hall forums, steering committee meetings as well as USC Chan Board of Councilors meetings.

Whether stakeholders participate in any one of these formal meetings or simply drop an anonymous comment at [chan.usc.edu/strategic-plan](http://chan.usc.edu/strategic-plan), Baranek said it was important to hear from everyone.

“I want to express how much I value the perspective of each and every member of the USC Chan Trojan Family — faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators and partners alike,” she said. “It is vitally important that our strategic planning process be as participatory, candid and transparent as possible.”

The third and final phase, set to begin in the fall, includes approving the strategic plan, identifying effective ways for its implementation and sharing it at open forums with faculty, staff and students.

The last time USC Chan underwent a strategic plan process was in 2013. This is the first strategic plan under the leadership of the new associate dean, who hopes to build on the division’s past momentum.

“The accomplishments of the past five years have far exceeded our expectations,” Baranek said. “[But] unrealized ambitions still wait on the horizon. I look forward to ... working together with you as we set into motion our bold plans for the next five years here at USC Chan.”



PHOTO BY JULIE MA

# Say Hello, Vietnam

THANKS TO A USC CHAN INTERNATIONAL EXTERNSHIP, STUDENT TRACY TANG GOES HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD TO GET BACK HOME.

BY TRACY TANG MA '18, OTD '19

There's this airline in Vietnam that plays a song called "Hello Vietnam," without fail, every time it lands. The lyrics go something like, "One day I'll touch your soil/One day I'll finally know your soul/One day I'll come to you/To say hello ... Vietnam."

It's a little bit corny, but I remember listening to this song years ago and wondering when I would ever visit my homeland. My father worked for the South Vietnamese government, and when the communist regime took over, he was captured and put in a concentration camp as a political prisoner for more than 15 years. He married my mom after he was released, and that's when they had me. My parents and I tried to escape Vietnam by boat when I was just a

few months old, but we were caught and thrown into prison. I have no recollection of this, and I don't know how long I was there. But when I was 2 years old, my parents and I were granted asylum from the U.S. and came over as refugees.

To say that starting over was hard would be an understatement. We lived in a storage house that flooded whenever it rained, and then we moved into a non-insulated, freezing garage. My mom got a job as an esthetician and worked as a hair and nail stylist. My father moved to Texas and worked there for a few years. Unfortunately, my mom was diagnosed with cancer when I was 9 years old. We learned how to navigate the medical system and, luckily, my mom got better.





My childhood wasn't easy, but the most difficult part was the pressure to excel and reach the American Dream. I grew up understanding that a huge sacrifice was made for me to be in the U.S. and that I needed to make this sacrifice "worth it." There was literally no choice: American Dream or bust. These experiences have built me into who I am today. They explain my ambition, my almost unhealthy perfectionist tendencies and my hunger for success.

When I was researching different occupational therapy schools, I saw that USC had a unique component to their curriculum — an externship during the second year where students could choose to go to an international location. I decided, then and there, that I would be going to Vietnam. And yes, I made this decision before USC even accepted me — in fact, I hadn't even applied yet!

Completing my occupational therapy externship in Vietnam wasn't just about visiting a cool country to learn about OT. It was about returning to a place wrought with history for my family, a place that defines the very core of who I am. Even though I don't remember Vietnam, returning felt familiar, in a sense, like nostalgia of what could have been or what would have been. It felt familiar, yet so far away. I saw so much beauty and joy in where I came from, but it wasn't without pain.

My classmates and I worked at an orphanage where we observed amazing therapists working with children from the community with various diagnoses (including autism, cerebral palsy, etc.). We also spent time visiting orphans ranging from a few months to 10-12 years old. It was a life-changing experience.

On our first day, we met an adorable little boy. After playing for a bit, it was time for his lunch, but before he left, he looked at me and said, "Miss, I'm going to lunch now, but will you and your friends promise not to leave until I come back?" My heart nearly broke. The orphanage had found him at a supermarket a few

months earlier. His mother had left him there. I'm someone who doesn't cry easily, but I literally couldn't speak for a good while. I wanted to adopt all of these kids and give them the world.

At the end of the week, we held a seminar on gross and fine motor skills for therapists from Worldwide Orphans. We led a workshop on creating a fine motor toolkit from everyday materials, and then we let the therapists use their imagination to come up with whatever they could using the materials they had. The results blew all of us away. Their creations were innovative, creative and aesthetic. Their passion for learning and desire to make a

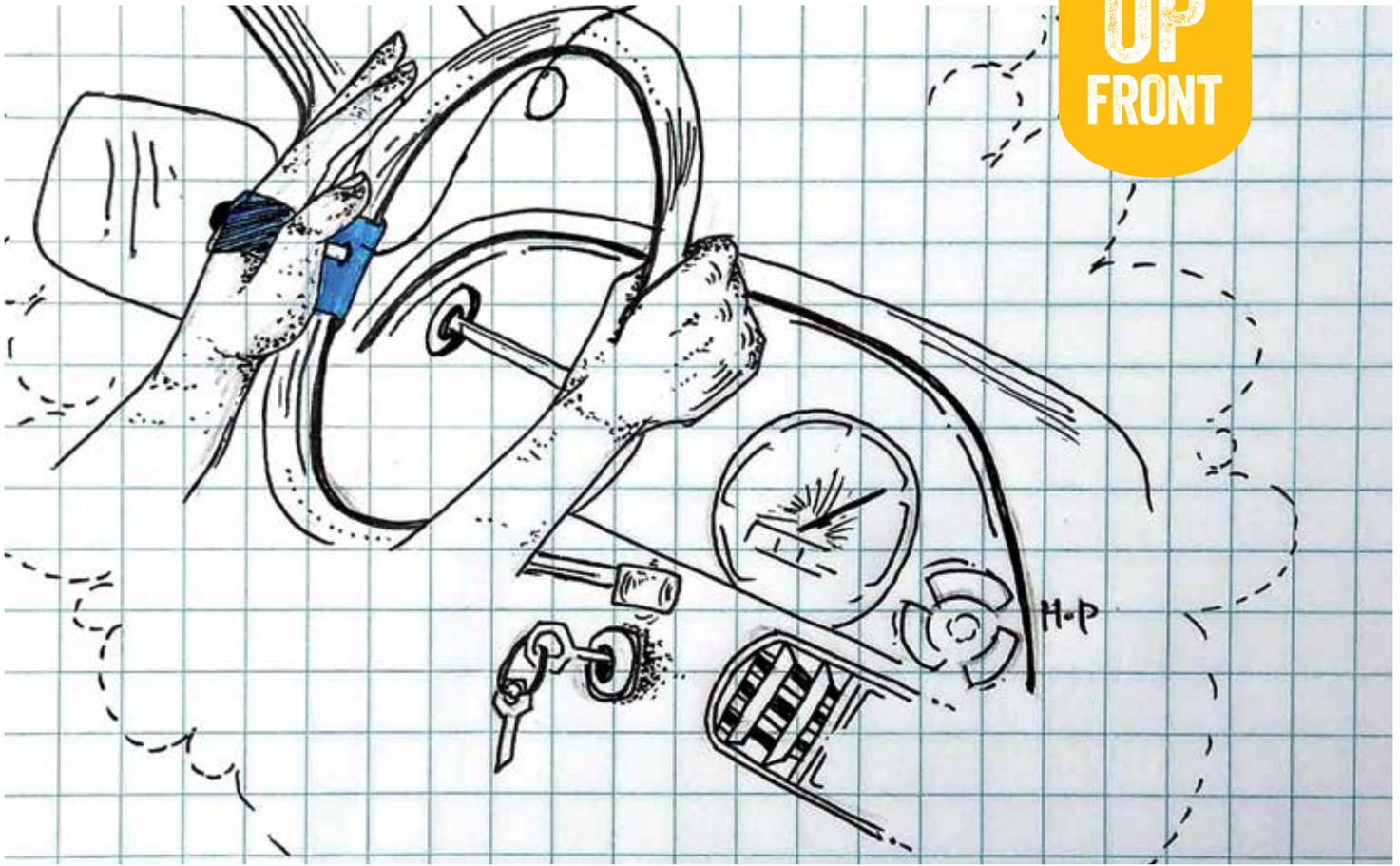
difference in these children's lives gave me inspiration and joy.

It truly was surreal to experience my externship in Vietnam with an amazing group of classmates. It was one of the most memorable, transformative experiences of my life. I've always believed that you need to understand your past in order to move forward with your future. After this experience, I've gained a better understanding of my roots. I've come away feeling blessed, a little bit nostalgic, and even more determined to create a meaningful path that will make a wide-scale difference in the future.

*Republished with permission from acupofpatience.com, Tang's personal blog.*



PHOTO BY TRACY TANG



## ART TEACHER INSPIRES AWARD-WINNING ASSISTIVE DEVICE

Harshada Sunil Patil MA '18 won the 2018 edition of the division's Mark and Semira Moshayedi Innovation Award competition with a proposal for an assistive device she calls Saksham-15. The winner of the annual award competition receives \$5,000 to develop their innovation and bring it to market.

As an undergraduate student, Patil learned how to construct a universal cuff for accom-

modating tools used in activities of daily living, such as a spoon, fork or comb. But when it comes to instrumental ADLs — life's more independent, meaningful and creative activities — Patil has never been fully satisfied with the cuffs currently available.

"My art teacher suffered from rheumatoid arthritis which limited her participation in teaching, cooking and the thing she loved the most, drawing," Patil says. "This gave me the idea to develop a futuristic device that would cater to the needs of every individual."

Saksham is a Hindi word that translates to "competence, capability, skill or efficiency." As she was designing the cuff, Patil counted at least 15 different functions that it could help a wearer perform, and Saksham-15 was born.

"I wanted to instill in them the belief that, even with the disabilities, they can perform occupations that are meaningful to them," Patil says. "As the device develops in the future, many different kinds of occupation can be performed using it, and it will be truly universal in its form and function."

## GOING VIRAL WITH GAGA

USC Chan students took to the streets of Downtown Los Angeles earlier this year for the March for Our Lives rally in solidarity with the survivors of February's Parkland, Fla., high school shooting. Along the way, they met up with singer Lady Gaga — thanks to students Carly Roberts MA '19 and Elissa Lee MA '19 who work with Lady Gaga's nonprofit Born this Way Foundation — and together filmed an Instagram video that has already racked up more than 1 million views. "We come together to march to save lives," Lady Gaga said. See the video at [tinyurl.com/changoesgaga](https://tinyurl.com/changoesgaga).



**NATIONAL PRESS FOR MS**

Faculty members Ashley Uyeshiro Simon MA '10, OTD '11 and Rebecca Cunningham MA '15, OTD '16 published "Optimal Living With Multiple Sclerosis: A Program Description and Alternative Payment Model" in a recent issue of *OT Practice*. The 12-week program — which is made possible by a partnership between USC Chan, the National MS Society and the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy — focuses on improving functioning through custom multidisciplinary approaches to health and wellness including the Lifestyle Redesign intervention approach.



**HELPING CLIMBERS GET A GRIP**

In preparation for the USA Climbing collegiate season, OTD resident Daniel Luo '16, MA '17, OTD '18 ran a clinic for the USC Climbing Team focused on upper extremity exercise and injury prevention. Luo, an avid climber and aspiring certified hand therapist, was joined by physical therapist and fellow Trojan alum Jared "The Climbing Doctor" Vagy.

"During the season, I led the team through the exercises we learned as our official warm-up before each competition," Luo says.

Proceeds from the clinic were donated to Access Fund, a national nonprofit organization that works to maintain and conserve wilderness climbing areas and environments.



**AIRTIME FOR AUTISM-FOCUSED STUDY**

Los Angeles-based television stations KCBS2 and KCAL9 highlighted a USC Chan-led research study during the stations' evening news broadcasts in early June.

The video package highlighted the National Institutes of Health-funded Sensory Adapted Dental Environments to Enhance Oral Care for Children. The ongoing project is overseen by Principal Investigator and Professor Sharon Cermak and is being conducted at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

"First thing we do is turn off the lights," said occupational science student Lucia Florindez PhD '19, to describe some of the visual, auditory and proprioceptive adaptations made to the dental environment in an effort to improve the clinical experience especially for children with autism spectrum disorder. View the story as it aired at [tinyurl.com/usc-chan-evening-news](http://tinyurl.com/usc-chan-evening-news).

**PCMAG HIGHLIGHTS LIEW'S VR RESEARCH**

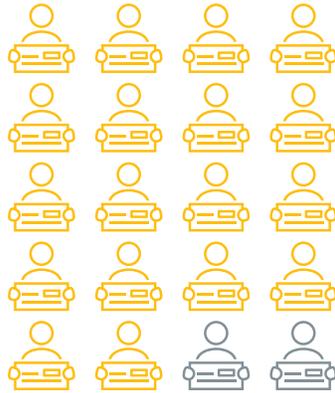
In previous issues of the *USC Chan Magazine* you've read about Assistant Professor Sook-Lei Liew MA '08, PhD '12 and the rehabilitation implications of her virtual reality research. In March, a feature article published in *PC Magazine* introduced Liew's work to even more techie readers.

"Inside VR you start to map [your own body and an avatar] together, it's astonishing," Liew is quoted as saying in the article.

Read "How Virtual Avatars Help Stroke Patients Improve Motor Function" published in *PCMag* at [tinyurl.com/uschanpcmag](http://tinyurl.com/uschanpcmag).

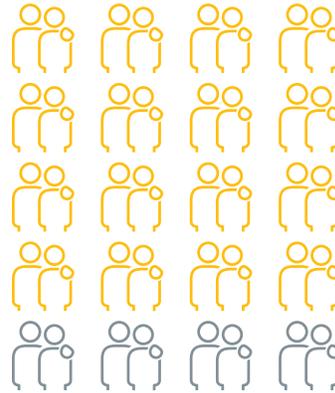


During the 2017-18 academic year, USC OTSC — the division's student-run council — gave back in oh so many ways to groups and communities across Southern California. Here are a few of the occupational therapy student body's charitable accomplishments:



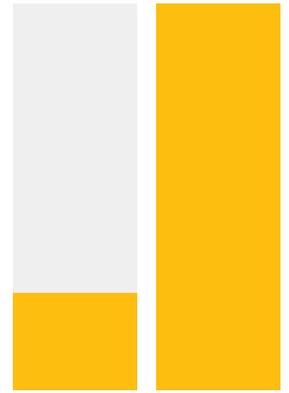
**18**

NON-PROFITS TAPPED AS PARTNERS



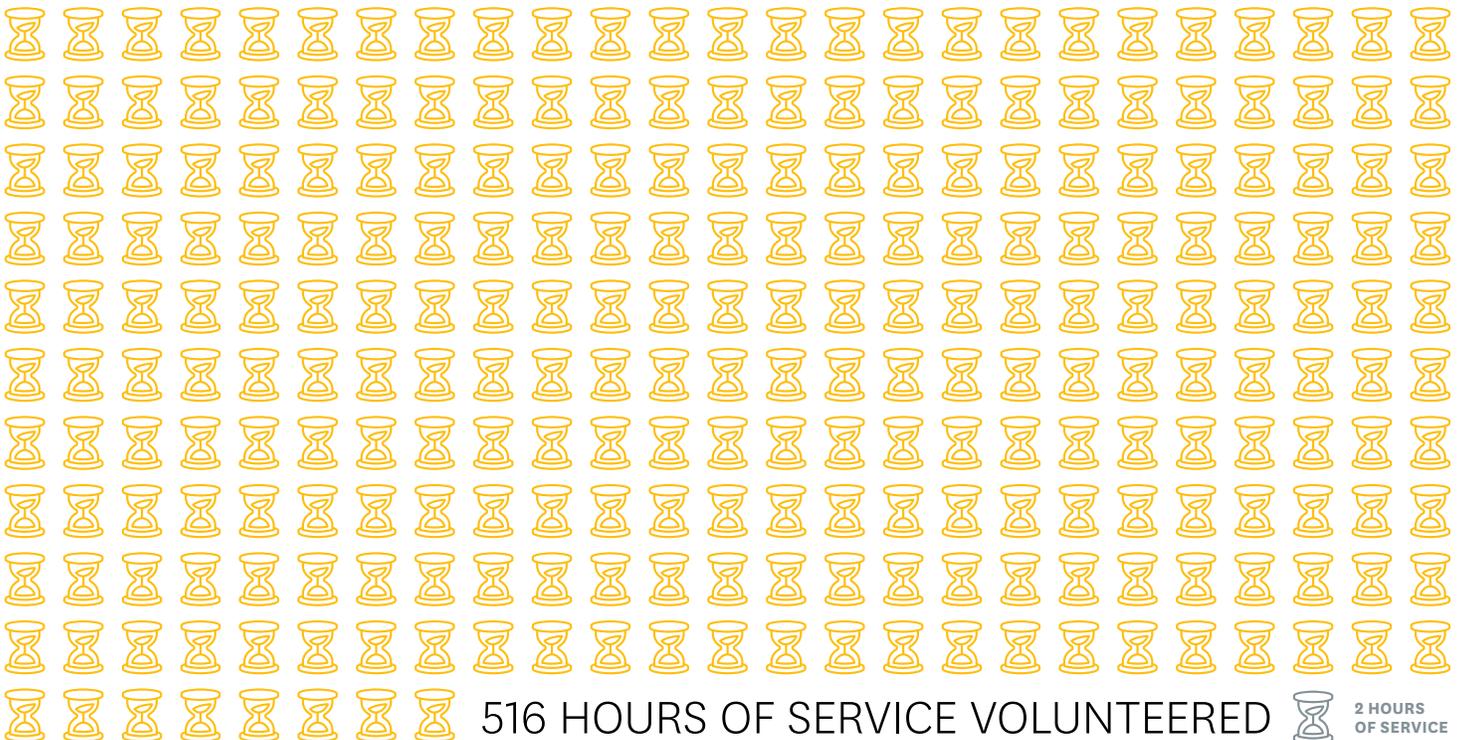
**16**

PHILANTHROPY EVENTS HOSTED



**400%**

INCREASED STUDENT PARTICIPATION



**516 HOURS OF SERVICE VOLUNTEERED**

**2 HOURS OF SERVICE**

# News Briefs

Lectures, grants, awards — there’s always so much going on at the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. Keep your finger on the pulse with these division news briefs:



## FAREWELL

### CLARK RETIRES WITH FOND FAREWELL MESSAGE

After a sabbatical year spent in reflection, Florence Clark, the division’s former administrative leader of nearly 28 years and a USC faculty member since 1976, decided to retire in early 2018. She made the announcement in an open letter addressed to the occupational therapy Trojan Family.

“Retirement evokes a multitude of competing feelings, but the overriding one I am experiencing today is gratitude for so much that cannot be adequately captured in words,” she wrote.

With her husband, John Wolcott, Clark has relocated to Bishop, Calif., to enjoy a very well-deserved retirement.



## CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

### COMMENCEMENT COMMENTARY ON CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The keynote address from Varun Soni, USC’s vice provost for campus wellness and crisis intervention and dean of religious life, highlighted USC Chan’s 76th annual commencement ceremony in May.

Record numbers of American college students today, in what Soni has described as “a full-blown mental health crisis,” are reporting mental health-related challenges that impact everyday quality of life. In response, Soni acknowledged occupational therapy’s unique value to help students develop health-promoting habits, routines and self-care skills necessary to successfully meet the demands of life as independent young adults on campus.

“It took me a long time to realize a simple truth,” Soni said. “It is not selfish to take care of yourself.”



## SEAL OF APPROVAL

### CDC SEAL OF APPROVAL FOR USC DIABETES PROGRAM

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized the USC Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice as a partner provider of its National Diabetes Prevention Program. The DPP is the CDC’s framework for diabetes prevention efforts to help people with prediabetes participate in affordable, high-quality lifestyle change programs aimed at reducing the risk of type-2 diabetes and improving overall health.

To become a DPP provider, organizations must meet the CDC’s standards for in-person or online lifestyle change programs, including the use of a CDC-approved curriculum, staffing and training requirements and demonstrating data-based efficacy.

The OT Faculty Practice’s Lifestyle Redesign Diabetes Program is a 16-week intervention based on Lifestyle Redesign principles for educating and implementing healthier habits, routines and occupations.



## SCHOLARSHIPS

### AOTA SCHOLARSHIP HELPS STUDENT WISE-N UP

Professional program student Patricia Trejo MA ’19 was one of three recipients of the AOTA E.K. Wise Scholarship during the past academic year. Established in the 1960s, the scholarship supports female students from diverse backgrounds to build a workforce that is more responsive to the needs of underserved populations.

“I feel so thankful and honored to have been an E.K. Wise scholarship recipient,” Trejo said. “This scholarship reinforced my passion and commitment to providing occupational therapy services to diverse and marginalized communities.”



## FACULTY

### FACULTY TREK TO CAPE TOWN CONGRESS

USC Chan was represented by 13 faculty

members during the recent Congress of the World Federation of Occupational Therapy in Cape Town, South Africa, the first time that the quadrennial event has been hosted on the African continent.

“The theme of the Congress was “Connected in Diversity: Positioned for Impact” and beautifully reminded us of the power we have as a profession in coming together as a diverse, collaborative and truly global community,” said Daniel Park MA ’09, OTD ’10, associate clinical professor and USC Chan’s director of global initiatives.



## FACULTY

### ZEMKE RECEIVES AOTA AWARD OF MERIT

Professor Emerita Ruth Zemke received the

2018 Award of Merit from the American Occupational Therapy Association. This rarefied honor recognizes those select few who have made notable contributions to the profession. It was formally presented to Zemke at the association’s recent conference in Salt Lake City. She is the 11th Trojan alumni or faculty member to have received this award.

Since the 1970s, Zemke’s scholarship has explored the concept of occupation, especially its temporal and spatial characteristics, and its relationships to human health, identity, meaning and experience. The co-principal investigator of the landmark USC Well Elderly Studies of the 1990s is an internationally recognized leader in the development of occupational science.

“I’m honored to be here with you, to share my hopes for the future — healthy occupations for everybody, everywhere, every day,” she said in her award acceptance speech.

Read more career reflections from Zemke in this issue’s “A Deeper Meaning” column on page 32.



Assistant Professor Beth Pyatak.

# USC CHAN STUDY SHOWS HOW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY CAN IMPROVE HEALTH, QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH DIABETES

**THE NIH-FUNDED STUDY IS THE FIRST OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY RESEARCH TRIAL TO APPEAR IN DIABETES LITERATURE.**

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

When Gerardo Flores, 25, was diagnosed with type-2 diabetes, his world was turned upside down.

Fueled by 7-11's brightly packaged fare and sugary drinks, the teenager would spend his leisure time watching Netflix movies and playing video games.

But the unexpected diagnosis would need to change all that, requiring Flores to eat consciously, monitor his blood sugar levels and begin a regular fitness program.

"For me, it was a chore," he admits. "I didn't really care about it."

So when Flores heard about a new study that aimed to use occupational therapy interventions focusing on the lifestyle-related activities, habits and goals for young adults who are managing their diabetes, he resisted at first, choosing denial over action.

"I just didn't want to even talk about my diagnosis," he says.

Eventually, though, he had a change of heart, hoping to get better control of his diabetes to pursue a dream career in criminal justice.

## Getting REAL

Designed by USC Chan Assistant Professor Beth Pyatak '02, MA '04, PhD '10, MS '15, the study — called Resilient, Empowered, Active Living with Diabetes (REAL Diabetes) — is an activity-based intervention meant to address the needs of young adults like Flores.

# Real diabetes

**RESILIENT, EMPOWERED,  
ACTIVE LIVING WITH DIABETES**

To conduct the study, Pyatak and her team recruited 81 English- and Spanish-speaking Angelenos, ages 18-30 years old, who have diabetes and are from a low socioeconomic background.

Participants were randomly assigned to either of two groups.

Forty-one, including Flores, took part in the REAL Diabetes intervention with a licensed occupational therapist for a minimum of 10 hours over six months.

At the center of this intervention is a manual, which guides the therapist and patient through seven modules that include suggested goals, activities supporting those goals and relevant educational materials.

The modules covered assessment and goal setting, living with diabetes, access and advocacy, activity and health, social support, emotions, and well-being and long-term health.

The remaining 40 participants were assigned to a control group that consisted of an initial home visit, during which they received a packet of educational materials and 11 follow-up telephone conversations.

## The results are in

Participants who completed the REAL Diabetes program showed significant improvements in their hemoglobin A1C levels, in their diabetes-related quality of life and in the strength of their habits for self-monitoring blood glucose.

"I just didn't have good habits," says Flores, who worked with resident Alyssa Concha-Chavez MA '14, OTD '15 during the study. "She went through my daily and weekly schedule and found little ways to help me out."

Some changes Flores made included placing his glucose-reading machines in places to remind him to monitor it regularly (in the kitchen, next to his bed), learning to advocate for himself with doctors and incorporating exercise into his routine.

"This study saved my life," says Flores, who now studies the administration of justice at East Los Angeles College. "Alyssa saw where I lived. She heard my dreams and goals and she set me on the right path to reach them."

The results of the study were published in *Diabetes Care* earlier this year. It was the first time an occupational therapy clinical trial appeared in a diabetes-focused literature or journal.

"Occupational therapists are the experts of choice when it comes to the intersection of everyday activities, lifestyle and better management of chronic diseases," Pyatak says. "The REAL Diabetes study validates our distinct contributions to an everyday diabetes care team and shows the real differences that occupational therapy can make in the lives of the 30 million Americans who have diabetes."

The study's co-authors include Cheryl Vigen MS '03, PhD '07; Jesús Díaz '05, MA '08, OTD '09; Jeanine Blanchard MA '99, PhD '10; USC Chan alumni and doctoral students; and faculty members from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research and the Yale School of Nursing.

REAL Diabetes was funded by a three-year K01 grant funded by the NIH National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Pyatak is the principal investigator.



# Research Buzz

## SITUATING SCI EXPERIENCES

The newly-minted Dr. Carol Haywood shares her PhD dissertation research and related work, supported by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, aimed towards making neurorehabilitation even more personalized and patient-centered.

BY CAROL HAYWOOD PHD '18

Adolescents and young adults experience the highest rate of acquired spinal cord injuries in the United States, with causes including motor vehicle accidents, acts of violence (often gunshot), sports injuries and falls. There are an estimated 17,500 new cases of SCI each year, and approximately 50 percent occur among individuals between 16-30 years old. Muscle paralysis, loss of sensation and autonomic dysfunctions are common, and SCIs can have devastating impacts across the life course, which can negatively impact quality of life and function.

In spite of the disproportionate rate of SCIs in adolescence and young adulthood, most SCI research and rehabilitative care is focused on either pediatric or adult care, leaving a gap for adolescents and young adults who are confronted with a disabling injury at a time when they would otherwise be focusing on increasing independence.

Identities are fragile during this time of life, and experiences matter. Typically, adolescents and young adults are focused on differentiating from their parents or guardians and expressing their own interests and skills. They prioritize peer relationships, including romantic partners, and they explore educational or vocational goals and roles. Milestones like obtaining a high school degree, becoming a parent, attending university or earning an income are difficult to achieve, especially considering cognitive skills for judgment and decision-making do not fully mature until about age 25. As a result, adolescents and young adults face many risks to their mental and physical health.

As an occupational therapist, I wanted to know more about what happens for this population beyond hospital walls. Most individuals with SCI go on to live in private homes with support of caregivers, which is where I began my research — to learn from lived experiences of adolescents and young adults with a SCI and their caregivers living in the community.

Using narrative and phenomenological research methods, I have been immersed in specific moments and experiences of day-to-day life for young people adjusting to SCI in order to better understand how activities after injury are experienced; how adolescents and young adults engage as actors in their own lives; and how experiences with an acquired disability may impact development.



PHOTO BY HONG LE

Functional changes from SCI stimulate a process of reconstructing the self and re-imagining the future. In many cases, adolescents and young adults with SCIs lose the ability to do the activities they once found meaningful without assistance. Daily activities and participation require careful and continuous coordination with caregivers. In some cases, there was great support to be active again after injury; in others, disability led to isolation and missed opportunities to learn about themselves and possibilities for the future.

Teenagers are sometimes judged as being disengaged or irresponsible, but in my research, I observed adolescents and young adults with SCI boldly facing the world each day. To be involved in meaningful activities, they took big risks in the face of barriers like inaccessible environments, social stigma and discrimination. All of my participants had unique circumstances, skills and interests; their stories revealed contextual factors that must be addressed in rehabilitative care that maximize functional outcomes and quality of life.

For future research, I am focused on optimizing services for this population. Rehabilitation must be tailored to individual factors, including developmental needs and community contexts, in order to improve long-term outcomes, and occupational science provides a valuable framework to make positive changes.

# GenNext

Meet the occupational scientists and therapists pushing the profession forward.

## OZAN YAY MA '19

**Age:** 26

**Hometown:** Huntington Beach, Calif.

**Undergraduate studies:** Biochemistry at the University of California, Riverside

**OT area of interest:** Mental health and pediatrics

**Meaningful occupations:** Crafting, making home videos, eating Thai food

**Describe OT in a few words:** The intersection of life, love and happiness

**You were born in Turkey and went to UCR for college; what were your career goals as an undergrad?**

When I was in first grade, my parents moved our family from Istanbul to Southern California. Growing up, I was always interested in how people interact and wanted to work with people, one way or another. At University of California, Riverside I majored in biochemistry, which helped bridge my understanding of how the microscopic world impacts our macroscopic reality.

**You worked at an education nonprofit, City Year, as an AmeriCorps team member; what inspired that opportunity?**

During undergrad, I associated my goals of working with people with attending medical school. As I approached my senior year of college, however, I was presented with the opportunity to work as an AmeriCorps tutor at a local elementary school in Riverside. I learned that working in a hospital wasn't the only way I could make an impact. A month before graduation, I landed a full-time position with City Year to continue my AmeriCorps service in Watts, Calif.

**How did your experience working in Watts spark your interest in occupational therapy?**

Early into the school year, I noticed a small section of the playground where students during recess could sit under the shade of trees. I thought that space was perfect to teach the students chess. With the support of the principal, I painted 12 chessboards on the tables, and every recess, I taught students how to play chess. Soon students began to fill the small garden area, which became known as "Mr. Yay's Chess Corner." Little did I know that I was helping these students through engagement in occupation.

**What are your future plans as an OT?**

One thing that has been on my mind since getting into OT is, "How did it take me so long to find OT?" Having first heard about our field through a former student at USC, I feel as though it is now my responsibility to further the awareness. Whether it is through printing my "Love Occupation" T-shirts or creating mini-documentaries about OT life, I want to raise awareness of our profession!



Faculty clinician Jodie Murakami and  
USC Keck patient George Benton.



# Our Better Angels

## KECK HOSPITAL OF USC HELPS GUIDE A NEWLY WIDOWED PATIENT THROUGH ITS COMPREHENSIVE CONTINUUM OF CARE.

BY MICHELLE MCCARTHY

George Benton, 88, lived for his wife, Norma. Theirs was a 63-year love affair.

After she was diagnosed with dementia two years ago, Benton renovated their home for better accessibility. Other than a caregiver who came in three hours a day to help, he took care of Norma's every need.

Last December, Norma took an accidental fall, broke both legs and was off to a rehab facility. On Christmas Eve, she came down with the flu, which Benton also caught while visiting her. Norma developed sepsis and was sent to Long Beach Memorial Medical Center. Weakened by the flu, Benton fell at home and was taken by ambulance to Long Beach Memorial. As he was being admitted to the emergency room, Norma passed away in her hospital room upstairs.

Thus began a long road to recovery, both physically and emotionally for Benton, one in which Keck Hospital of USC would play a big part.

"I spent eight days at the hospital with the flu," Benton says. "Then they transferred me to a rehab hospital in Huntington Beach. I was trying to get well enough to go to [Norma's] funeral, but then I got a bowel blockage. When they realized I needed surgery, they sent me to Keck."

A parastomal hernia was discovered to be the culprit of Benton's bowel obstruction, and because of his complex medical history, he needed the higher level of care that Keck Hospital of USC prides itself on providing.

"He had a history of tongue cancer, bladder cancer, hypertension, diabetes, atrial fibrillation and sick sinus rhythm, so he had a pacemaker," says Jodie Murakami MA '16, OTD '17, an assistant clinical professor at USC Chan and occupational therapist at Keck Hospital. "He was a high-risk surgery, so he was transferred to our special needs center."

Benton underwent surgery to repair the hernia and place a feeding tube in January, but his recovery was marked with a litany of complications including a lower intestinal infection, pneumonia, abdominal abscesses, hyponatremia, malnutrition and a sacral wound.

"I went there expecting I'd be there for a week," Benton says. "I was there for more than two months."

When he awoke from surgery, Benton couldn't even sit up on his own, a harsh reality for someone who was previously independent. "I thought I was going to die right there in the intensive care unit," he recalls. "I never felt so bad in my entire life."

### Getting up and getting on

That's when he met Murakami, who would not only serve as Benton's occupational therapist but also as his long-term advocate and confidant. By helping him grieve and cope with the loss of his wife, Benton eventually would refer to Murakami as "his angel."

Their first order of business was to get Benton standing up, which took the assistance of two people at first. Murakami assessed he had strong arms but weak legs, an ideal candidate for lift equipment that allowed Benton to stand without assistance. "I would just guide him up," she says. "That gave him the confidence of, 'Wow, I'm standing.' Then I took off the footplate to give him the actual feeling of standing. A few days later, we put the machine away, and he stood up by himself."

These were the small advances Murakami used to encourage Benton whenever he got down on himself. Another motivational method she used was to take photographs of Benton's achievements — standing up, getting into a chair — and print and post them on his hospital room wall. "I'd put them right where he could see so he wouldn't forget all the progress he made."

Once Benton was walking, Murakami helped him relearn everyday activities such as bathing and getting dressed.

"With his stomach pain, I had to show him different ways of putting on his socks, shoes and pants to avoid bending," she says. "When you meet the patient, you have to take time to learn about them, not just their physical needs but what they enjoy, their history, what they like to do, what's meaningful. With OT, we have the ability to not only strengthen and assist with balance and walking distance, but also give them a sense of themselves again. I think George forgot."

Benton hadn't been outside in a month, and once Murakami took him out in his wheelchair, she noticed a difference in his overall demeanor. He started to open up and slowly began to envision life after the hospital.

"At first, he wasn't ready to talk about his wife. Every time I tried to ask what he liked to do, it always included his wife, and that made him sad. So I started talking about moving forward — about his children and grandchildren. We talked about his 30 years in the Air Force and his career as an electrical engineer. I noticed he started talking about his wife in past tense. Then a month out, he'd say things like, 'What kind of electric scooter should I get to go to that shopping center by my house?'"

Even though Benton was still experiencing abdominal pain, Murakami fought to get him transferred to Keck Hospital of USC's intensive inpatient acute rehab unit, rather than be discharged to another facility.

"He was making progress, but it was slow and the wounds on his abdomen weren't healing that fast," she says. "I knew he would recover much faster in intensive therapy since he was independent at his baseline."

### Tipping the scale

Murakami's persistence paid off. After two-and-a-half-months through Keck Hospital's continuum of care — from surgery to intensive care to inpatient rehab — Benton was discharged in early March. He is now back at his Huntington Beach home, living with his granddaughter. Though still in a wheelchair, Benton says he's around 70 percent back to normal.

"I have PT and OT twice a week," he says. "I also have a home health nurse who comes in three times a week. I go out in the backyard and walk around with my walker every day. I plan to start getting out more often as I'm feeling better."

While Benton is focusing on the future, he can't help talking about his gratitude for the experience at Keck Hospital of USC.

"That is one fantastic hospital," he says. "I had the best people in the world taking care of me. They gave me such great care. I'm completely indebted to them. I've been in a lot of hospitals, but none compare to Keck. On a scale from 1 to 10, they're a 25."

# 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT: MARY LAWLOR

BY YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16

EARLIER THIS YEAR, PROFESSOR AND ASSOCIATE CHAIR OF RESEARCH MARY LAWLOR WAS ELECTED CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOUNDATION. AS A LEADER IN FAMILY-CENTERED RESEARCH — EXAMINING AND PROVIDING CARE FOR THE FAMILIES OF THOSE WITH ILLNESS OR DISABILITY—LAWLOR HOPES TO ENGAGE AOTF MEMBERS AND BOLSTER THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE PROFESSION DURING HER THREE-YEAR TERM AS CHAIR. HERE ARE FIVE MORE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT LAWLOR:



PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

**1 She's always been drawn to arts and sciences.**

It wasn't until her junior undergraduate year that Lawlor decided to major in occupational therapy. "I liked the combination of arts and sciences and also the holistic approach to OT, in terms of looking at real people in real life," she says.

**2 She moved to Southern California for a position at USC.**

The Northeast native moved to SoCal in 1996. "I was recruited to join the division as an associate professor by [Associate Dean Emeritus] Florence Clark." In 2003 she was promoted to a professor, and in 2013, received a joint appointment as professor of pediatrics at Keck School of Medicine of USC, where she focuses on family-centered care.

**3 Her research has pioneered an approach called "collective narrative."**

Lawlor and her team work with parents, grandparents or other family members of children with disability or illness, many of them from underserved communities, by asking them to share their stories and expertise about raising children with special health care needs. "These narratives have turned out to be very powerful and taught us a great amount," she says. "We have also heard from many of the families that it has also been important and therapeutic for them to have the chance to be listened to and have their experiences matter in a significant way."

**4 She is committed to moving the profession forward.**

Lawlor believes in social learning, which has guided her involvement in professional organi-

zations, foundations like AOTF and research contributing to the profession's forward momentum. "I am obviously a firm believer of the importance and power of OT," she says. "I think it takes cultivation of new opportunities with others who care about the same issues in helping to secure the future of the profession."

**5 She enjoys creative expression in her free time.**

"I sometimes describe myself as a painter, and sometimes I don't," Lawlor says, with a laugh. "It just depends on how much time I create for it." In her free time, Lawlor also enjoys listening to, telling and writing stories. "I am also kind of a news junkie," she admits. "I know that sounds more like work, but I really enjoy it!"

# IN PRIME TIME

No practice area has received quite as much attention during the past decade of health reform as primary care. In this exciting new era, Trojans are demonstrating just how valuable occupational therapy services can be for patients, providers and organizations alike. Meet the USC Chan researchers, educators, clinicians and students making a real difference during this prime time for primary care occupational therapy.



# Life, Interrupted

**Rheumatoid arthritis sidelined Sandra Robles for nearly two decades. Now, thanks to the right medication and occupational therapy, she's ready to get back to the business of life.**

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

It started with inexplicably red, swollen knuckles.

Sandra Robles, then 16, showed her pediatrician who thought she had probably only bumped her hand.

But then unbearable pain began to set in — first, in Robles' inflamed knuckles, then in her feet. Suddenly, it was difficult for her to accomplish everyday tasks like opening doors, getting dressed and even walking.

It all culminated late one night when the teenager got up out of bed to use the restroom. Barely able to walk, she stumbled onto the toilet and fell asleep.

"My mom awoke me the next morning before she went to work," Robles says. "She was like, 'What is wrong with you?!'"

Another trip to the pediatrician — and a referral to a rheumatologist — confirmed that Robles had juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, a disease that affects 50,000 children in the United States.

## A deluge of drugs

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disorder in which the body mistakenly attacks its own healthy tissues, including the membranes lining joints. The inflammation can eventually cause deterioration and destruction of bone and cartilage, creating excruciating pain and deformities.

"Even when you're not moving, it just hurts," says Robles, whose condition progressed to affect her left knee, elbows and shoulders.

What followed was a deluge of drugs — Enbrel, Prednisone, Kineret, Remicade — as doctors searched for the right medications to relieve Robles of her daily pain.

The process can take years and, through trial and error, ended up sidelining Robles from some of life's major milestones: For example, she never learned to drive and she was forced to drop out of college, where she was studying animal science, after just one year.



*People with arthritis — both the wear-and-tear type of typical aging and the autoimmune rheumatoid arthritis — work with occupational therapy practitioners to participate in everyday activities, stay safe and meet personal goals.*

## Seeing what physicians don't

Robles met occupational therapist Samantha Valasek MA '15, OTD '16 during a regular doctor's visit at Keck Medicine of USC.

Valasek is one of a handful of occupational therapists nationwide practicing alongside primary care physicians in what is expected to become occupational therapy's next frontier.

"Occupational therapists are trained to look at the big picture," Valasek says about the value the profession can bring to primary care. "We might see contributing environmental triggers or behavioral patterns that physicians may not have the time to investigate."

One day a week, Valasek, a USC Chan assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy, does rounds with two to four USC family medicine physicians, taking part in appointments and offering occupational analyses for patients.

"I scan their charts and, based on their diagnoses and narratives, will identify those who look like they might benefit from occupational therapy," Valasek says.

The occupational therapy can be as short as a 10- to 15-minute intervention, during which Valasek will help the patient identify and replace unhealthy daily habits, or as long as recurring appointments at the USC Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice.

The partnership proves advantageous to patients who benefit from the trained eyes of two different professionals looking at health from two different perspectives.

## A new outlook on life

Seeing how much she was struggling, Robles' physician connected her with Valasek, who treated Robles for about eight months. During one of her first sessions, Robles made a list of all that she hoped to accomplish through occupational therapy.

"One of my biggest issues was my energy level," Robles says. "The fatigue brings you down. You get depressed because you want to do things, but you just don't have the energy."

Valasek helped Robles devise strategies to make better use of her limited energy.

The two focused on Robles' most strenuous activities and how she could modify them to save energy — for example, using a wheeled laundry basket to save her from carrying one.

Valasek also coached Robles to create healthy daily routines like eating healthfully, getting enough sleep and, most importantly, asking for help from her family when she needed it — a tall order for the fiercely independent Robles.

The occupational therapy strategies — coupled with the right medication — began to make a difference, relieving Robles of the pain and fatigue she had experienced for years.

Though she experienced a setback earlier this year with RA destroying her left ankle's cartilage, requiring bone-fusing surgery (which is why she uses a cane to get around), Robles says she's feeling great.

"She seems more confident now, knowing she can manage her energy and can get things done," Valasek says. "She went from thinking she might not ever be able to work again to thinking one day she might get a job."

A long-time animal lover, Robles dreams of running an animal sanctuary. And for the first time in years, it's a dream that could be within reach — thanks to the comprehensive health care she received at Keck.

"I was able to talk to Sam about anything, and she helped a lot," Robles says. "More than anything, she taught me to see beyond my RA diagnosis and have a whole new outlook on life."

“One of my biggest issues was my energy level. The fatigue brings you down. You get depressed because you want to do things, but you just don’t have the energy.”

– Sandra Robles



# A Master Generalist

**Thanks to faculty member Ashley Halle, USC Chan is helping set the standard for primary care occupational therapy.**

**BY MIKE McNULTY '06, MA '09, OTD '10**

There are no dull moments in primary care occupational therapy. One moment you're discussing how chronic pain impacts your patient's sleep routines, and the next, you're helping a person with Graves' disease adapt daily activities because of changing fine motor abilities.

According to Assistant Clinical Professor Ashley Halle MA '11, OTD '12, that moment-to-moment variability is part of what makes the practice area so exciting.

"You have to be a master generalist," says Halle, who is USC Chan's coordinator of primary care residency and services. "You have to shift your thinking so rapidly, and draw upon a breadth and depth of knowledge and skills, because you never know who's coming through the door next."

That clinical reasoning is put to the test in practically every primary care encounter which, in simple terms, is defined as a person's first point of contact with the healthcare system. Services are typically more generalized than specialized, encounters occur nearer to the home and the patient-provider relationship is sustained over time. As Halle says, "ideally it's comprehensive, accessible and coordinated."

To some clinicians, that may sound like a groundbreaking approach to occupational therapy. But Halle is quick to point out that primary care topics like health management, wellness and prevention have been cornerstones of the profession for decades.

"I think a fair amount of practitioners are doing primary care, they just don't know it," Halle says.

## Timing is everything

Yet what does seem revolutionary, especially at the present moment in American health care, are opportunities to showcase occupational therapy's value as a holistic service that complements what primary care physicians and sites offer.

Among what still remains of the Affordable Care Act, alternative payment initiatives like the Federally Qualified Health Center and the Patient Centered Medical Home still hope to transform primary care with better integration, coordination and communication among multidisciplinary providers. Population health, which lies at the intersection of public health and care delivery, is an increasingly cited objective for clinical, regulatory and professional organizations. More comprehensive approaches to meeting peoples' needs have been gaining traction in settings that have long focused exclusively on physical medicine.

"I'm especially excited about occupational therapy's role in addressing behavioral and mental health issues in primary care," she says, reflecting on the obvious fact that primary care providers and sites haven't historically had the time or capacity to fully address these concerns. "Your head is connected to your body."

## Making "why not?" work

Halle has made a career out of seeing opportunities on the horizon and maneuvering to capitalize upon them. A licensed occupational therapist for less than a decade, Halle is already among the profession's most respected experts on this topic.

"When I was a student nobody was talking about primary care," she says. "There wasn't much there. But we said, 'Why not? Let's see if it works.'"

Something is indeed working, thanks in no small part to Halle's continuing efforts. She was the lead author of a primary care update article published in April's issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Every spring, she teaches a two-unit elective course on the subject to 30 USC Chan master's students, and is responsible for mentoring fieldwork students and clinical doctoral residents who are training in primary care sites, including those affiliated with the USC Keck medical enterprise. On behalf of the American Occupational Therapy Association's Commission on Education, she is co-authoring a new official association document about primary care education within programs' curricula.

That policy and educational perspective is reinforced by the time Halle spends on the frontline of primary care delivery. As part of the USC Geriatrics Assessment Program, funded by a three-year \$2.5 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Halle conducts home visits with older adults living throughout Southern California.

During these home safety evaluations, Halle also screens patients' motor, cognitive and behavioral abilities for safe and independent



community living, and can follow-up with her colleagues for any potential issues she flags. What may seem like a throwback to house calls from a bygone era of medicine, Halle says, is actually part of an increasing trend to address patients' holistic health needs within their places of residence.

"It's incredibly valuable to see where your patients are living their lives, spending the majority of their time," she says.

## Life-changing magic

Showcasing occupational therapy's value to patients, providers and payers alike will continue to inspire Halle well into the future, even though it is difficult to predict what exactly that future will look like a decade from now. But whether she's working side-by-side with a patient, teaching the next generation of primary care clinicians or pushing forward profession-wide issues, Halle knows that incremental change is the secret to long-term success.

"In primary care, small things can have tremendous impact," Halle says. "It's the magic of quiet, steady change over time."

# Living La Vida

## By partnering with community health workers and clinics, the ¡Vivir Mi Vida! study connects underserved Latinos living on the edges of Los Angeles County with lifestyle-based occupational therapy.

BY ANA BEATRIZ CHOLO '98

Concepción Navarrete was worried about her health. At 63, the mother of two adult children was pre-diabetic and had high blood pressure, but didn't know what to do about it. She was eating the wrong foods. And although she was making attempts at exercising, it wasn't making a difference.

That all changed after her Zumba teacher told her about a new USC pilot study to determine if *¡Vivir Mi Vida!*, a 16-week lifestyle intervention translated as “Live My Life!,” could benefit the health of rural, middle-age Latino adults.

Fortunately, Navarrete was chosen as one of the study's 40 participants. All were between the ages of 50 and 65, had accessed services from a local safety-net clinic within the past year and lived in and around Antelope Valley. While a particular health condition wasn't required to be eligible, many participants were struggling with conditions ranging from depression to hypertension.

Navarrete had a feeling her life was about to drastically change.

“Whatever I was going to learn, I knew it was going to help me,” she says. “I was really happy.”

### Valley speak

Five years ago, a team of researchers from USC Chan began collaborating with various community partners, patients and stakeholders to develop *¡Vivir Mi Vida!*, which was initially aimed at an urban-dwelling, senior demographic akin to the groundbreaking USC Well Elderly studies of the 1990s. It quickly turned into a community-driven, grassroots effort focused on rural, safety-net patients from minority groups.

“We brainstormed about how the program could be extended to serve older people who were underserved and at high risk for developing chronic conditions or early onset disability,” says Stacey Schepens Niemiec, the lead investigator and USC Chan assistant research professor. “We looked to our community partners to identify patients truly in need of a healthy lifestyle program.”

While Latinos in rural communities may be able to access basic medical and social care, specialized preventive services like occupational therapy are not commonplace. The Antelope Valley, located 60 miles north of Downtown Los Angeles, has the poorest health indicators in Los Angeles County including diabetes, obesity, heart failure and asthma.

“When comparing the baseline health and well-being of our participants in this study to that of Well Elderly participants, you can see that this patient group was experiencing much more severe health problems at an earlier age,” Schepens Niemiec says.

### Promoting with promotoras

Schepens Niemiec led a multiethnic team with direct ties to the community, including

three *promotoras de salud* — the Spanish term for community health workers — and additional staff from the Antelope Valley Community Clinic and Antelope Valley Partners for Health.

A native of Mexico, *promotora* Laura Guzmán has decades of experience working in the community and a knack for connecting with people.

“The people in this area were waiting for a program like this,” she says. “They felt forgotten in this small community, *parientes pobres* [poor relatives]. They felt like nobody cared about them.”

Guzmán helped recruit all *¡Vivir Mi Vida!* participants and spent a year, along with Assistant Clinical Professor Jenny Martínez '09, MA '10, OTD '11, developing the program materials. Those included handouts, a picture-based flipchart and a loosely scripted manual, covering topics like healthy foods, exercise, specific health concerns such as diabetes, arthritis and cancer, and managing stressors like sleep and finances.

Tailoring a culturally responsive study was more than just translating words into Spanish. The team was careful to consider the health beliefs and

**Continued on page 24**



From left to right, Jenny Martínez, Stacey Schepens Niemiec and Laura Guzmán.

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

practices of the community. For instance, family is of paramount importance in Latino culture, and research shows that family cohesion is a significant health protective factor in Latinos. Thus, the program incorporated opportunities for family to be involved in their loved one's health practices.

Guzmán supervised two other community health workers as they delivered 16 weekly sessions, which were conducted more like a conversation between neighbors as opposed to a lecture in a class. Bits of educational content were followed by discussions about how it applied to participants' daily life.

"As *promotoras*, we try and help our community in various ways," Guzmán says. "If they have health concerns, we help them figure out what are the right questions to ask a doctor so they feel more confident walking into an appointment. We speak the same language, like a bridge between the community and the resources they provide and Latinos."

### Keep the change

Although the study was not a randomized controlled trial, its findings are incredibly encouraging. The negative impact of symptoms on daily activity significantly improved, even to a 12-month follow-up. Patients also showed improved clinical markers such as reduced systolic blood pressure, as well as improved health behaviors such as reduced sodium and saturated fat intake. These results — published in May's issue of *Primary Health Care Research & Development* — will serve as a foundation for implementing a large-scale trial that will provide more definitive evidence about the value of such a program for late-midlife Latinos.

"It demonstrates the feasibility of extending occupational therapy services to underserved, hard-to-reach patients," Schepens Niemiec says.

As for Navarrete, she claims to be a reformed person.

She's become a pro at reading labels in the grocery store. Her cholesterol level dropped from 200 to 80. Her blood pressure is now a perfect 120/76 and she is still using the Fitbit she and all of the other study participants received, walking at least a mile-and-a-half every day.

"I changed everything," she says. "I stopped eating sweets. I stopped eating salt. They gave us recipes that I still use."

There was only one thing that she did not like about *¡Vivir Mi Vida!*, however.

"It was too short. I wished it could have gone on for longer!"

# Public Service Announcement

## Student fellowship project focuses on streamlining occupational therapy services — starting with diabetes patients at Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center — within public health systems.

BY JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04

Elissa Lee MA '19 has long had an interest in health issues that disproportionately affect low-income patients. While working for several different non-profits, health care and social services agencies in the Bay Area, she started seeing the same patients returning again and again.

"There was this revolving door syndrome," she says. "Patients would come in for one thing, but the underlying issue wasn't addressed, so they would come back. That's why I wanted to pursue occupational therapy at USC, because there are more preventive treatments, including the research we're doing now."

In April, Lee became the first occupational therapy student to receive the Gehr Student Innovator Award from the Keck School of Medicine of USC. The award includes a six-week fellowship, during which Lee will implement a new project focused on low-income patients with diabetes seen at the Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center's Adult West clinic.

"Diabetes is a such a complex disease," Lee says. "Often when patients come into primary care — especially at L.A. County — doctors have to treat multiple medical conditions and don't really have the time to help patients navigate changes in daily habits."

### Making inroads

Successfully managing diabetes requires incorporating a constellation of health behaviors — including diet, exercise and medication routines — into a patient's life. What sounds deceptively simple can be especially difficult due to obstacles that patients of lower socioeconomic status face.

Lee is being mentored by Assistant Professor Beth Pyatak MA '04, PhD '10 who, for the past year, has been implementing a pilot study integrating occupational therapists into the Adult West clinic.

"OT has been trying to make inroads into primary care for a long time, but we haven't had a lot of evidence to point to that demonstrates our value in that setting," says Pyatak, who leads USC Chan's Lifestyle Redesign for Chronic Conditions research team. "We have interventions that could help people in a primary care setting, but this is one of the first examples of a project that is rigorously evaluating the impact of having an OT embedded within the care team at the [Adult West] clinic."

While more research and data need to be analyzed, results from the study so far have been positive — not just for patients, but for the clinic.

"We've seen 80 percent of patients have significant improvements in their blood sugar levels," Pyatak says.

Bringing OTs in the primary care mix also allows the team of providers to practice more effectively.

"They can better understand what their patients need," Pyatak adds. "And they want to continue having an OT in the clinic, so that's a significant outcome as well."

### The personal touch

During the year-long study, occupational therapists, including Associate Research Professor Jesús Díaz MA '08, OTD '09, have worked alongside Adult West patients with uncontrolled diabetes to provide highly personalized health care strategies.

"We try to make and break habits," Díaz says. "We look at patients' life circumstances and day-to-day activities, and try to infuse healthy strategies as opposed to making generic recommendations."

A large part of providing occupational therapy to patients in the clinic is navigating a variety of everyday circumstances and barriers.



Jesús Díaz and Elissa Lee at one of LAC+USC's adult outpatient clinics.

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

“For example, if you work long hours and don’t have a break to take your insulin or check your blood sugar levels,” Lee says. “Or you need to exercise, but your neighborhood isn’t safe to go take a walk. It’s looking at these types of issues.”

Not only are these individualized interventions improving blood sugar levels, they’re giving patients a better sense of control over the disease.

“We want people to feel confident that this is something they can manage,” Díaz says. “Everyone we work with wants to have better control of their diabetes — they’re just having difficulty doing so.”

#### Guide for integration

The team is also looking to expand primary care OT for other chronic conditions, including pain management and smoking cessation.

Part of Lee’s fellowship — which is administered by the aptly-named Gehr Family Center for Health System Science — will help do just that. She is writing a manual of best practices and procedures for implementing occupational therapy within primary care sites at public clinics and health systems.

“It’s a guide for how to get started,” Lee says. “We’re analyzing how OT can be utilized in certain settings, and putting these pieces together so other clinics can create a similar service.”

This vision is in line with the mission of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, the nation’s second largest municipal health system composed of 19 centers and four hospitals, which continues expanding resources and care to treat chronic conditions.

OT’s involvement in the care of chronic conditions can also help lift some of the stigma and fear.

“There are a lot of misconceptions about diabetes, and I hope our research will help patients feel empowered to make lifestyle changes,” Lee says. “I hope that we can help people manage their care well and live healthy and meaningful lives.”

# WITH THE TEMPO

## WHEN IT COMES TO PREVENTING INJURY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND USC MUSICIANS ARE IN PERFECT HARMONY.

BY BRYAN KANG MA '18

With a swift upstroke, the conductor picks up into Beethoven's four-movement Symphony No. 5 in C minor. The orchestra quickly carries through the most memorable motif — *bub, bub, bub, buuuuuuuuu* — in perhaps all of classical music.

The typical performance of Beethoven's fifth symphony ranges from 30 to 40 minutes, and requires thousands of violin bow motions, trombone slides and flute trills of its players. An untold many more hours

of practice are required for synchronic perfection in a live performance.

But behind beautiful melodies is an all too common reality that many musicians endure.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 50 to 76 percent of professional musicians have reported sustaining musculoskeletal injuries. That statistic highlights an occupational hazard for many musicians: overuse of their limbs with consequent pain and potential for debilitating disorders such as osteoarthritis and entrapment neuropathies.

Yet due to the competitive and rigorous nature of the industry, musicians often leave their pain associated with overuse untreated.

"Sometimes you woke up in the morning and just felt like your body was not at 100 percent," says USC Chan graduate student Annie Ting MA '17, OTD '18, who studied violin performance as an undergraduate at the prestigious USC Thornton School of Music.

"With such a rigorous schedule of practice, no one really had time to address any pain they were feeling."

### A noteworthy partnership

In response, USC Thornton launched its Musician's Wellness Initiative in 2015. The initiative partners with USC's own faculty experts on topics like hearing protection, managing performance anxiety and yoga-based breathing. The ultimate goal is to educate student musicians about ways to decrease their chances of injury to have a longer, healthier career in music.



“Knowing how it is to have an injury and not feel you are at your full capacity as a musician is a devastating thing,” says Bill Kanengiser, assistant professor of practice at USC Thornton and a founding member of the school’s Wellness Committee.

Kanengiser, a renowned classical guitarist, has seen plenty of performance-related injuries throughout his 30 years at USC Thornton, including his own.

“It is vital for us musicians to know how to reduce risk for injuries and address the issues sooner to recover faster.

### Re-tuning for the future

In February, USC Chan visited the Musician’s Wellness Initiative to share occupational therapy’s perspectives and techniques for decreasing risk for overuse injuries.

Ting was joined by Chan faculty members Janice Rocker OTD ’14 and Chantelle Rice Collins ’07, MA ’08, OTD ’09 at the weeknight seminar to share advice and tips with Thornton students.

“Because many instruments require an asymmetrical method of holding and playing, we as occupational therapists must examine the differences that playing the instrument may have on both sides of the body,” says Rocker, who is an assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy and a Certified Hand Therapist. “A musician’s slouched posture might cause him or her to compensate by extending the wrist a little too much, resulting in pain.”



Annie Ting, right, simulates a violinist’s playing posture while Janice Rocker watches.



PHOTO BY ERIN OFFENHAUSER

Rocker identifies ergonomic factors involved in the seated playing posture of USC Thornton faculty musician Bill Kanengiser.

By evaluating how musicians use their bodies, not only when playing their instruments but also when engaged in typical daily activities, occupational therapists can customize ergonomic interventions which help minimize risks to the spine, muscles, tendons and nerves.

“When you are playing guitar bent forward with your elbow and wrist flexed, how does that posture compare to when you use your smartphone or laptop?,” Rocker asks.

Rice Collins, director of the USC Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice and an associate professor of clinical occupational therapy, further expanded the point with a discussion on Lifestyle Redesign strategies. Lifestyle Redesign is an occupation-based treatment approach that focuses on helping people build healthier lifestyles through sustainable daily habits, routines and behaviors.

Rice Collins highlighted common barriers to effective time management, including unrealistic expectations, over-committed schedules and procrastination. She noted that the lack of a consistent daily schedule, due to practices and performances, makes musicians especially prone to de-prioritizing self-care necessities such as diet and physical activity. Lifestyle Redesign can instead offer a framework for fostering self-analysis and mindfulness of how everyday occupations outside music might be impacting students’ ability to perform at their highest level.

Thanks to the Musician’s Wellness Initiative, USC Chan is helping Trojans who might not otherwise encounter occupational therapy enact healthier lives, inside and outside of the performance hall. That is a major — not a minor — development.

“There is now a direct engagement between healthcare and music departments,” Kanengiser says. “There are amazing resources available and we want our students to keep utilizing them.”

## FEATURED PUBLICATION



Given today's prevalence of diagnoses including sensory processing disorder and autism spectrum disorder, research on the efficacy of sensory-based interventions is in high demand. Occupational therapists have historically been at the forefront of evaluating and treating children and youth with sensory integration challenges, and USC Trojans continue to be leaders in studying issues surrounding sensory integration intervention.

Assistant Professor of Research **Stefanie Bodison** '92, MA '93, OTD '10, Postdoc '13 and alumna Diane Parham MA '81 published "Specific Sensory Techniques and Sensory Environmental Modifications for Children and Youth with Sensory Integration Difficulties: A Systematic Review" in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* earlier this year.

Bodison's and Parham's review examined the efficacy of sensory techniques and sensory environmental modifications by surveying more than 11,000 academic publications dating from January 2007 to May 2015. Of those, eight studies met the inclusion criteria for methodological

design reflecting high levels of evidence and participants' demonstrated sensory integration difficulties. The studies consisted of both remedial and compensatory intervention strategies focused on increasing each individual's participation at home, school and in the community. Bodison and Parham identified strong evidence supporting specific sensory interventions including: Qigong sensory treatment; weighted vests; slow, linear swinging; and the incorporation of multisensory activities in preschools.

As a follow-up to the review, Bodison reiterated the importance of practitioners' post-professional training in sensory integration. Due to the very individualized nature of sensory processing difficulties, clinicians must have the knowledge and expertise to evaluate whether a child's specific sensory characteristics make him or her a good candidate for these interventions. "Specific Sensory Techniques and Sensory Environmental Modifications for Children and Youth with Sensory Integration Difficulties: A Systematic Review" is available online at [ajot.aota.org](http://ajot.aota.org). —Bryan Kang MA '18

# In Print

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**Grace Baranek** was the lead author of “Cascading Effects of Attention Disengagement and Sensory Seeking on Social Symptoms in a Community Sample of Infants At-Risk for a Future Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder” published in *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*. Baranek also co-authored articles published earlier this year in *Autism*; *Autism Research*; *Autism and Developmental Language Impairments*; and *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

**Stefanie Bodison** authored two entries in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Abnormal and Clinical Psychology* published by SAGE Publications, Inc.

**Karen Crum** co-authored “Delivering High Quality Hip Fracture Rehabilitation: The Perspective of Occupational and Physical Therapy Practitioners” published in *Disability and Rehabilitation*. The article was co-authored by USC Chan students **Carin Wong** PhD '19 and **Sun Hwa Chang** MA '17.

**Mary Lawlor** co-authored “Beyond V40.31: Narrative Phenomenology of Wandering in Autism and Dementia” published in *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*.

**Sook-Lei Liew** was the lead author of “A Large, Open Source Dataset of Stroke Anatomical Brain Images and Manual Lesion Segmentations” published in *Scientific Data*. **Lisa Aziz-Zadeh** and staff member **Julia Anglin** were among the co-authors, who also included USC Chan students **Kaori L. Ito** MA '16, PhD '21; **Jennifer Chan** MA '18; **William Nakamura** MA '17; **David Saldana** MA '19; and **Allie Schmiesing** MA '18.

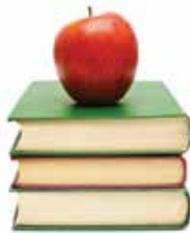


**Shawn C. Roll** co-authored “A Pilot Study to Precisely Quantify Forces Applied by Sonographers While Scanning: A Step Toward Reducing Ergonomic Injury” published in *Work*.

**John Sideris** co-authored “First-Grade Cognitive Predictors of Writing Disabilities in Grades 2 Through 4 Elementary School Students” published in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*.

**Ashley Uyeshiro Simon** co-authored “Multidisciplinary Team Treatment Approaches to Chronic Daily Headaches” published in *Headache*.

**Cheryl Vigen** and **Elizabeth Pyatak** co-authored “Diabetes Empowerment Council: Integrative Pilot Intervention for Transitioning Young Adults With Type 1 Diabetes” published in *Global Advances in Health and Medicine*.



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## CLASS NOTES

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**Amber Angell** PhD '16 was awarded the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's 2018 Nedra Gillette Endowed Research Fellowship for her study titled “Using an Interest-Based Approach with Young Adults with Autism: An Exploratory Mixed Methods Study.” Angell is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Arameh Anvarizadeh** '05, MA '06, OTD '07 was elected chairperson of the Credentials Review and Accountability Committee of the American Occupational Therapy Association's Representative Assembly.

**Tracy Becerra-Culqui** '05 was the lead author of “Mental Health of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth Compared with their Peers” published in *Pediatrics*. Becerra-Culqui is a postdoctoral research fellow at Kaiser Permanente's Department of Research and Evaluation.

**Aaron Eakman** PhD '07 was named a member of the AOTA Roster of Fellows in 2018. Eakman is an associate professor at Colorado State University.

**Karen McCarthy** MA '04, OTD '08 published “Dating as an Occupation: Swipe Right for Occupational Therapy” in the March issue of *OT Practice*. McCarthy is an assistant professor at Dominican University of California.

**Rachel Proffitt** Postdoc '14 received an Intervention Research Grant from the American Occupational Therapy Foundation. The one-year award will fund a pilot evaluation of the *Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT)*® – *BIG* intervention upon motor function and performance of 50 people who have sustained a stroke. Proffitt is an assistant professor at the University of Missouri.

**Wendy Wood** MA '88, PhD '95 was named the 2018 Ruth Zemke Lecturer in Occupational Science by the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA. Wood, who is a professor at Colorado State University, will deliver the lecture in October at SSO:USA's annual conference.

Several USC Chan alumni attended the Occupational Science Europe Conference in Hildesheim, Germany in late 2017. Professor Emerita **Ruth Zemke** opened the conference with an invited keynote presentation. Other Trojans attending or presenting at the conference included **Eric Asaba** PhD '05; **Michelle Elliot** PhD '14; **Susan Forwell** MA '89, PhD '05; **Jeanne Jackson** MA '86, PhD '95; and **Elizabeth Larson** PhD '96.

# CAROL STEIN '81, MA '84

## MUSICIAN, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, EXEMPLARY FRIEND.

BY PROFESSOR GELYA FRANK MPW '16

**F**ormer USC faculty member and administrator Carol Stein '81, MA '84 died at her home on Feb. 18, 2018, surrounded by family and close friends. She was 77.

A two-time USC alumna, Carol did her master's research on hand rehabilitation. Together with her thesis committee chairperson Elizabeth J. Yerxa, she published her study, "A Test of Fine Finger Dexterity," in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* in 1990.

Recognizing Carol's abundant talents and outstanding personal qualities, Betty Yerxa, then professor and department chair, hired her to serve as administrative assistant and director of admissions. Consequently, Carol participated in the scholarly conversation led by Yerxa that culminated in founding the discipline of occupational science in 1989 and was a co-author on the first OS publication in 1990. Among other things, we can thank Carol Stein for the beautifully apt concept of "orchestration" of people's daily occupations.

In 1989, Carol took a position at the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Medical Center with the charge to create an occupational therapy education program. Under her leadership, the program built demand to the point of accepting students from all 50 states. Carol also led the first Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) of the WLA VA physical medicine and rehabilitation services unit. She prepared most of the manuals still used in the rehabilitation department.

Carol had become Chief of Occupational Therapy at both the West Los Angeles and Sepulveda VA campuses before retiring in 2009. Her department included almost two dozen occupational therapists, the largest in the entire VA system. She also successfully introduced Tai Chi and Qigong programs, drawing patient referrals from throughout the hospital.

### A prodigy, a prognosis

Because of Crohn's disease beginning in her 20s and neurological disability from later head trauma, the real story of Carol's professional life goes deeper. Occupational therapy was Carol's second career.

Carol was a musical prodigy from the age of 3. She was someone for whom her piano teacher, the renowned Natalie Limonick, arranged a session with a couple of visiting UCLA faculty colleagues: violinist Jascha Heifetz and cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. Carol was then 9 years old.

As an undergraduate music major at UCLA, Carol was one of three accompanists — with her teacher Limonick and another instructor — for the Music Department's Opera Workshop. Carol's playing was exceptionally musical and lyrical, besides the fact that she could read music almost perfectly on sight.

Laura Fenster, Carol's friend at UCLA and later piano faculty member at the Sherwood Conservatory in Chicago, recalls a time when Carol accompanied the cello studio: "The cello teacher told his student that the student should play with the same kind of singing tone as the accompanist (Carol), which is totally unheard of. Usually we pianists are told to sound like a string instrument."

During her life, Carol recounted how, after a major surgery for Crohn's disease, she overheard a doctor predict that she would not live to see 30. This cruel prognosis seems to have stiffened Carol's resolve to live her life — then a wife and mother of small children — and to live it beautifully. Two weeks before she died, she said that, in light of that prognosis, she considered every day thereafter to be, in her words, "a gift."

Not long after the surgery, Carol sustained a head injury in a car accident that affected use of her left hand. It put an abrupt end to her piano career. Against this background of chronic disease and disability, Carol's quiet dignity and wicked sense of humor especially stand out.

### Living a well-orchestrated life

Carol was a delightful friend.

Once, she agreed to give me piano lessons, and I played a piece I had practiced. "How did I do?" I asked. "Beautifully," she said, "in all three tempos."

When I was invited to write a chapter for an occupational therapy textbook, I had to have Carol co-author it with me. After all, she had noticed that if we published together, the authors would be Frank and Stein!

Carol's husband, Philip, comments: "Carol had two major passions in her retirement. First, was knitting. We started going on annual cruises, and her biggest decision was not what to pack to wear, but which knitting project she should bring along. She was determined that before she died, every member of her immediate family would have a hand-knitted fisherman blanket, often more than one, and a good supply of knitted socks."

Her husband Phil, daughters Amy Poulos and Rebecca Stein, sons-in-law Greg and Rob, and grandson Elijah were not the only beneficiaries. Carol knitted for the friends she loved, and she had many. She made sweaters for Adam and Noah, the sons of her Eritrean-born occupational therapist colleague Letty Woldu and husband Mengis Gebremeskel. Carol considered them her adopted family. I treasure a blue afghan that Carol knitted for me.

As a result of occupational therapy and disciplined practice of Qigong, Carol regained significant fine motor control of her left hand and the stamina to play. Carol and Laura Fenster eventually performed *Fantasie in F minor for Piano Four Hands* by Franz Schubert in public concert in Chicago.

Carol Stein's brilliance and good-heartedness were accompanied by a keen critical sensibility. She did not suffer fools and mean-spiritedness. Using her remarkable gifts even with severe loss and limitations, she created an exemplary life. Her story is about many things — among them, the importance of carefully selected and well-orchestrated occupations in achieving a life well lived.

*Listen to Stein and Fenster's 2014 performance of Schubert's Fantasie in F minor for Piano Four Hands online at [chan.usc.edu/carolstein](http://chan.usc.edu/carolstein).*



Carol Stein '81, MA '84. Photo courtesy of the Stein family.

# A DEEPER MEANING

## The 2018 recipient of the American Occupational Therapy Association's Award of Merit, Ruth Zemke reflects on five decades of contributions to occupational science and occupational therapy.

BY PROFESSOR EMERITA RUTH ZEMKE

I've been thinking about the past and my occupations lately, perhaps as an informal life review. I'm pleased at how each memory brings forth people (often my students) with whom I've engaged in the many variations of my occupational patterns.

**Fifty years ago**, I had convinced my northern Wisconsin family that, against all their expectations, I was not going to be a teacher but instead study for a career none of us had ever seen or heard of: occupational therapy. With the benefit of my savings and a scholarship, I was able to make up the difference in expenses that the occupational therapy program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison would cost, compared to the expected cost at the nearby State College, winning my dad's support for the plan!

I had been married to Wayne Zemke since my junior year at UW, worrying my family about my academic perseverance, but surprised them by receiving my BS in OT degree faster than the planned sequence, in the UW's first mid-year graduation ceremony. I passed the AOTA exam, receiving lifetime certification as an OTR (oh, how times change such promises!), and had begun my practice as a generalist in occupational therapy, saying goodbye to academia forever (never say never!). Practicing occupational therapy in pediatric mental health, developmental disability evaluation and home programming, pre-vocational evaluation and neuro-rehabilitation encouraged me to wonder about the polyphyletic (look it up — it's a great word for the breadth of our practice) nature of occupational therapy and question the common denominator in these practice areas (we didn't talk about occupation in those days).

**Forty years ago**, I had added career experiences in an acute care hospital, community-based residential mental health and a skilled nursing facility and administration, as we moved geographically and I looked for new challenges. We had "gone back to school" for Wayne's PhD studies and then I too decided to complete a MS degree in Child Development. With faculty encouragement and some federal health care professions scholarship support, I earned a PhD in that field with a minor in the new field of Adulthood and Aging. Even more challenging, our son, David, was born while we lived in a one-bedroom, married-student apartment in WWII Quonset housing at Iowa State University. After a year of searching for a place with jobs for two new PhDs, Wayne and I had found them near Milwaukee, enabling us to return home to Wisconsin where we bought our first house and settled down to live happily ever after.

**Thirty years ago**, I had been a tenure track assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee when Wayne got a job offer from Southern California. In an amazingly timely stroke of luck, a faculty position opened at USC. I met Betty Yerxa, inspiration and guide into the conceptual world of occupation, and my life changed. I became part of one of the most outstanding academic programs in the country and began the work that has focused the rest of my career — the development of occupational science.

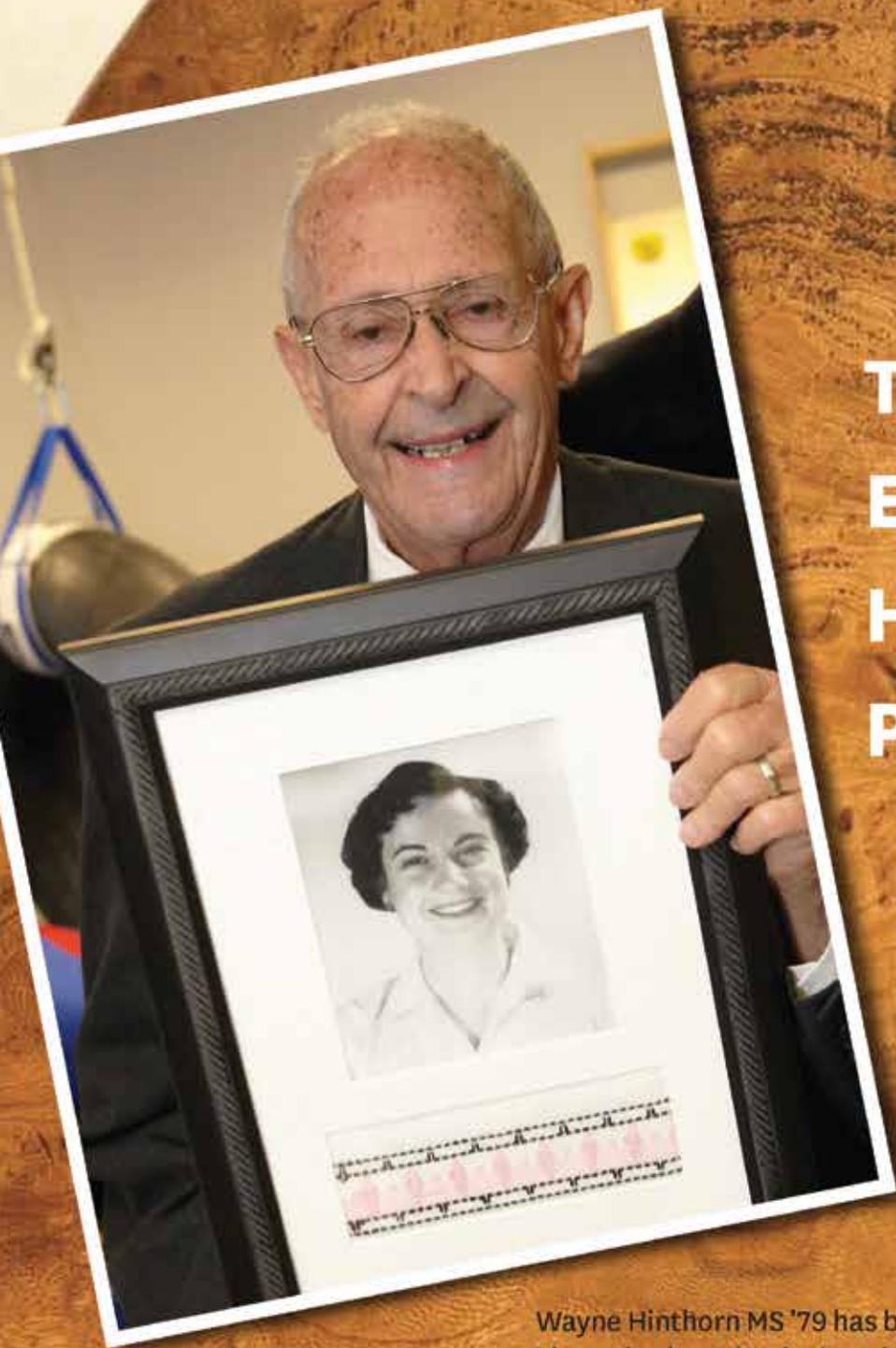


A very small group of faculty and students with a lot of hubris decided to encourage the recognition of a science. We began the first PhD program, co-edited the first book in occupational science and received the first major federally-funded randomized controlled trial occupational science research project, known as the USC Well Elderly Study.

**Twenty years ago**, I had been coordinator of the USC OS & OT graduate programs for a decade when invited to assist a dean of health sciences (one of our Trojan grads) at a Japanese university to develop a graduate program with an occupational science base. With the assistance of USC administrators, I took a sabbatical leave that began a five-year commitment involving consultation and a visiting faculty role. The challenges and joys of living in a new cultural and geographical environment were a real stimulus, adding enthusiasm to my efforts to better understand and teach concepts of occupation. The Japan Occupational Science Seminar was begun, as was the Japan Society for the Study of Occupational Science, by the nine M.S. and three PhD graduates who had studied with me. I have returned to Japan continually since then, participating in most of the annual JOS Seminars and teaching in many conferences and OT programs. I stopped counting my round-trip flights at 20 after the first few years!

**More than 10 years ago**, I was honored to present an Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lectureship at AOTA and to have a lectureship named after me by members of the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA. I retired from employment at USC, maintaining relationships through the honorary position of professor emerita. I was thrilled to watch the development of the OTD program and am excited about its future. I have maintained my contact with as many previous students as possible, finding the discussion of their ongoing work exciting, and glad of any assistance I can offer them.

**Today and tomorrow**, I hope to maintain relationships that have made my engagement in occupational therapy and occupational science such an important and deeply meaningful part of my life.



**Trojan.  
Engineer.  
Husband.  
Philanthropist.**

Wayne Hinthorn MS '79 has been called many things throughout his life. The retired mechanical engineer has a USC graduate degree in Systems Management. His late wife, Micky '53, was a beloved occupational therapist and proud Trojan. Now, thanks to a recent bequest gift, the Hinthorns' legacy will shine brightly at USC Chan for decades to come.



For more information on how to include USC in your own will or trust, contact the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC's Office of External Relations at (213) 740-0428 or by emailing [ostrow.development@usc.edu](mailto:ostrow.development@usc.edu).

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