A team of researchers led by USC OS/OT discovered that the ordinary daily experiences of people with spinal cord injury (SCI) can present challenges that make maintaining good health precarious. Of particular concern is the susceptibility people with SCI have to developing pressure ulcers. A constellation of factors, including injury, unrelieved pressure, limited sensation, shearing, friction, skin that is compromised, nutrition, moisture and substance use, can all lead to the formation of pernicious pressure ulcers. Difficult to treat, pressure ulcers can penetrate otherwise healthy tissue, creating gaping craters that can go bone-deep, give rise to systemic infections and even result in death. Treatment can consist of surgery and/or months of bedrest, causing serious disruptions in the life of the person with SCI and limiting participation in desired activities. However, preventive interventions that address the issue have received very little attention.

To address this gap, investigators from USC OS/OT and Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center will once again collaborate under the leadership of Principal Investigator Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA to study pressure ulcer risk for people with SCI. In the new 5-year study, to be funded by an NIH R01 grant totalling $2,882,372, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) will be conducted of a Lifestyle Redesign® (LR) intervention designed to help study participants learn to take a variety of health-promoting measures to prevent pressure ulcer formation. The team used this approach in a small pilot study last year and found it to be feasible for further testing. This pilot study, along with the original qualitative investigation (which was nicknamed “PUPS,” an acronym for “Pressure Ulcer Prevention Study”) and principles identified in the Division’s two Well Elderly Studies, led researchers to develop the larger RCT now being launched.

“The new PUPS grant is a terrific achievement,” declared Dr. Clark. “It indicates that our years of investment in studying the life circumstances in people with SCI that contribute to recurrent pressure ulcers has had a huge payoff. This trial has the potential to show that the Lifestyle Redesign® intervention we have tailored based on this earlier work can cost-effectively protect countless consumers from life-threatening ulcers. And it may lead to more OTs being funded out in the community to help them.”

Joining Dr. Clark as co-investigators in the study, which officially started on September 1st, will be Stanley Azen, Ph.D., Erna Blanche, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, Michael Carlson, Ph.D. and Joel Hay, Ph.D. from USC; Salah Rubayi, M.D. and Michael Scott, M.D. from Rancho Los Amigos; Barbara Bates-Jensen, Ph.D., RN from UCLA; and Jennifer Unger, Ph.D. of Claremont Graduate University. Drs. Carlson, Rubayi and Scott were also investigators in the first PUPS research.

Goals of the RCT will be to measure the intervention’s ability to reduce incidence of Stage 3 and 4 pressure ulcers; assess cost-effectiveness and potential cost savings of the intervention; examine the effects of the intervention on participants’ quality of life, and model the process mechanisms that mediate effects. A total of 160 ethnically diverse men and women, including both English and Spanish speakers, will be recruited and randomly assigned to either a 12-month LR intervention or a standard care control group. The intervention will consist of in-home visits and phone calls to help each client create a personalized plan for pressure ulcer prevention. Tools used with consumers will include www.PressureUlcerPrevention.com, the interactive consumer self-education website created as a product of the first PUPS.

“The acquisition of this grant bolsters the presence of our Division in the rehabilitation science community,” Dr. Clark added. “It also contributes to our reputation of excellence in conducting randomized clinical trials and cost-effectiveness studies.”
I really think AOTA’s new brand “Living Life to Its Fullest” is terrific. As AOTA President Penelope Moyers Cleveland explained, this identity should enable us to knock on big doors and make sure they open. She described that when OT practitioners say the impossible is possible, we are living life to its fullest; when we work with a person with mental illness to set meaningful occupational goals, thought to be beyond reach, we are helping that person live life to its fullest; and when we help a wounded soldier learn to regain balance and vision and perception, we are helping her live life to its fullest. The Vision statement is a tool that will, as President Moyers Cleveland described, enable us to knock on big doors. But how many of us really feel prepared to do so and have the confidence to persist when that door does not open easily?

I believe that to build an army of big door openers, we need to prepare our students for power. Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, “There is nothing very odd about lambs disliking birds of prey, but this is no reason for holding it against large birds of prey that they carry off lambs.” In a power structure, this happens when a person at the top of organizational charts compromises the quality of the services OT practitioners provide to eke out a better bottom line. This happens when the intellectual property or creative ideas of OT practitioners are used by other professionals without acknowledging the originator. This happens when OT practitioners innovate in the workplace but others from more powerful professions take the credit. We want the graduates of our program to be neither birds of prey nor lambs.

At USC, we will now be putting more emphasis on preparing our graduates for power. First, we will make them comfortable with the idea that power is something each of us needs to cultivate. As I have traveled the country giving Centennial Vision talks, I have noticed that many of us are uncomfortable with the inclusion of the word “power” in the Centennial Vision statement. This may be because the notion of overtly setting out to access and wield power may not fit certain feminine views of self, and so much of our workforce is made up of women. But the word “powerful” can be thought of in gender-neutral ways. We can think of it as simply the ability to accomplish our aims, to exercise our natural talents and to flourish. Mary Cantwell wrote, “[Feeling] entitled to power…when it comes to getting it, is tantamount to being halfway home. Talent, energy and self-discipline and, oh yeah, good luck take one the rest of the way. Still, there’s no taking the first step without a sense of self-worth.” We want to instill in our graduates a mental model of themselves and of their profession as powerful. I believe our students will become comfortable with this idea when they develop an in-depth understanding that having power can be a wonderful gift and is in and of itself a neutral attribute. What is important is whether it is misused or used in the service of the public good. At the end of the day, it is how it is used that colors power’s ethical complexion.

We will be teaching our students about how to capture sources of power. We will emphasize that knowledge and competency pave the way for autonomy and power in the health care arena. We will arm our students with an outstanding preparation in the science that justifies OT interventions and in the evidence that can be used to defend our scope of practice. Beyond this, we will train our students in how such information can be used to increase their power. We will inculcate in our students the habit of analyzing where they are situated in organizational power structures in the arenas in which they find themselves. They will be encouraged to ask as they seek jobs where their position is on organizational charts, how much power the OT leadership has in the organization, how much access OT practitioners have to resources, information and support, and whether they will be able to use best practice approaches freely and have power to function with ethical integrity and independence.

This doesn’t mean we would encourage them to refrain from accepting employment where accessing power is challenging. Asking these questions means entering a situation prepared. We will show that hardy individuals have proven able to be both ethically pure and effective. We will prepare our students in strategies to work between the cracks to create dramatic shifts in who has power in the workplace. We will groom our graduates in qualities that research indicates underlie hardness: self-determination, self-efficacy, persistence and self-confidence. We will let them know power can be set up in organizational structures, but also in the many contexts of everyday life. We will instill the view that future power as a clinician, scientist, educator or even politician depends on powerful state, national and international professional societies and organizations. Without their advocacy, their advancement of science and knowledge, and the leadership training they do, professions wither and eventually no longer exist. So this year we hope to achieve the Gold Level in student AOTA and OTAC membership.

We want to develop in students the belief that an OT degree is as good as, or perhaps better than, a law degree to prepare for public service, because OT practitioners possess detailed, empathetic understanding of human suffering and resilience. These are qualities every politician should possess. I hope to see more of our graduates in public service and on political trajectories; their commitment to the public good affords a special kind of power. As Mohandas K. Gandhi wrote, “Power that comes from service faithfully rendered ennobles.”
A new grant in the amount of $800,000 has been awarded to researchers in the USC Division of OS/OT by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), an agency of the U.S. Department of Education. The grant, which will run from 2008 to 2013, is titled “Training Occupational Therapy Specialists” (or TOTS) and will be used to prepare entry-level OTs in the Division’s Master’s degree program to work in typical early intervention settings including homes, day care centers, preschools and kindergartens. The students participating in TOTS will acquire skills to provide services to children from birth to 5 years of age who have disabilities or are at risk for disability.

The new grant, the type of which is for related service personnel preparation, will provide an apprenticeship model approach. Each year, the TOTS project will assign 15 selected USC OS/OT students in the second year of their MA-II program to a part-time fieldwork site. The students will be mentored by a clinical instructor in working with infants, toddlers and young children who are eligible for early intervention services. These hands-on, practical experiences will be supplemented with classroom learning, as students will take elective courses in school-based OT practice focusing on early intervention, preschool and early elementary interventions. In addition to the fieldwork mentoring, TOTS trainees will receive a $10,000 scholarship to support their participation. The first cohort will enter the project in the 2009-2010 academic year.

Project Director for TOTS will be Diane Hammon Kellegrew, Ph.D., OTR/L, an Associate Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy in the USC Division of OS/OT. She is a widely known expert in early intervention who has been serving as Director of the USC School-Based Occupational Therapy Project. Working with her will be Jean Pacifico-Banta, OTD, OTR/L, who will serve as Project Coordinator and assist with field site logistics. Additionally, Dr. Pacifico-Banta continues to work with Dr. Kellegrew on the School-Based Grant. Also part of TOTS will be Associate Professor Ann Neville-Jan, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, Assistant Chair of the Division of OS/OT. Dr. Neville-Jan helped write the grant proposal and will serve as a grant advisor on issues related to cultural and disability studies, her area of specialty.

“The TOTS grant is different than past school-based grants USC has had through the U.S. Department of Education in that this topic is to train Master’s entry level OTs to work in early intervention settings with children between the ages of birth to 5 years of age,” explained Dr. Kellegrew. “This grant complements the other USC training grants focused on services for children in schools. With this training grant, USC OT students will now have the opportunity for comprehensive training in working with children with disabilities across the age spectrum covered under IDEA, from birth to 22 years of age. Our early intervention community partners are thrilled to be a part of this unique project, as training for this age population is rarely available for entry level OT students.”

**OTD Program Update**

One of the top trends in education today is distance learning. Offering flexibility of time and place, as well as enabling students with sociopsychological or physical challenges to participate in group learning activities from any suitable environment with Internet access, distance learning can be seen as a form of student-centered universal design. With this in mind, a key course in the USC OTD curriculum, OT650, is being offered in a distance learning format as a “blended” course to study the feasibility of putting more OS/OT courses online in the future.

The “blended” format allows the two students in the pilot program to “attend” lectures and discussions via videoconferencing without entering the actual classroom in the Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign. All students submit papers to the co-instructors electronically and take part in a virtual discussion that takes place throughout the week by posting comments about readings on the Blackboard website. Blackboard, which has been used extensively throughout USC for several years, is an online learning management system that includes functions for posting documents and comments to boards as well as checking on class assignments, grades and downloading documents such as handouts or a syllabus.

“We will conduct a careful evaluative process to select courses to be offered online, and which hardware and software will work best,” said Susan Leech, Ed.D., OTR/L, co-instructor of OT650 (with Erna Blanche, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA). “We’ll use faculty input and interviews with a sample of all students for that decision.”

“We look forward to making this state-of-the-art educational program available to distance learning students,” observed Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA. “The launching of this course is a first step for the Division in being responsive to the expressed needs of OT practitioners throughout the nation and the world who want to take courses through our Division but are unable to travel to the USC campus.”
In a time when it seems that tensions exist between countries across the globe because of perceived cultural, political and economic differences, it’s more important than ever to build understanding between nations at the grassroots level. It was with this goal of supporting communication between cultures in order to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries” that the Fulbright Program was established in 1946. “Fulbrighters” are the approximately 105,400 Americans and 174,100 citizens of 155 other countries who are chosen for academic or professional excellence as well as for leadership potential. These grant recipients spend extended periods in host countries to observe each others’ political, economic, educational and cultural institutions, to exchange ideas and to engage in cooperative ventures designed to benefit people worldwide.

Among the scholars recognized by the Fulbright Program for the 2008-2009 fiscal year is USC OS/OT Associate Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy Erna Blanche, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA. A specialist in occupational science and pediatric OT and Coordinator of USC’s OTD Program, Dr. Blanche, a native of Chile, became one of 1,100 scholars in the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program (one of 14 Fulbright categories) for her project to develop a Master’s program in occupational science at the University of Chile in Santiago. She will go to Santiago as a Fulbright Scholar from April to June, 2009. “I feel that this is a great opportunity for me to develop a longtime dream of contributing to and advancing the study of occupational science in Latin America,” Dr. Blanche described of her grant.

Dr. Blanche’s affiliation with the University of Chile began in 2002, when she was approached to help develop a Master’s program in OT. Since that time, she has collaborated with faculty of the School of Occupational Therapy to create the first academic program in Latin America to focus on occupational science. Her time in Chile as a Fulbright Scholar will allow Dr. Blanche to mentor Chilean OTs whom she first taught in short courses 2 years ago, offering more instruction, collaborating on academic endeavors and advising students on their projects. Dr. Blanche is uniquely qualified to take on this role, as she is widely published in both English and Spanish and has taught occupational science for many years in both languages.

While in Chile, Dr. Blanche plans to teach a course on applying occupational science to practice. This concept will be familiar to many USC OTD students because it is similar to content explored in OT650, Development of Adaptive Skills, one of the required courses in the OTD program (see related story, page 3). Dr. Blanche will also conduct a course focusing on sensory integration and interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This will be especially important to the Chilean practitioners, as children with ASD are typically diagnosed much later in life in Chile than are children in the U.S. Introducing awareness and diagnostic tools that can increase the early identification of ASD will help these children to begin receiving services earlier, thus potentially improving their outcomes. Another goal for Dr. Blanche will be to work with Chilean faculty members to implement diverse teaching skills and methods that can be used in research projects. Through this exchange of ideas, Dr. Blanche hopes to support the Latin American educators in becoming equal partners in theoretical and scientific dialogues with other scholars worldwide.

“I expect that the opportunity to remain in Chile for an extended period of time will allow me to develop skills in community-based practice and will help me pave the road for transcultural collaboration in research in OS and OT,” explained Dr. Blanche. “The long-standing reputation of the University of Chile and its affiliated clinical programs’ tradition in community practice provides me an excellent opportunity to meet my goal for skill-building.

“I also want to use my time there to explore the Chilean tradition of mental health practice in the community, specifically to examine programs that address contemporary lifestyle issues such as obesity that are conceptualized differently than in the U.S.,” she added. “I am interested in understanding with greater depth how such programs are seen in Chile. I think this offers a rich possibility for the exchange of information.”

Fulbrighters are strongly encouraged to view their scholarship as a lifelong commitment, in that they can speak and write about their Fulbright experience and support the program through alumni activities, hosting visiting Fulbrighters and serving on selection committees. Dr. Blanche intends to follow up by developing research collaborations with Chilean professionals and creating a model of international community-based practice upon her return to USC.

Named for Senator J. William Fulbright, who introduced legislation that created the organization, the Fulbright Program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the U.S. Department of State. Funding comes from the U.S. Congress ($184.6 million in 2006) and contributions from binational commissions and foreign foundations ($50.4 million in 2006). The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program is administered by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES). For more information on the Fulbright Program, go to http://www.cies.org.
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(Continued on page 12)
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Fieldwork Update

USC OS/OT welcomes Leo Lee, OTD, OTR/L, Adjunct Assistant Professor and Assistant Fieldwork Coordinator (see related story, page 8). Dr. Lee has clinical and administrative experience in practice areas including geriatrics, home health and mental health. He will coordinate the Level I fieldwork program. The fieldwork coordination team, including Jaynee Taguchi-Meyer, OTD, OTR/L, Dr. Lee, Karen Park, MA, OTR/L, and Robin Turner, Fieldwork Assistant, will busily handle approximately 475 Level I fieldwork and Level II fieldwork assignments for the 2008-2009 academic year. We highly value and thank our very loyal local, national, and international fieldwork communities.

The international fieldwork program continues to grow. Renee McDannel, Ph.D., OTR/L of Fundatia Broken Heart in Romania, Bonnie Nakasuji, OTD, OTR/L and Tiffany Fu, MA, OTR/L of Mephibosheth Training Center in Ghana, and Dr. Taguchi-Meyer, Academic Coordinator of Fieldwork Education at USC, collaborated to present a 3-hour workshop about international fieldwork opportunities for USC OS/OT students at the AOTA Conference in Long Beach, CA in April 2008.

Hong Kong Polytechnic University facilitated USC OS/OT student Adley Chan’s Level II fieldwork placement in Hong Kong in Summer 2008. Cheryl Li traveled to Hong Kong for a Level I fieldwork placement in Spring 2008. We look forward to facilitating the clinical training of the first Hong Kong Polytechnic University student here in the U.S. in Winter 2009. Level I fieldwork opportunities are again being offered for Spring 2009 in Ghana and Romania. Collaboration with Jean Pacifico-Banta, OTD, OTR/L and Diane Kellegrew, Ph.D., OTR/L on the School-Based Training Grant continues with expansion of school-based and other Level II part-time fieldwork opportunities for students.

We look forward to a highly productive and well-coordinated fieldwork placement year.
USC OS/OT Welcomes New Faculty, New Posts

The 2008-2009 academic year finds a number of new faculty members joining the USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, as well as new duties for current Assistant Professor Julie McLaughlin-Gray. In welcoming these scholars, Division Associate Dean, Chair and Professor Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, commented, “It is so exciting to see so many new faculty in our ranks this year. Each one brings a special set of skills and knowledge to strengthen the capacity of our program to prepare our graduates with the expertise they need in the diverse areas of practice and research.”

USC OS/OT is very proud to announce that Sharon A. Cermak, Ed.D., OTR, FAOTA, an internationally renowned expert in sensory integration and health promotion for individuals with disabilities, will be joining the faculty as a full Professor. Dr. Cermak has been a long-time faculty member of Boston University as well as having an appointment in the Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program at the E. K. Shriver Center of the University of Massachusetts and a visiting fellowship at Hebrew University in Israel. Dr. Cermak is widely published and has been honored with a number of lectureships, fellowships and awards. She is involved in NIH-funded research at LEND and is Principal Investigator of an NIH R21 grant studying physical fitness and obesity in children with coordination disorders and co-investigator of the NIH R21 grant, “Diet, Activity and Obesity in Children with Autism.”

“I am delighted to be joining the faculty of the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy,” Dr. Cermak explained. “I am impressed with the high quality of the faculty, their leadership in the profession, and the research funding that they have achieved. USC and the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy are recognized as global leaders. I highly value the opportunity to collaborate with the faculty and continue to grow and expand my knowledge and skills. I’ve heard wonderful things about the high quality of the student body in the Division, many of whom have become leaders within the field. I am excited to teach and mentor within this exceptionally strong program.”

At the USC Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice (OTFP), Camille Dieterle, OTD, OTR/L assumes the position of Director, as well as Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy in the Division of OS/OT, where she will teach OT583, Lifestyle Redesign®, in the Spring. Dr. Dieterle was a resident at the OTFP as an OTD student; her OTD project used Lifestyle Redesign® (LR) principles to train members of the USC community to create a more environmentally-friendly, “green” way of living (see Spring 2008 newsletter). In her new position, she oversees the staff of the OTFP as well as supervising the fieldwork and residencies of students including three USC OTD candidates who are creating LR interventions for the needs of specific populations.

“I’m very excited to be taking on these roles here at USC,” Dr. Dieterle stated. “My OT passion is Lifestyle Redesign® and I’m looking forward to continuing our great LR programs at the Faculty Practice, growing the practice to reach more clients and develop new Lifestyle Redesign® programming, and passing on this treatment process to our future OTs.”

Joining Dr. Dieterle at the OTFP is Karen McNulty, OTD, OTR/L, who is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy. Dr. McNulty works half her week at the OTFP and half her week at the University Park Campus in the Student Union building, where the USC Disability Services and Programs office has contracted for OT and LR services for students who are registered with a disability. She teaches an OT500 course, Optimal Living with Multiple Sclerosis, guiding students in running weekly groups for health care consumers with MS in conjunction with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy (see Fall 2006 newsletter). Additionally, Dr. McNulty offers LR services to USC students through the OTFP’s ongoing Lifestyle Redesign® for the College Student program, which was the subject of her OTD project. The program was recently profiled online by USC News (http://www.usc.edu/uscnws/stories/15608.html).

“When I finished my work on the Well Elderly Study II, I knew that I wanted to continue to work in LR and stay connected with USC, so I entered the OTD program trying to find a new population to work with,” Dr. McNulty remarked. “College students turned out to be the perfect match. Not only do I get to incorporate my love for OT and LR specifically, but also my experience and passion for mental health. It is so great to be a part of the USC family, especially the OT family. I love being connected to such great mentors and mavericks in the field. After working on campus with the students, I now have a heightened Trojan pride and pride in the students that I work with who continue to amaze me. It’s great to be back at USC, but in a way I guess I never left!”

Joining USC OS/OT as Level I Fieldwork Education Coordinator is Jeng-Ru (Leo) Lee, OTD, OTR/L (see related story, page 7). Dr. Lee has an extensive background in physical disabilities and home health interventions, both in the U.S. and his
Slavkin to Step Down as Dean of School of Dentistry

After serving with great distinction since 2000, Harold C. Slavkin has announced his intentions to leave his post as Dean of the USC School of Dentistry (SOD) and holder of the G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery Dean’s Chair in Dentistry at the end of 2008.

Following a 1-year sabbatical, Dr. Slavkin will return to the SOD in 2010 as a faculty member. Dr. Slavkin has stated that he wishes to have more time to spend with his wife Lois, their four children and eight grandchildren.

Among his many achievements during his tenure, Dr. Slavkin led SOD to become aligned with the Divisions of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy and of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy. A search will begin shortly for a new Dean of the SOD, it was announced by the USC Office of the Provost.

Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy Julie McLaughlin-Gray, Ph.D., OTR/L, has been named Coordinator of the Professional Program. Currently, she teaches the Kinesiology course for juniors, and the Clinical Pathways course, Enhancing Motor Control for Occupation, which is held at Rancho Los Amigos and includes student participation in providing outpatient treatments for individuals recovering from strokes or brain injuries.

“I am very proud to be a part of the Division’s effort to use innovation to show leadership by building an exemplary online presence for the future,” noted Dr. Leech. “The many resources in both faculty and on campus are excellent for implementing technology in the USC OS/OT program.”

Samia Rafeedie, OTD, OTR/L, who earned her MA and OTD at USC OS/OT, is now an Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy. She is teaching OT452, OT Theory and Practice in Physical Dysfunction, this semester, and will teach OT468, Advanced Occupational Therapy — Aging (Gerontology), in the Spring. Along with her academic duties, she is working with Kathleen Gross, MA, OTR/L, Director of Occupational Therapy, to streamline OT evaluations and paperwork, design competencies for OT staff and update educational materials for patients at USC University Hospital. In addition, Dr. Rafeedie is mentoring OTD students.

“I am thrilled to be back at USC, as I embraced my education here while I was a student and learned how much I loved being in the classroom through my TA experiences with Julie Gray and while I taught part-time at Ohio State University, as well as Towson University in Maryland,” enthused Dr. Rafeedie. “USC OS/OT is an amazing faculty to be a part of and the students are always the best at USC!”

Named as Director of the Ph.D. Program is Professor William Morgan, Ph.D. A specialist in the philosophy of sport, Dr. Morgan joined the USC OS/OT faculty last year. He is teaching a course in the Division on Sports and Ethics, and has been researching several topics in occupational science.

“I’m excited about this opportunity,” Dr. Morgan stated. “Part of my excitement is what an academically vibrant Division it is and the promise of future intellectual growth. We’re completing a major curriculum initiative for the Ph.D. program and we’re working on OS core classes, new research methodology courses and on research practicums. We’re looking to expand our elective offerings at the Ph.D. level to take advantage of the very talented and capable faculty we have in the Division.”

Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy Susan W. Leech, Ed.D., OTR/L, ATP, RAS, brings a diverse background in occupational therapy and technology to her new position. With her doctorate in Educational Technology, Dr. Leech is helping to head up USC OS/OT’s entrance into the area of distance learning (see related story, page 3). She is co-instructor this semester of OT650, Development of Adaptive Skills, and will co-instruct OT655, Work and Leisure, in the Spring; these two required courses in the OTD program are being offered online as part of a pilot study of the optimal methods for offering USC OS/OT courses for students unable to come to campus. In addition, she will be teaching Pathways courses in assistive technology and developing a course in universal design, one of her specialties. Dr. Leech has been both a classroom and online instructor, as well as a practicing pediatric OT in Texas and California.
Alums Get Increased Library, Research Database Access

In keeping with the university’s lifelong-learning commitment to the Trojan Family, the USC Alumni Association and campus libraries are working together to promote essential library services that encourage continuing study and discovery and provide alumni another way to stay connected to campus life. With these goals in mind, the USC Libraries-Alumni Association partnership has acquired an expanded license for the ProQuest Reference Library, one of the libraries’ most heavily used online research databases. Alumni can now search thousands of periodicals from home for free by logging onto the ProQuest database.

Earlier this year, the USC Libraries also increased the number of books alumni can borrow. In addition, Trojan alumni enjoy research assistance from USC librarians – both in-person and on the Internet – and access to rare items in the university’s special collections, among other resources available across the USC Libraries.

Alumni can obtain their free membership and begin using ProQuest Reference Library at http://alumni.usc.edu. A link to log in to ProQuest is on the USC Alumni Association home page.

New Grad Wins Award for Pediatric OT Website

A vital Shuster earned her MA from USC OS/OT in 2008. Even before she graduated, she was honored at the 2008 AOTA Conference in Long Beach with First Prize in the Student category of the 34th Annual Maddak Awards Competition for Product Design. Sponsored by Maddak, Inc., a designer and manufacturer of assistive devices for daily living activities, the awards recognize creative innovations for rehabilitation and supporting healthful activities. Ms. Shuster’s prize was for developing OTPlan, a website that assists OT practitioners, teachers and families to help identify activities for children that will use available resources to work on improving the targeted skill.

Q: What was your motivation for creating OTPlan.com?
AS: I came up with the idea for the website during my Level II fieldwork at the Irvine Unified School District [where I am now employed]. I used to spend hours searching for and coming up with evidence-based home programs and thought it might be a good idea if there were a website where I could enter what I want to work on and what materials I have available, and then it would return a list of suggested activities fitting my needs. I asked my husband (a software engineer and USC grad student) if something like this were possible, and within a few days we had a working prototype.

Q: How is the website used?
AS: We wanted to create a website that would be easy to understand and use. OTPlan is aimed at pediatric OTs and has grown to be an activity idea and treatment plan search engine. The site matches the skills you want to work on with the materials you have to a detailed treatment activity. Each activity the site suggests explains the purpose, materials needed, process, rating for the activity, and comments by our users. The OTPlan search engine uses the ranking by users and other factors in determining the order of the activity ideas presented to you. You can start by selecting the skill you want to target, or selecting the materials your client has available. Fellow therapists can add comments or their own activity ideas. We also created a Facebook application (http://apps.new.facebook.com/otplanner/) which provides the same functionality as the OTPlan website itself but as part of Facebook.

Q: What was your experience of participating in the Maddak Awards?
AS: While presenting OTPlan in front of the Maddak Award panel of judges [who are selected by AOTA], I noticed a lot of interest in the website. Some judges referred to our site as “the Google for OTs.” When I was announced as the winner, I was excited and honored. I was especially touched when fellow OTs approached me and said they’ve used the website and it helped them find new activity ideas. Today, I even refer teachers and parents to the website when they are in need of creative ideas that are easy to implement in the classroom and at home. We’re getting a lot of positive feedback from all of our users and I’d like to invite everyone to enjoy OTPlan.

For more information, go to www.OTPlan.com, or e-mail Ms. Shuster at avital@otplan.com.
Reseach Assistant Professor Olga Solomon, Ph.D., an interdisciplinary researcher in the Division of OS/OT, was playing fetch with her border collie in the park a few years ago when the dog instinctively brought the Frisbee to a young girl. The child picked up the disc and tossed it, a seemingly typical reaction for a child. But, as the girl’s father tearfully explained to Dr. Solomon, the youngster had autism and usually did not interact playfully. This moving event stimulated Dr. Solomon to explore how therapy dogs might serve as predictable, reliable social partners for children and others with autism who could benefit from practicing social behaviors that they had not developed earlier in life.

Dr. Solomon’s investigations have been recognized by USC’s James H. Zumberge Research and Innovation Fund, a university-wide research grant support mechanism geared particularly for newer faculty members, with a 2008-2009 Individual Award of $22,943. As part of her study, entitled “Animal-Assisted Therapy as Socially Assistive Technology: Implications for Autism,” Dr. Solomon has taped over 65 hours of sessions since 2003 with 5 children with autism, ranging in age from 3 to 14, as they play with the dogs and engage in social interactions with their families and others in their typical environments. Dr. Solomon hopes to articulate what is happening in these interactions. One finding has been identifying what she has defined as “autistic socialty,” a systematically observable phenomenon that she and USC Professor Elinor Ochs, Ph.D., reported at the OS/OT Division’s 20th Occupational Science Symposium (see Spring 2008 newsletter).

“They're rare, and they are essential for those who wish to become career scientists. Dr. Solomon’s work in conjunction with this grant will formally situate animal-assisted therapy as an important component of the Division’s research portfolio. It is splendid that we will be branching out in this new, exciting, and innovative research direction.”

Annual “Tea with a Scholar” Examines Spirituality

by Heather J. Kitching, MA ’02, OTR/L

The USC Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign was once again the location for the 7th Annual Afternoon Tea with a Scholar on Sunday, September 7, 2008, sponsored by OTAC Region Two. This year’s Tea featured USC alumna Christy Billock, Ph.D., OTR/L, whose presentation was titled “Delving into the Center: Spirituality, Occupation and Occupational Therapy.” Dr. Billock has been a faculty member at Loma Linda University in the School of Allied Health Professions for 8 years, where she teaches coursework in both the Masters’ and Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree programs. Subjects she teaches include human occupation across the lifespan, occupational therapy history and theory, aging, spirituality and occupational science. Dr. Billock has been an OT in physical disabilities at Huntington Memorial Hospital and authored the chapter “Spirituality, Occupation, and Occupational Therapy” in the 11th edition of Willard & Spackman’s Occupational Therapy.

In her talk, Dr. Billock challenged her audience to reflect on the history of occupational therapy and the overt presence (or absence) of spirituality as a central concept for intervention with clients. She provided a summary of her own dissertation research exploring the relationships between spirituality and activity for women. Attendees remarked that the discussion of spirituality was refreshing and stimulating. Dr. Billock’s concluding remarks included her recommendation to be client-centered and occupation-centered as a means of most effectively facilitating a client’s perceptions of spirituality in the context of our services, and that clients be referred to chaplains or other spiritual guides if they wish to make a more in-depth exploration of this area.

The spirit of the Tea is to bring seasoned scholars, master clinicians, professional leaders and students together to share ideas and strengthen the profession. The event continues to be a success each year due to the generous support of many individuals, including the featured speakers, attendees and volunteers.
SOUTHPAW ENTERPRISES PARTNERS WITH USC OS/OT TO LAUNCH STATE-OF-THE-ART SENSORY INTEGRATION LAB ON CAMPUS

We are pleased to announce a generous donation from Southpaw Enterprises, the leader in sensory integration therapeutic equipment, that will allow USC students to receive hands-on training in the application of sensory integration theory and practice across the lifespan.
A Message from USC’s Director of Annual Giving

by Iyoni Rice, Director of Annual Giving for University Advancement

The USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy has long been recognized as a small professional program with a big reputation which will continue to grow as the united support of alumni increases. In celebration of the Division’s 65th Anniversary, many alumni made their endorsement of USC and the Division of OS/OT official by participating in the 2007-2008 Annual Fund drive, which concluded on June 30th. As a result, the Division has moved up four positions in the 2007-2008 USC alumni participation school rankings. This represents the fourth highest percentage increase of all USC schools compared to fiscal year 2006-2007.

This symbolic endorsement from OS/OT alumni sets off a chain reaction that helps to determine the Division’s future accomplishments. So, I would like to encourage you to participate in the 2008-2009 Annual Fund drive, which started on July 1st. Remember, before the Division can recruit world class faculty and elite students, before the Division can win grants from foundations and corporations, before the Division can achieve positive press in influential publications, people want to know how you and other OS/OT alumni feel about your Division.

Think of the leverage you can continue to provide, and remember that it’s not the size of your gift, but that you choose to participate that matters most.

Additionally, the Division would like to extend our gratitude to the donors who have set an admirable example of annual giving by supporting the Division year after year. Thank you!

Contributing 6-10 consecutive years
Gretchen M. Schmalz
Claire B. Kopp
Eric Paul Abe
Judith Freeman
Michelle Berro
Anthony Francis DeJonghe
Kimberly A. Eggleston
Emily Hart

Contributing 11-15 consecutive years
Priscilla Kong Wong
Jean Pennucci
Judith L. Packard
Kathleen Gross
Loretta Ellen Reust

Contributing over 20 consecutive years
Dagney M. Cooke
Julie W. Shaperman
Leonora A. Pezzuti

Maria Balsimo, a current second-year MA student, received a $1,000 Progressus Therapy Scholarship from the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF), whose mission is “to provide financial support for emerging leaders in the occupational therapy practice.”

A large number of international students entered the USC OS/OT MA-I in August of this year. Included in the group are 11 students from India, as well as Jamie Colquhoun, who is from Scotland. Mr. Colquhoun was elected MA-I representative to OTSC.


MA ’08 graduates and current OTD students Suzanne Lai, Michelle Lee and Lyndsay Price all volunteered at Rancho Los Amigos’ annual athletic competition, the Spinal Injury Games. The students, who helped with set-up and registration throughout the day, had been enrolled in the USC OS/OT Pathways course Enhancing Motor Control for Occupation (held at Rancho) during the second year of their MA-II programs, and Ms. Lai had completed a Fieldwork II placement at Rancho’s Spinal Injury Unit.

Births
Dominic Jon Bruzzese, first-year MA-II student, became the father of son Mateo Jon Bruzzese in September 2008. Mateo weighed 7 lbs. exactly and measured 20 inches tall.

Student News

Students enrolled in USC OS/OT’s School-Based Grant program worked with authors Barbara Hanft and Jayne Shepherd in preparing their recent book (and related AOTA continuing education course), Collaborating for Student Success: A Guide for School-Based Occupational Therapy. The students, cited in the book’s acknowledgements (and some quoted in the text of the book), were: Kelly Bloom, Sara Cassone, Courtney Daniels, Inbal Fraiman, Kory Fukuwa, Anthony Gallegos, Samana Khan, Rebecca Kim, Sophia Lin, Christine Nakamura, Denver Nino, Melissa Schofield, Karen Smikahl, Britt Sorensen, Sarah Tompkins, Maritza Villeges and Rebecca Zino.

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Phyllis J. Meltzer
Susan Lanell Spitzer
Renee Andrine Spitzler
Grace Lopez
Claudell Gapultos

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OS/OT Faculty Present at European Conferences...

Continuing the Division’s tradition of promoting the growth of occupational science and occupational therapy internationally, USC OS/OT faculty members made a number of presentations throughout the year at overseas conferences and educational institutions. While OS/OT faculty and grad students are involved across the globe, including Latin America (see related story, page 4) and Asia, three meetings in Northern Europe recently coincided in which Division professors participated.

COTEC, or the Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries, had its 8th Annual Conference in Hamburg, Germany in May. An organization that represents 120,000 practicing OTs in 26 countries, COTEC’s stated aim is to enable European OTs “to work together to develop, harmonise and improve standards of professional practice and education, as well as advance the theory of Occupational Therapy throughout Europe.” Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA and Jeanne Jackson, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA, presented at the conference on the subject, “Well Elderly Research Project: Addressing the Lifestyle Redesign® Program.” Dr. Jackson noted, “It was important to share our work with our colleagues from Europe, and to hear about their projects and research.”

Three USC OS/OT faculty members — Dr. Clark, Mary Lawlor, Sc.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, and William Morgan, Ph.D. — visited the prestigious Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden in June. While there, Dr. Lawlor talked about her research on the Boundary Crossing grant, Dr. Morgan presented on the ethics of occupations and Dr. Clark made two presentations: “Uncovering New Vistas: The Future of Occupational Science” and “The Centennial Vision and Occupational Therapy in Health and Wellness: Lifestyle Redesign®.” “The Department of OT and Occupational Science at Karolinska is one of the premier institutions in the world,” Dr. Morgan said. “So it was informative and exciting to compare notes with them about our respective programs and research agendas, and to establish a formal relationship with them. We look forward with great expectation to future collaborations with their faculty and students.”

Dr. Clark also gave an invited keynote address at the 5th Congress of the European Union Geriatric Medicine Society (EUGMS) in Copenhagen, Denmark in September, where her topic was “Lifestyle Intervention for Promoting Health-Related Outcomes in Community-Dwelling Elders.” “It was so rewarding to be able to present our Well Elderly research program to an audience of over 200 physicians and therapists,” Dr. Clark observed.

“What was special was that this largely European audience was able to see first-hand that occupational therapy has a track record in producing research of the highest caliber that demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of one of its intervention approaches on health outcomes in the elderly. I really think the talk enhanced the perceptions of interdisciplinary colleagues on the extent to which occupational therapy is a scientific, evidence-based field.”

...and International Visitors Present at USC OS/OT

USC OS/OT played host to visiting scholars from around the world during the past year. As well, the Division is planning for more visits in months to come.

In late March, UK practitioners Gaynor Sadlo and Jennifer Creek presented on “Occupational Therapy in England” for the USC OS/OT community. Ms. Sadlo specialized in work rehabilitation while working as an OT in Australia, and in physical rehabilitation and social services in Britain. In 1983, she took a teaching position at the London School of Occupational Therapy. Ms. Creek is an expert in mental health practice, having published extensively on issues pertaining to OT and mental health.

Tan Hwei Lan, an occupational therapist from Singapore, visited the Division in September. Previously chief hand therapist at Singapore General Hospital and currently a lecturer and Clinical Coordinator for Nanyang Polytechnic School of Health Sciences, Ms. Tan is also a council member and former president of the Singapore Association of Occupational Therapists. Her presentation, attended by 20 USC OS/OT students, was titled “OT in Singapore” and concerned both Singaporean culture and OT practice.

Scheduled for October is Denise Reid, Ph.D., a Professor in the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the University of Toronto in Canada. With over 80 publications, a book and a patent to her credit, Dr. Reid’s interests include virtual reality-based interventions. “I am looking forward to meeting with faculty and students to share with them a new concept called ‘occupational presence,’ and to receive much appreciated feedback,” she enthused. “It will also be my pleasure to speak about our Canadian experience in OT.”

In 2009, Dr. Kerstin Tham, head of the Division of Occupational Therapy at the Karolinska Institutet, will be a visiting professor at USC OS/OT. Her research specialty is neuroscience, particularly rehabilitation of unilateral neglect following stroke.
The USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy is proud to announce that the XXI Occupational Science Symposium will take place on Friday, March 27th, 2009. As in recent years, the venue will be the Davidson Conference Center on the University Park Campus.

The topic of the latest symposium will be Rehabilitation Science. Speakers are not yet confirmed, but will include scholars not only in occupational science and occupational therapy, but also in a number of health and related fields, providing attendees with an interdisciplinary exploration of the latest innovations and thought in rehabilitation. The program will also include the annual Wilma West Lecture and an optional catered lunch.

Tuition for the day-long conference will be $125 per person, and it is anticipated that continuing education credit will be available. For more information on this event, contact Peter Wittrock in the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at (323) 442-1861, or e-mail him at wittrock@usc.edu.

Join OS/OT alumni, students, faculty/staff and friends for Homecoming on Saturday, November 1, 2008, when the top-rated USC Trojans take on the Washington Huskies. Time for the pre-game events and game is yet to be determined. To reserve your tickets, contact Jackie Mardirossian at jmardiro@usc.edu or (323) 442-2811. Hurry, there are a limited number of tickets available!

The USC School of Dentistry has announced that its next Research Day program will be February 18, 2009. Students and faculty from the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy are invited to present posters on their latest research. Prizes are awarded for outstanding work. Save the date!

Do you have news you’d like to share with fellow alums? A new position, a publication or honor, or perhaps an addition to your family? We’d like to hear from you and report your news in an upcoming issue of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy. Also be sure to let us know if you have any updates in your contact information. Please e-mail your news and/or updated contact information to jmardiro@usc.edu. You can also send your information to: USC Division of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy, Attn: Jackie Mardirossian, 1540 Alcazar St., CHP-133, Los Angeles, CA 90089-9003. Be sure to include your name, degree and class year, home and e-mail addresses, and telephone number.

We would also like to know your interests in what you’d like to read about in an upcoming newsletter.
USC OS/OT Celebrates New and Half Century Alums

To offer a symbol of their appreciation for their outstanding education and experiences as USC students, the 2008 graduates of USC OS/OT presented the Division with a class gift at the May commencement ceremony. The gift, which was a framed, 2-foot by 5-foot Timeline depicting the history of USC OS/OT, will be displayed in the hallway of the Division on the Health Sciences Campus, and a copy will be created for the Center for Occupational and Lifestyle Redesign. Members of the 2008 MA-II class organized the collection of funds and selected the gift, but money was raised from all graduating students to set an example for future classes of giving back to their alma mater.

“I continue to be overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness and generosity of the Class of 2008 in leaving the Division with a class gift,” Associate Dean and Chair Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA told the newly minted alumni. “Your idea to present an updated Timeline of the past 65 years is so special. Your spirit of giving and lifelong connection means the world to me, the faculty and the Division. You are the future of USC OS and OT and have set a beautiful example. We will always remember you.”

Beginning with their 50th class reunion, graduates of USC are welcomed into a distinguished group of alumni known as the Half Century Trojans. As caretakers of USC history and tradition, Half Century Trojans are uniquely positioned to promote the Trojan Spirit and to strengthen the bonds that connect USC alumni across generations.

The Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy is pleased to announce its alumni of the Class of 1958 as the newest members of the Half Century Trojans:

- Marilyn Alper
- Shirley Burns
- Nancy Durdick
- Dorothy Ecker
- Harriet Hague
- Phyllis Hix
- A. Joy Huss
- Suzanne Kenworth
- Lillian Kuwayama
- Janice Lee
- Donna Rozelle
- Doris Sakamoto
- Delmer Scoonover
- Jane Stauss
- Kathleen Strom
- Mineko Takahashi
- Mary Vezie
- Florence Wakayama
- James Wishard
- Millicent Wong
- Lillian Yamashita

For more on USC Reunion Weekend and the Half Century Trojans celebration, go to http://alumni.usc.edu/reunion.