Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, Associate Dean, Chair, and Professor of the USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the School of Dentistry, has been elected President-Elect of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). Dr. Clark will serve as President-Elect for the first year of her four year term and assume the Presidency in spring 2010.

Dr. Clark, who has served in various capacities on the AOTA’s Board for the past 6 years, including as a Director and as Vice-President, will spend her year as President-Elect being mentored in her new role by current AOTA President Penelope Moyers-Cleveland. As President of the AOTA she will lead the Board in setting strategic directions of AOTA, including preparing the organization and its members for implementation of its “Centennial Vision,” a forward-looking mission statement devised to recognize that both AOTA and the profession will celebrate their 100th anniversary in 2017. The Centennial Vision states that AOTA “envision[s] that occupational therapy is a powerful, widely recognized, science-driven, and evidence-based profession with a globally connected and diverse workforce meeting society’s occupational needs.”

“I am very grateful to the membership of AOTA for having elected me to this position,” Dr. Clark commented. “This is a time of opportunity for occupational therapy as the profession moves forward in response to the national health care reform agenda. My hope is to ensure that what occupational therapy has to offer to meet societal needs is communicated in the arenas where national policy decisions are made. As President of AOTA, I will emphasize the ways in which occupational therapy contributes to better health for all Americans. Occupational therapists enable people to live life to their fullest no matter what. Architects design homes. We design lives. We help people to develop daily living strategies and customize their environments and daily routines so that they can flourish. Recently, more and more occupational therapists are securing NIH and other forms of extramural funding to push the boundaries of research to build occupational science, an interdisciplinary field, focused on the science of everyday living. I am honored to assume the Presidency of this national professional organization. In this role I can be a voice of scientists, educators and practitioners in the profession. Each and every day occupational therapy practitioners help people live their lives more fully, develop their capacities, and build healthy habits and routines. Concurrently, occupational scientists are launching extramural research programs that contribute to the broader fields of neuroscience, rehabilitation science, gerontology, health promotion, child development, and neurorehabilitation, among others.”

A widely published and noted scholar with research interests ranging from the development of sensory integration in children to health promotion in the elderly, to recovery from spinal cord injury, and the disciplines of rehabilitation science and occupational science, Dr. Clark was appointed a charter member of the Academy of Research of AOTA, has served as special consultant to the U.S. Army Surgeon General, been a board member of the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NIH), and been a recipient of the Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lectureship, the highest academic honor given by AOTA. In 1999, she was honored with an Award of Merit from AOTA, and in 2001, she received a Lifetime Achievement from the Occupational Therapy Association of California. Dr. Clark earned her Ph.D. in Education from USC, where she was appointed an Assistant Professor of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy in 1976. In 1989, Dr. Clark became Professor
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s many of you already know, I was recently elected President-Elect of the American Occupational Therapy Association (see related story, page 1), and will begin my three-year term as President on July 1, 2010. I am deeply humbled at being entrusted to lead AOTA during these current changing times. This is a time when we need to be very proactive. I believe the particular forces at work in the health care policy arena afford occupational therapy with a unique opportunity to grow in power and influence.

I am particularly fascinated by the confluence of several different forces. On the one hand, there is a palpable sense of excitement with the new Administration and Congress in Washington. There is a sense of hope for our country’s future, and a willingness to try new and innovative ideas. One of the focal points of this hopefulness is directed towards health care reform, and there is optimism that health care policy can be significantly changed to reflect the real needs of the American people.

On the other hand, all of us understand that we are experiencing an unprecedented crisis in our nation’s economy. Every dollar spent by any funding source must be accounted for, and this standard will certainly be applied to health care. Health care funding must be based on getting the most health benefit for Americans while trying to contain costs, obviously an arduous challenge.

The convergence of these forces opens a door for occupational therapy through which we must boldly walk. Occupational therapy can meet the real needs of people in a way no other health profession can. We must convince those who are determining reimbursement policy of our indispensable contribution to prevention and to living with chronic disease and disability.

Now is the time for AOTA to be strong, vocal, and to insert itself into the national health care discussion. We know that Membership is the life blood of AOTA’s strength. This is why AOTA has launched the “Member-to-Member” (M2M) campaign, a concerted effort in 2009 to enlist current AOTA members in recruiting new members. You can find an M2M tool kit, including talking points and PowerPoint presentations about the vital importance of membership, at http://www.aota.org/Benefits/M2M.aspx.

I urge all of you to join with me, and USC’s Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the School of Dentistry, in the M2M campaign. We hope you will use your networks to help build membership in our professional associations, both AOTA and OTAC. Our faculty is exploring ways to empower our students to bring the membership message to the students and practitioners they encounter. We continue to explore creative ways to bolster membership, and I encourage you to do the same. What we need is a grassroots movement of our Trojan Family occupational therapists to help build the financial base for advocacy for our profession and the consumers it serves.

Sometimes we lose focus, sometimes we think joining our professional association is not all that important, sometimes we mistakenly perceive AOTA or OTAC as social clubs or product distributors. These perceptions are wrong. These organizations assure that we are “there” and our “voices heard” when the decisions that insure our profession’s future are made. Every membership dollar builds the fiscal base we need. And every one of you is a foot soldier in the march onward to achieve our Centennial Vision.

I hope you share my confidence that the future of occupational therapy is, in fact, a flourishing one. I do believe that we dare not miss the opportunity these current dynamic time offers us to strengthen our profession. I am proud of the way the USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy is doing its part to ensure AOTA is equipped to powerfully advance the ability of our profession to serve the public good. I truly hope you will join us in building this grassroots movement. Occupational therapy has been good to us and we have a legacy to return to it.

[Signature]
Spotlight: Sharon Cermak Joins USC OS/OT Faculty

Sharon A. Cermak, Ed.D., OTR, FAOTA, has recently joined the faculty of the USC Division of OS/OT as a Professor (see Fall 2008 Newsletter). Her distinguished career includes an appointment as Professor of Occupational Therapy at Boston University, visiting professorships in Australia and Israel, serving on the editorial board of OTJR, numerous awards and over 100 publications. While in Israel this spring as a visiting professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Dr. Cermak has submitted a grant proposal to duplicate research she has conducted in the U.S. on an NIH grant, conducted a graduate course on autism, presented papers on participation, physical activity and sensory sensitivities, talked to OT students and consulted on research grants with PIs at Haifa University. She answered questions for the Newsletter about her research interests and her current projects at the USC OS/OT Division.

Q: What drew you to your current research emphases in pediatrics?
SC: My mentors from my M.S. program, Dr. Anne Henderson (an OT) and Dr. Shirley Stockmeyer (a PT), had profound influences on my career and contributed to my moving from adult rehab to pediatrics. My main research areas are in sensory modulation disorders, particularly in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and children who experienced deprivation, dyspraxia/developmental coordination disorder and the effect of deprivation on child development. This latter interest stems from my work with children in orphanages in Romania.

Q: What are some of the areas you are currently studying here at USC?
SC: A primary area concerns sensory sensitivity in children with ASD. I plan to adapt and replicate a study conducted in Israel (Parush and Shapiro) on adapting sensory environments for oral care in children with disabilities. This is particularly appropriate at USC since the OS/OT Division is part of the School of Dentistry. I also plan to continue my research in dyspraxia/developmental coordination disorder and ASD in the area of health promotion.

Q: What initially drew you to OT when you first chose a career?
SC: As a high school student, I did a lot of volunteer work with children with intellectual disabilities. I went to my guidance counselor and told her I wanted to work with individuals with disabilities but I did not want to be a teacher and focus on reading and math; I wanted to do something more functional. She suggested that I look into OT and PT. PT required swimming, OT did not, so I became an occupational therapist!

Q: What are some of the highlights of what you’ve accomplished?
SC: I would say that the most rewarding work of my career has been international work, particularly work with children in orphanages and the consultations I have done with families who have adopted children from orphanages. Also, I have been very fortunate to receive fellowships including a Fulbright Award and the Lady Davis Fellowship from the Hebrew University, which have allowed me to work in several countries including Israel, Australia, Taiwan and Colombia. I have made many wonderful friendships in the world of OT and beyond. This has also involved research. For example, colleagues in Israel (Katz and Lifshitz) are currently replicating an NIH-funded study I did in the U.S. examining the relationships between children’s motor coordination and their participation in physical activity, physical fitness and risk for obesity. Similarly, when I return to the U.S., I plan to conduct a study that was conducted here in Israel (Parush and Shapiro) on adapting sensory environments for oral care in children with disabilities.

Q: In general, how do you feel about coming to USC?
SC: It is always challenging and difficult to make a life change. I believe my decision to come to USC was a good decision, and feel that USC is the right place for me. I am also excited about collaborating with the excellent OT clinics in the greater Los Angeles area.
21st OS Symposium Has International View of Rehab

With a goal of generating interdisciplinary discussion about the role of rehabilitation in people’s everyday lives, the USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy collaborated with the Division of Occupational Therapy at the distinguished Karolinska Institutet in Sweden to present USC’s 21st Annual Occupational Science Symposium in March. The day-long program, titled “The Intersection of Self and Context: The Changing Landscape of Rehabilitation Science,” was held at the Davidson Conference Center on the University Park Campus.

“These symposia are a forum for scholars from a variety of backgrounds to come together and share their expertise on how cutting-edge science is increasing our understanding of the impact of everyday life on health and well-being,” commented Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, who provided the Welcome and Introduction to the Symposium. “We’re ready now to answer how the interdisciplinary field of occupational science relates to the interdisciplinary world of rehabilitation science.”

The keynote speaker, Jin-Shei Lai, Ph.D., OTR/L of Northwestern University, began the day with a presentation titled “The Future of Outcomes Measurement: NIH PROMIS, Item Banking, Tailored Short-Forms and Computerized Adaptive Tests.” Dr. Lai is a leader in the area of using item banks and computerized adaptive testing to design measurement tools that result in clinically useful information to screen potential clients, identify problem areas for new clients and track progress for ongoing clients. Additionally, new tests that are developed must be comprehensible to the health care consumers and be an appropriate length to gather information without taxing therapist or client by requiring too much time to complete. In elaborate detail, Dr. Lai described the iterations involved in the process of defining items that can be used in instruments, including defining a domain framework, performing a literature review, doing archival data analysis, using focus groups to explore the language used in items and the importance of items to clients, reviewing and reaching consensus among experts, binning and winnowing items that are not essential, and more steps of editing and reviewing before large scale testing to verify validity. One result of the process is the creation of the NIH-funded PROMIS project, which allows visitors to a free-registration website (www.assessmentcenter.net/ac1) to select areas of interest, define the demographics of the population they are concerned with, and then let the website create an online screening tool in either a short-form or more in-depth. For more information on PROMIS, go to www.nihpromis.org.

Denise Tate, Ph.D., ABPP, FACRM, a psychologist and Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Michigan Medical School, took inspiration from a Ziggy cartoon about one surprisingly simple definition of what it means to be alive to title her talk, “Life is Doin’ Stuff: Promoting Participation Across Rehabilitation.” Dr. Tate in fact used the artist who created Ziggy, Tom Wilson, as an example of how participation helps individuals to remain engaged in life even in the light of serious disruptions. Wilson has survived lung cancer, a severe motor vehicle accident that crushed his legs and his wife’s death from breast cancer by staying active, “as opposed to death, which is not ‘doin’ stuff,’” Dr. Tate related. The many studies that find individuals who are involved socially and physically have a better quality of life affirm the importance of activity, and thus what is lost when acquired disability limits an individual from engaging in desired occupations. Dr. Tate used the ICF model as a framework to define participation, but also explored some shortcomings, such as the fact that some personal factors, such as motivation, self-determination and satisfaction, are not accounted for in understanding why a person is or is not participating in a given activity. She also talked about cutting-edge programs that use technology in rehabilitation, such as centers where robotic treadmills, Lokomat training and aquatic therapy are used to help people with spinal cord injuries to get some restoration of function. Dr. Tate concluded by suggesting that clients benefit most when their participation in the community is supported.

After a luncheon, Lena Borell, Ph.D., OT (reg), Professor and Chair of Occupational Therapy at the Karolinska Institutet, delivered the Wilma West Lecture. Her topic was “Aging in Place at Home: Implications for Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.” Dr. Borell discussed the ongoing research program at Karolinska in Sweden, where political and social forces support public programs that aid people who wish to remain in their
long-time homes as they age. Aging in place is studied with four themes: participation, agency and safety in relation to modifying the home environment; everyday and assistive technology for supporting cognitive issues and dementia; IT-based assistive technology; and development of home rehabilitation programs. For promoting safety, the Swedish researchers thought “outside the box” by recruiting community members such as shoe salespeople and vision specialists to become “activists” by educating them about fall prevention. “Everyday” technology, a term that doesn’t translate directly to American culture but which roughly includes ordinary household appliances and tools, from cell phones to irons, can be helpful to supporting people with cognitive challenges, or puzzling to people who can’t remember how to turn on an oven safely. One finding was that clients achieved higher quality of life when their caregivers did activities with them rather than for them, thus keeping older adults involved as much as possible. IT-based technology can be used in many helpful ways, such as setting up alarms to remind people to take medications at certain times. Robots are an area for future research, both to provide help to do tasks and to learn whether a sense of companionship can be formed.

Joy Hammel, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, an Associate Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the Occupational Therapy, Disability Studies and Rehabilitation Science programs, spoke on “Examining the Impact of the Environment on Home and Community Participation.” Dr. Hammel stressed the importance of defining participation and disability from “within,” that is, listening to the voices of people with disability. Four key areas in which dis-abling can take place in the environment are Entry (can a person with disability even get started in an activity, environment or community?), Engagement (with activities and with groups), Enfranchisement (recognizing people with disability as a minority group with rights) and Empowerment (respecting diversity rather than expecting assimilation). Dr. Hammel stressed that definition in these areas cannot be imposed on people with disability, even with the best of intentions; the identification of desired changes must come from listening to voices in the disability community.

The final speaker of the day, Staffan Josephsson, Ph.D., OT (reg), also of the Karolinska Institutet, movingly told the story of “Oskar and the Play in the Kitchen: A Reflection on How Occupation Is Transformative.” This narrative, which drew on principles of philosopher Paul Ricoeur (also found in publications by USC Professors Mary Lawlor and Cheryl Mattingly) about relationships between narrative, action and sociality, related an experience Dr. Josephsson had early in his career with Oskar, a man who had developed dementia who became a regular visitor at the adult day center where Dr. Josephsson was an occupational therapist. At first, Dr. Josephsson was directive with Oskar, which did not engage him to take part in “fika,” a Swedish practice of relaxing over coffee or tea. When Dr. Josephsson changed to preparing fika with Oskar, both men became very engaged in the activity, turning occupation into a “meeting place” for therapist and client. Thus, impairment might be viewed not as a physical or cognitive problem, but as a problem of disconnection.

The Symposium was followed by a reception for presenters and attendees at the Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign.

OS Symposium Day 2: “Debriefing”

The learning atmosphere established at the 21st OS Symposium continued for scholars the next day at the OS Symposium Debriefing. The half-day program began with Dr. Kathleen Zackowski, Assistant Professor at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Her talk, “Understanding Movement Dysfunction in Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis,” focused on the use of MRI data in identifying functions of sensorimotor tracts in the brain and specific movement impairments related to those tracts. “The Symposium provided me with an renewed appreciation for the theoretical implications of OS and the importance of environment and context,” Dr. Zackowski observed.

Next, Dr. Susan Murphy, Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, spoke on “Career Development Beyond the Doctoral Degree,” providing guidance on learning to be a clear and effective academic writer for students at the event. “Participation is not well understood or researched yet, but I feel that OS provides a good foundation to operationalize this complex construct,” Dr. Murphy said of the Symposium. After lunch, Dr. Kerstin Tham, Head of Department at Karolinska Institutet, presented “The Lived Experience as the Point of Departure for Developing Occupation-Based Intervention after Acquired Brain Injury.”

OT Extravaganza!

The USC chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon held its second Occupational Extravaganza to celebrate occupation, offer activities and display poster presentations on OS and OT. Here, OTD student Jesus Diaz decorates cookies at the Center with local children.
You don’t have to be rich to be a philanthropist.
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OS/OT Researcher Studies Prosody with R03 Grant

A cutting-edge researcher in cognitive neuroscience, USC Division of OS/OT Assistant Professor Lisa Aziz-Zadeh, Ph.D., has been awarded an R03 grant to continue her studies into brain functions associated with “prosody,” or the melody and intonation of speech. Her current research project, titled “Neural Correlates for the Perception and Production of Prosody,” is being funded for $50,000 per year for 2 years by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

“The prosody composes a large portion of human interaction and communication,” Dr. Aziz-Zadeh explained. “There are individual differences in one’s ability to perceive and produce prosody: for example, individuals with autism or TBI may have deficits in prosody production/perception. As well, individuals with psychopathic personality disorder are known for poor prosody perception ability. In this study, we aim to understand the neural correlates of prosody production and perception, and to show if there are brain regions that are involved in both processes. Furthermore, we aim to explore individual differences in this system, that is, to find the neural correlates for differences between good prosody perceivers/producers and poor prosody perceivers/producers. We also correlate this to one’s ability to empathize with other people.”

Dr. Aziz-Zadeh added that the grant “is an exciting opportunity. It will additionally help fund some of my grad students, who are also excited to work on this study.”

Grant Supports Interdisciplinary Course on Autism

The population of people diagnosed with autism is growing daily, increasing the urgency for professionals across fields, from health care to computer technology to education, to join in interdisciplinary research and practice to offer new supports for this group and their loved ones. Accordingly, USC is contributing to the Innovative Technology for Autism Initiative, which was launched to promote development of new technologies, by offering “Innovative Technology for Autism Spectrum Disorders” as an ENGR599 course for Fall 2009. This interdisciplinary course, geared to doctoral level students in engineering and health care (particularly occupational science), will be taught by USC OS/OT Research Assistant Professor Olga Solomon, Ph.D.

The ENGR599 course, which is funded by the Autism Speaks Foundation, builds upon similar courses offered in recent years at top universities across the country integrating fields such as engineering, occupational science, occupational therapy, neuroscience, psychology, linguistics and anthropology. This year, Innovative Technology for Autism courses will be taught at USC, MIT and the University of Toronto.

“I am looking forward to teaching this course and helping our OS/OT students build interdisciplinary relationships with students in the Viterbi School of Engineering,” Dr. Solomon stated. “The advancements in research and clinical practice that such collaborations promise to produce are much needed.”

Grant Funds Los Angeles Falls Prevention Coalition

Just as scholars at the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden have found that supporting older adults to age in place is more successful when there is cooperation across a wide diversity of community members (see related story, pages 4-5), researchers at the USC Andrus Gerontology Center are examining community-wide approaches to improve health for elders. In this pursuit, the Falls Prevention Center of Excellence at Andrus has won a grant from Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., as part of the Thriving Aging Initiative, for “Fall Prevention Coalition LA: Taking Action to Prevent Falls.” The project seeks to develop a sustainable, broad-based coalition of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and groups in the private sector to educate consumers about fall prevention; improve fall prevention knowledge and skills of service providers; and influence policy makers to include fall prevention in their planning/programs.

Anna Quyen Do Nguyen, MA ’05, OTD ’06, Associate Program Director for the grant, commented that, “We fall in every stage of life, but especially for older adults, falls are associated with increased morbidity and mortality and can seriously impact one’s daily routines and meaningful activities. In addition to developing a network of services and resources, this Fall Prevention Coalition in the City of Los Angeles will be a unique opportunity to capture the narrative of older adults, caregivers and service providers who have been affected by falls. We hope to utilize their stories to spark systems-wide change by influencing policymakers to include fall prevention in their programs.”

Nguyen’s position at the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence grew out of her residency at the Andrus Gerontology Center as part of her OTD studies.
Dr. Sanjay Gupta happened to be on traumatic brain injuries that day and American soldiers had incurred. He remembers being in a fire fight and within two and a half weeks, he traveled to Kuwait and arrived in Iraq. Called to the reserves after 9/11, the story begins when Jesus was an undergraduate in his junior year and in the United States Marine Corps military reserves. Then 9/11 happened, just a few months before his graduation date. Before he could take the NBCOT examination, he was called to serve in Iraq. After only two weeks on Iraqi soil, Jesus incurred a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) during a military strike. Now, after an eight year journey that involved brain surgery performed by nationally known neurosurgeon and commentator Dr. Sanjay Gupta, intense occupational, physical, and speech therapy, the support of other health care providers and his family, Jesus Vidaña has emerged as a compelling messenger on how to best help our wounded warriors and improve our health care system. The basic motif of the hero’s journey according to Campbell is to leave a prior condition and transform into a richer one. Jesus’ story follows this pattern.

The story begins when Jesus was called to the reserves after 9/11, traveled to Kuwait and arrived in Iraq. Within two and a half weeks, he remembers being in a fire fight and then awakening in Spain. Five American soldiers had incurred traumatic brain injuries that day and Dr. Sanjay Gupta happened to be on site (as an embedded journalist covering a story for CNN). Dr. Gupta performed surgery on all five, but only one of his patients survived – Jesus Vidaña. The two would go on to have a long term relationship and, eventually, Jesus and Dr. Gupta would appear in the news media together.

From Spain, having been reunited with his family, Jesus was flown to the naval hospital in San Diego where he remembers suffering severe headaches and was living in a “half-world” because of left hemianopsia and neglect. It was in the intensive care unit there that he began receiving occupational and physical therapy. From San Diego, he was next admitted to a Veterans Administration hospital in Northern California for intensive rehabilitation. Jesus remembers his experience there as extremely “hopeful” as he worked with his therapists to achieve his goals. It turns out that his parents had explained to the occupational and physical therapists that Jesus had been trained as an occupational therapist and they therefore were particularly zealous in giving him the power to formulate what he wanted to achieve in therapy. One of his highest priority goals was to sit for the NBCOT examination. Jesus recalls living the “life plan” he developed in collaboration with his therapists as he struggled to overcome his cognitive issues, visual field cuts, memory concerns and self-described blocks in problem solving.

What is most fascinating is that Jesus describes the ways in which he harnessed his occupational therapy education to maximize his own recovery. Here he was, simultaneously, in a sense, both patient and his own therapist. Two years of learning in the context of his occupational therapy courses about the conditions that were now shaping his everyday reality could be used to inform his previously inconceivable experiences. But that which surprised him the most was the deeply felt recognition that his psychological well-being was just as pivotal a factor in his recovery as his physical status. Then came a dramatic turn. During a time period in which Jesus was experiencing depression, in a therapy session, he was asked to think of anyone he had known who had overcome a disability. And there she was, shining with luster and her beautiful smile in his mind’s eye…our own Professor Ann Neville-Jan. As a student, he had observed her living a full, rich and happy life with spina bifida, tending to her students, caring for her husband and children, and making breakthroughs in occupational science. Next, Jesus picked up the phone and called Dr. Neville-Jan. She assured him – he could do it!

Jesus next moved on to three years of intense outpatient rehabilitation offered in the VA system. He believes the services he received there were “great!” They included two to three years of intensive speech therapy three times per week, physical therapy two times per week and occupational therapy two times per week. Upon completion of his therapy program, he did a third fieldwork at the Veterans Administration hospital where he had received outpatient therapy and began volunteering so that he could assist...
USC OS/OT Students Co-Sponsor Veterans Reception

The story of the Veterans Day Appreciation Reception held last November 11th and co-sponsored by the USC Division of OS/OT and the Marshall (School of Business) Military Veterans Association began with a class project. An important step in the Division’s MA-II program is the challenge to create a proposal for a viable community-based occupational therapy program as the culmination of the first-year course, OT464: Occupational Therapy Skills Theory III. Some students are so inspired by their projects, they seek to make them a reality, such as the award-winning proposal for “Arugamamani” by current second-year MA students Grace Matsuo and Yuko Mori (see related story, page 10).

In that same class, Lien Hoang, Catherine Hsu, Charmaine Ugalde, and Tritia Woo teamed together to create a project. This group decided to investigate the needs of military veterans returning to the United States after service in the Persian Gulf or Afghanistan who wished to enroll in college. Their efforts began at home, as they chose to work with approximately 150 to 175 student veterans currently at USC. After conducting a needs assessment, the group identified two goals: to create a social network among student veterans, and to honor former soldiers for their service. These goals were combined in the form of organizing a reception, which was held at the USC University Club. As part of the process, the student team realized it was important to establish a broader connection between the Division of OS/OT and USC veterans “because it was evident from our needs assessment, conducted as part of our community based project, that they needed and wanted help establishing a social network to support the returning Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom student veterans,” explained Ms. Hsu. “In addition to establishing this social network, we were hoping to increase the visibility of the occupational therapy profession and educate the USC community about OT and what we, as future practitioners, can offer for a group like the veteran population. In our opinion, occupational therapists have the skills and knowledge base to help our returning student veterans transition to school life.”

Ms. Hoang, Ms. Hsu, Ms. Ugalde and Ms. Woo joined with members of the Marshall Military Veterans Association (MMVA) to co-sponsor their celebratory event, which was the first formal event at USC recognizing veterans who served in Afghanistan and the current Iraq engagement. Among the more than 60 attendees of the reception were military veterans from various generations and military branches, as well as family members, friends, and faculty and students from the USC OS/OT. To express gratitude for the efforts of the four OS/OT students, one veteran who came to the Reception nominated the team along with Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, Associate Dean and Chair of the Division, for an award from Freedom Team Salute, an organization which honors people who support members and veterans of the U.S. Army. Next, the team hopes to make the Appreciation Reception an annual Veterans Day celebration at USC.
MA Students Honored for Community Housing Plan

Second-year MA-II students Grace Matsuo and Yuko Mori won a 2009 Phi Kappa Phi Student Recognition Award for “Arugamamani,” a design for an alternative community housing project for healthy older adults in Japan. The Award, which includes a $500 grant, was given at the 2009 Academic Honors Convocation on the USC University Park Campus.

“Although elderly people in rural areas are healthy and work at agriculture to gain necessary income, their future is at risk if they become unable to perform tasks they do now because they lack transportation, help from family who have moved away, universal design or social support, or due to declines in health,” explained Ms. Mori. “We were concerned that these elders are one step away from being ‘dis-abled’ from doing things they enjoy. Therefore, we thought of building a universally designed housing facility where older adults can live together, help each other, take part in planned activities with local school kids and access transportation. This is sort of a prevention program that helps the healthy elderly to live longer and stronger at home and in their neighborhood for as long as possible. We made an architectural model and calculated the cost for building and community outreach.”

“The project was for OT464, but also for my grandmother, whom I love, respect and hope to be well as long as possible,” Ms. Mori said. “We need to raise more money to keep developing the project. We hope by next year to really start building the place.”

Fieldwork Update

The USC OT Fieldwork Coordination team including Jaynee Taguchi-Meyer, OTD, OTR/L, Leo Lee, OTD, OTR/L, Karen Park, MA, OTR/L, and Robin Turner, Fieldwork Assistant, busily coordinated approximately 475 Level I fieldwork and Level II fieldwork assignments for the 2008-2009 academic year. We are thankful for and grateful to our very loyal local, national, and international fieldwork community!

In Fall 2009, the MA-II Professional Program will add a Level I fieldwork experience to existing one- and two-week full-time “immersion” experiences in Fall and Spring semesters respectively. This new Fall Level I fieldwork experience will be structured in a “dose” model, with students going out to sites one day per week for six weeks in September and October. Students will meet in seminars on campus to debrief about experiences, then go out for one full-time week in November, and again meet in seminars to debrief. This new fieldwork experience format will get students into clinics and practices earlier in their academic program, enable students to experience a third practice setting before going out to Level II fieldwork, and provide more structured debriefing opportunities to integrate what they experience in practices with what they learn in coursework.

The international fieldwork program continues to grow. Renee McDannel, Ph.D., OTR/L of Fundatia Broken Heart in Romania hosted three Level I fieldwork students, and Bonnie Nakasuji, OTD, OTR/L of Mephibosheth Training Center in Ghana along with five other OT fieldwork educators hosted 33 Level I fieldwork students in March 2009. This is the largest group of overseas USC OT students and Level I OT fieldwork educators yet. Several USC OT alumni, in addition to Drs. McDannel and Nakasuji, served as fieldwork educators this year: Tiffany Fu, MA, OTR/L, Desiree Go, MA, OTR/L, Nazuki Ito, MA, OTR/L, Katie Sorensen, MA, OTR/L, and Esther Suh, MA, OTR/L. The students enthused that “it was an amazing experience!”

USC OT hosted the first OT exchange student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Winter 2009. Ching-Wai (Wallis) Chan successfully completed an 8-week clinical rotation at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Spring 2009. We look forward to continuing our clinical training exchange with Hong Kong Polytechnic University in the coming years. USC OS/OT alum Eric Asaba, Ph.D., OTR will educate his first USC OT Level II fieldwork student in Japan in inpatient psychiatric practice in Summer 2009. Collaboration with Diane Kellegrew, Ph.D., OTR/L continues, as the School-based Training Grant comes to a close and the new TOTS early intervention training grant begins with expansion of Level II part-time fieldwork opportunities for students.

Fieldwork is a cornerstone of the full educational experience for all OT students. We are very pleased with the rich variety of experiences available to our students in the USC Division of OS/OT, encompassing a wide range of practice settings, practice specialties and geographic locations. If you would like information about joining our fieldwork community, please contact Jaynee Taguchi-Meyer at (323) 442-2857 or taguchi@usc.edu.
Congratulations to the following faculty on their outstanding achievements!


**Erna Blanche, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA**, taught an SI course at LTM Medical College at LTMG Hospital in Mumbai, India, and presented on OS to the All India Occupational Therapists Association, Bombay Branch. She will present on OS at the Latin American OT Congress in Lima, Peru, the OS Symposium in Santiago, Chile, and the Second Latin American Sensory Integration Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Dr. Blanche is also featured in Erik Linthorst’s film, *Autistic-Like: Graham’s Story*.

**Gelya Frank, Ph.D.,** co-authored the article “The Tule River Tribal History Project: Collaboration with Anthropology and Occupational Therapy to Preserve Indigenous History and Promote Tribal Goals” in the Winter 2008 issue of *Human Organization*, and the chapters “Postcolonial Practice in Occupational Therapy: The Tule River Tribal History Project” and (with **Ruth Zemke, Ph.D., FAOTA**) “Occupational Therapy Foundations for Political Engagement and Social Transformation” in *A Political Practice of Occupational Therapy*.

**Jeanne Jackson, Ph.D., FAOTA**, presented “Translational Research in Occupational Science: Exploring Mediating Factors in Activity-Based Intervention and Health-Related Outcomes for Older Adults” at the SSO-USA Conference in Fort Lauderdale, and co-authored “Confronting Challenges in Intervention Research with Ethnically Diverse Older Adults” in the *Journal of the Society for Clinical Trials*.

**Christina J. Law, MA, OTR/L**, won the Outstanding Graduate Student Service Award from the USC Division of Student Affairs and the LGBT Lavender Commencement Service Award from the USC LGBT Resource Center for her OTD project with the USC LGBT Peer Mentoring Program.

**Leo (Jeng-Run) Lee, OTD, OTR/L,** is presenting a poster titled “Same-Sex Partnership as Health and Well-Being Giving Occupation” at the AOTA Conference in Houston, TX.

**William Morgan, Ph.D.,** was quoted in the November 30, 2008 *New York Times* article “Born to Run? Little Ones Get Test for Sports Gene.”

**Deborah Pitts, MBA, OTR/L,** wrote the article “Introduction to Special Section on Occupational Therapy” and co-authored “Doing Daily Life: How Occupational Therapy Can Inform Psychiatric Rehabilitation” in the Winter 2009 issue of *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*.

**Olga Solomon, Ph.D.,** gave a plenary talk titled “On ‘Narrative Turn’ in Autism Research: A Contribution of Ethnographic Approach to the Study of Autism and Narrative” at the Human Communication Science Network Workshop on Narrative and Communication Disorders at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She has also been nominated for the USC Parents Association Outstanding Teaching and Mentoring Award.
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Alumni and Student News

Mojca Herman, BS ’94, MA ’96, was spotlighted in the article “Mojca Herman: Moments of Greatness,” about her work as a hand therapist and her background as an Olympic swimmer, in the July/August/ September 2008 issue of the American Society of Hand Therapists’ newsletter, ASHT Times.

Nancy Bagatell, MA ’94, Ph.D. ’03, has been appointed to the Editorial Board of ETHOS: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology. Dr. Bagatell is an Assistant Professor of OT at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT.

Jess Holguin, BS ’96, MA ’05, and current Ph.D. student, authored the article “Occupational Therapy and the Journal Citation Reports: 10-Year Performance Trajectories,” published in the January/February 2009 issue of The American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

Susan K. Brislin, MA ’99, authored the article “Using a Japanese Wellness System” that was published in the March 9, 2009 issue of OT Practice.

Harmony Pyper, MA ’00, co-created the San Diego company Step4Kids, LLC, which has recently released an instructional handwriting DVD, “Steps4Kids to Write Cursive.” The DVD was awarded “Dr. Toy’s 100 Best Children’s Products” (Education Category), “Editor’s Choice” and “5 Star Award of Excellence” (The Toy Man, Education Category) from CreativeChild Magazine (“Preferred Choice” - Educational DVD) and the Parent’s Choice “Approved Award.” This is the second award-winning DVD co-created by Ms. Pyper; the first was “Steps4Kids to Write Their ABCs.”

Kim Wilkinson, MA ’01 and current Ph.D. student, recently presented the training course “Developing Self-Care Skills in Toddlers and Pre-school Aged Children with Special Needs” at Huntington Hospital in Pasadena, CA.

Sunayna Agrawal, MA ’02 and current OTD student, presented a workshop on “Sensory Integration and Therapeutic Activities for Your Child with Special Needs” to Southern California chapters of the Autism Society of America.

Heather J. Kitching, MA ’02 and OTD student, co-authored with USC OS/OT Professor Gelya Frank the article “The Tule River Tribal History Project: Collaboration with Anthropology and Occupational Therapy to Preserve Indigenous History and Promote Tribal Goals” in the Winter 2008 issue of Human Organization, and (along with USC OS/OT alumnae Allison Joe, MA ’04, Colleen Harvey, MA ’04, Amber Bertram, MA ’04, Rani Bechar, MA ’04, Jeanine Blanchard, MA ’09 and Ph.D. student, and USC OS/OT Assistant Professor Jaynee Taguchi-Meyer) the chapter “Postcolonial Practice in Occupational Therapy: The Tule River Tribal History Project” in the book A Political Practice of Occupational Therapy.

Carly Rogers, MA ’04, has designed the Ocean Therapy Surf Program, an adaptive surfing intervention geared to accessing the healing effects of the ocean environment for clients coping with mental and physical disabilities. Populations served by the program, which is based in Manhattan Beach, CA and funded through The Jimmy Miller Foundation, include at-risk youth and wounded Marines based at Camp Pendleton.

Current USC OS/OT students Kitty Chan (MA-II), Jesus Diaz (OTD), Elizabeth Goodwin (MA-II) and Myka Winder (MA-II) were honored by the Division with 2009 Student Leadership Awards, which include scholarships to attend the national AOTA Conference in Houston, TX.

Amanda C. Foran, current Ph.D. student, is presenting a poster titled “Occupation-Based Faculty-Student Co-Teaching to Enhance University Student Heath and Well-Being” at the AOTA Conference in Houston, TX. Additionally, she presented posters on “Community-Dwelling Older Adults’ Perceptions Regarding the Relationship of Dog Ownership to Engagement in Dog-Walking for Physical Activity” at two research events held at USC.

MA-II student Stephanie L. Hayes has accepted an Albert Schweitzer Fellowship to conduct a project addressing occupational needs of board-and-care home residents experiencing serious mental illnesses in the Los Angeles area. She also authored an article, “Skin Picking Behaviors: An Examination of Prevalence and Severity in a Community Sample” in the March 2009 issue of The Journal of Anxiety Disorders.

MA-II students Grace Matsuo and Yuko Mori were honored with a 2009 Phi Kappa Phi Student Recognition Award for their community housing proposal “Arugamamani” (see related story, page 10).

Births


Deaths

Grace R. Young, MA ’90, passed away suddenly on January 22, 2009. Survivors include her daughters Diane and Sharon and three grandchildren. ■
The interdisciplinary team of scholars of Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Technologies for Successful Aging with Disability (RERC), a partnership of USC and Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, is studying the challenges of living with disabilities, whether due to long-term conditions or newly acquired as a consequence of aging or developing a new condition. Among RERC’s innovative features are its cutting-edge technologies and that its measure of success will be greater participation; in fact, the project’s stated objective is to “Optimize Participation Through Technology” (OPTT). It is being funded for $950,000 per year for 5 years by the NIDRR.

RERC consists of four components.

Project 1 develops a reliable method to assess hand function and dexterity.
Project 2 develops fun, low-cost virtual games that encourage engagement and help increase physical function.
Project 3 uses virtual reality and other technology to teach optimal techniques to prevent shoulder damage for people who transfer to and from wheelchairs.
Project 4 studies use of wireless microstimulators implanted in muscles to shift an immobile person’s weight automatically to avoid pressure ulcers.

“The project provides an ideal mechanism for fostering collaborations between OS/OT, PT and Biokinesiology, Psychology, Neuroscience, Gerontology, Engineering, Computer Science and Game Developers,” explained Dr. Albert Rizzo, PI for Project 2.

Among RERC investigators is Florence Clark, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA. “I think working with Dr. Clark brings in a very different yet important perspective that tends to be ignored in this engineering-based center, and that is the more societal and lifestyle aspect of what it means to be disabled,” noted RERC co-director Dr. Philip Requejo. “We are dealing with a wide variety of populations, including spinal cord injury, Parkinson’s disease, and osteoarthritis. Those who are aging with a disability are facing a greater challenge, and those who are used to being integrated in the community are now facing new challenges. Now we are able to integrate new technologies into the rehabilitation science.”

For more information on RERC, go to http://www.usc.edu/agingrerc.

AOTA Elections (Continued from page 1)

and Chair of the department, and rose to her current position as Associate Dean, Chair, and Professor when the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy was incorporated into the School of Dentistry in 2006. Dr. Clark received USC’s Presidential Medallion in 2004, the highest honor for academicians who have brought honor and distinction to the University.

Also winning office in AOTA’s recent elections were current USC OS/OT grad students Stephen Barbour and Elizabeth Wright Hayes, who will be serving in AOTA’s Assembly of Student Delegates (ASD). The OS/OT Division recently held a reception on the Health Sciences Campus to congratulate all three new officers.

Mr. Barbour was elected Secretary of the ASD Steering Committee. In his new post, he will be responsible for keeping and distributing minutes of all meetings, notifying students delegates of meetings and events and working with the Vice-Chairpersons of the ASD to maintain lines of communication. “I wanted to get more involved with our profession and saw this as a great opportunity to gain leadership experience while serving OT students across the nation,” Mr. Barbour commented. “It is an honor to be given this opportunity to make a difference within the OTS community, and to serve the national OT student body to the best of my ability. I would like to thank all the USC students and faculty who supported me throughout this process. I believe the roles of student and ASD officer complement and enrich each other. I’m looking forward to a successful and productive year with the ASD committee.”

Ms. Hayes was elected to the post of Communication and Advocacy Chairperson. Her duties will include serving as liaison to AOTA headquarters staff for membership, marketing and communication initiatives, and to the American Occupational Therapy Political Action Committee (AOTPAC); assisting in orientation of new officers; transferring records to new ASD representatives; and working with the ASD Chair as needed. “Wanting to be more connected with our national organization motivated me to run for Communication and Advocacy Chairperson, and I am so very excited to be representing USC in this role,” Ms. Hayes noted. “I am very interested in policy and advocacy for OT and love that this position will allow me connection to AOTPAC. My goals are to communicate effectively from our students to AOTA, gain experience in leadership, learn how to advocate on many levels, and cause positive change for students. I really want to thank all the USC students who voted, and can’t wait to make all students’ voices heard!”

AOTA represents the interests and concerns of occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants and occupational therapy students. Its major programs and activities are directed toward assuring the quality of OT services, improving consumer access to health care services, and promoting the professional development of members, as well as educating the public about the profession and advocating healthy living. Currently, AOTA has a nationwide membership of 36,000.
Save the Dates for Continuing Education

The USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy is conducting continuing education programs for OT practitioners through 2009. Upcoming in the near future are:

* Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation — Saturday, May 30, 2009

* Life Advisor Training Program — Monday, June 8 through Wednesday, June 10, 2009

* Lifestyle Redesign® and Lifestyle Redesign® Weight Management — Friday, November 13, 2009

The Lifestyle Redesign® continuing education opportunity will be taking place the day before Homecoming (see related story, this page). Participants can take advantage of this scheduling to enjoy a weekend of activities celebrating work and leisure, as well as catching up with fellow Division alums.

All programs will take place on the USC Health Sciences Campus, or in the Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign (locations to be confirmed). For more information, contact otconted@usc.edu or visit www.usc.edu/ot and click on “Programs.”

Homecoming 2009 — November 14th

Join OS/OT alumni, students, faculty/staff and friends for Homecoming Tailgate Party on Saturday, November 14, 2009, when the nationally ranked USC Trojans fight on against the Stanford Cardinal. 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!

Research DayHonors OS/OT Students

USC OS/OT Ph.D. students Jess Holguin, BS ’96; MA ’05, and Sook-莱i Liew, MA ’08, won first and second place, respectively, in the category of Outstanding Research by a Student in Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the USC School of Dentistry’s 2009 Research Day. Mr. Holguin’s poster was titled “Spirituality, Well-Being, and Participation Capacity: A New Perspective on the Hispanic Paradox,” and Ms. Liew’s was “Mission Impossible: An fMRI Study of Motor Empathy for Impossible Actions in a Woman with Congenital Limb Deficiencies.” Congratulations!
Effective April 1, 2009, USC has acquired USC University Hospital (USCUH) and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, both located on the Health Sciences Campus, from Tenet Healthcare Corp. for $275 million. Mitchell R. Creem assumes the position of Chief Executive Officer for USCUH and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, reporting to USC Executive Vice President and Provost C.L. Max Nikias.

“The hospital acquisition is an historic investment by USC and a strategic move to create an integrated academic medical center,” commented Nikias. “We look forward to enhancing the patient service that comes with the outstanding care provided by our Doctors of USC. In doing, we will elevate the Keck School of Medicine of USC to a nationally acclaimed leader among the nation’s medical schools.”

The hospitals are of particular significance to the USC OS/OT Division faculty and students not just because of their proximity, but because they provide a valuable setting for clinical and research experiences. Hospital clients receive outstanding OT in-patient services, including lymphedema management and interventions to support recovery from cancer, neurological insults, bariatric surgery and other causes of hospitalization. High school and college students aspiring to a career in OT can volunteer at the hospitals; additionally, for enrolled OS/OT students, the hospitals serve as sites for Fieldwork I and II, OT500 classes, and doctoral and clinical doctoral residency. Kathy Gross, MA, OTR/L, is Chief of Occupational Therapy for USCUH.

An acute care hospital, USCUH opened in 1991 and currently tracks 7,700 inpatient visits and 56,000 outpatient visits each year. Norris Cancer Hospital was acquired by Tenet in 2003. Devoted exclusively to the treatment of patients with cancer, the hospital is affiliated with the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. Between them, the two hospitals employ 1,600 people. Facilities at the 411-bed USCUH include the new 10-story Norris Inpatient Tower, which provides 11 new operating rooms and 146 inpatient beds, most of which have never been used. Facilities at the USC Norris Cancer Hospital include 60 beds. When USC opens the new inpatient beds at University Hospital, the Doctors of USC will be caring for patients throughout a 1,400-bed system, including the new 600-bed Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center hospital and the 314-bed Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.