

# USC Chan

SPRING 2015

USC MRS. T.H. CHAN DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ALUMNI MAGAZINE

## FEATURED STORIES

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### 10 Years in Africa

USC Chan celebrates a decade of improving the lives of Ghanaian children with disabilities

### Remembering Ann Neville-Jan

Looking back on the life and times of the beloved OT Trojan Family Member

### Experimental Soccer and the Good Life

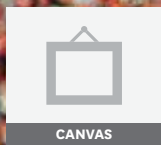
Examining the role of moral striving in families with children with disabilities

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**Ranked U.S. News & World Report's top occupational therapy program**





SCAN PAGE WITH  
LAYER APP FOR  
ENHANCED CONTENT

**WALKING ON AIR** | On Nov. 29, Ralph DeQuebec (pictured at center with his wife Kathleen) proudly walked on to the L.A. Coliseum field to be honored as the “Hero of the Game” during the USC-Notre Dame football faceoff. DeQuebec, a 31-year-old Marine Corps veteran who served three tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, has been at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center since late 2012 when an improvised explosive device blew off his legs from the knees down. Through surgical intervention—including bone-lengthening procedures—and working with USC occupational therapist Annemarie Orr MA ’09, OTD ’15, DeQuebec has learned to walk again using prostheses. “The key to this recovery has been surrounding myself with a great team. I have the best wife, family, doctors, therapists and mentors,” DeQuebec said. “And it was amazing to share that moment with everyone.”





## DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

It is hard to believe that more than six months have elapsed since the announcement of the Chan family's historic \$20 million gift to endow and name the USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy! Yet our collective pace has seemed to accelerate even faster—in January, a new tenure-track faculty member joined our ranks (learn more about Sook-Lei Liew's research on page 10); we are celebrating the decade anniversary of international fieldwork education in Ghana (see pages 12-19 for more); and we are actively expanding our Global Initiatives footprint in tandem with strategic partners (including Wenchun Qu, who pens this issue's "A Deeper Meaning" on page 32).

While this exciting new era unfolds before us, another era has regrettably come to a sudden close. In early February, Ann Neville-Jan, associate professor and associate chair of curriculum and faculty, passed away. Ann was a renowned and beloved faculty member in our division for 25 years, and her career was as notable for its scholastic excellence as it was for the warmth, soulfulness and authenticity that she radiated into the lives of so many.

In late March, hundreds of members of the Trojan Family—faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends—joined Ann's family and friends on campus at a memorial celebration of her life. Laughs and tears were shared by all as we gathered to remember this dynamo of a woman. As her family members so graciously recalled, USC was indeed a central facet of her personal and professional life. She loved the university and the division, and it was truly our honor to commemorate her life and legacy.

At USC, the oft-used phrase "Trojan Family" is shorthand for the connections shared between our alumni and the university. But upon seeing the crowd gathered to honor Ann, I was vividly reminded that the Trojan Family is more than just a slogan; it is a permanent, tangible bond between Trojans that spans the distances of time and place. Thank you, too, for all that you continue doing to strengthen our unparalleled Trojan Family.

**FLORENCE CLARK PHD '82, OTR/L, FAOTA**  
ASSOCIATE DEAN, CHAIR AND MRS. T.H. CHAN PROFESSOR OF  
OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
USC MRS. T.H. CHAN DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE AND  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
HERMAN OSTROW SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY OF USC



## 4 A Kinder, Gentler Dental Appointment

How an interdisciplinary research initiative aims to make trips to the dentist less terrifying for children with autism.

## 6 The Trojan Advocates

Three USC Chan students were elected as student delegates to the American Occupational Therapy Association.



## 7 News Briefs

Keep your finger on the pulse of what's going on at the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.



## 8 Research Buzz

Assistant professor Natalie Leland discusses her innovative research project that seeks to define quality metrics to enhance rehabilitation after post acute care.



## 10 Harnessing Brain Power

Assistant professor Sook-Lei Liew's research uses cutting-edge technology to discover ways to enhance the brain's ability to restore motor function after a stroke.

### *Associate Dean and Chair*

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### USC MRS. T.H. CHAN DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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MIKE MCNULTY '06,  
MA '09, OTD '10

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

LEILA ABULASHIN MA '15  
PHIL CHANNING  
PIERSON CLAIR  
HEATHER DINGESS DPT '09  
JOHN HWANG MA '03  
JOHN SKALICKY

#### DESIGN JHK CREATIVE

#### CONTRIBUTORS

HOPE HAMASHIGE  
JOHN HOBBS MA '14  
NATALIE LELAND  
CHERYL MATTINGLY  
MIKE MCNULTY '06, MA '09, OTD '10  
CALEN OUELLETTE  
YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '17  
WENCHUN QU MS '02, PHD '03  
JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04

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



USC University of  
Southern California





## I2

### 10 Years in Africa

It's been a decade since USC Chan students first began treating children with disabilities in Ghana as part of their leadership externship. Read about how the experience has made an impact—on both the children and the more than 200 aspiring occupational therapists who've traveled to West Africa.



## 20

### Ann the Adventurer

USC Chan celebrates the life and career of longtime faculty member Ann Neville-Jan with her inspiring life story about how a baby girl born with spina bifida—and very little hope—grew up to become the accomplished woman who received OTAC's Lifetime Achievement Award just last year.



## 26

### Experimental Soccer and the Good Life

In her new textbook, *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life*, USC Chan professor Cheryl Mattingly explores suffering and moral striving.



## 28

### In Print

This issue's many published research articles and book chapters include a *Journal of Occupational Science* article about enriching the lives of cancer survivors and an article in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* that studies the effects of social influence on middle schoolers' alcohol and marijuana usage.

## 32

### A Deeper Meaning

The division's 2015 commencement speaker Wenchun Qu talks about his career path and how he hopes to help further define OT in China.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### HEATHER DINGESS DPT '09



Heather Dingess has been a pediatric physical therapist at Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach

Calif., for five years but, judging by her captivating photography, it would be easy to mistake her for a professional photographer. 2015 marks the third year she has provided services to the children of Mephibosheth Training Center in Ghana, a trip that hundreds of USC Chan students have taken since the site became a fieldwork affiliate in 2005. During a recent trip, Dingess used her camera to capture the beautiful Ghanaian faces and moments. Check out her work on pages 12–19.

### NATALIE LELAND



"I knew I was going to be an occupational therapist in junior high school," says Natalie Leland, who

was exposed to the profession at a young age as the daughter of a pediatric speech therapist. Since then, Leland earned a bachelor's degree in OT and master's and doctor of philosophy degrees in gerontology. She joined the USC Chan faculty in August 2011 and has a dual appointment with the USC Davis School of Gerontology. Her research, featured on page 8, received Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality funding, which she plans to use to develop standardized metrics for post-acute care patients.

### CHERYL MATTINGLY



Dr. Mattingly likes a good story. The USC Chan professor, who has a joint appointment with the anthropology

department at USC Dornsife, focuses her research on patient-care narratives. It's through these stories that health care professionals, including occupational therapists, can learn what matters most to a patient, allowing for more effective treatment interventions. Mattingly recently wrote a textbook called *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life*, which inspired her thought-provoking essay, "Experimental Soccer and the Good Life," about suffering and moral striving on page 26.

### WENCHUN QU MS '02, PHD '03



It was a conversation on an inter-campus tram with a chatty occupational therapy student that forever changed the

trajectory of Wenchun Qu's career path. The Chinese surgeon who was at USC pursuing a PhD says he realized the surgeon's "fix it" paradigm was only half the picture in restoring form and function to his patients. Qu, now an assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the renowned Mayo Clinic and the featured speaker at USC Chan's commencement ceremony this spring, reflects on his journey and his aims to help define OT in China in "A Deeper Meaning" on page 32.

# A KINDER, GENTLER DENTAL APPOINTMENT

## NIDCR GRANT PROMISES TO IMPROVE DENTAL EXPERIENCE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

BY JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04

The National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research has awarded Sharon Cermak a \$3.2-million grant in support of her research to improve dental experiences for children with autism.

"We're really excited about it," said Cermak, a USC Chan professor.

Cermak's study, which started in 2009, adapted dental offices to see if children with autism could feel more at ease in the chair.

"Research has shown that oral care is one of the primary unmet health needs of minority children and children with disabilities," Cermak said. "Our goal was to see if we can find a way to make dental cleanings easier for children with autism, as well as for other children with sensory issues or anxiety."

A trip to the dentist can be overwhelming, with the combination of bright lights, loud drills and strong smells.

"A lot of kids are really afraid of going to the dentist," Cermak said. "All of these factors are really uncomfortable for children, particularly those with autism," who are more sensitive to stimuli.

Children with autism are often restrained or sedated at the dental office to prevent outbursts.

Cermak and her team found that dimming the lights—providers used headlamps instead of overhead lighting—and playing soothing music greatly reduced children's anxiety. Additionally, a "butterfly wrap" attached to the chair calmed kids with a deep-pressure "hug."

Cermak hopes that setting the stage for less anxious children



Sharon Cermak

PHOTO BY PHIL CHANNING

will lead to better behavior, which would prompt parents to schedule cleanings and more providers to treat children with disabilities.

With office modifications, "we can reduce the need for general anesthesia, which can reduce costs and improve the health of children," she said.

Cermak's research also showed that both children with autism and normally developing children tend to benefit from the adapted dental environment.

"Children with autism tend to benefit more, but all kids showed some benefits," she said. "It reduces anxiety, makes them calmer, and they do better getting their teeth cleaned."

Cermak's study was truly a group effort. The research team included a pediatric dentist and a clinical psychologist at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, as well as experts from USC, including a psychophysiological, an economist and a statistician. A center in Israel, which had conducted a similar study on children with special needs, also served as a collaborator.

Thanks to the grant money, Cermak and her team will provide 440 cleanings for a group of 220 children—half normally developing and half with autism.

"They'll each have one cleaning in a regular dental environment and one in the sensory-adapted environment," she said.

In this new study, Cermak and her team want to better understand why the adapted dental setting works and for which children it will be the most effective.

"We want to look at if it's more effective for younger children or older children—or is it more effective for children with sensory issues or anxiety issues," she said. "Or is it more effective for higher functioning children or children who may be lower functioning—and does that make a difference?"

"Research has shown that oral care is one of the primary unmet health needs of minority children and children with disabilities."

—Sharon Cermak





UP AND COMING

# Calendar

AUGUST 28

## White Coat Ceremony

[chan.usc.edu/news-and-events/events](http://chan.usc.edu/news-and-events/events)**APR 18**

### Trojan Family Reception at AOTA Conference and Expo

Relax and reconnect with fellow Trojans in the music city! Associate Dean Florence Clark invites you to the USC Chan Reception after you have perused the exhibits and events of the annual conference.

*Details >> Omni Nashville Hotel, 250 5th Ave. S., Nashville, Tenn. >> 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. >> More info: [tinyurl.com/aota2015](http://tinyurl.com/aota2015)*

**APR 18-19**

### Los Angeles Times Festival of Books

Bookworms and festivalgoers unite! USC hosts the 20th annual *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books. This year's fun-filled festival not only promotes literacy with book drives, poetry readings and arts but also promises loads of sensory stimulation with food trucks, live music and educational activities by USC's own health sciences divisions.

*Details >> USC University Park Campus >> More info: [festivalofbooks2015.usc.edu](http://festivalofbooks2015.usc.edu)*

**APR 25**

### 82nd Annual USC Alumni Awards

Every year since 1932, the USC Alumni Association has celebrated its own at the Alumni Awards. The gala brings together Trojan Family members to be recognized for their service, achievements and merit at the event. Past honorees have included astronaut Neil Armstrong, architect Frank O. Gehry and filmmaker Robert Zemeckis. *Details >> Westin Bonaventure Hotel, 404 S. Figueroa St., L.A. >> 5:30 p.m. >> More info: [alumnigroups.usc.edu/awards](http://alumnigroups.usc.edu/awards)*

**MAY 1-2**

### 4th Annual Occupational Therapy Summit of Scholars

USC Chan alongside co-sponsors Thomas Jefferson University, University of Illinois at Chicago and Washington University bring the profession's brightest scholars to sunny Southern California for the 4th annual Summit of Scholars. The summit provides academics the chance to share research, network and formulate discussions and ideas among faculty from leading academic institutions.

*Details >> Doubletree by Hilton Los Angeles Downtown, 120 S. Los Angeles St., L.A. >> More info: [chan.usc.edu/research/ot-summit](http://chan.usc.edu/research/ot-summit)*

**MAY 15**

### 132nd Annual Commencement

Watch as students from the class of 2015 toss their mortarboards in the air and embark on their journeys as USC alumni. You can participate and follow the monumental day via the hashtag #USCgrad.

*Details >> USC University Park Campus, Alumni Park, 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. >> More info: [commencement.usc.edu](http://commencement.usc.edu)*

**AUG 28**

### USC Occupational Therapy White Coat Ceremony

The USC Chan Division celebrates and welcomes the newest members of the profession as they don their white coats and recite their oath for the first time as health professionals.

*Details >> USC Health Sciences Campus >> More info: [chan.usc.edu/news-and-events/events](http://chan.usc.edu/news-and-events/events)*

**OCT 22-25**

### OTAC 39th Annual Conference

Save the date! Don't miss the largest West Coast OT conference this fall in the state's capital, Sacramento. Gather with fellow colleagues while participating in conference sessions and workshops.

*Details >> Hyatt Regency Sacramento, 1209 L St., Sacramento, Calif., >> Sacramento Convention Center, 1400 J St., Sacramento, Calif. >> More info: [otaonline.org/annual-conference](http://otaonline.org/annual-conference)*



# THE TROJAN ADVOCATES

THREE USC  
CHAN STUDENTS  
WILL SERVE  
AS AMERICAN  
OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY  
ASSOCIATION'S  
STUDENT  
DELEGATES

BY JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04



PHOTO BY LEILA ABULASHIN MA '15

L-R: Elizabeth Peters MA '16, Ellen Wleklinski '14, MA '15 & Joseph Ungco MA '16

The USC Chan Division will soon have more Trojans in high places. Three OT students from USC have been elected to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Assembly of Student Delegates (ASD).

AOTA announced last month that Joseph Ungco MA '16 will serve as ASD chairperson; Ellen Wleklinski '14, MA '15 as vice chairperson; and Elizabeth Peters MA '16 as secretary. The students will start their term July 1. Ungco and Peters will serve two years; Wleklinski will serve one.

"I've never been prouder to be one of three Trojans representing USC on the [ASD] steering committee," Peters said. "I think I speak for all three of us in saying that we could not have done it without the support from students and faculty from the program."

The USC students will serve on a six-person ASD assembly and support OT students and student members of AOTA by providing a voice into AOTA affairs and advancing students' professional contributions.

"I see my role as being the liaison between all OT and AOTA students and the AOTA board of directors and representative assembly," Ungco said.

Added Wleklinski, "Put simply, my job will be to facilitate communication between the committee, the student delegates and their schools."

The USC students have several objectives they hope to accomplish during their ASD tenure.

"My main goals are to identify the current trends in student issues and advocate for them within AOTA," Ungco said. "Additionally, I am passionate about increasing membership in our professional associations, as well as broadening the diversity in our workforce."

While Peters said her role as secretary is still taking shape, she plans to use the position to act as a proponent for her peers, which also prepares her for an OT career.

"I was intrigued by the potential opportunity to help represent OT students nationwide and collaborate with fellow classmates near and far," she said. "Our main role as members of ASD is to be advocates. As future occupational therapists, we are being trained in how to advocate for and teach advocacy to our clients."

Wleklinski shared Peters' goals to work on behalf of OT students.

"I have always been interested in the advocacy side of occupational therapy," she said.

The students also stressed the importance of AOTA as an organization.

"I truly believe that professional development is not just about being a great clinician, but it also carries a responsibility to engage with your professional associations, which are our prime advocates," Ungco said.

Added Wleklinski, "I consider AOTA membership as an important part of our profession, so I was excited when I learned about the opportunities for students."

While the students won't take their ASD seats until summer, the representatives plan to attend the AOTA Conference in April in Nashville, Tenn.

"During this time, we will be oriented to our new roles and have time to meet the current members of ASD, as well as the newly elected students in person," Peters explained.

The ASD assembly mission is to uphold the values of the AOTA, promote association membership and provide a forum for the development of student leadership and political awareness to enhance the viability of the profession.





YOUR WORLD

# News Briefs

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

## HONORS



### Two USC Chan faculty members named 2015 AOTA Fellows

After this spring's AOTA National Conference

and Expo, division faculty members Julie McLaughlin Gray MA '96, PhD '06 and Shawn Roll will be able to add the FAOTA credential after their names when they are officially named Fellows of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Bestowed upon less than 1 percent of OT professionals, the title recognizes occupational therapists who have made significant contributions to the continuing education and professional development of other AOTA members. With these awards, the USC Chan Division will have a total of nine fellows—two of whom are emeriti—within its faculty ranks.

## COMPETITIONS



### BOC member gives \$100K for Shark Tank-like competition for division students

Board of Councilors

member Semira Dariushnia and her spouse Mark Moshayedi have made a pledge of \$100,000 to fund a student competition at the USC Chan Division. Each year, aspiring occupational therapists will present innovative ideas concerning the future of the profession to a panel of Chan faculty and experts. Examples of ideas may include the development of new tools to improve treatment modalities, new protocols for improved diagnostic and therapeutic approaches or new business models for OT practices. The most innovative idea will be awarded a \$5,000 prize. "Our faculty members strive to instill a spirit of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in our students," Florence Clark said. "And this competition will most certainly accelerate our capacity for doing so."

## AWARDS



### 2015 Buehler Award: SCERTS model for children with autism spectrum disorder

Pediatric occupational

therapist Amy Laurent and autism spectrum disorder expert Amy Wetherby received the 2015 Buehler Legacy Award for Clinical Innovation on Jan. 29 for their work with the SCERTS model for children with autism spectrum disorder. In their lecture, the multidisciplinary team gave an overview of SCERTS, an educational model that provides specific guidelines for helping a child become a successful communicator while preventing problem behaviors. Presented in honor of alumna Patricia Buehler '49, the Buehler Legacy Award is intended to increase the visibility and application of occupational science and therapeutic best practices in the clinical community.

## MINDFULNESS



### USC Chan students lead meditation sessions on Health Sciences Campus

Nearly 70 surgical

and anesthesiology residents and fellows found their collective *om* during a flash meditation session at LAC+USC Medical Center's inaugural Resident and Wellness Day. The group session, led by USC Chan students Michael Nader MA '16 and Donna Ozawa MA '15, also offered mindfulness tools to event participants as part of an ongoing program to promote self-care among the doctors on the Health Sciences Campus. An article posted in late 2014 on the Eric Cohen Student Health Center of USC reported that nearly one-third of the HSC student population reported feeling depressed or having feelings of depression.

## PLEDGES



### BOC member and spouse pledge \$25K for scholarship

Board of Councilors member Grace Ho '82

and spouse Daniel Ho have pledged \$25,000 to the USC Chan Division to establish the Hisako Saeki Scholarship. The new scholarship—named in tribute of Grace Ho's mother—will be awarded in \$1,000 increments annually to a student interested in promoting occupational therapy research, practice and interdisciplinary collaboration of services for terminally ill patients and their families. After graduating, Grace Ho practiced in rehabilitation until returning to Japan to be with her terminally ill mother during her final years. Grace Ho has since applied her therapy skills to business philosophy and is a motivational international business lecturer. She and her husband have international business interests in Asia and the Pacific Rim.

## ALUMNI



### New additions to OTAA board

The USC Occupational Science and Occupational

Therapy Alumni Association recently added four new alumnae to its board. Tamara "Tami" (Gotz) Delaney MA '00 and Sarah Yun MA '10 will step into co-vice president roles while Jessica Richman MA '13, OTD '14 has been tapped as treasurer, and Jenna Mele MA '09, OTD '10 will serve as secretary. Delaney and Yun have worked in pediatric occupational therapy since finishing their degrees at USC Chan. Richman works at a non-profit, community-based mental health agency providing services to at-risk, disadvantaged youth, and Mele is a registered yoga instructor who works in long-term care and home health settings with older adults. The newest members of the board join Jennifer (Stokely) Jones MA '06, OTD '07, a Pasadena-based pediatric therapist, who enters her second term as board president.



SCIENCE

# Research Buzz



## IN EQUAL MEASURE ENHANCING POST-ACUTE CARE REHABILITATION BY DEFINING QUALITY METRICS

BY NATALIE LELAND PHD, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR JOINTLY APPOINTED AT THE USC DAVIS  
SCHOOL OF GERONTOLOGY



For many years I have worked as an occupational therapist with post-acute care patients to help them resume fulfilling and meaningful lives back in the community after a medical event.

But while I was working in skilled nursing-home facilities throughout the country, I began to notice striking variations in practice patterns.

The institutional “culture” and use of evidence-based interventions dramatically differed between facilities and, not surprisingly, yielded significant variations in patient outcomes.

For example, among hip-fracture patients with high risk for falling and subsequent readmission, I observed how home safety assessments were inconsistently included in discharge plans.

The capacity for these patients to return and remain home safely varied greatly and far too often resulted in falls and injuries requiring hospital readmission.

Because practice guidelines and clearly defined standards of care for rehabilitation were nonexistent, I felt ill-equipped to address these differences in care delivery. I believed there could be a better way not only to document variations in care but then build upon that data to improve care patterns and ultimately patient outcomes. That was why I first pursued a research career as a gerontologist, health services researcher and occupational therapist, and it is still the inspiration for my research agenda today.

Improving health care service delivery systems and patient outcomes are key priorities of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Multiple new initiatives, such as physician-led quality improvement and performance-based payment models, are driving efforts to better align care delivery with incentives. But despite growing concerns over containing costs while also improving the quality of post-acute care, these proven approaches have not yet been applied to rehabilitation populations.

My new research grant, a K01 mentored research scientist development award from the Agency for Healthcare Research and



PHOTO BY PHIL CHANNING

Natalie Leland

Quality (AHRQ), will address this critical gap by developing an approach for applying evidence-based guidelines to rehabilitation populations to improve quality of care.

My overarching aim is to define an initial group of quality measures for hip fracture care, which will inform the standardization of a mixed-method approach for evaluating the quality of post-acute care rehabilitation.

This proposal is innovative because it will translate established physician quality improvement methodology to rehabilitation contexts. More specifically, I will identify patient-centered and evidence-based fall prevention care processes, characterize current hip fracture rehabilitation practices and then produce a strategy for measuring rehabilitation quality. This will lay a foundation for developing quality metrics for a broad range of rehabilitation populations. It will also establish systematic methods for improving care delivery and outcomes, while more closely aligning rehabilitation with the patient-centered goals of the ACA.

A research project like this—which spans the boundaries of many fields—deserves a multidisciplinary team of collaborators to help successfully see the study to completion. I am excited to work with various experts from the USC Davis School of Gerontology, USC School of Pharmacy, University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, Brookings Institution, Keck School of Medicine of USC, UCLA, RAND Corporation, Veterans Administration and American Medical Association’s Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement who will be consulting with me throughout the phases of this study.

The mission of the AHRQ is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency and efficacy of health care for all Americans.

My grant will not only accelerate my professional goal of becoming a leading independent investigator of rehabilitation health services research, but also it is a significant step toward directly improving the quality of life for a population that is central to occupational therapy practice nationwide.





SEEN &amp; HEARD

# Up Front



## SPEAKING UP

**BILL WONG MA '11, OTD '13**  
**TEDXGRANDFORKS PRESENTER**

In February 2015, USC Chan alumnus Bill Wong delivered an inspiring “TED talk” at TEDxGrandForks in North Dakota about the contributions people with autism can—and do—make in the world. He ought to know.

Wong, who has autism spectrum disorder, not only works in the field, providing occupational therapy services at Interface Rehab in L.A., but he also regularly guest lectures at educational programs and conferences across the country, hoping to inspire others.

### TEDXGRANDFORKS TALK TITLE:

“Fight On: Overcoming Autism Diagnoses”

### SPEECH REDUX:

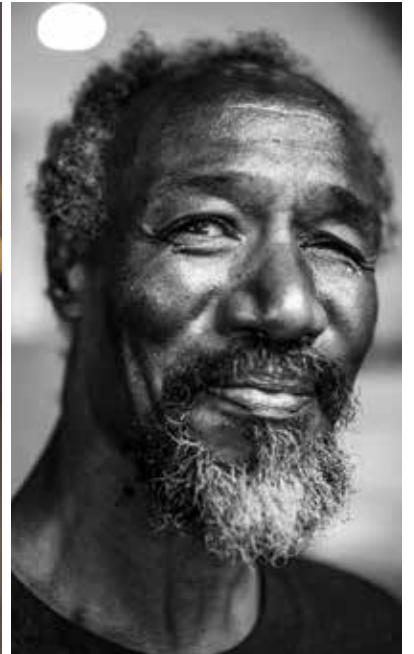
Autistic individuals can be successful, even in areas where the odds of success seem stacked against them.

### HOW WONG CONQUERS PRE-TALK JITTERS:

“My anxiety has decreased as I got more experience. For me, repetition and positive feedback gave me the confidence to try public speaking stages with bigger audiences and higher stakes.”

### WHAT HE HOPES THE AUDIENCE WALKED AWAY WITH:

“I want to use my personal success to motivate other autistic individuals in the field of occupational therapy to aim high for their career goals. I also want to use my experience as an inspiration to let autistic students in occupational therapy know that they are not alone in their journeys.”



PHOTOS BY JOHN HWANG MA '03

## SKID ROW IN FOCUS

On any given day, nearly 2,000 homeless people are living on the worn sidewalks of L.A.'s Skid Row. Some are drug users, some have a mental illness, while others have simply fallen on hard times. Whatever their story, occupational therapist and photographer John Hwang MA '03 is there to listen, offer assistance and chronicle the encounters for his photo series, *Skid Row Stories*. His captivating work has recently been basking in the media spotlight. Last year, local NPR-affiliate KPCC 89.3 published an audio profile on Hwang's work. In January 2015, 11 of his stunning portraits helped illustrate a CNN story called “On patrol with Skid Row's ‘Angel Cop.’” Check out his work by following the links below:



**SEE MORE:**

[tinyurl.com/hrwangcnn](http://tinyurl.com/hrwangcnn)



**HEAR MORE:**

[tinyurl.com/kpccaudioprofile](http://tinyurl.com/kpccaudioprofile)



**HELP WITH DONATION:**

[skidrowstories.com](http://skidrowstories.com)



**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
PLACED 13<sup>TH</sup> ON THE  
LIST OF 100  
BEST JOBS**

## FACE OF THE PROFESSION

Assistant Professor Samia Rafeedie MA '05, OTD '06 was the star of this year's *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Job rankings report on the occupational therapy profession. In the article, Rafeedie remembers thinking, “I don't want to help people find jobs,” when an academic adviser first suggested she consider occupational therapy. Thanks to the article, fewer prospective students are likely to make the same semantic mistake. “Physical therapy teaches people how to walk, and occupational therapy teaches them how to dance,” Rafeedie explains in the article, repeating the quote she heard that helped launch her career in occupational therapy, which placed 13th on the list of 100 Best Jobs.

Read the full profile at [tinyurl.com/rafeedie](http://tinyurl.com/rafeedie).

“Physical therapy teaches people how to walk, and occupational therapy teaches them how to dance.”



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*"With the help of novel technology, we can start to understand how to augment the brain's recovery and personalize the approach for each patient."*

PHOTO BY JOHN SKALICKY





# HARNESSING BRAIN POWER

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR SOOK-LEI LIEW'S RESEARCH USING BRAIN IMAGING AND NON-INVASIVE BRAIN STIMULATION DURING REHABILITATION COULD MEAN GREATER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR STROKE SURVIVORS.**

BY HOPE HAMASHIGE

Strokes can happen in an instant, but their effects can last a lifetime. For stroke survivors, subsequent motor impairments can dramatically impact their quality of life until rehabilitation can begin the process of restoring function.

While health care professionals who work with stroke survivors have all seen patients who respond beautifully to therapy, they also know that therapies simply do not work equally well for all patients.

Sook-Lei Liew MA '08, PhD '12, who began working with stroke patients as a graduate student in the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, found those times when therapy failed both frustrating and inspiring.

"We never knew what was going to work and whether they were going to have a good outcome," explains Liew, now an assistant professor at USC Chan. "That was my motivation for going into research—to uncover more ways to help these patients have good outcomes."

Following stroke, the brain loses the ability to perform certain functions and has to be retrained to perform seemingly simple tasks.

Those patients who have trouble walking, for example, perform repetitive exercises to relearn that skill. Making the muscles work often makes the brain work, too, and for some patients, recovering function is a matter of practicing a motion over and over again. But not all patients fully regain their motor skills, or their quality of life, through repetitive movement.

Liew's research is exploring ways to supplement this approach of using muscles to train the brain. She is studying how to enhance the brain's own ability, with the help of cutting-edge technology, to bring function back to those parts of the body that are compromised following a stroke.

"With the help of novel technology, we can start to understand how to augment the brain's recovery and personalize the approach for each patient," she says.

Using imaging technology called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a non-invasive technique used to "observe" brain activity, Liew is better able to understand which parts of the brain are involved when a patient is asked to learn to perform a particular task.

Because every person's brain is wired slightly differently, not every person engages the exact same areas of their brain when re-learning a task, Liew explains. Having the ability, thanks to imaging technologies, to observe which parts of the brain each patient engages may help develop targets for customizing therapy to maximize the outcome for that individual.

Once target brain regions have been identified, Liew then studies ways to encourage brain activity in those regions to enhance neural repair. One method she uses is non-invasive brain stimulation to enhance

neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to reorganize neural pathways based on learning new skills. This stimulation is thought to help neurons fire more easily which, in turn, may help the brain recover better than it would without such stimulation.

Another method is real-time fMRI neurofeedback, which uses a computer interface coupled with fMRI technology. This allows Liew to analyze real-time brain activity and give patients feedback about their brain activity on a second-by-second basis.

With this feedback, patients can potentially learn to re-control their own brain activity in regions that may have been damaged after stroke, using only their thoughts. Liew says this technology gives patients a way to become active players during their recovery by learning how to control their own brain networks.

"We give them a way to control their own brain activity, even if they cannot necessarily control their own limb movements," she says. "So far, we've seen that people with more severe motor impairments also show the greatest increases in brain activity with neurofeedback, suggesting that this is a promising tool for individuals who cannot recover through traditional motor practice alone."

Associate professor Lisa Aziz-Zadeh says Liew's use of novel techniques to analyze and potentially stimulate brain activity may become very beneficial to stroke patients.

"One of the exciting things about her work is her use of real time fMRI," says Aziz-Zadeh, who is collaborating with Liew on research to analyze connectivity patterns in the brain's motor circuits following stroke. "This can potentially help patients change their brain processing by regulating brain activations themselves with neural feedback."

Liew, who earned her PhD degree in occupational science at USC in 2012, returned to the USC Chan Division as a faculty member in January 2015 after spending two years conducting postdoctoral research at the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. By its nature, stroke research is a multidisciplinary pursuit that can be improved through collaboration among experts from many disciplines. Liew, who directs the Neural Plasticity and Neurorehabilitation Laboratory and also holds faculty appointments in the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy and in the neurology department at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, believes having access to experts in many disciplines will improve her own research. In fact, it was one of the primary reasons she chose to return to USC.

"It's great to be back at USC because it feels like home," she says. "I also feel there are so many resources here that will benefit my research and, hopefully, help [us] find new methods that will improve quality of life for stroke patients."







# 10



# YEARS IN AFRICA

**2015 MARKS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEADERSHIP  
EXTERNSHIP THAT HAS TAKEN MORE THAN 200 USC CHAN  
STUDENTS TO AFRICA'S WEST COAST.**

**BY JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04**

**PHOTOS BY HEATHER DINGESS DPT '09**

**B**onnie Nakasuji '74, MA '94, OTD '08 first went to Ghana in 2003 with a simple mission. She wanted to match patients with wheelchairs.

Only two years later—thanks to her passion for OT and a good deal on airfare—Nakasuji returned to Ghana with 10 USC Chan students in tow to help adults and children with disabilities.

During the past decade, Nakasuji, an adjunct associate professor at USC Chan who coordinates the division's leadership externship to Ghana, has ushered 232 USC OT students to Ghana, taking on some 50 duties from arranging air travel to lecturing at universities.

"It's just been an amazing journey," Nakasuji says. "When a student has an opportunity to give professionally, it's really rewarding."

"I have always been interested in international work, and I wanted to do something bigger," says Erin O'Donnell MA '13, OTD '14, who first traveled to Ghana in 2013 as a student and returned the following year as a practicing occupational therapist. "I'm planning on going back forever."

### PART OF A MOVEMENT

Traditionally, Ghanaian society has held an attitude that those with disabilities are "useless," Nakasuji says. It's even more pronounced in small villages.

"People believe that those with disabilities are cursed, so families who have children with disabilities throw them away," she says. "They have to get rid of the curse; they don't want it to permeate the family or the village."

Social centrality in an African village requires that each person contribute to the group's livelihood.

"Some people in Ghana think people with disabilities can't do anything, so they're not only cursed, [they're] worthless," Nakasuji explains.

Many Ghanaian children have a story of survival, Nakasuji says, including a boy she met who remembers his father taking him to the bush and leaving him to die.

"Infanticide is alive and well in Ghana," she says. "But I want to emphasize this attitude is changing."

In fact, advocacy for people with disabilities in Ghana took a giant leap forward in 2006 when the disability rights law passed, which protects people with disabilities from discrimination, exclusion and abusive or degrading treatment.

"The country has really changed in the last few years, with more locally run and locally funded programs," says Mariko Yamazaki MA '10, OTD '11, who first went to Ghana as a student and now co-coordinates USC's leadership externship.

Eight years ago, the University of Winneba in central Ghana launched a community-based rehabilitation (CBR) program to empower those with disabilities. As part of their externship, USC OT students are paired with CBR students for a leadership activity.

OT students join CBR students at a hospital, village or school, and together they work providing support and advocacy for patients, often with little or no money or equipment.

"These are families that don't have a therapy clinic down the street; they might not even have access to running water," Yamazaki says. "We have to make recommendations on what's realistic knowing that we won't be back in a month to follow up."

The most common disabilities OT students encounter in Ghana are cerebral palsy and polio, Nakasuji says.

"Many people don't have access to the polio vaccine or refuse to vaccinate because they believe it causes impotence in boys," she explains.

USC OT students have also worked with children with a range of disabilities

(Continued on page 19)

### ABOUT GHANA

**Location:** Africa's west coast

**Population:** 25.7 million

**Land Mass:** 92,098 square miles (about the size of Oregon)

**Capital:** Accra (approx. 42 miles from the Mephibosheth Training Center)

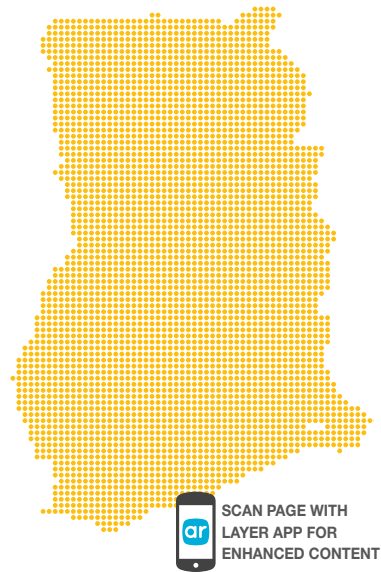
**Official language:** English

**Top 3 occupations:** 56 percent agriculture, 29 service industry, 15 percent manufacturing

**Doctor-patient ratio:** .09 doctors: 1,000 patients

**Life expectancy:** 64 for men, 68 for women

\*Source: CIA World Factbook



**"WHILE IN GHANA, I LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFTING MY EYES FROM MY OWN AGENDA TO SEE THE BEAUTIFUL AND FLUID BLENDING OF VARIOUS CULTURES, PERCEPTIONS, VALUES AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS. I HAVE SINCE LEARNED THE PROFESSIONAL IMPORTANCE OF STEPPING BACK AND TAKING ON A POSITION OF HUMILITY INSTEAD OF IMMEDIATELY ASSUMING AN 'EXPERT' ROLE WHEN WORKING WITH MY CLIENTS." —NATALIE PIERSON '12, MA '13**



### The Stigma of Disability

According to traditional Ghanaian religious thought, people with disabilities are "cursed" as a result of the family's sinful behavior. To avoid the stigma, families often abandon their disabled children. Enter Mephibosheth Training Center. This boarding school for children with special needs opened its doors in March 2005 to take in these "throw-away" children—ages 4 to 22—and educate them to contribute to society in meaningful ways. Since USC Chan began working with Mephibosheth a decade ago, 232 occupational therapy students have had service-learning experiences at the special needs school.









**“MY FIRST TRIP REALLY REMINDED ME WHY  
I WANTED TO BECOME AN OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPIST IN THE FIRST PLACE: TO HELP  
PEOPLE BE ABLE TO DO THE THINGS THAT  
ARE MOST MEANINGFUL TO THEM.”**

**—SOPHIA LIN MAGAÑA MA '07, OTD '08**













(Continued from page 14)

at the Mephiosheth Training Center since the day it opened in 2005.

The goal of the boarding school, which takes its name from the only disabled child mentioned in the Bible, is to train children to take on one of three vocations—sandal-making, sewing or carpentry.

"If they learn a skill, they can contribute to village life and they won't be mistreated or thrown away," Nakasuji says. "A sandal-maker, seamstress and carpenter are considered really good, middle-class jobs."

OT students present simple, fun activities related to sewing, leatherwork or woodworking and offer feedback on the child's capabilities and strengths, as well as strategies to help the child perform the job or a specific task.

"Some of these children have really significant disabilities that we really don't see in the U.S.," O'Donnell says. "It's just amazing seeing how capable they are."

With the launch of the country's first OT program in 2013 at the University of Ghana, USC students took on another role serving as mentors to incoming Ghanaian students.

Since OT is so tied to culture, Nakasuji and Yamazaki wanted to assist Ghanaian students without imposing an American perspective on OT.

"They don't have any [Ghanaian] OTs yet, since the first class from the university hasn't graduated yet, so I don't know what OT will look like in Ghana," Nakasuji says.

Adds Yamazaki, "We're at this interesting place where we really want to support [the university] and spread OT to new places, but we don't want to intrude on their own culturally relevant professional identity."

Nakasuji thought an email exchange program between the two sets of students would be the ideal solution.

"The [Ghanaian] students have a resource for getting information about how OT works in certain situations," Nakasuji says. "It's a way for the OT students to develop a professional identity when there are no OTs in the country ... and this is a perfect leadership activity for our students."

#### **A WORLDLY PERSPECTIVE AT HOME**

Year after year, USC students tell Nakasuji how their experience in Ghana has profoundly impacted how they practice OT.

"It completely changed the trajectory of my career," says O'Donnell, who now works in pediatrics. "I realized I'm meant to be working with kids; these trips have given me a passion."

Adds Yamazaki, "I'm much more aware of how to support the whole family and each client's unique family context, whether they live across the world or down the street."

O'Donnell and Yamazaki most value Nakasuji's lessons in cultural fluidity over cultural competency, a term often used by medical organizations, including the American Occupational Therapy Association.

"Cultural competency implies something static. It makes us feel we're accomplished when we never will be," she says, referring to the ways in which cultures change over time.

Nakasuji teaches students to bask in the cultural differences of Ghana, and to apply that same openness when working with a client at home.

"It's easy to see differences when you're working with someone who's very different," Nakasuji says. "But I want [OTs] to keep that same mindset when working with someone very similar."

While a clinician and patient might share experiences—the same hometown, ethnicity and religion—Nakasuji says an OT can never fully understand the client's experience, culture or context.

"As therapists, we think we're more culturally competent than we are," she says. "I believe that we're all very different. For us to be truly client-centered, we must maintain an openness that has to be culturally fluid."





# ANN THE ADVENTURER

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A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE LIFE  
AND TIMES OF ANN NEVILLE-JAN,  
USC CHAN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
AND ASSOCIATE CHAIR OF  
CURRICULUM AND FACULTY, WHO  
PASSED AWAY FEB. 1, 2015.

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14 AND MIKE MCNULTY '06, MA '09, OTD '10



*"Don't judge anyone until you walk a mile in their shoes or live a day in their life."*

—A quote Neville-Jan revered and practiced in her daily life

Doctors didn't have high expectations for Ann Neville-Jan when the future USC Chan associate professor was born on Dec. 13, 1950.

"Your daughter has spina bifida," they told her mother, according to an autobiographical PowerPoint presentation created by Neville-Jan. "She probably won't ever walk; she could be mentally retarded; and you'll need to watch her head because it might get big," they said, referring to hydrocephalus, a condition that often accompanies spina bifida.

The medical team didn't anticipate the fierce determination of the spunky little girl, though.

Just months later, she defied the odds—first by bouncing up and down in her infant seat in the backyard and then by learning to walk at 18 months old—albeit not perfectly. She walked with both feet pointed to the right, her right leg shorter and less muscular than the left.

The doctors' concerns about hydrocephalus never came to pass, and Neville-Jan showed no intellectual development problems through childhood. Rather, she excelled in school, diving headlong into the sciences and eventually earning her bachelor's, master's and doctor of philosophy degrees and becoming an occupational therapist.

### A daring adventurer

In grade school, Neville-Jan was inspired by the works of Helen Keller, the renowned author, political activist and first blind and deaf person to earn a bachelor's degree. Keller's famous quote, "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all," gave Neville-Jan insight into her own life.

"[Keller] came to see her disability as a natural part of her life and in doing so she taught me that disabilities aren't insurmountable barriers," Neville-Jan once shared. "Disabilities add twists and turns on the road of life, but the road nonetheless stretches before you, if you're game."

As it turned out Neville-Jan was more than game. She embarked upon a series of life adventures that would eventually lead her to become an occupational therapist, scholar, wife and a mother. But her first adventure was "school, school and more school."

In high school, Neville-Jan began a life-long love affair with the sciences, partly, she admitted, as a way to understand why she had spina bifida. During an advanced biology class, for example, she learned to artificially induce spina bifida in a tadpole embryo.

In 1972, Neville-Jan earned her bachelor's degree in biology from Towson University in Maryland after deciding to change her educational plans when she came across a career book that described

occupational therapy.

"If I never read that career book I would never have thought about a career in occupational therapy," Neville-Jan shared in a recent issue of *USC Chan Magazine*. "The idea of occupational therapy's combination of the arts and sciences is really what inspired me first."

In 1974, Neville-Jan completed her master of science degree in occupational therapy from Columbia University.

During her early career she practiced in mental health settings and held positions as director of occupational therapy at the Boston Veterans Administration Medical Center, rehabilitation coordinator for psychiatric services at the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Medical Center and education coordinator at the Sepulveda Veterans Administration Medical Center.

In 1986, she earned her doctor of philosophy degree in occupational therapy from New York University, and was appointed a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) the same year.

"In a word, Ann was simply the most beautiful, kind, loving person I've ever met. I think about her every day and will miss her for the rest of my days."

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—BILL MORGAN, PROFESSOR  
AND DIRECTOR OF THE PHD IN  
OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE PROGRAM



## A USC Chan veteran

Neville-Jan joined USC's occupational therapy faculty as an adjunct assistant professor in 1987 and became a full-time member in 1989.

In the 25 years since, she became an integral member of the USC Chan Division. Throughout her academic career at USC she taught research, theory and clinical courses across the undergraduate and graduate programs; was responsible for various administrative and curricular duties; and chaired dissertation committees for many master's and doctoral students.

She held positions within AOTA and had been invited to participate on panels of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) and the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine. She was a recent occupational therapy consultant to the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR). In 2014, she received the Occupational Therapy Association of California Lifetime Achievement Award.

Her scholarship included chronic pain, depression and secondary conditions associated with disability.

She eventually became an expert in spina bifida as both a research investigator and participant, and she secured research grant funding from the NCMRR, the AOTF, the U.S. Department of Education and the American Cancer Society.

She was a member of the editorial board of the *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, and her academic articles were published in the journals *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Disability & Society* and *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health*.

"She was one of the strongest people I know and an amazing advocate for so many. Rest in peace, dear Ann. We will miss you, and USC will never be the same."

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—ELIZABETH CARLEY, ASSISTANT  
CLINICAL PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR  
OF ADMISSIONS

## One final adventure

On the evening of Sunday, Feb. 1, USC Chan Division faculty, staff and students were shocked to read an email announcement from USC Chan Associate Dean Florence Clark notifying them that Neville-Jan, who was 64 years old, had passed away unexpectedly after suffering complications from surgery.

"Ann was an outstanding scholar, mentor and educator, and most importantly, a dear friend to many. So many of the division's successes can be directly attributed to her leadership and commitment," Clark wrote. "Beyond this, as we all know, her special smile and positive spirit fueled all of us, and in every moment reminded us of the importance of caring."

Almost instantly, Neville-Jan's Facebook newsfeed began to fill with students and colleagues sharing their fond memories (see sidebar on page 25).

"I am honored to have known such a great pioneer for our profession and also such an exemplary human being," Ashley Halle MA '11, OTD '12, assistant clinical professor, posted. "I am honored to call her my mentor."

Alumna Katie Sorensen MA '06 posted, "When I arrived at USC, I was still very confused and conflicted about ... how I felt about having [a] disability [myself]. With humility and humor, she showed me how to embrace and appreciate the (rolling) platform having a disability gives me."

Assistant clinical professor Kiley Hanish MA '02, OTD '11 wrote, "She overcame so much throughout her life and used her life experiences as a way to help influence and improve the world around her, dedicating herself to disability studies and occupational therapy."

Judging by the many lives she touched not only at USC but throughout the profession at large, it's clear that although Neville-Jan is gone, she's not soon to be forgotten.

## LIFE IN HER SHOES

Exploring the many milestones in the life of the recently departed USC Chan associate professor and 2014 OTAC Lifetime Achievement Award winner Ann Neville-Jan.



**DEC. 13, 1950**

Born in Baltimore, Md.

**1972**

Earns bachelor of science degree in biology from Towson University

**1974**

Earns master's degree in occupational therapy from Columbia University and enters the workforce as a staff occupational therapist at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens, N.Y.

**1980**

"Temporal Adaptation: Application with Short-term Psychiatric Patients," the first of 12 research articles published during her career, appears in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*

**1984**

"I have spina bifida and I lead a very normal and productive life," Ann Neville tells a national television audience, in response to a *NBC News Magazine* broadcast about new in vitro diagnostic procedures that can test for congenital disorders.

**1986**

Earns doctor of philosophy degree in occupational therapy from New York University with her thesis entitled "The Relationship of Selected Personality Variables to Productivity in Depressed Patients." She is named a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association in recognition for application of theory to practice

**1989**

Joins the USC Department of Occupational Therapy as a full-time faculty member



**1992**

Named to the Roster of Distinguished Alumni of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons

**1996**

Promoted to associate professor faculty rank

**2003**

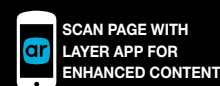
"Trust, important in any relationship, is especially salient for a person in pain who is confronted on a daily basis by suspiciousness. Trust implies a genuine belief that a person experiences pain. Pain is what the person says it is, despite any statements to the contrary by other health professionals. Occupational therapists need to believe in a person's pain." —From her *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* article "Encounters in a World of Pain: An Autoethnography"

**2014**

Receives Occupational Therapy Association of California's Lifetime Achievement Award

**FEB. 1, 2015**

Passes away at the age of 64





## PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES

*"I'll miss her steady and even-keeled approach to work even in chaotic moments, her sage words of advice about parenting [while] having an academic career, her great sense of humor, her open and kindhearted spirit and her intellect and passion for OT and disability rights."*

—ELIZABETH PYATAK, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

*"I loved sitting in her office at the end of a long, grueling day. Sometimes it seemed like we would sit there forever. She was never too busy for me. From the moment I met her, it was as if we were old friends who had always known each other and always would."*

—ASHLEY HALLE, ASSISTANT CLINICAL PROFESSOR

*"After an automobile accident three weeks into starting the MA program, Ann stopped me from giving up my career—convincing me to fight against my limitations, that my disability would not define me. She was always a hero to me, baring her soul, so that all of us facing obstacles would know that we were not alone in the fight."*

—SARAH GLEASON, TECHNICAL GRANT WRITER

*"Ann loved shoes and dark chocolate M&M's—there was always a jar in her office, and we all visited her often to get some sugar and have a lovely talk about all sorts of life topics. Ann, you were one of the strongest, bravest, most confident and most hopeful women we have ever met.*

*We are so glad that we had the opportunity to share some time with you. You will be sorely missed."*

—KILEY HANISH, ASSISTANT CLINICAL PROFESSOR





# EXPERIMENTAL SOCCER AND THE GOOD LIFE

IN A BLOG FROM HER NEW TEXTBOOK, *MORAL LABORATORIES: FAMILY PERIL AND THE STRUGGLE FOR A GOOD LIFE*,  
USC CHAN PROFESSOR CHERYL MATTINGLY EXPLORES SUFFERING AND MORAL STRIVING

BY CHERYL MATTINGLY

*Editor's Note: Cheryl Mattingly is a USC Chan professor with a joint appointment at USC Dornsife's department of anthropology. Parts of this article originally appeared as a post on the blog of the University of California Press, the publisher of Mattingly's latest book, *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life*. It is Mattingly's second book drawing upon *Boundary Crossing*, a 15-year longitudinal ethnographic research program beginning in 1997 of African-American families raising children with a range of significant chronic illnesses and disabilities as well as the clinicians who served them. Overseen by Mattingly and Professor Mary Lawlor and funded through multiple Maternal and Child Health Bureau and National Institutes of Health grants totaling more than \$5 million, its research aims were to identify and describe how families contribute to the production of culturally responsive care and to reveal the strategies families and practitioners enact to establish commonalities and bridge differences to partner together effectively.*

It could be one of any thousands of soccer fields scattered throughout America. Grade-school children in their uniforms running up and down the grass, shouting to one another as their parents cheer them on. It is an ordinary Saturday afternoon event repeated in countless towns and cities across the United States. Except that in the center of this field, as screaming children fly by, is a boy in a wheelchair being madly propelled by another boy as, together, they too head in the direction of the ball.

His father and mother stand on the sidelines watching the action. The boy's parents, Tanya and Frank, have three children—two girls and a son, Andy, who is their oldest. Andy was born with an extremely severe case of cerebral palsy, which not only leaves him physically disabled but very cognitively impaired as well.

Tanya is one of those mothers determined to fight for her son's rights to good schooling, and she is fierce in her determination to stand up to school board members, principals and other public officials in order to get good care for her son. "It's my Jamaican blood," she laughs, justifying her willingness to battle authorities.

But she credits her husband, Frank, for opening her eyes to her son's capability to participate in everyday children's activities that she would have shielded him from otherwise. Her husband is an athlete, a natural at many sports, and he maintains that a son—his son—should love sports as much as he does.

Frank decided that he should get Andy involved with the local children's soccer team. Tanya, however, was terrified and absolutely refused; they fought about this for several years. But finally Frank prevailed, and Tanya let her son go out onto the field.

During one of the games, just as she feared, Andy's wheelchair was accidentally knocked over and he toppled to the ground. But, to her great surprise, he didn't even act frightened.

This is a story Tanya has told more than once. It moves her every time; catching her up short, this realization that despite her determination to

make others view her son as capable, she herself underestimated him and the community surrounding him.

I came to know Tanya and Frank as part of *Boundary Crossing*, a long-term research study among African American families in Los Angeles raising children with significant illnesses and disabilities. I have been repeatedly struck by how often parents respond to the suffering of their children by trying to transform not only themselves but also the social and material spaces in which they live.

Parents like Tanya struggle to cultivate more morally worthy characteristics—to become "better" parents—in the face of immense demands illness and suffering can bring; to "step up to the plate," as one father put it, in order to care for their medically fragile children. These practices of care are undertaken in circumstances that are always fraught and sometimes seem impossible spaces in which to find any "best good" worth acting upon. Parents may even carry out moral experiments, such as the re-invention of a local soccer game, as part of raising their children.

How might we represent and theorize moral experience, including its experimental side? Anthropologists have relied upon a host of powerful intellectual voices to give analytic depth to accounts of suffering, especially as connected to widely (even globally) dispersed institutional forms of governance, knowledge generation and control.

But what about the aspirational aspects of life—of moral striving? What truths might we uncover when we pay attention to not only suffering but also to people's attempts at realizing good lives even in unpromising circumstances? How might we look at the inventive qualities of moral striving? What analytic frameworks might be useful?

My focus on meaningful activity and the good life can be traced back to the late 1980s when I was asked by the American Occupational Therapy Foundation to carry out a study of the clinical reasoning of occupational therapists, a study which resulted in the 1993 book *Clinical Reasoning: Forms of Inquiry in a Therapeutic Practice* co-authored with Maureen Fleming.

In my new book, *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life*, I outline a virtue ethics approach, drawn from moral philosophy, to explore the promises and perils of moral becoming as connected to family practices of care.

These themes may appeal to occupational therapists working in a range of practice areas where "partnering up" with family caregivers is especially important. Occupational therapists, more than many other health care providers, are concerned with what is of significance to the people they serve. This is, of course, also a concern for parents raising children who have disabilities that might preclude many "ordinary" childhood experiences, parents who too want their children to participate in important child activities and be part of the daily rounds of family life.

*Purchase a copy of *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life* at [tinyurl.com/morallaboratories](http://tinyurl.com/morallaboratories).*



The background is an abstract watercolor painting with various colors including blue, orange, red, and grey. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is centered on the page, serving as a container for the text. The text is white and bold, with the title being the largest and the author's name being the smallest. The subtitle is in a smaller, orange font and is flanked by two thin horizontal lines.

# MORAL LABORATORIES

FAMILY PERIL AND THE  
STRUGGLE FOR A GOOD LIFE

CHERYL MATTINGLY





# In Print

**Stanley Azen** co-authored “Life Span Exercise Among Elite Intercollegiate Student Athletes” in *Sports Health* and “Methods and Baseline Cardiovascular Data from the Early versus Late Intervention Trial with Estradiol Testing the Menopausal Hormone Timing Hypothesis” to be published in a forthcoming issue of *Menopause*.

**Erna Blanche, Jesús Díaz** and **Florence Clark** co-authored “Building a Framework for Implementing New Interventions” published in *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*. Occupational science student **Alison Cogan MA ’12, PhD ’17** was also a co-author.

**Sharon Cermak** co-authored “Sparse Representation of Electrodermal Activity with Knowledge-Driven Dictionaries” published in *IEEE Transactions on Bio-Medical Engineering*. Postdoctoral fellow **Leah Stein MA ’06, PhD ’13** was a co-author alongside Theodora Chaspari, Andreas Tsiartas and Shrikanth Narayanan of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

**Sharon Cermak** co-authored “Relationship Between Motor Skills, Participation in Leisure Activities and Quality of Life of Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder: Temporal Aspects” and “Physical Fitness and Overweight in Israeli Children with and without Developmental Coordination Disorder: Gender Differences” published in *Research in Developmental Disabilities*. Alumna **Noomi Katz MA ’79** was a co-author of both articles.

Postdoctoral Fellow **Valerie Hill** co-authored “Mental Practice-Triggered Electrical Stimulation in Chronic, Moderate, Upper-Extremity Hemiparesis After Stroke” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

**Natalie Leland, Karen Crum, Pamela Roberts** and **Barbara Gage** co-authored “Advancing the Value and Quality of Occupational Therapy in Health Service Delivery” published in the January/February 2015 issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The article was co-authored with alumnus and Board of Councilors member **Shawn Phipps ’97**.

**Natalie Leland** co-authored “The Need for Uniform Quality Reporting Across Post-Acute Care Rehabilitation Settings: An Examination of Accidental Falls” published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

**Cheryl Mattingly** co-authored the chapters “Practical Philosophy and Hope as a Moral Project Among African-Americans” and “What Can We Hope For? An Exploration in Cosmopolitan Philosophical Anthropology” published in the textbook *Anthropology & Philosophy: Dialogues on Trust and Hope* edited by S. Liisberg, E.O. Pedersen and A.L. Dalsgård and published by Berghahn Press.



**Florence Clark** co-authored “Unlocking the Core Self: Mindful Occupation for Cancer Survivorship” published in the *Journal of Occupational Science*. Occupational science student **Alix Sleight MA ’12, OTD ’13, PhD ’18** was the article’s lead author. While cancer survivors can often expect to live many years beyond remission, to achieve holistic well-being, survivors often need to pursue life management approaches beyond requisite coping strategies at the levels of the physical and the narrative self. Clark and Sleight apply neuroscientist António Damásio’s three-tiered framework to explore a third level—the core self—that acts as a bridge between the physical body and the conscious mind in cancer survivors. The authors ultimately suggest that mindful engagement in everyday occupations can allow cancer survivors to unlock the core self and enhance their quality of life.





FUTURE

# GenNext

## Jonathan Rodil MA '15 Occupational Therapy

### HOMETOWN

West Covina, Calif.

### UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Majored in kinesiology at California State University of Fullerton

### OT AREAS OF INTEREST

Pediatric mental health, sensory integration, outpatient rehab and working with veterans and at-risk youth

### MEANINGFUL OCCUPATIONS

Surfing, swimming, basketball, running, guitar, piano, pretty much anything that involves music

### POST-MASTER'S PLANS

I will be pursuing my occupational therapy doctorate at the USC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

### THREE WORDS TO DESCRIBE EXPERIENCE AT USC CHAN

Inspiring, passionate, growth

### FINISH THIS SENTENCE: WHEN I AM AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, I WANT TO ...

... help as many people as I can in a variety of settings.

### When did you first know you wanted to become an occupational therapist?

I always knew that I wanted to pursue a profession in which I could have a positive impact on others. I was taking a surfing class at CSUF, during which I did a project around the therapeutic implications of surfing. In doing research for this project, I came across the Jimmy Miller Foundation, a program started by USC Chan alumnus Carly Rogers that utilizes the occupation of surfing and the healing context of the ocean to help foster therapeutic relationships for children with special needs and veterans who have PTSD. This was my "a-ha!" moment—just the fact that you can turn something that you really love into a means for therapy to help people really appealed to me. For me, I couldn't imagine a better way to spend my life's work.

### What's one of the most valuable lessons you've learned while at the USC Chan Division?

Surround yourself with people who best fuel your passion, ambition and dreams.

### What's the best part of being an occupational therapist?

It's the creativity that goes along with being an occupational therapist. I've been able to utilize gardening, guitar playing and even surfing—activities that patients find meaningful—to help former patients reach their goals.

### What's the worst part?

The most challenging aspect of occupational therapy is really finding your niche. Since OTs can work across a variety of settings with a diverse range of individuals, it can be difficult at times to figure out which setting best suits you.

### Looking toward the end of your master's studies, what do you intend to do for your capstone project?

I'm going to the Philippines to gain a better understanding of how occupational therapy is conceptualized there. I will be shadowing the owner of an

emerging pediatric outpatient and early intervention service. I'll also be developing leadership skills in a teaching hospital and volunteering at an orphanage and an elderly home. At the end of my trip, I'll utilize the proceeds from a fundraiser I put together to distribute flip-flops and school supplies to the children who need it the most.

### What kind of mark would you like to leave on the profession?

As a soon to be entry-level clinician, I take to heart the responsibility that I have to help the field of occupational therapy grow and evolve. It would be a dream come true to look back on my career and see that I developed a successful occupational-based program for an underserved community.



# In Print

**Stacey Schepens Niemiec, Mike Carlson, Natalie Leland, Cheryl Vigen** and **Florence Clark** co-authored “Development and Validation of the Activity Significance Personal Evaluation (ASPEn) Scale” published in the *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*. Staff member **Jeanine Blanchard** was also a co-author.

**Rachel Proffitt** was the lead author of “Considerations in the Efficacy and Effectiveness of VR Interventions for Stroke Rehabilitation: Moving the Field Forward” to be published in a forthcoming issue of *Physical Therapy*. She was also the lead author of “A Comparison of Older Adults’ Subjective Experiences with Virtual and Real Environments During Dynamic Balance Activities” published in the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*.

**Elizabeth Pyatak, Erna Blanche** and **Florence Clark** co-authored “Lifestyle Changes and Pressure Ulcer Prevention in Adults with Spinal Cord Injury in the Pressure Ulcer Prevention Study Lifestyle Intervention” in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The article was co-authored with staff member **Jeanine Blanchard** and alumna **Samruddhi Ghaisas MA ’11, OTD ’12** was the article’s lead author.

**Pamela Roberts** was the lead author of “The Role of Occupational Therapy in Primary Care,” an official document adopted by the American Occupational Therapy Association under the purview of the Commission on Practice and published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The document was co-authored by alumna **Michelle E. Farmer MA ’10, OTD ’11**.

**Susanne Smith Roley** and **Sharon Cermak** co-authored “Sensory Integration and Praxis Patterns in Children with Autism” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The article was co-authored with alumnae **Zoe Mailloux ’77, MA ’81, OTD ’12** and **L. Diane Parham MA ’81** and assistant research professor (Keck School of Medicine of USC) **Christianne Lane**.

**Shawn C. Roll** was the lead author of “Reliability of Superficial Male Pelvic Floor Structural Measurements Using Linear-Array Transperineal Sonography” published in *Ultrasound in Medicine & Biology*. He was also the lead author of “In Memoriam: Jane Douglas Case-Smith (September 5, 1953–July 30, 2014)” published in *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*. Roll is also the lead author of “Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Severity Staging Using Sonographic and Clinical Measures” to be published in a forthcoming issue of *Muscle & Nerve*.

**Jayne Taguchi Meyer** authored “Ensuring a Diverse Workforce: Fieldwork Success for Occupational Therapy Students with Disabilities” published in *OT Practice*.

Read more online at [chan.usc.edu/research/faculty-publications](http://chan.usc.edu/research/faculty-publications).



**Sarah-Jeanne Salvy** was the lead author of “Proximal and Distal Social Influence on Alcohol Consumption and Marijuana Use Among Middle School Adolescents” published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. The study this article covers assesses the effects of perceived peer norms, usage by a best friend and the presence of others who use upon middle school adolescents’ consumption of marijuana and alcohol, and tracks how the effects of these social influences evolve during middle school. More than 11,000 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders from 16 Southern California schools were assessed at five points between 2008 to 2011. Salvy and her co-authors discovered that all sources of social influence were predictive of alcohol and marijuana consumption. As they grew older, the amount of time adolescents spent with others who drink increased the likelihood of their own drinking. Furthermore, as adolescents spent more time around other peers who drink, the predictive value of perceived norms on alcohol consumption decreased. Similarly, as they grew older, the influence of a best friend’s use and time spent with other adolescents who use marijuana remained stable. The authors suggest that perceived peer norms may be more influential in early adolescence, while proximal social determinants—such as being in the presence of other peers who consume—become more influential as youth enter middle adolescence.





*Board of Councilors Member Patricia Volland*

## IN MEMORIAM

Patricia “Pat” Volland Plumtree, a 12-year member of the USC Chan Division’s Board of Councilors, died Jan. 10, 2015, as a result of head injuries sustained from a fall. She was 73.

Plumtree was born March 2, 1939, in Los Angeles to Norman and Bernadette Browne Volland. In 1946, her family moved to Nebraska where she attended St. Cecilia grade and high school, graduating in 1957.

After briefly attending Rosary College in River Forest, Ill. and spending a summer working in New York City’s Garment District, Plumtree transferred to Denver University.

She entered the workforce as a merchandise buyer for Livingston Brothers in San Francisco, where she met her future husband, Jim Plumtree.

Soon thereafter, Pat Plumtree began working for the J.C. Penney Company. In 1973, the Plumtrees relocated to Southern California where Jim Plumtree earned his master’s degree in occupational therapy at USC in 1978. Upon his graduation, the Plumtrees moved to Boise, Idaho.

When her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 1982, Pat Plumtree became increasingly involved in work for the disease. In 1984, she founded the Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Association, a non-profit support group for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias as well as their families.

Pat Plumtree’s service work earned her numerous accolades, including the J.C. Penney Community Service Award, the Idaho Citizen of the Year Award, and the U.S. President’s Volunteer Action Award.

In 1988, she retired from retail merchandising to work full-time for the Alzheimer’s Association at the organization’s national level. In 2002, USC President Steven Sample appointed Jim and Pat Plumtree to the Board of Councilors of the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.

In 2003, after more than 14 years of service with the Alzheimer’s Association, Pat Plumtree retired from full-time work.

A year later, the Plumtrees returned to Boise to begin retired life together, which included travel, opera, Shakespeare and volunteer work.

Pat Plumtree was preceded in death by her husband, Jim Plumtree, and is survived by her sister, Pamela Marie Volland R.G.S., a Sister of the Good Shepherd currently ministering in Beijing; sister-in-law, Kathleen Plumtree Henderson; niece, Renee Hugo; and nephew, Craig Henderson.



## CLASS NOTES

**Rebecca Aldrich ’05, MA ’06** will receive the Outstanding Mentor Award from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) at the association’s 95th annual conference in Nashville, Tenn.

**Aaron Bonsall PhD ’13** authored “The Social Context of Occupations: Analysis of a Father Feeding his Daughter Diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy” published in *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*.

**Shain Davis MA ’12, OTD ’13** authored “Evidence-Based Practice and the New Practitioner” published in *OT Practice*.

**Bonnie Nakasuji ’74, MA ’94, OTD ’08** will be inducted into the AOTA Roster of Fellows at the association’s 95th annual conference in Nashville, Tenn.

**L. Diane Parham MA ’81** and **Chia-Ting Su MA ’98, PhD ’02** will each receive the AOTA’s Cordelia Myers *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* Best Article Award at the association’s 95th annual conference in Nashville, Tenn.

**Shawn Phipps ’97** will receive a Recognition of Achievement Award from AOTA at the association’s 95th annual conference in Nashville, Tenn.

**John A. White MA ’92, PhD ’99** will be inducted into the AOTA Roster of Fellows at the association’s 95th annual conference in Nashville, Tenn.



# A Deeper Meaning

Every issue, we invite someone to share with the Trojan Family their inspirations—past, present and future—in their personal and professional life. USC Chan alumnus and 2015 commencement speaker Wenchun Qu, assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the renowned Mayo Clinic, tells of going around the world and back again in pursuit of improved rehabilitation.

**WENCHUN QU MS '02, PHD '03**

Life's pathway sometimes takes us on unexpected adventures. Eighteen years ago—and half a world away in China—I would never have imagined becoming a specialist focusing on function, let alone on function in the social and environmental spheres of life. In fact at the time, those concepts were not even in the vocabulary of a spine surgeon in China at all!

So one day, while I was riding the bus from the USC Health Sciences Campus to University Park Campus, I engaged in a conversation with a gentleman I unfortunately now only remember as “Bob, the OT student.” Bob caught my attention by his meditation and potato-only diet during the ride, and I was completely intrigued by what he told me about occupational therapy, rehabilitation science and practice.

Soon thereafter, I found myself in Dr. Florence Clark's office. I told her that I was a spine surgeon from China, pursuing a PhD degree at USC, and something that one of her students told me had opened up a completely new world to me.

As surgeons, we enjoy diagnosing conditions and, more importantly, “fixing” problems through surgery; complacency was widespread among us because again we “fix” problems with excision, fusion and stabilization with screws, rods and plates. Little did we know about how much function a patient would be able to recover after the most common disabling conditions and the procedures they underwent. Realizing that we were actually doing half of the job sent me to deeper thinking.

The worth of a health care provider is embedded in prolonging life, reducing physical and mental pain and, as I learned from my conversations with Bob and Dr. Clark, maximizing functional capacity with improved quality of life. It may sound simple, but it took decades to develop in the United States. It also took a long trip to the other side of the earth for this Chinese spine surgeon to realize. I changed my PhD track to study occupational science.

Soon after, I realized that, even though I would devote six years to a PhD in occupational science, I was just one of nearly 1.25 billion people in China. What about all of my colleagues and compatriots? Who would bring the good and bad news that our patients could do better, that we actually were missing a big chunk of care to help them accomplish it? Who would introduce the occupational science and occupational therapy practice to China? I felt an obligation and a sense of responsibility brought about by some deeper meaning in my own training and career trajectory.

It has been a wonderful privilege that I trained with the leaders of occupational science, Drs. Florence Clark and Ruth Zemke, and an icon in the field, Dr. Margaret Stineman, who expanded my horizon to rehabilitation medicine. I trained and subsequently stayed on faculty at Mayo Clinic as a physician in physical medicine and rehabilitation, the

only medical specialty of function where I've had the opportunity to work with physicians of various specialties, psychologists, social workers, nurses, occupational and physical therapists and, more importantly, patients with a large spectrum of conditions.

A Chinese proverb says, “all streams flow to the ocean.” That's how I felt when I looked at my diverse trainings and started to contemplate my role in a concerted effort not only to bring the good and bad news of rehabilitation to China, but also to define and establish the field of occupational science and therapy in China at the highest international standard, of course only conceivable with the help from USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.

From Shanghai to Beijing, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York and now Rochester, Minn., I have come a long way, met the most amazing people, studied under the most enlightening mentors and have been given the most prestigious opportunities. The loop closed when I was called back to L.A. last year, 17 years after my first meeting with Dr. Clark, when she told me it was my destiny to finish up the work in China.

Occupational therapy is not clearly defined in China, and there are few degree programs; fewer still that are accredited by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. As of this writing, there are only three WFOT-accredited degree programs. That era is going to end, and this becomes possible because of the vision and support from the Chan family with their passion for and kindness towards the people in China.

A global initiative has been commissioned, and USC Chan will carry out the task. I have been on the receiving end of so much support to build my career, and now I am looking forward to contributing to the effort as my way of giving back.



Wenchun Qu MS'02, PhD '03





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