

# USC Chan

WINTER 2015

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



The  
Entrepreneur  
Issue



CANVAS



**FLASHING A SMILE** | Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom can keep a proud Trojan from snapping a selfie. Assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy Sarah Bream MA '96, OTD '09 stops to capture the moment at an uncharacteristically soggy commencement ceremony earlier this year. Forty-three students earned their doctor of occupational therapy degrees in 2015 from USC Chan, with another 134 receiving master's degrees and 11 getting bachelor's degree.

PHOTO BY GUS RUELAS/USC





## DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

Risk is an inevitable facet of professional life, and one that I have become well acquainted with throughout my career. No matter the setting or type of workplace, it is hardly convenient to defy convention or to buck trends in pursuit of a greater good. Yet effective leaders are able to not only assess risk but deftly navigate through it toward opportunities lying ahead.

That's because risk, despite our instinctual urge to avoid it, is fundamental to the long-term process of learning, growth and improvement. As clinicians, we help our clients develop strategies to mitigate hazards and maximize their capabilities to continue living life to its fullest. As educators, we ask students to grapple with challenging ideas beyond those with which they are familiar. As scientists, we develop groundbreaking research methodologies aimed at solving some of society's most vexing problems.

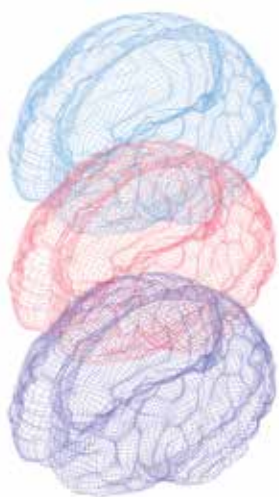
This theme of risk — weighing it, adapting to it and outmaneuvering it — permeates this issue of *USC Chan*. Starting on page 17, you will meet six Trojan entrepreneurs who have struck out on their own to realize their dreams of being their own bosses in niche practice areas, despite the risks inherent in small business ownership. You'll read about alumna Karly Streisfeld on page 14, who risked a splash landing on the *American Ninja Warrior* obstacle course to promote a very worthy cause. You will also learn about assistant professor Shawn Roll's new \$2.3 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to better predict, detect and prevent workplace risk of median nerve injury on page 28.

Lastly, as you may already know, after much personal reflection I have decided to step down from my administrative role as associate dean and chair of the division, effective July 2016. I invite you to read more about my decision beginning on page 30. During my 27-year tenure as chair, I have learned how to calculate risks and make strategic decisions in light of them. And knowing where the division stands today, it truly could not be any better situated for a successful transition to our next administrative leader. It can be so easy to cower in the face of risk and choose to play it safe. But as Trojans typically do, I prefer the ambitious, the courageous and the aspirational. Thank you, too, for all that you do to make our Trojan Family a bold one!

Fight On!

**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

### Yes, We Scan!

A \$2.1-million NIH grant aims to help associate professor Lisa Aziz-Zadeh use neuroimaging technology to better understand underlying causes of autism.

6

### USC Chan Adjunct Faculty Member Elected AOTA Vice President

Shawn Phipps '97 recently became second in command at occupational therapy's national professional association. Find out what's on the veep's agenda.



8

### Research Buzz

Assistant professor Barbara Thompson pens this issue's research column, with a thought-provoking discussion about how animal research models could unlock some of the mysteries of autism.



9-13

### Up Front

A USC Chan professor takes on Hollywood; travel through time to rediscover the Center for Occupational and Lifestyle Redesign; meet Chan's new director of the professional program — and more! It's all here in our newly expanded Up Front section.



I4-I6

### Going the Distance

It's Karly Streisfeld MA '05 vs. the harrowing *American Ninja Warrior* obstacle course, as the alumna helps raise awareness for Haiti's continued medical need, five years after the island nation suffered a devastating 7.0 magnitude quake.

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

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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





17-27

## A Head for Business

Less than 10 percent of occupational therapists go into private practice. Meet six USC Chan alumni who are forging their own path in the profession by starting small businesses.



28

## Picturing Prevention

With help from a \$2.3-million grant, assistant professor Shawn Roll hopes to use sonographic imaging to detect early signs of carpal tunnel syndrome in dental hygiene students, a group at risk for the neurological disorder thought to be caused by repetitive motion.



30

## A Curtain Call for Clark

Associate Dean and Chair Florence Clark PhD '82 is scheduled to vacate her administrative duties at USC Chan in July 2016. Read about what's next for her as she transitions into a different role at the division.



32

## In Print

This issue's many published research articles and book chapters includes an *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* article about how occupational therapy might be an effective intervention for a population at risk for developing chronic conditions that could lead to disability.

36

## A Deeper Meaning

Alumna and newly elected OTAC president Heather Kitching MA '02, OTD '10 shares the inspiration behind her career in occupational therapy.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### CHRISTINA GANDOLFO



Portrait photographer Christina Gandolfo felt a certain connection to the entrepreneurial

subjects featured in this issue's cover story "A Head for Business," featured on pages 17-27. "As a freelancer and small business owner, I know firsthand how much hard work and focus it takes to build a business out of your passion," Gandolfo says. "Immediately I could feel the creativity and energy each woman brought to the room." Gandolfo's vibrant and narrative portrait work is seen regularly in magazines like *Los Angeles Magazine*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Fast Company*, *Bicycling* and *Pacific Standard*.

### BREANNE GRADY MCM '10



Breanne Grady is a Midwestern-Angeleno hybrid who grew up in Indiana but has lived in L.A. for the past 13 years.

She completed her undergraduate degree at Indiana University and her master's degree at USC. She wrote for *Indiana Daily Student*, *Variety* and *Campus Circle* before returning to her science roots, working at Amgen for 11 years. When she's not busy blogging, reading or watching *Game of Thrones*, you can usually find her sweating it out at the gym or on the Santa Monica Stairs. An avid animal lover, Grady has three rescue cats named Don Corleone (aka Corly), Richie and Lily.

### HEATHER KITCHING MA '02, OTD '10



Not a day goes by that Heather Kitching doesn't appreciate the many opportunities she has been able to take advantage

of during her professional career. Practicing, teaching and being a leader have together strengthened her resolve to advocate on behalf of those she serves — clients and colleagues alike. The fourth Trojan to be elected to the presidency of the Occupational Therapy Association of California, Kitching endeavors to unite practitioners across the state to participate in defining occupational therapy's role in California into the next several years. Kitching shares the passion that fuels her rising career in "A Deeper Meaning" on page 36.

### BARBARA THOMPSON



Barbara Thompson has conducted groundbreaking research in the neurobiology of developmental

disorders and is contributing to translational science in areas such as autism by developing and testing conceptual models, which link animal studies in the neurosciences to clinical problems in human populations. Thompson has already demonstrated particular skill in interdisciplinary research collaborations and strengthens the division's critical mass in autism and sensory integration with a special focus on neuroscience research.

## YES, WE SCAN!

# NEW \$2.1-MILLION NIH GRANT WILL USE NEUROIMAGING TO BETTER UNDERSTAND UNDERLYING CAUSES OF AUTISM

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

A five-year, \$2.1-million National Institutes of Health research grant has been awarded to USC Chan for a research project that will use neuroimaging technology to better understand the relationships between brain activity patterns and social and motor deficits exhibited by children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Associate professor Lisa Aziz-Zadeh will be the principal investigator of the study, titled “The Neurobiological Basis of Heterogeneous Social and Motor Deficits in ASD.” Funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, it is the fifth-largest research grant in USC Chan history as measured by total dollar amount awarded.

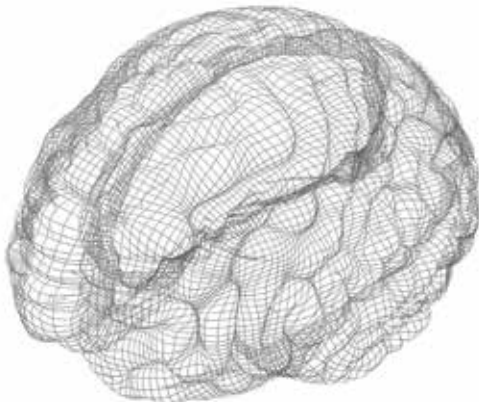
Autism spectrum disorders are a leading cause of disability among children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates the current autism prevalence rate in the United States at one in 68 children, and some estimates calculate that ASD incurs an annual societal cost of almost \$137 billion.

Although the societal impacts of autism are undeniable, its underlying causes are less well understood. The sheer variety of symptoms demonstrated by people with ASD — what researchers call “patient heterogeneity” — has likely hindered previous research efforts to pinpoint its neural origins.

“Understanding the neurobiology of ASD is complicated because of the diversity of associated symptoms, which include both social and motor deficits,” said Aziz-Zadeh, who holds a joint appointment with the psychology department at the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

“Our study will be the first to show how social and motor deficits relate to brain activity in social and motor networks and connectivity between them.”

—Lisa Aziz-Zadeh



Lisa Aziz-Zadeh

Faced with this nagging issue of patient heterogeneity, Aziz-Zadeh and her team will instead embrace the problem as a scientific opportunity. The study will purposefully include subjects whose behaviors vary across both social and motor continuums, as well as children with the diagnosis of developmental coordination disorder who do not exhibit the hallmark social and communication deficits of ASD. By doing so, Aziz-Zadeh and her team aim to correlate these distinct clusters of symptoms with different measures of brain activity.

The researchers at USC Chan and the USC Dornsife College's Brain and Creativity Institute will use functional magnetic resonance imaging to observe neural brain patterns in 120 children while they perform motor and social processing tasks. This innovative approach will be the first to use brain imaging for comparing these groups. In turn, the researchers hope to better identify, isolate and understand the activity, interactions and functional connectivity between social and motor brain networks.

Because of the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the groundbreaking study, co-investigators from multiple USC academic units will be involved, including Sharon Cermak, USC Chan professor with a joint appointment at the Keck School of Medicine of USC; Antonio Damasio, University Professor, David Dornsife Chair in Neuroscience and professor of psychology and neurology; Jonas Kaplan, assistant research professor of psychology; and Marian Williams, associate clinical professor at the Keck School and clinical assistant professor of psychology at USC Dornsife. Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles will also be collaborating.

The results generated from the study will advance the knowledge of the underlying neurobiological bases of ASD across symptoms. Such an improved understanding will likely guide future development of individualized clinical interventions — aimed at improving outcomes for people with ASD.

“Our study will be the first to show how social and motor deficits relate to brain activity in social and motor networks and connectivity between them,” Aziz-Zadeh said. “The results will allow us to better understand the range of neurological deficits in ASD and generate data to guide individualized therapies.”



UP AND COMING

# Calendar

## FEATURED EVENT

**APRIL 7-10**

### AOTA'S 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO

Join your fellow alumni and colleagues in the Windy City to embrace the profession's distinct value to connect, collaborate and strategize. With a presidential keynote and more than 1,000 educational poster presentation sessions, discussions and networking opportunities, the expo promises to be brimming with state-of-the-art products and opportunities for all.

*Details >> McCormick Place, 2301 S. Lake Shore Dr., Chicago, Ill. More info: [www.aota.org/Conference-Events/Annual-Conference.aspx](http://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/Annual-Conference.aspx)*



PHOTO BY CHOOSE CHICAGO

**FEB. 5**

### Patricia Buehler Legacy Award for Clinical Innovation

Join USC Chan for the 2016 Patricia Buehler Legacy Award for Clinical Innovation, honoring Charlotte Exner, executive director of Towson University's Hussman Center for Children and Adults with Autism. The Hussman Center brings together Towson students with young adults on the autism spectrum to create a mutually rewarding learning environment. Social, educational and fitness programs support student learning while helping adults with autism develop the necessary tools to lead meaningful and engaged lives.

*Details >> Keynote Speaker: Dr. Charlotte Exner. CEUs will be available. Location: USC Health Sciences Campus, 1540 Alcazar St., G-37, L.A. More info: [tinyurl.com/buehler2016](http://tinyurl.com/buehler2016)*

**MARCH 9**

### Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC Research Day

This annual day, which includes the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy and the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, is dedicated to showcasing the cutting-edge research being conducted at the university. Join the division in poster presentations followed by an awards ceremony recognizing each category of research.

*Details >> Location: Galen Center, 3400 S. Figueroa St., L.A.*

**MARCH 19-20**

### OTAC Spring Symposium Continuing Education Conference

This annual symposium is a convenient opportunity to earn high-quality professional development units from well-respected California-based occupational therapy practitioners. As with OTAC's annual conference, this symposium also focuses on offering the latest occupationally-centered, evidence-based practices. *Details >> Location: Crowne Plaza San Diego – Mission Valley, 2270 Hotel Circle North, San Diego, Calif. More info: [www.otaconline.org/index.php/member-benefits/62-spring-symposium](http://www.otaconline.org/index.php/member-benefits/62-spring-symposium)*

**APR. 9-10**

### 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 food trucks, live music and health education activities by USC's own health sciences divisions.

*Details >> Location: USC University Park Campus. More info: [events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks/](http://events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks/)*

**MAY 13**

### USC's 133rd Annual Commencement

Watch as students from the class of 2016 toss their mortarboards into the air and embark upon their journeys as USC alumni. You can participate and follow the day's events via hashtag #USCgrad. *Details >> Location: USC University Park Campus, Levey Library West Lawn, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. More info: [commencement.usc.edu](http://commencement.usc.edu)*

**SEPT. 23**

### USC Occupational Science Symposium

This symposium is USC Chan's premier academic event, featuring scholars, leaders and practitioners from various health, medical and social science professions gathering to enhance the scholarship of the occupational science. Established at the University of Southern California in 1988 as a forum to disseminate and celebrate the then-emerging academic discipline of occupational science, the symposium is the division's longest-running academic event.

*Details >> Location: Radisson Hotel Los Angeles Midtown at USC, 3540 S. Figueroa St., L.A. More info: [chan.usc.edu/research/symposium](http://chan.usc.edu/research/symposium)*



# USC CHAN ADJUNCT FACULTY MEMBER ELECTED AOTA VICE PRESIDENT

## AS VEEP, SHAWN PHIPPS '97 HOPES TO SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON THE PROFESSION

BY HOPE HAMASHIGE

Shawn Phipps '97 had never heard of occupational therapy until, as a USC undergraduate interested in medicine, he was shadowing physicians at the Keck Hospital of USC.

On one such visit, he met an occupational therapist who explained the role occupational therapy plays in helping patients recover from traumas such as stroke.

Immediately drawn to the idea of improving the quality of life for patients with disabilities, Phipps asked to visit occupational therapists and their patients in clinic.

From his first visit, he understood that he had found the path he was meant to follow.

Now, as the newly elected vice president of the American Occupational Therapy Association, one of Phipps' main goals is to help raise awareness for the profession.

"We have been quietly working behind the scenes," said Phipps, USC Chan adjunct faculty member and chief quality officer and associate hospital administrator at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, "but people are starting to recognize the value of what we do."

That is why, in spite of an already-packed schedule as an administrator at one of the nation's top rehabilitation hospitals, Phipps has been crisscrossing the country since taking office in July, giving speeches and attending events, such as the recent Voice Awards in Los Angeles.

There, leaders in occupational therapy discussed with entertainment

"I took to heart those values that USC places on leadership, and they have carried me. I thank them [USC educators] so much for the foundational leadership skills I learned."

—Shawn Phipps

industry executives the help occupational therapists provide for people living with mental illness.

Raising awareness of the profession is important now, Phipps explained, because a growing number of Americans may need occupational therapy for several reasons.



Shawn Phipps '97

For one, we are living longer, increasing the likelihood of developing a chronic condition, he said. More people are surviving traumas, but need help from occupational therapists through their recovery. And, while occupational therapy may be best-known for serving the elderly, a growing number of children are benefiting from occupational therapy. Chief among them are children with autism for whom occupational therapy is an effective tool for developing motor skills and daily life skills such as getting dressed.

Given the passage of health care reform, it is critically important for occupational therapists to ensure that legislators on both the state and national levels understand that occupational therapy is not only necessary for many patients but can also achieve cost-savings by keeping them independent, Phipps said.

His willingness to give of himself and his time for his patients and for the profession is directly tied to his days as a USC student, he shared.

### WHY RAISING AWARENESS OF THE PROFESSION IS IMPORTANT:



"The curriculum at USC is infused with this philosophy of leadership," Phipps said. "I took to heart those values that USC places on leadership, and they have carried me. I thank them so much for the foundational leadership skills I learned at USC."

And now he's preparing to pass those lessons on to a new generation.

As an adjunct assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy at USC Chan, Phipps is preparing to teach a course on management and leadership to 22 post-professional students in whom he hopes to instill a commitment not only to being great clinicians, but also great leaders.





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.

## AWARDS



### Division earns four awards at 2015 OTAC Conference

Four USC Chan alumnae

were recognized for their achievements at the 2015 OTAC Conference. Lisa Test MA '89, OTD '09 received the Lifetime Achievement Award, one of the event's most distinguished awards. Last year, the Lifetime Achievement Award went to the late USC Chan faculty member Ann Neville-Jan, with alumna Michele Berro MA '88 receiving it in 2013. Other awards this year included faculty members Julie Bissell MA '79, OTD '12, who took home the Award of Excellence; Chantelle Rice '07, MA '08, OTD '09, who earned the OT Practice Award; and Karen Park MA '02, OTD '13, who received the Fieldwork Educator Award. The 2016 OTAC conference is slated for Oct. 27–30 in Pasadena, Calif.

## LEADERSHIP



### AOTA selects four Trojans for leadership training

USC Chan alumni

took four of the 15 spots in AOTA's 2015 Emerging Leaders Development Program. Yasi Amanat MA '15, OTD '16; Susan Lingelbach MA '13; Jenny Martínez '09, MA '10, OTD '11; and Samantha Valasek MA '15 were selected for the year-long program, which aims to give students and new practitioners the tools to become strong leaders within the profession. Those selected receive a two-day in-person training at AOTA's national headquarters before being paired with a mentor who holds an AOTA leadership position. Afterward, the mentees participate in service learning activities under the tutelage of their mentors.

## AWARDS



### Fall prevention study awarded more than \$400,000

Assistant professor

Natalie Leland has been awarded a \$437,222 K01 Mentored Research Scientist Career Development Award by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The award will fund Leland's three-year study to better define metrics used in post-acute care for hip-fracture patients — an area known to yield inconsistent outcomes across settings — to standardize care delivery and improve quality. "I believe 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," Leland wrote about her research in a previous issue of *USC Chan* magazine. Leland joined USC in 2011 and holds a dual appointment with the USC Davis School of Gerontology.

## LEADERSHIP



### Adjunct faculty member to lead ACOTE

Earlier this fall, Pamela

Roberts was officially installed as the chairperson of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). Roberts, an adjunct instructor of clinical occupational therapy at USC Chan, has been a member of ACOTE since 2008. As an on-site evaluator, she has assessed more than 20 occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs across the nation. Roberts has more than 30 years' experience in occupational therapy and has been a faculty member in varying capacities at USC Chan since 1996. The official accrediting agency for the American Occupational Therapy Association, ACOTE accredits 355 occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant educational programs across the nation.

## FACULTY



### McLaughlin Gray named associate chair of curriculum and faculty

Associate professor of clinical occupational therapy Julie McLaughlin Gray MA '95, PhD '06 has been named associate chair of curriculum and faculty at USC Chan. McLaughlin Gray has been director of the professional master's degree program for seven years and helped coordinate its curriculum redesign. She was also instrumental in the division's preparation last year to meet accreditation standards. "I am confident that she is well prepared and highly capable to assume this administrative role and am so grateful that she has agreed to take on new responsibilities," associate dean Florence Clark PhD '82 wrote in an email announcement to USC Chan faculty and staff. McLaughlin Gray assumes the role left vacant after the sudden passing of associate professor Ann Neville-Jan in February 2015.

## NEW CLASSES



### USC Chan welcomes newest classes at annual White Coat Ceremony

In fall 2015, USC Chan

welcomed its newest classes of doctorate of occupational therapy (OTD), master's and bachelor's students at its annual White Coat Ceremony. Forty-eight OTD students, ranging in age from 23 to 48, put on their white coats and took their professional oaths for the first time as occupational therapy professionals. An additional 127 students entered the entry-level master's program, meant for individuals who received a bachelor's degree in any other field; 22 students entered the post-professional master's program for students with bachelor's degrees in occupational therapy. The division also welcomed 10 bachelor's to master's students, a group of senior undergraduates already working on master's level coursework who earn their master's degree in only one year post undergraduate graduation.



# Research Buzz

## MODEL BEHAVIOR

### HOW ANIMAL RESEARCH CAN ADVANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF AUTISM

BY BARBARA THOMPSON

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR JOINTLY APPOINTED AT THE KECK SCHOOL OF MEDICINE OF USC DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

“But why?” Isn’t that the essential scientific question? As well as the refrain of every inquisitive 3-year-old? This question is the foundation for numerous projects in my research laboratory.

One of the hallmark features of individuals with autism is a disruption in social capacity. However, no one understands what drives this disruption, even at its basic behavioral level. Why do individuals with autism show disrupted social engagement and interactions? Is the disruption due to a lack of reward from social interactions? Or, is the disruption due to fear and anxiety during social interactions?

I want to answer these questions from a perspective based upon my diverse training experiences. I am a trained behavioral neuroscientist and began studying the behavior of rats as an undergraduate at Florida State University. During my graduate career at the University of Delaware, I focused on understanding the cellular and molecular mechanisms of fear and anxiety. As a postdoctoral fellow at Vanderbilt University, I investigated disruptions in reward circuitry of cocaine-exposed rabbit offspring.

Additionally, while I was a postdoctoral fellow, I was lucky to participate in research meetings and seminars that were attended by clinical psychologists, neurologists, general practitioners and basic scientists focused on understanding autism.

It was during one of these research seminars that I asked the question, “But why do children with autism show disruptions in social interactions?” Although there was no answer, there were two definitive sides of the argument. I instantly knew that before we could move forward to design effective interventions for improving social interaction, we had to first understand the basic underlying behavioral mechanisms.

What was needed was a task that could discriminate between fear and lack of reward. My training in behavioral neuroscience, specifically animal models, ideally positioned me to ask and answer the question.

Animal research relies on utilizing tasks that can probe how a stimulus makes an animal feel without using language to communicate those feelings. Conditioned place preference (CPP) is a time-honored animal paradigm that accurately measures differences between motivation, reward and aversion. I decided to adapt the CPP task to make it child-friendly. However, it was crucial to keep the task independent of expressive language, just as in the animal paradigm, because communication deficits are common across several neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism.

With the help of a set-designer (the benefits of working and living near Hollywood!), my research team constructed a child-friendly castle



Barbara Thompson

— essentially a controlled, thematic environment in which we can observe children at play. Using a simple associative learning paradigm while the child plays in the castle, we can probe whether a stimulus is reinforcing, aversive or just not motivating to a child, all without the need for language.

Our first publication using the CPP paradigm in young children was highlighted earlier this year by *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* as it provides ground-breaking evidence that the CPP task is, in fact, a robust behavioral paradigm for using with young children.

Next we will directly test the question I asked so very long ago — “But why?” — using the CPP paradigm in the castle. Why do children with autism display disruptions in social interactions? Is it because those social interactions are aversive? Or rather, are they just not motivating?

I think what makes this research so exciting is that numerous studies are employing animal models to study human disorders, but the reverse — adapting well-regarded rodent models for use in humans to further understand human behavior — is the exception. It’s invigorating to lead a study that can be described as an exception.

Basic science and clinical findings continue revealing the heterogeneity of both the genetic underpinnings and behavioral symptoms in neurodevelopmental disorders, which makes it more and more obvious that multidisciplinary approaches to science are necessary for understanding complex human behaviors. Translational studies like this are necessary for understanding the biological underpinnings of human behavior and disorders and can ultimately help guide the individualized interventions that occupational therapists deliver.

*Thompson’s most recent journal article, “Conditioned Place Preference Successfully Established in Typically Developing Children,” was published in Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience earlier this year. The article was co-authored with USC Chan students Leah Ticker Hiller MA ’15, PhD ’21 and Sandy Takata MA ’15, OTD ’16. View the abstract at [tinyurl.com/thompsonresearchbuzz](http://tinyurl.com/thompsonresearchbuzz).*

## A HOLLYWOOD MOVER AND SHAKER

"Dance has been such a meaningful part of my life," says assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy Carlin Daley '02, MA '06, OTD '07, who has been studying ballet, tap and jazz since she was 12. A choreographer on the side, Daley has worked with such big names as Beyoncé and Spike Lee. She recently served as assistant choreographer for *We Are Your Friends*, a film released this past summer starring Zac Efron and Emily Ratajkowski. "Working on the film was an incredible opportunity to bring my passion to life on the big screen," Daley says. "I am so grateful to have been a part of the talented team involved on this project."

—John Hobbs MA '14







PHOTO BY JOHN HOBBS

## TIME MACHINE

### CENTER FOR OCCUPATION AND LIFESTYLE REDESIGN

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

RESEARCH PROVIDED BY JIM CHILDS AND JEAN FROST, WEST ADAMS HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

In 1999, USC Chan expanded its facility footprint by renovating a three-story Queen Anne style house located at the corner of Hoover and 27th Streets. The restored architectural beauty — once known as “the Cockins House” but now called the Center for Occupation and Lifestyle Redesign — includes 6,000 square-feet of classroom as well as research and laboratory space for USC Chan students.

While the house might’ve become ordinary for Chan faculty and students who use it everyday, its history is anything but. Jump into the wayback machine to learn more about it:

#### 1891

Three years before the first nail was hammered in the construction of the Cockins House, the architectural firm Bradbeer and Ferris completed construction of the Alfred J. Salisbury House directly across 27th Street. Despite having a slightly different exterior, the Victorian home has identical floorplans to the Cockins House. The Salisbury House was recently sold to a student-housing company and is currently under renovation.

#### 1896

The Cockins House was once home to William W. Cockins and his wife Sarah. Situated in the onetime tony neighborhood of North

University Park, the house often made the *Los Angeles Times*’ society pages, like in Jan. 15, 1896: “Mrs. W. W. Cockins and Miss Cockins [their daughter] entertained very delightfully yesterday afternoon at their home on Hoover Street. ... The house was prettily decorated, the drawing rooms with yellow carnations and marguerites and smilax, the reception-room with pink carnations and the dining-room with pink roses and carnations.”

#### 1897

The house has switched hands at least 16 times, according to a historical research report done in 1989 by the deceased historian David G. Cameron. In 1897, William B. Wilshire, brother of H. Gaylord Wilshire — the real estate developer who christened Los Angeles’ famous “Wilshire Boulevard” — is listed as residing in the house by county assessor records.

#### 1913

It is alleged — though not verified — that silent film actor Charlie Chaplin stayed at the Cockins House after it was converted into a boarding house in the early 1910s. Before the English funnyman hit it big in Hollywood in 1913, he was a featured player with a theater company, doing week-long engagements in Downtown L.A.’s Empress Theatre. It stands to reason he would need short-term housing. Could the so-called “Tramp” have hung his bowler hat at Cockins House? The mystery remains. Today, the Cockins House’s only permanent resident is a life-size likeness of Chaplin standing guard on the third-floor balcony, a nod to the rumored roomer.

#### 1991

In 1991, the Cockins House was designated a Los Angeles Cultural Monument (no. 519) by the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission. In 2004, as part of the North University Park Historic District, the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places. This double designation makes it more difficult for a real estate developer to tear down the home at any point in the future.

# 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT:

**Samia Rafeedie MA '05, OTD '06**  
**Director of the Professional Program**

Earlier this year, assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy Samia Rafeedie was offered a position as the director of the professional program, a prestigious post that gives her the opportunity to shape future occupational therapists at the top-ranked program in the nation. Here are some other things to know about Rafeedie:

## **She's always been drawn to education.**

In high school, Rafeedie enjoyed helping her former elementary school teacher grade spelling tests, put up bulletin boards and get organized for the school year. In graduate school, she says she “absolutely loved” being a teaching assistant for Julie McLaughlin Gray. As a doctoral student, she focused on occupational therapy education and adult learning. “I feel like all of this positioned me well for my new role because I have a direct connection to how the curriculum is designed and how it can be improved in any way with a direct link back to the student,” she says.

## **She's driven.**

Rafeedie attributes her work ethic to her Palestinian parents who left everything behind for better opportunities in America. “All we heard growing up was ‘Get the education and work as hard as you can. Prove to me that we came here for a reason,’” Rafeedie says of the influence of her father, who passed away from kidney failure three years ago. “I have this sort of drive and passion for what I do because my parents set this amazing example for us,” she says.

## **She considers it a career mission to strengthen occupational therapy's role in primary care.**

Her father's death at 61 years old has inspired Rafeedie to advocate for occupational therapy services in the primary care physician's office. A lifetime smoker, Rafeedie's father struggled with blood pressure management. Before he passed away, he was taking up to 12 prescriptions for his blood pressure — all of which took a toll on his kidneys. “Instead of giving him 12 different medications, they should've written one prescription for occupational therapy,” she says.

## **She considers USC Chan's curriculum to be among the best.**

Having been exposed to various occupational therapy programs across the country, Rafeedie counts USC Chan's curriculum among the best. “We are really doing an amazing job at giving our students access to both theory and practice,” she says.

## **She's often starstruck in the presence of the “mothers of OT.”**

Rafeedie admits that it's a little awe-inspiring to walk down the hall and see people like Florence Clark, Mary Lawlor, Erna Blanche, Sharon Cermak, Deborah Pitts and Julie McLaughlin Gray. “These are really big names in our field,” she says. “I have to pinch myself. If I can even contribute one ounce to the pound of anything going on here at the division, then I am so honored.”



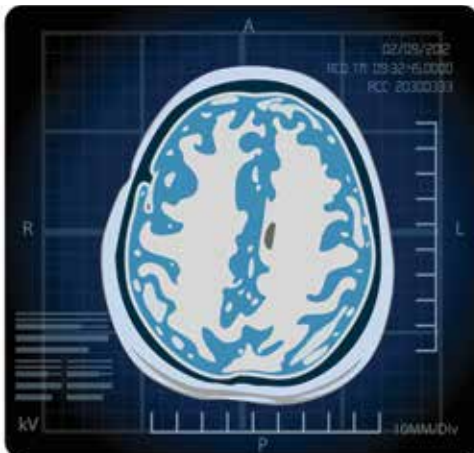
PHOTO BY CHRISTINA GANDOLFO





## NEWS AT 11

USC Chan professor Sharon Cermak (pictured above at left with research assistant professor Leah Stein Duker) made national news this summer for research that could improve trips to the dentist for children with autism. The nearly two-minute video package, aired by NBC affiliates across the country, highlighted how sensory changes to the dental office environment — dimmed lights, soothing music and slow-moving visuals — can make dental appointments less terrifying for children with sensory issues. The modifications could ultimately improve the oral health of the estimated one in 68 American children who have autism — a group known for having poor oral health. Watch the clip: [tinyurl.com/NBCSADE](http://tinyurl.com/NBCSADE).



# W I R E D

## QUOTED

Associate Professor Lisa Aziz-Zadeh was quoted in a June article of *Wired*, offering her expert perspective about the limitations of functional magnetic resonance imaging when trying to measure brain activity surrounding creativity. Aziz-Zadeh studies the neural processes involved in complex phenomena including creativity. Read the article here: [tinyurl.com/AZWired](http://tinyurl.com/AZWired).

## LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM



**“NO ONE EVER  
TAUGHT ME HOW  
TO DREAM...AND  
NOW I AM A  
DREAMER!”**

Byeori Han, a bachelor's student in occupational therapy at South Korea's Soonchunhyang University, said this during his final presentation at the 2015 Summer Occupational Therapy Immersion program. Han was one of 29 students (from 13 countries on five continents), who participated in the four-week program geared toward international OT students and professionals interested in studying or working in the United States.





FUTURE

# GenNext

## ■ Brenda Covarrubias

**AGE:** 30

**HOMETOWN:**

Garden Grove, Calif.

**UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES:**

Majored in psychology with a minor in South and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley

**MEANINGFUL OCCUPATIONS:**

Spending time with friends and family, traveling, trying new cuisines, antique shopping, music, the craft of stitching, and, of course, spending time with my dog Mosquito

**DESCRIBE OT IN 3 OR 4 WORDS:**

Collaborative, empowering and meaningful

**DEFINITION OF SUCCESS:**

Success is a mixed bag of finding meaning in your life, staying connected with others, never letting your fears get the best of you and remaining grateful for the little things.

**When did you first know that occupational therapy was the right career for you?**

About four years ago, I was conversing with a good friend about a possible career change. We were both working as outreach counselors for homeless youth and young adults, and we loved our jobs. However, we both knew we needed a change, and I knew I needed to go back to school. This was when my friend suggested occupa-

tional therapy. Prior to this conversation, I had never really heard about OT. As I read more about it, I knew I had found a profession that encompassed everything I wanted from a career.

**What is one of the most valuable lessons you've learned so far at USC Chan?**

It's really to seek out opportunities and really take advantage of them and also not letting your fears get the best of you.

**What does it take to be a really good occupational therapist in your view?**

First, if you're going to be doing direct patient care, you have to have an understanding of others. You have to really be able to put yourself in their shoes. You also have to be a problem solver and know your own personal boundaries, particularly how to take care of yourself, because you can't take care of others until you take care of yourself.

**In what ways would you like to see occupational therapy's role in society change in the future?**

I know right now there's this whole movement for the profession in primary care, and I think that's a great need. There's also a movement in occupational therapy to be involved with palliative care. We live in a society where death is too much to handle; no one can really process it well. I think occupational therapists can fulfill some role in that, but I haven't quite figured out how yet.

**Who would you say is your most admired person, and why?**

My father: He sustained a spinal cord injury when I was 1. It very much molded my life. Seeing him struggle and learning to have that empathy, understanding and patience for others. It all came together to make me who I am. And just seeing how, no matter what happens in this world, you just try to make the best of it.

**What's next for you after you earn your OTD?**

I just want to be settled. This is my second career so going back to being just a student has been a little bit difficult, so I'm happy to go back to the working world and just really establish myself as a practitioner. I also want to continue being involved with our national organization and potentially promoting diversity within our profession.









# GOING THE DISTANCE

IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE A MAGNITUDE-7.0 QUAKE DEVASTATED HAITI, BUT USC CHAN ALUMNA KARLY STREISFELD IS AS DEDICATED AS EVER — EVEN COMPETING ON NBC'S AMERICAN NINJA WARRIOR — TO HELP SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON THE ISLAND NATION'S CONTINUED NEED FOR AID.

BY JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04



**W**hile in Haiti five years ago on a service trip, Karly Streisfeld MA '05 helped a 16-year-old boy feed himself for the first time.

The teen, who lived in an orphanage, had been born without an arm while the other was severely deformed. Using duct tape, scrap metal and more than a little ingenuity, Streisfeld fashioned an apparatus in 15 minutes that the boy could use to eat.

"If he were born in the United States, he would have been in therapy right away," says Streisfeld, a USC Chan alumna and an occupational therapist at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami.

"Once you know how simple things can change someone's life there, it's so hard to not want to continue to go," she adds.

Prompted to action by the country's devastating 7.0-magnitude earthquake in 2010, Streisfeld started volunteering with the nonprofit Project Medishare, and later with the Haiti Rehab Project, even competing on NBC's *American Ninja Warrior* to raise awareness for disadvantaged populations in the poverty-stricken country. "It's an hour-and-a-half flight from Miami," she says of the island nation. "How do I sit here and know what's going on and not go help?"

Streisfeld has taken four volunteer trips to Haiti in the past five years through Project Medishare. During her first trip, just weeks after the quake, she treated patients with severe trauma, including amputations, spinal cord injuries, as well as multiple fractures. "People had been crushed," says Streisfeld, who specializes in such trauma-related conditions.

In the weeks following the quake, she saw victims of violence, including gunshot and machete wounds.

"It was an unstable environment," she explains. "People were fighting for food and survival."

Cultural differences also posed unique challenges to providing care, including newly paralyzed patients who slept on the ground. "You're teaching them how to get from the floor back into a wheelchair because they're not going home to a place with a bed," she explains. In the United States, "we don't teach that until at least eight weeks after someone's been injured, depending on the injury."

Patients with a range of ongoing disabilities and injuries, who until the earthquake didn't have access to care, also poured into the clinic. "People now had access to an American-run tent hospital with skilled staff," she says, adding that patients, including children with developmental delays from orphanages, "were just being dropped off — it was mayhem."

Streisfeld says her education at USC Chan helped prepare her for fieldwork.

"USC developed a program to make people leaders; they want you to think on a higher level outside the box," she says. "It helped me to problem-solve, working with nothing in unique situations."

Between patients, Streisfeld trained providers who had less experience treating trauma patients. "A lot of people volunteered, but they didn't have that expertise," she says. "When you're in that environment, you're all working as a bigger team with people from different professions, countries and training all trying to make things work in one small hospital."

Years after the quake, Streisfeld continues to treat earthquake-related injuries and complications, but funding has become increasingly scarce. "Haiti has been forgotten," Streisfeld explains. "There are a lot of other problems people are putting money and energy into."

While in Haiti in 2012, Streisfeld began working with another provider, New York-based physical therapist Ginger Oliver. "I took her under my wing and showed her the ropes since I'd been there and knew the people," Streisfeld says. "She fell in love with the culture and need there and started the Haiti Rehab Project."

In addition to providing medical care and supplies to disadvantaged



populations, the Haiti Rehab Project trains and employs Haitians with disabilities to fabricate adaptive equipment for amputees.

"I don't know of any organizations [in Haiti] that are trying to provide jobs for those with disabilities from the earthquake," Streisfeld says.

"It's very taboo to be paralyzed or disabled, and the environment isn't set up for people to get around easily if you have one leg or are in a wheelchair — they don't have job opportunities."

To raise awareness for the organization, Streisfeld, an avid athlete who counts Parkour among her workouts, appeared on NBC's reality competition, *American Ninja Warrior*.

The show's producers shot a package on Streisfeld and the nonprofit, but her footage didn't air on the June 23 episode. "I was so disappointed," says Streisfeld, who got tripped up on the course's second obstacle and was disqualified. "The only reason I decided to do it was to raise money for the Haiti Rehab Project." Still, Streisfeld managed to raise nearly \$3,000.

The Haiti Rehab Project continues to raise funds to start a rehab clinic in the rural area of Gonaives. And Streisfeld plans to return to Haiti to help the clinic open its doors. "The people there are very resilient and they've gone through so much," Streisfeld says. "They are just so appreciative for little things we take for granted."

**TO VOLUNTEER OR DONATE TO THE HAITI REHAB PROJECT,  
VISIT [HAITIREHABPROJECT.ORG](http://HAITIREHABPROJECT.ORG)**



# A HEAD FOR BUSINESS

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14;  
MIKE MCNULTY '06, MA '09, OTD '10; AND  
YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16

**Meet six alumni who've combined their expert clinical skills with an intrepid entrepreneurial spirit to blaze their own trails.**

They are some of occupational therapy's big thinkers. They are risk takers. They are innovators. Where others zig — for example, the more than 60 percent of OTs who choose to practice in hospitals, long-term and skilled nursing facilities and schools, according to the 2015 AOTA Salary and Workforce Survey — these intrepid few zag, finding new, exciting ways to practice occupational therapy or incorporate their expertise into other industries altogether. Many work long hours, sometimes juggling two or three job commitments to make sure their dream of business ownership comes true. And they do it all with entrepreneurial spirit. Meet just a few of the alumni who have taken the expert clinical and research skills they've gained at USC Chan and forged their own path toward a career of their dreams in occupational therapy.



**“I really wanted to do more than just ergonomics. I felt my training and education left me with so much more to offer.”**

## Barb Phillips OTD '11 CEO, Ergo Life Solutions

BY YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16

Sitting across from her banker's desk, Barb Phillips notices him typing on an unsteady keyboard. Politely she stops him and flips out the other leg of the keyboard.

“Try that,” she says as he begins typing again. “Better, right?”

These are exactly the types of recommendations that Phillips makes for people through her business Ergo Life Solutions.

The self-described career problem solver created a business out of helping people get out of pain and back to work.

Her occupational therapy journey didn't start in ergonomics, though.

“I worked for a few years in community-based settings and with people with disabilities,” Phillips says. “I always enjoyed working with people with disabilities and imagined my career continuing down that track.”

Phillips moved to Southern California in 1993 to work at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where she was introduced to and later took part in Florence Clark's Lifestyle Redesign pilot class in 2001.

“Dr. Clark's class gave me a whole new perspective on how occupational therapists can work in the community and make a difference in people's lives,” Phillips says. “Her words also inspired me to continue my degree.”

Phillips was accepted into the division's OTD program in 2008. During her program, she worked for the City of Los Angeles, where

she set up the ergonomic program.

“I really wanted to do more than just ergonomics,” Phillips says, referring to the challenge of business ownership. “I felt my training and education left me with so much more to offer.”

In 2012, Phillips left her job with the city and launched Ergo Life Solutions.

With her new business up and running, she was finally able to use her skills in compassionate care to listen to her clients and observe their situations as an ergonomic consultant.

“Different ergonomists do things differently,” she says. “Some people make a list of all the things their clients should implement, but my goal when I'm working with someone who's in pain is to get them out of discomfort, no matter what I have to do.”

She's also been known to use old books to prop up computer monitors or to duct tape stuffed animals to chairs as cushioned armrests.

With clients ranging from the L.A. Zoo to the NFL Network, Phillips says the most rewarding part of her job is the instant gratification. “Making minor adjustments and seeing my client's reaction is extremely rewarding,” she says. “I even helped a client avoid surgery on her back from an adjustment at her work station.”

Phillips credits much of her success back to what was ingrained in her at the division.

“As soon as you start the program you are treated like a leader in the profession and you're forced to think like one,” she says. “You're

working with people of mixed experience levels, creating real programs, and my classmates were absolutely fearless. I am so grateful for my classes and my education, but my classmates really inspired me to take challenges head on.” ♦



### CLIENT PROFILE Erika Salgado

For months, Erika Salgado experienced pain radiating from her shoulders to her lower back. To ease the pain, the human resources executive would try to adjust her workspace, but she continued to feel discomfort.

Salgado's employer, Pankow Builders, offered her an ergonomic consultation with Barb Phillips, who did a complete evaluation of Salgado's workplace, including position measurements of her computer screens, phone, printer and chair.

Phillips realized that Salgado's office floor was unbalanced. She adjusted Salgado's equipment, including moving her entire work station to a different position so that she was able to work more comfortably. “My life has changed significantly,” Salgado says. “I am no longer in pain, and I'm more comfortable in my workstation than I have been in all my 18 years working.”









- ERGO LIFE SOLUTIONS
- ERGOLUTION
- DAMON LIFESTYLE CONSULTING
- DOLLAR SAFETY NETWORK
- THRIVE FOR LIFE



**“Everything is hard; even having a regular job. It is part of life and it makes you a better person through the struggle.”**

## Charissa C. Sims MA '00 President and CEO, Ergolution

BY YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16

Charissa (Shaw) Sims MA '00 had a stable career working as an in-house ergonomics specialist for Corporate America when she realized she had much more to offer her clients with her clinical skills as an occupational therapist.

This professional epiphany led her to start her own ergonomics consulting business called Ergolution.

When Sims was applying to occupational therapy schools, she didn't realize the myriad opportunities the profession had to offer.

In the late '90s, Sims decided to follow a track in ergonomics, which she learned about in one of her classes at USC Chan. “We had a speaker in our geriatrics course one day who seemed to speak directly to my heart,” Sims says. “She talked about ergonomics and how it is a great field for occupational therapists to pursue. So I began to do my research.”

Sims got in touch with local ergonomics consultants in Southern California and asked to shadow them.

Soon after, she landed her first job at UCLA Ergonomics, where she worked for six months. It was during her next job at Raytheon, where she worked from 2002 to 2004, that Sims realized the clinical and leadership skills gained at USC Chan were being underutilized.

“What first inspired me was that I wanted to do more things than my boss and department would let me,” Sims says. “I saw many opportunities to change the culture but was limited. I saw my ticket to freedom and flexibility was starting a consulting business!”

She launched Ergolution in 2003, with her first and long-standing client City of Hope coming to her through a referral from one of the

chair vendors she had previously worked with.

These days Sims gets new clients through a bid process or referrals. She also uses her website and social media sites such as LinkedIn and Maven as tools to gain new business.

As CEO of Ergolution, Sims not only runs business development, but she also works with her clients directly by providing ergonomic program management, software and training. She also does workplace evaluations, making recommendations on tools or furniture modifications, such as new chairs or work equipment.

“Working with clients from industrial settings is very different than clients in office settings, and many of the recommendations are customized and unique,” she says of her constantly growing client base.

Sims has worked with everyone from truck drivers to insurance brokers, but she says, despite their different vocations, their discomfort tends to be the same.

“The most common injuries or areas with pain among my clients is the lower back followed by eye issues and then neck, wrist, shoulder, buttocks, knees and feet,” she explains. “It's my job to figure out the cause and alleviate the discomfort.”

While she admits running a business has its challenges, to her, the benefits outweigh the negatives. Pursuing her entrepreneurial endeavor has given her more time for family and the additional flexibility to pursue other opportunities.

“I've developed products, ergonomic software and am now working on an ergonomics app for your phone,” she shares. “On the side, I wrote and self-published a children's book, *Kinley the Water Dragon*, that teaches kids how

to conserve water.”

Sims believes being interested and inspired by your work helps during those tough times as a small business owner. “Everything is hard; even having a regular job. It is part of life and it makes you a better person through the struggle,” she says.

“Still it's rewarding that I have the power to eliminate someone's pain through demonstrating a stretch, adjusting their workstation or changing their posture.” ♦



### CLIENT PROFILE Amber Bill

Amber Bill was a new employee at the City of Hope Medical Center when the employer contracted Sims to conduct ergonomic interventions for its employees.

Sims worked closely with Bill — not only to do an ergonomic evaluation of her office space but also to help the new assistant director establish a long-lasting program at City of Hope.

“Charissa helped fill a gap in our company by providing ergonomic assessment needs for our staff in locations hard for us to logistically get to,” Bill says.

“She has also helped me personally by providing training and guidance on how to conduct ergonomic assessments and how to properly document reports.”



**“I come home after work some days and work some more until midnight, then go to bed and start it all over again.”**

## Jessica May Tang MA '13 Owner, Damon Lifestyle Consulting

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Deann Kato '68's goal was simple: She wanted to be able to sit on the floor and play with her 4-year-old grandson for 30 minutes.

The once incredibly active 68-year-old retiree, who had been suffering from chronic neck and back pain and had undergone cervical lumbar fusions, approached USC Chan alumna and new business owner Jessica May Tang MA '13 to help her achieve this rather modest goal.

Part life coach and part occupational therapist, Tang guided Kato toward her objective through one-on-one at-home sessions.

Together, the two set up an exercise and stretching program, discussed activity pacing and energy conservation strategies and even worked on fall prevention techniques and pain management.

With Tang's help, Kato eventually played on the floor with her grandson for 45 minutes.

“There was a sense of freedom,” Kato says of reaching her goal. “I felt proud of myself to achieve something that had been unattainable to me for a long time.”

Effecting this type of lifestyle change was precisely what Tang envisioned when she started her own business Damon Lifestyle Consulting earlier this year.

The burgeoning business, which serves clients across Southern California, aims “to assist individuals in creating healthy habits, routines and goals toward living their best lives,” according to its website.

Through her business, Tang works with clients to create personalized treatment plans for everything from stress and anxiety management to caregiver support to pain management.

“I really like working with people in chronic pain and with other chronic medical condi-

tions,” she says. “I assess their entire lifestyle — their body, their routine, their habits, their environment and their values — and talk about where their life is right now and where they'd like to see themselves.”

A case starts with a free 15-minute consultation — typically in the would-be client's home.

“I like to do it that way because I get to see what their environment is like,” Tang says, “and how they choose to interact with that environment, and I can make adjustments right away.”

From there, Tang charges anywhere from \$50 to \$150 a session, depending on the number of sessions the client purchases.

Still in her first year of business ownership, Tang admits it's not been an easy road. “Let's just say the easiest part was getting the DBA,” she jokes, referring to registering the company's legal name.

Learning how to write a business plan, how to market something as unknown to lay audiences as occupational therapy and how to finance a small business have presented Tang, a self-described life-long learner, a steep learning curve.

She thinks these skills should be taught in an elective course during one's occupational therapy education.

“I think that would be an interesting elective to have at USC in case you're interested in going out and starting a small business,” she says.

Though, with less than 10 percent of occupational therapists opening their own practices, the course could be a hard sell for most programs.

While Tang grows her business, she's had to continue working part-time at a hospital and an outpatient clinic.

“I get up really early everyday and work on

my business,” she says. “I come home after work some days and work some more until midnight, then go to bed and start it all over again.”

But she says the satisfaction of seeing her clients' epiphanies about their lives helps fulfill her through those long days.

“Whenever someone has an ‘Aha!’ moment about how they've been looking at their life or when they realize there's so much they can do and how much control they have over their lives to change, that's very satisfying,” she says. ♦



### CLIENT PROFILE Allison Kato

Having seen her mother's success with Damon Lifestyle Consulting, Allison Kato MBA '09 — daughter of Deann, the 68-year-old grandmother who sought to play with her grandson despite her back pain — purchased a session with Jessica May Tang to help her and her husband deal with their own chronic low back problems.

“I was surprised at how effective Jessica was at identifying the root cause of my pain,” says Allison, 36, who was 5 months pregnant when Jessica visited the couple's home to see how they interact with their environment.

“She suggested exercises and adjustments to our posture that have made a big impact on our day to day life,” Allison says.

“The session taught me that occupational therapy is beneficial for anyone at any age and can help address many different challenges.”





PHOTO BY CHRISTINA GANDOLFO





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**“When people encounter barriers, it makes life less worth living. What I do is remove those barriers to make life more worth living.”**

## Sean Sullivan MA '13 Owner, Dollar Safety Network

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

When Sean Sullivan MA '13 launched Dollar Safety Network in early 2015, he knew that flexibility would be integral to realizing his business goals.

“I didn’t care what hat I wore — occupational therapist, ergonomist or home modification expert,” Sullivan says, reflecting on his small business’ start-up phase. “What I did was survey the community and ask the question, ‘Is there a need out there that’s not being met?’ Because I can fill unmet needs.”

As he surveyed the community, Sullivan identified a gap between the concentrated populations of older adults who actively consume health care services and those who don’t. That gap is a substantial one: According to 2012 data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, the top 5 percent of health care consumers in the Medicare population are responsible for 38 percent of total spending.

“I saw a potential middle market — a wife or a husband, a mother or a father, who doesn’t have many immediate needs but is legitimately concerned about their long-term ability to age successfully and at home,” Sullivan says.

That concern likely reflects older adult’s overwhelming preference for aging at home. A 2010 survey conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons found that 88 percent of respondents age 65 and older want to remain in their current place of residence for as long as possible.

Sullivan started Dollar Safety Network with the goal of empowering his clients to lead safer, more satisfying lives in their own homes. For the price of one dollar per day for an annual membership to Dollar Safety Network, the Orange County-based Sullivan visits customers in their home and leads them through a compre-

hensive evaluation aimed at analyzing their specific degrees of risk exposure.

“I learned to code and build algorithms well enough to develop a digital risk assessment tool that measures 300 discrete threats to a person’s health and safety,” Sullivan says. Categories of risk analysis include health history, physiology, cognition, environment, support availability, post-surgical and illness-specific risks and activities of daily living. During the assessment, clients complete brief interviews and demonstrations and participate in interactive games including digital apps.

Knowing those targeted risk areas, Sullivan then provides clients with individualized education, equipment, community resources and easy-to-understand strategies that can decrease their overall degree of risk exposure. Solutions can be as intuitive as suggesting kitchen tools that compensate for decreased grip strength while cooking, or as involved as bringing a contractor into a client’s home for renovations. Sullivan also provides traditional home health occupational therapy services.

“I think of myself as a matchmaker to help people get the services that they need,” Sullivan says.

And his services are in demand. Since hanging his own shingle in early 2015, Dollar Safety Network has been growing at approximately 17 percent each month.

The young entrepreneur has also learned crucial business lessons along the way, chief among them the importance of sustainable, organic growth.

“Not every business needs to be a full-time commitment right away,” Sullivan says. “What matters is finding the right scalability model for you.”

What Sullivan has indeed found is a business

model that not only works but makes substantive improvements in the everyday lives of people in his community. No matter what hat he wears on any given day, Sullivan’s passion for assisting others is tangible.

“When people encounter barriers, it makes life less worth living,” he says. “What I do is remove those barriers to make life more worth living.” ♦



### CLIENT PROFILE Marion Littlefair

America’s population of nonagenarians — older adults aged 90-and-older — has nearly tripled since 1980. Retired school teacher Marion Littlefair, 90, is a new member of this esteemed demographic which, although growing rapidly, still has unique health concerns. Dollar Safety Network’s Sean Sullivan was put in touch with Littlefair to conduct his proprietary risk assessment to pinpoint her personal needs and build safeguards around them. Not surprisingly, Littlefair showed signs of typical aging such as faltering memory, instability while walking and declining energy for sustained activities during the day. Sullivan’s in-home services that followed have markedly improved her quality of life, making changes that even Littlefair’s caregiver has noticed, including increased motivation to get out of bed during the day and stay active and engaged in her home. Dollar Safety Network, in Littlefair’s own words, is “about making it easier to stay in my home.”



PHOTOS BY KAAI NALUA'I-SEMPIO





“Clients often come back to us  
 and say it’s been a life-changing  
 experience for them, and that it’s  
 improved their quality of life.”

# Catia Garell ’01, MA ’02 & Damian Sempio ’01 Owners, Thrive for Life LLC

BY JOHN HOBBS MA ’14

Imagine you’re a 27-year-old man whose life has been forever changed after a car accident left you with a spinal cord injury.

If you choose to remain in your home, there will need to be some modifications made — entry ramps added, hallways widened, showers made for wheelchair accessibility — so you can navigate daily life in a wheelchair.

At this point, you might Google a good local contractor to redesign your living space, which is what one of Thrive for Life LLC’s Maui-based clients did recently to give him greater autonomy in his bathroom.

“It was all ADA-compliant; the measurements were perfect; the grab bars were where they should be,” explains Catia Garell ’01, MA ’02, Thrive for Life co-owner. “But it was a good example of needing the clinical skills of an occupational therapist because the contractor didn’t take into account his bowel and bladder program.”

Garell explains that the client often felt lightheaded after using the bathroom and needed to have his legs elevated while showering — something the contractor didn’t know and the client didn’t think to share. The contractor had built the shower without enough space for the client’s legs to be elevated.

“We had to go back in and redo the entire job,” she says. “It was a good example of where our clinical background and medical skills can truly support function.”

Home modifications made with the expertise of an occupational therapist is the business of USC Chan alumni Garell and Damian Sempio ’01, who in 2011 started Thrive for Life LLC, which serves the entire state of Hawaii.

“The two fields of construction and health care are polar opposites,” Sempio explains. “You have ‘Contractor Joe’ coming in with his hammer, ready to knock down walls, not neces-

sarily thinking about the specific occupational therapy needs of the client.”

Through Thrive for Life, Garell and Sempio have helped individuals ranging from medically fragile children to young adults who’ve suffered catastrophic accidents to elderly individuals, all of whom need guidance through the process of home modification.

The small business’ goal is “to simply modify your home environment so you and your loved ones can comfortably ‘age in place’ for the rest of their lives,” according to its website, [thriveforlife.com](http://thriveforlife.com).

The process starts with an assessment, where Garell and Sempio meet the clients and their caregivers. They look at the client’s medical history, take measurements and assess the client’s daily tasks, specifically focusing on areas where they might face barriers.

While their clients range in age, one particular area of interest for Garell and Sempio is the elderly. With the U.S. census projecting the number of elderly in America to double by 2050 and the annual price of a nursing home in Hawaii exceeding \$150,000, Garell and Sempio saw a need. They wanted to help ensure more elderly individuals could stay in their own homes instead of having to transition into assisted living environments.

Both Garell and Sempio have Certified Aging in Place Specialist designations as well as Executive Certifications in Home Modification from the USC Davis School of Gerontology.

Once the team — comprised of draftsmen, designers and contractors — has gathered the information needed, they detail a few construction concepts for the client and their family to choose from.

After a plan is selected, Garell and Sempio guide their clients through the process from

collecting contractor bids to filing the appropriate paperwork for permits to conducting a comprehensive post-construction assessment where they watch their client in their new space.

“Clients often come back to us and say it’s been a life-changing experience for them, and that it’s improved their quality of life,” Garell says.

“There’s a sense of satisfaction in being able to design something that creates this huge smile and makes the families safer and the homes more accessible for everyone,” Sempio adds. ♦



## CLIENT PROFILE Ryan Cadirao

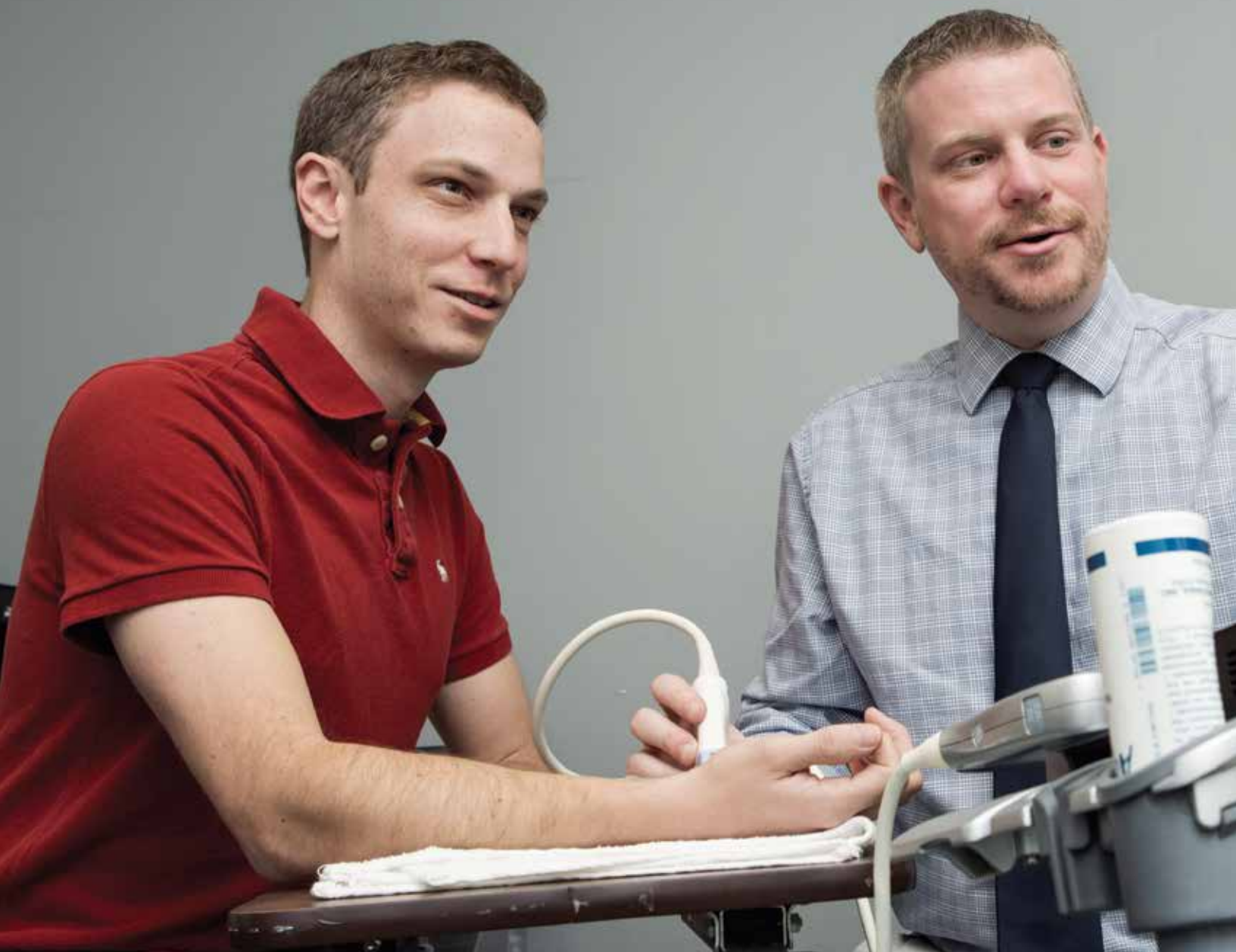
Bath time for Ryan Cadirao used to be a real challenge. A narrow bathroom door and cramped layout left his caregivers little choice but to lift the 15-year-old with mitochondrial myopathy from his wheelchair, carry him inside and, while balancing on one foot, shut the door behind them with the other.

“It got to a point where carrying him became too difficult,” explains his mother Caroline Cadirao, who hired Thrive for Life to oversee home modifications to make the home more accessible.

“Damian and Cat’s understanding of our needs really made the process go smoothly.” As to whether Ryan, who’s not able to express himself verbally, likes the changes or not: “He’s never cared for baths anyway,” his mom says with a laugh. “But they put in this tilting mirror, and when we wheel him past, he just loves to smile at himself.”



Shawn Roll, on right, examines graduate research assistant and doctoral student Mark Hardison's wrist to demonstrate the way he collects data for his research.



## PICTURING PREVENTION

**USING SONOGRAPHIC IMAGING, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR SHAWN ROLL AND HIS RESEARCH TEAM SEEK TO DETECT THE EARLIEST SIGNS OF CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME.**

**BY BREANNE GRADY MCM '10**

Shawn Roll has expertise in a specific type of “handiwork.”

This past September, he was awarded a \$2.3-million research grant that will allow the researcher to study the early stages of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) in dental hygiene students.

A USC faculty member in his fifth year, Roll focuses primarily on research for the prevention, rehabilitation and assessment of musculoskeletal disorders like CTS.

Originally interested in athletic training, Roll changed his focus to occupational therapy, earning a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy, a master’s degree in allied health professions, and in 2011, a PhD in health and rehabilitation sciences, all from the Ohio State University.

Roll refers to adults in the workplace as “industrial athletes” — a nod to his sports background — and treats them as such, working to prevent work-related injuries and helping adults be functional when they do sustain some sort of injury.

“The nice thing about occupational therapy that drew me in was its theoretical foundation,” he states, explaining his shift in interest. “It allows you to understand how to holistically view an individual and understand the way that you would intervene with that individual to improve their independence and their functional performance.”

According to Roll, what is known about CTS is largely from the clinical perspective, when somebody already has identifiable symptoms such as numbness, tingling or weakness in the hand.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA GANDOLFO

“We’ve been studying carpal tunnel syndrome for more than 20 years, longer than that even, and we don’t understand what causes it,” he explains. “We have a collection of different ideas and know that repetitive motion, forceful gripping, vibration and those types of things can lead to it, but not always and not in every individual. You can put five individuals in the same job with the same physical exposures and three of the five will develop it while two will not.”

The four-year grant, which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health, is titled “Sonographic Tissue Morphology in Early-Stage Work-Related Median Nerve Pathology.” It will run from September 2015 through September 2019.

As principal investigator, Roll and his team will be using sonography to examine populations of dental hygiene students at both USC and Loma Linda University.

Among Roll’s collaborators are co-investigator Jane Forrest, professor of clinical dentistry at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC,

and Wendy Mack, associate professor of preventative medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, who will serve as statistician for the grant.

Roll and his collaborators determined that dental hygiene students were an ideal target population for the study.

“When students come into the program, they’re young and typically don’t have any problems, and less than 20 percent of them complain of any pain or discomfort in their hands,” he explains. “By the end of their two-year program, Dr. Forrest has documented up to 66 percent, or two-thirds of them, having some sort of pain in hands due to repetitive activities they’re doing in holding the scaling instruments. So, there is something going on there.”

Moreover, Roll describes how CTS in long-term dental hygienists is a known problem. In fact, he cites more than half of dental hygienists report having CTS at some point during their career.

In his preliminary work using sonographic imaging on chronic CTS patients, he determined that the median nerve — a major peripheral nerve in the upper limb of humans and other animals — is enlarged when compared to asymptomatic individuals, where the nerve is much smaller.

“Somehow, there has to be a transitional point to get from the small to the large,” he explains. “Using the imaging, we’ve actually done other preliminary work in an animal model where we’ve been able to replicate that progression in the size of the nerve, due to repetitive functional activities.”

Determining this tipping point could help target interventions and prevent CTS specifically in early-stage individuals.

The students in the study will be measured via imaging every four to five months to see if the median nerve tissues are actually changing in size or structure. The team will also use nerve conduction testing to see if the physiology of the nerve is working properly.

In addition, the team will collect symptom reports and functional reports from the student populations, comparing the imaging and changes in tissues of individuals complaining of symptoms or problems against those without symptoms.

In parallel, the study will collect the same data from a cohort population.

“We will collect data from a population of OT students, who also have a two-year professional program and very similar demographics, but do not engage in repetitive upper extremity tasks,” he says.

Using the sonographic images collected from both populations, his team will look for changes in median nerve morphology — the first signs of which could indicate the beginning of CTS.

At the end of the study, Roll hopes that the research will lead to earlier identification for individuals who might be progressing towards CTS. He stresses that research on the early stages is crucial to prevention.

“Our goal is to develop some sort of predictive model to show how imaging will show the progression of CTS, so we can develop this model and then implement it in the workplace where high-risk workers are screened every six months or year using the imaging,” he explains. “If we start to see the changes, we can then intervene.”

At the same time, the team will video-record the dental hygienists at work and look at the actual positions and postures they are using to be able to understand if there are certain positions and postures that are potentially leading to the symptoms.

“Hopefully, we can develop some sort of education program and preventive techniques,” he explains. “We won’t necessarily see CTS in our students across two years, but hopefully we’ll be able to continue following and measuring some of these individuals as they move into their professional careers long-term.”



## A CURTAIN CALL FOR CLARK

Florence Clark PhD '82, OTR/L, FAOTA, associate dean and chair, announced in October that she will be stepping down from her administrative positions at the conclusion of the 2015-16 academic year. The longtime leader sat down with the *USC Chan* magazine to discuss her decision, reflect on her accomplishments and outline where her efforts will be focusing next.

### **You have been department chair for 27 years. Why is now the right time to transition away from your administrative roles?**

Because more than ever before, the entire division stands on a fortified foundation in terms of its fiscal base, the size and scope of its research portfolio, its faculty capacity, its clinical service delivery and the rankings of its educational programs. It truly could not be better positioned for a seamless handoff to the next leader.

### **What accomplishments during your time as chair and associate dean are you most proud of? What have you been most surprised by over the years? What about the positions will you miss the most?**

There are too many to list here! Launching the PhD program in occupational science in the late '80s and early '90s; acquiring the first RO1 [Research Project] Grant from the NIH for a randomized controlled trial that enabled us to test the effectiveness of preventive occupational therapy; stewarding the legacy of Dr. A. Jean Ayres; the successes of our OTD and occupational science minor programs. As far as the most surprising? The impact that new technologies have had across all dimensions of education and research. And of course, the Chan family's endowment gift last year — I am still overawed by their generosity and mission to improve global health and wellness. What I will probably miss most are the leadership opportunities and the ability to make strategic decisions on resource allocation in the service of the public good.

### **In your eyes, how have USC and the profession of occupational therapy at large changed since 1989?**

In 1989, occupational science was this nascent discipline, and occupational therapy research was still, it's fair to say, in its youth. I don't think any of us could have imagined the new normal of today, with core research faculty in charge of running their own laboratories and earning multimillion-dollar NIH grants. In terms of the profession as a whole, the down-sizing of mental health practice and the growth of pediatrics are probably the most surprising. Also, the 1989 version of me would be shocked by the degree to which legislative and political decisions — I'm thinking of the Balanced Budget Act in 1997, for example — have consequences on the provision of and reimbursement for occupational therapy services. That's something I've become much more attuned to over the years. It has fueled my commitment to advocacy and made crystal clear the critical need to support our professional associations, such as OTAC and AOTA. Finally, the growth in the public awareness of our profession over the course of the past two decades has been truly astounding.

### **Your legacy at USC Chan is indelible. What traits have fueled your leadership successes?**

Effective leaders consider the points of view of lots of people before making crucial decisions. I am always tracking the zeitgeist — that is, the general beliefs, ideas and spirit of the times and places in which I, USC and the profession are situated. I guard against getting stuck in or being tied to a particular disciplinary perspective or paradigm. This flexibility enables me to imagine new possibilities that pertain to what is really going on in the world. I am always recalibrating and shifting my thoughts as I scan the environment to

know what is trending and where our next opportunities and advantages may be.

### **What leadership "lessons" have you learned about yourself, and how might the next generation of leaders benefit from learning them?**

Early on, I thought that I really knew it all, and I didn't listen to others as much as I maybe should have. The most important lesson I have learned is how valuable it is to gather input from others before making decisions. I have also learned how critical it is to take strategic risks and ultimately make courageous decisions based on the input gathering process.

### **You've traveled this year to Asia, Europe and the Middle East, serving as almost a type of international ambassador for the division. How have the division's international relationships grown during the past several years, and where do you see our collaborations growing in the future?**

They are widespread, strong and growing exponentially, especially in South America and the Pacific Rim! I couldn't single out just one to talk about. So stay tuned!

### **As you return to a full-time research and teaching career at USC, what is ahead on your horizon?**

I haven't looked that far ahead yet! (*laughs*) I expect the time available on my calendar will enable me to think carefully about what lies ahead and into which projects it would be most fruitful for me to invest my energy.







# In Print

**Stanley Azen** co-authored “The Trojan Lifetime Champions Health Survey: Development, Validity, and Reliability” published in the *Journal of Athletic Training*. The article was co-authored by **Shawn C. Sorenson**, **E. Todd Schroeder** and **George J. Salem** of the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, and **Russell Romano** and **Robin M. Scholefield** of the USC Department of Athletic Medicine.

**Lisa Aziz-Zadeh** co-authored “Functional MRI Preprocessing in Lesioned Brains: Manual versus Automated Region of Interest Analysis” published in *Frontiers in Neurology*. The article was co-authored by **Brent Liu** of the Department of Biomedical Engineering, **Hanna Damasio** of the USC Brain and Creativity Institute and **Carolee J. Winstein** of the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy. **Aziz-Zadeh** also co-authored “Psychopathic Traits Modulate Microstructural Integrity of Right Uncinate Fasciculus in a Community Population,” published in *Neuroimage: Clinical* and co-authored by **Laura Baker** and **Catherine Tuvblad** of the Department of Psychology and **Bradford Martins** of the USC Brain and Creativity Institute.

**Julie Bissell** co-authored “Occupational Therapy for Children and Youth Using Sensory Integration Theory and Methods in School-Based Practice,” an official document of the American Occupational Therapy Association published in the 2015 supplement of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The article was co-authored by alumna **Susanne Smith Roley OTD ’12**.

**Erna Blanche**, **Jesús Díaz** and **Sharon Cermak** co-authored “Caregiving Experiences of Latino Families with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. USC Chan alumna **Tanya Barretto MA ’14, OTD ’15** was a co-author.

**Stefanie Bodison** was the lead author of “Engaging the Community in the Dissemination, Implementation and Improvement of Health Related Research,” published in *Clinical and Translational Science*. **Bodison** also authored “Developmental Dyspraxia and the Play Skills of Children with Autism,” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

**Sharon Cermak** and **Leah Stein Duker** were the two lead authors of “Sensory Adapted Dental Environments to Enhance Oral Care for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Study,” published in the *Journal of Autism and*

*Developmental Disorders* and of “Feasibility of a Sensory-Adapted Dental Environment for Children with Autism,” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Both articles were co-authored by USC faculty members **Marian Williams**, associate clinical professor at the Keck School of Medicine of USC; **Michael Dawson**, professor of psychology at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences; **Christianne Lane**, assistant professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School; and **José Polido**, division head of dentistry at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and assistant professor at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC. **Cermak** was also the lead author of “Participation in Physical Activity, Fitness, and Risk for Obesity in Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder: A Cross-Cultural Study,” published in *Occupational Therapy International*. Alumna **Noomi Katz MA ’79** was an article co-author. **Cermak** also co-authored “Sensory Differences and Mealtime Behavior in Children With Autism,” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Alumna **Zoe Mailloux ’77, MA ’81, OTD ’12** was an article co-author.

**Florence Clark**, **Rachel Proffitt**, **Stacey Schepens Niemiec** and **Cheryl Vigen** co-authored the second edition of *Lifestyle Redesign: The Intervention Tested in the USC Well Elderly Studies*, published by AOTA Press. Staff members **Jeanine Blanchard** and **Sarah Gleason** were co-authors, as were students **Valerie Hill Postdoc ’15**; **Alix Sleight MA ’12, OTD ’13, PhD ’18**; **Alison Cogan MA ’12, PhD ’17**; **Lucía Floríndez PhD ’18**; **Rebecca Heymann MA ’15, OTD ’16**; **Alexis Holden MA ’14**; and **Molly Murphy ’11, MA ’12**.

**Gelya Frank** was the lead author of “Theorising Social Transformation in Occupational Therapy: The American Civil Rights Movement and South African Struggle against Apartheid as ‘Occupational Reconstructions,’” published in the *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Alumnus **Bernard Muriithi MA ’14** was an article co-author.

**Julie McLaughlin Gray** co-authored “Importance of Interprofessional Education in Occupational Therapy Curricula,” an official document of the American Occupational Therapy Association published in the 2015 supplement of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

**Ashley Halle** authored “Integration of Behavioral and Mental Health Providers in Primary Care: Challenges and Opportunities” published in *Outlook: Newsletter of the Society of Behavioral Medicine*.

## FEATURED PUBLICATION



**Stacey Schepens Niemiec, Mike Carlson, Jenny Martínez and Florence Clark** authored “Developing Occupation-Based Preventive Programs for Late-Middle-Aged Latino Patients in Safety-Net Health Systems,” published in the November/December issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The article was co-authored with staff member **Laura Guzmán** and **Anish Mahajan**, director of system planning, improvement and data analytics for the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

The research team conducted a qualitative pilot study by interviewing 11 Latino adults aged 50–60 years old, a demographic at high risk for developing chronic conditions that can lead to early disability. These one-on-one interviews discussed routines and activities, health management and health care utilization. The goal was to develop a foundational design for health promotion programs that have the potential to be implemented by occupational therapy practitioners in primary care settings.

Content analysis of the interviews revealed six domains as most concerning to the interviewees: weight management; disease management; mental health and well-being; personal finances; family, friends and community; and stress management. Within each of the six domains, the researchers tentatively identified patient-centered, health-promoting strategies and sample recommendations, key components for designing an occupation-based intervention.

This “schema,” specifically designed for low-income, late-middle-aged Latinos receiving care through safety-net systems, can be used by occupational therapists as a starting point for developing and customizing health-promoting lifestyle interventions in the future.

*(“In Print” continues on page 34)*

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**USC** Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy



# In Print

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**Natalie Leland** was the lead author of “An Examination of the First 30 Days after Patients are Discharged to the Community from Hip Fracture Postacute Care,” published in *Medical Care* and the lead author of “What Happens to Patients When They Fracture their Hip during a Skilled Nursing Facility Stay?,” published in the *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*. **Leland** also co-authored “Volume Matters: Returning Home after Hip Fracture” and “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*. She also co-authored “Client Centeredness and Health Reform: Key Issues for Occupational Therapy,” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Alumnus **Donald Fogelberg PhD '08** was also a co-author.

**Jenny Martínez** and **Natalie Leland** authored “Language Discordance and Patient-Centered Care in Occupational Therapy: A Case Study,” published in *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*.

**William Morgan** co-edited “*Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*,” published by Routledge. Within the text, **Morgan** co-authored the introduction entitled “*A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Sport*” and authored the chapter entitled “*Conventionalism and Sport*.”

**Rachel Proffitt** was the lead author of “User-Centered Design of a Controller-Free Game for Hand Rehabilitation,” published in the *Games for Health Journal*. **Chien-Yen Chang** and **Belinda Lange** of the USC Institute for Creative Technologies were also co-authors.

**Elizabeth Pyatak** and **Cheryl Vigen** co-authored “Let’s Empower and Prepare (LEAP): Evaluation of a Structured Transition Program for Young Adults with Type 1 Diabetes,” published in *Diabetes Care*. Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty members **Paola Sequeira**, **Marc Weigensberg**, **Valerie Ruelas**, **Lucy Montoya** and **Anne Peters** were also co-authors.

**Elizabeth Pyatak** co-authored “Patient Perspectives on Peer Mentoring: Type 1 Diabetes Management in Adolescents and Young Adults,” published in *The Diabetes Educator*. Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty members **Anne Peters**, **Jamie Wood**, **Michele Kipke** and **Paola Sequeira** were also co-authors.

**Shawn C. Roll**, **Julie McLaughlin Gray** and **Gelya Frank** co-authored “Exploring Occupational Therapists’ Perceptions of the Usefulness of Musculoskeletal Sonography in Upper-Extremity Rehabilitation,” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Alumna **Monique Wolkoff MA '12, OTD '13** was also a co-author.

**Shawn C. Roll** authored “Role of Sonographic Imaging in Occupational Therapy Practice,” published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. **Roll** was also the lead author of “Clinical Utilization of Musculoskeletal Sonography Involving Non-Physician Rehabilitation Providers: A Scoping Review,” published in the *European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine*. The article was co-authored by alumna **Julieann Tsai MA '12, OTD '13**.

**Ashley Uyeshiro Simon** and **Lindsey Reeves** co-authored “Occupational Therapy’s Role in Headache Management: A Lifestyle Behavioral Approach,” a research poster presented at the 17th Congress of the International Headache Society and published in *Cephalalgia*.

**Olga Solomon**, **Larry Yin** and **Mary Lawlor** co-authored “‘You Can Turn Off the Light if You’d Like’: Pediatric Healthcare Visits for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder as an Interactional Achievement,” published in the *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. Occupational science student **Amber Angell PhD '16** was also a co-author. **Solomon** and **Yin** also co-authored “‘What Brings Him Here Today?’: Medical Problem Presentation Involving Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Typically Developing Children,” published in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

**Olga Solomon** authored “‘But-He’ll Fall!’: Children with Autism, Interspecies Intersubjectivity, and the Problem of ‘Being Social,’” published in *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry: An International Journal of Cross-Cultural Health Research*.

**Barbara Thompson** co-authored “The Autism-Associated Gene Chromodomain Helicase DNA-Binding Protein 8 (CHD8) Regulates Noncoding RNAs and Autism-Related Genes,” published in *Translational Psychiatry*. Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty members **Kai Wang**, **Oleg Evgrafov**, **James Knowles** and **Daniel Campbell** were also co-authors.

*(continued from page 33)*

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

# Annual Donor Honor Roll

The division would like to thank the following for their gifts of support. Their generosity improves the health and quality of life for people across the globe today and decades into the future.

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VOICES

# A Deeper Meaning

Heather Kitching tells how a simple grade school career exercise launched a career that will, soon, see the office of the president of the Occupational Therapy Association of California.



Heather Kitching MA '02, OTD '10

BY HEATHER KITCHING MA '02, OTD '10

I was asked to complete an interest inventory when I was in seventh grade that produced a list of potential careers for me, and occupational therapy was on that list. In my junior year of high school, I spent a day touring school-based therapy. I was intrigued when the physical therapist said to me, “that’s the occupational therapist,” and continued to describe a person who had recently arrived on staff and yet was pushing the limits of what was done for evaluation and treatment. I was drawn to this person’s ability to make a career out of advocating for what was best for her young clients.

In 1987, I entered the occupational therapy program at Quinnipiac University. The pride and enthusiasm in the department was palpable. A new chairperson, Kimberly Hartmann, had been appointed during my sophomore year, and she was overseeing many program developments and changes that would set an example of leadership and vision for me. Dr. Hartmann told story after story about pushing the boundaries of practice and innovating intervention. I can remember her tale of helping a child with severe paralysis use a computer to complete Valentine’s Day notes for her classmates. This story was one of many that stayed with me. We were learning the basics of occupational therapy practice as well as leadership and advocacy for the clients we would serve.

My practice career began four years later at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. Rancho Los Amigos was then, as it is now, filled with leaders who brought creativity, vision and passion to their everyday work. I observed the majority of practitioners I worked beside daily write for publication, innovate interventions and equipment design, serve the state and national associations as volunteer leaders and enact occupation-based practice at the highest possible level. Rancho served the residents of Los Angeles County, who often had nowhere else to go; advocacy for patient rights was at the core of what the facility was built to provide. The speaker for one

of the earliest quarterly staff meetings I attended was Florence Clark re-delivering her Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture. The concepts of storytelling and story making would ignite my interest in empowering clients to embrace their own present and chart a better future.

A colleague at Rancho gifted me on my birthday of that first year of practice with an OTAC membership. This was a most meaningful gift that would launch a long, rich relationship with both that individual and the association. Lora Woo ’83, OTD ’10, a valued colleague and my partner now of 20 years, was the first person to explain to me that the nearest occupational therapy program was quite innovative. I then began to read about USC and occupational science.

My graduate education provided mentorship opportunities in teaching, leading and expansion of my practice expertise. I had long been interested in the work of Gelya Frank. She introduced me to the concept of interventions at the social and cultural levels as the bases of empowering populations to advocate for their own needs and improved opportunities in daily life.

I was recently honored with election to the office of president-elect for OTAC. I have always cherished my instinctual sense of social justice and interest in advocacy. Service in the state association at the regional and state levels has provided opportunities for me to develop my skills in leadership and advocacy for the profession as a whole. I look forward to traveling throughout the state and meeting the multiple practitioners, leaders and scholars who strengthen the core of our profession on a daily basis.

My personal objective is to highlight and share across the state what is already being done by individuals who advocate for our profession through a dedication to excellence in practice, teaching, networking and scholarship. I hope that sharing stories of our rich past of successful advocacy efforts will allow others to envision a future of new advocacy opportunities and collaborate in the association’s efforts in creating a strong future for the profession.



A young child with light brown hair, wearing a colorful striped zip-up jacket, is sitting at a wooden table. They have white frosting smeared on their chin and are holding a cupcake with pink frosting. Several other cupcakes are on the table. The background is a solid reddish-brown color.

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