

Alumni Association Newsletter

Volume 5

Issue 2

Summer 2009

From the Former Chair

....Dr. Shelly

I have been asked for parting words; my final note to alumni as outgoing chair. We have come a great distance since I first took on this role, in 1996. Change is never easy, but we made some huge changes and they were due to the fact that we were a team. I need to extend some acknowledgements to those who made up the team. First, there was support and guidance from patient and committed office staff for starters; something we all know we cannot live without! Second (of course *not really second*) was and is the faculty. I have developed a deep appreciation for the faculty who are the heart and soul of the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy. This faculty has broad interests, vast skills, and seemingly boundless energy; they are dedicated to their roles as teachers, mentors, researchers, and service providers. The growth and development of the VCU OT Department programs would not have been possible without them; my own growth as a leader would not have been as rich without them either. I have also had the incredible

opportunity to meet and grow to know students-now-colleagues who are making a difference in the lives of their clients and in the profession. I am always proud to say someone was a student in our program. Thank you to the students for the differences you are making for everyone.

Was I asked for advice? No, not really, but I will offer some. Find pleasure in what you do so that you can put your all into it; find pleasure in the people with whom you do it, so that you can enjoy the time spent on each and every task; find pleasure in the outcomes you help to create because therein lies the meaning in what you do. It really is all about being an occupational therapist.

I am pleased to be staying on as faculty. Following my brief sabbatical I will rejoin the group, and hit the ground running with one course in each of our three programs. I look forward to my time away, and look forward to returning, wearing a slightly different hat. Best!

Shelly J. Lane, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP, FAOTA
Professor and Chair



New Chair of VCU Occupational Therapy Department

Please join faculty, staff and students in welcoming **Al Copolillo, Ph.D., OTR/L** as the new Chair of the VCU OT Department and congratulating and thanking Shelly Lane, Ph.D., FAOTA, OTR/L who is stepping down from 13 years of stellar service as Department Chair. The official transition took place on July 25, 2009. The next newsletter will feature a story with more specific details about this recent and exciting change.

have demonstrated sustained commitment,

Dr. Shelly J. Lane receives the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's Ayres Research Award

excellence and/or innovation in sensory integration and brain-behavior relationships in

Awards and honors are a part of every annual American Occupational Therapy Association conference. At the 2009 AOTA conference, held in Houston, TX, Dr. Shelly J Lane, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA received the Ayres Research award. The Ayres award is given through the research arm of AOTA, the American Occupational Therapy Foundation, and honors the founder of the sensory integration theory and frame of reference for occupational therapy practice, Dr. A. Jean Ayres.

clinical practice. Dr. Lane indicated that being awarded the Ayres award this year was particularly special because she shared it with a good friend, colleague, and previous Scardina mentee, Ms. Susanne Smith Roley.

Dr. Ayres' professional concentration throughout her career was on developing theory in support of practice; her work and contributions were of great significance to the profession of occupational therapy. The award recognizes occupational therapy clinicians, educators, and researchers who have demonstrated sustained commitment to the application, development, or testing of theory in occupational therapy. Dr. Lane was recognized as having made significant contributions to the development of research and education in sensory integration.

Dr. Lane is past Chair of Occupational Therapy and the Assistant Dean for Research in the School of Allied Health Professions. Her research at VCU has included the establishment of the Sensory Integration and Stress Evaluation (SPASE) laboratory where she works with a colleague to examine the neurophysiological and neuroendocrine correlates of sensory processing disorders. The SPASE lab is one of six laboratories across the country that form the Sensory Integration Research Collaborative (SIRC). The SIRC labs work both separately and in collaboration to examine the neuroscience of sensory integration and processing disorders.

Dr. Lane began her study of sensory integration in the Cincinnati Public Schools under a well known mentor, Virginia Scardina. Ms. Scardina mentored many occupational therapists during her clinical years, and several of her mentees have gone on to make significant contributions to knowledge of sensory integration. Ms. Scardina was a pioneer in the inclusion of sensory integration concepts and knowledge into the public school system, and herself is honored by the Scardina award, given to outstanding clinicians who



WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE OUR ALUMNI?

and everyone (peds, adults, geriatrics in outpatient, acute care and nursing home)”.

Kimberly (Kim) Bartram (M.S., 2008) is getting married on the beach in Florida in August, 2009. She’s working at a SNF (but also sees residents of the independent and assisted living units on an outpatient basis) in a Williamsburg, VA retirement community and says “I absolutely LOVE my job”.

David Boerkel (M.S., 1986) moved to Virginia Beach in 2008, where he works with a rehab management company.

Karen Kates Brookhart (M.S., 1990) works PRN for several hand clinics in the Des Moines, IA area. She’s been working exclusively in hand therapy since receiving her CHT in 1999. She and her husband have 3 children and 4 dogs. They own and manage a gym together, and spend their free time going to their children’s sporting events (volleyball, football, softball, baseball and basketball).

Jacque Cherry (M.S., 2008) is working for Sheltering Arms in Richmond, VA at the St. Mary’s acute care location, where she is currently assisting in their efforts to become a Magnet Orthopedic Center. Soon she will be working with the Bon Secours Care-A-Van which provides mobile healthcare in low-income communities. For fun she enjoys taking mini-trips in her new 4-door Jeep Wrangler with family, friends and/or the dog.

Sarah Collins (M.S., 2008) works at Kennedy Kreiger in the Specialized Transition Program, a day program for children transitioning from inpatient rehab back to school. This summer she’s coordinating development of a fitness



Megan Bailes (M.S., 2008) lives and works in Newport News, VA. She says “I’m loving being an OT. I’m working with just about everything

program for patients needing weight management in order to participate in therapy and/or to be more involved in the community. Daughter Annabelle is now 10 months old and crawling everywhere. She uttered her first word, “up”, wanting to get down from her high chair, after dinner on June 4, 2009.

Rachel Crews (B.S., 1993) returned to OT after the birth of her daughter Sarabeth in October, 2008, who joined brother Joseph (age 13). She works in a Medical Facilities of America skilled nursing facility in the Martinsville, VA area. She also became a Registered Nurse in 2001 and has worked in Critical Care and Oncology nursing.

LuAnn (Brown) Demi (M.S., 1994) lives in Clearfield, PA and works at Penn State University.

Robert Fix (M.S., 2004) was accepted into the VCU School of Allied Health Professions Interdisciplinary Doctorate in Health Science program and began his studies in the OT track in June, 2009.

Rebecca Liggan Gusich (M.S., 1978) has worked as an OT in the Henrico County (VA) Public Schools system since 2000 where she serves 5 schools and has a caseload of about 50 children. She volunteers for Horses in Service, a therapeutic riding program, working with riders who have a range of physical and/or learning difficulties. She and her husband John (VCU/MCV PT 1978) have been married for 30 years and have two sons, Brian (age 23) and Chris (age 20).

Laurie Hanson (M.S., 2006) and Eric got married on New Year’s Eve, 2008. They bought a house in rural Cheyenne, WY that has more than 8 acres of land and a “HUGE garden”. Laurie is working in home health, primarily with older adults and those with acquired brain injuries and reports she “absolutely loves it”, especially applying the information she learned about assistive technology while in school. She’s been riding her red 2007 Harley Davidson Dyna Super

Glide in the Rockies and has applied for a part-time position as a motorcycle safety instructor.

Marianne Hubbard (B.S., 2000) works at Westchester Medical Center in acute care and acute inpatient rehab, and also at a skilled nursing facility. She’s also very involved with raising two young daughters, Emma (age 4) and Eleya (age 2).

Selena Isabelle (M.S., 2001) reports that she “retired her nomadic shoes” after 4½ years as a travel therapist, which took her to “cool cities” such as Austin, Seattle, Tucson, Asheville and San Diego. She now lives in Denver, CO and works at Brookdale Senior Living, “an upscale retirement community”.

Holly (Gordon) Stacy (B.S., 1999) is an independent contractor providing OT services at two therapeutic special education schools in Virginia (Little Keswick School and Accotink Academy). She and her husband of 9 years, Charles, have two children, Will (age 7) and Hannah (age 5).

Susan Lin (M.S., 1990) is the Director of Research at the American Occupational Therapy Association. where she is building a researcher database and working to facilitate linkages between research, practice and education.

Erin McCall (M.S., 2000) has started her own business in the Portland, ME area (where she moved eight years ago) called Occupied with Health. She works with clients with vocational rehabilitation and/or health coaching needs. Erin also works part-time for a large retail company, offering employee health, wellness and injury prevention programs. She plays on an ultimate Frisbee team, sails and dances as often as she can (jazz, swing and latin). Although she loves living near the ocean, she’s also been doing some traveling to study scientists exploring “the intersection of spirituality and quantum physics”.

Sheila McCoy (B.S., 1997) was featured in the Employee Spotlight in the VCU Health

Systems Newsletter, Spring, 2009 edition. Immediately after graduation, Sheila was hired by the Acute Medicine Unit, but three years later transferred to inpatient psychiatry, which she feels is “her calling”. Most of her patients come from the Emergency Department; once stabilized, Sheila and team partner **Pat Blease (M.S. 2001)** use both individual and group sessions to work on social skills, self-esteem and stress management. Sheila says “my job is to give them the tools to better cope with life so they don’t have to come back again”.

William (Bill) McCracken (B.S., 1957, RPI) lives in Chesterfield, VA and has been enjoying retirement for eight years after an impressive and varied career. He served as an OT at the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (Rusk Institute) and at the (then-named) Medical College of Virginia, where he was supervisor of the Physical Medicine Clinic and specialized in upper extremity prosthetics. Before his retirement, Bill spent 41 years with 3M Pharmaceuticals, with his last position being District Sales Manager.

Lauren Schierer (M.S., 2008) works with older adults in a skilled care facility in Leesburg, VA.

Laura (Christenson) Thumm (B.S., 2000) works for Children’s Hospital of Richmond at their Fredericksburg, VA clinic. She’s a

volunteer coordinator and fieldwork Level I and II supervisor. She and Shawn Thumm got married on November 11, 2006. They built their home in King George, where Shawn has a job at NSWC Dahlgren Division as a systems safety engineer. She has fun with family, friends and “sweet pets” (species unspecified!) Molson and Norman.

Maria (Kay) Van Ness (M.S., 2005) moved to Kentucky when her husband, Gordon, got a scholarship to a Master’s program in folklore. She works at a rural medical center, owned by a health corporation that provides, acute, inpatient rehab, outpatient rehab and long-term care. Earlier this year, she and Gordon bought a lab mix puppy, Lilly.

Sharon Zehender (M.S., 2002) works in hospital-based outpatient rehab at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, VA and excitedly reports passing her CHT exam in November, 2008. She currently lives in Washington, DC.

The **M.S. Class of 2008** has taken the McGuire Veterans Administration Medical Center by storm! **Brandi Fulwider, Heather Kloepping** and **Dawne Wetzel** work on the Spinal Cord Unit, and **Mandy Freeman** in the Community Living Center which provides skilled care to older adults.

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE YOU??!

We would love to hear from you and share your professional and/or personal news with your former classmates in our next newsletter.

Mail: Jodi Teitelman, VCU OT Dept., Box 980008, Richmond, VA 23219-0008
E-mail: jlteitel@vcu.edu

Name: _____ Class Degree and Year _____

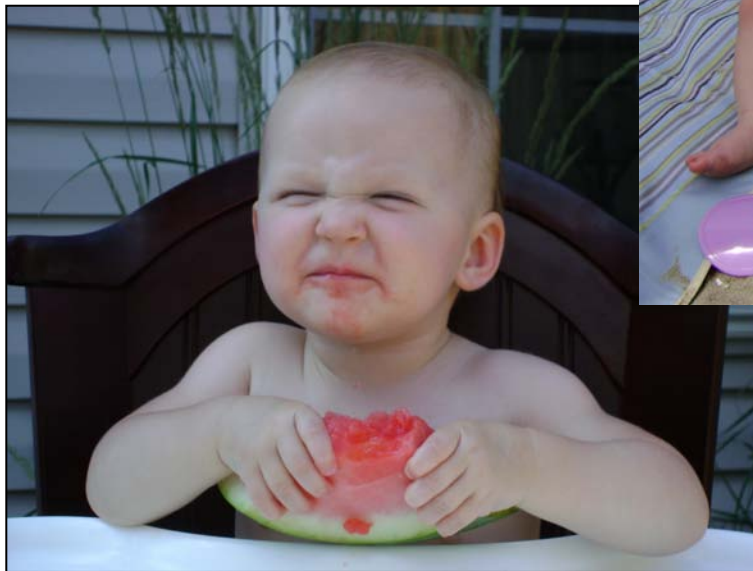
Address: _____

Preferred Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

My News: _____

 **Family Album** 

Thank You





Sarah Collins (MS, 2008) would like to share pictures of her new daughter, **Belle**.

Family Album



We need your help! The photo is the Occupational Therapy Class of 1944, 1945 and 1946. Please let us know if you know who is in the photograph. Alumna Jane Trivette Ford (bottom row sixth from the left) has spearheaded an effort to get her classmates together for the spring reunions. You should be hearing from us shortly and if you don't, please contact:

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News from the Entry Level Program

VCU Welcomes Largest MSOT Class Ever!



VCU welcomed 42 new entry-level MSOT graduate students on June 1st. The strength and size of the applicant pool this year seems to reflect several different factors.

- Many students consider continuing directly on to graduate school rather than seeking employment at this time due to the current state of the economy
- OT has been identified by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a well paying “recession proof” job with employment opportunities that are expected to increase by 23 percent over the next decade.
- Aware that VCU was ranked at #13 among the 150+ OT programs ranked by the US News and World Report list of Best Graduate Schools.

Who is in the class?

- 79% hail from Virginia
- 21 % come to us from neighboring states like North Carolina and Maryland, other east coast states like New Jersey and Florida and from as far away as Texas.
- Students range in age from 21 to 41.
- Undergraduate preparation at UVA, Virginia Tech, JMU, GMU, VCU, Notre Dame, NC State, East Carolina, Texas Christian, the University of North Florida, the University of West Florida & others.

This new group of future practitioners began their summer studies with an intensive week-long introduction to OT course entitled Nature of OT taught by Dr. Stacey Reynolds. They also completed 6 intensive weeks of Human Anatomy with Dr. Steve Gudas before the fall semester began.

VCU OT Students Complete Study Abroad Course in Ghana

Graduate students in the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy Masters of Science program recently returned from two weeks in Ghana, West Africa. The course, entitled “Disability Culture and Child Development in West Africa”, focused on understanding Ghanaian disability laws, experiences of those living with disabilities, and the influence of Ghanaian culture and the environment on the development of children with and without disabilities. The team was led by Dr. Stacey Reynolds, assistant professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy.

The team partnered with an NGO, Sovereign Global Missions, to complete both services and education experiences in the country. Prior to departure, students collected book donations and were able to ship over 500 pounds of books to donate to the SGM community library. Funds for shipping the books were raised by the OT student honor society, Phi Theta Epsilon. While in-country, students and faculty helped professional painters hired by SGM to paint the interior and exterior of the community school building which is scheduled to open to children in the Adoteiman community this fall. This service project was a continuation of the efforts initiated by the VCU School of Social Work which has worked to both clear the land and build both the SGM Adoteiman school and library.

The team also used their occupational therapy skills to provide consultation and evaluation to village and street children with disabilities and their families, provide training to staff at a school for children with developmental disabilities, and conduct an in-service for teachers and aides on safe transfer techniques and adapting school, self-care, and play materials for children with disabilities.

Students also interviewed community leaders on the perception of disability in Ghanaian culture and the role the new disability law will play in changing the conditions for people with disabilities in Ghana. The team also visited an orphanage for children with special needs (including HIV/AIDS) and a government sponsored rehabilitation center in the city of Accra.

You can read more about the study abroad experiences by visiting faculty and student blogs:

<http://vcuotghana.blogspot.com/>

<http://siphipps-vcuotghana.blogspot.com/>

<http://otghana.blogspot.com/>

<http://leapeck.blogspot.com/>

<http://katekapus.blogspot.com/>

<http://otstudent-ghana2009.blogspot.com/>





Connections-2009

For the past five years the MCV Alumni Association has closed our post-fieldwork session, *Connecting the Dots*, by hosting an amazing “new alumna” event, Connections. Thanks to Barbara Payton, Executive Director of the MCV Alumni Association for her on-going support of our Department and for generous funding of Connections, which allows us to offer refreshments and door prizes to new alumni each year. This year *Connections 2009* proved to be as inspiring as ever. Our new colleagues, former students of the class of 2008, joined the ranks of the alumni with good wishes and high hopes for a future of connections. Thanks to Sarah Hopkins, clinical instructor, friend, and member of the M.S. class of 1986 for words of inspiration, an interactive exercise, and songs from the student archives!



Thanks to Sheltering Arms Rehab Hospital in Richmond, VA

Warmest thanks to Sheltering Arms Rehab Hospital in Richmond, VA for generously providing lunches at the Department’s Student Research Forum on April 20, 2009. The lunches were truly delicious and much appreciated!



News from the Post Professional Program

Using the VCU OTD to Promote Change Through Leadership and Programming Jennifer Dianne DeSanto, OTD, OTR/L, VCUHS,

As a Leadership Capstone Project for the Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) Program at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), an OT outpatient sensory integration program was developed and implemented at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children (VTCC). The success of this project was made possible by the education gained in the curriculum offered within VCU's OTD program. The following paragraphs highlights the steps taken to complete the sensory integration outpatient program. Leadership skills obtained through VCU's OTD curriculum served as a foundation for the project.

Health care is shifting, necessitating occupational therapists (OT) to develop innovative programs. Successful innovative programs must be considered in context. This is demonstrated in a new program which was implemented in a child/adolescent mental health setting. The VTCC, for which the program was developed, had originally offered OT services within residential, day treatment and acute care programs. Due to shifts in the first quarter of 2009, the residential and day treatment programs were phased out. This left OT rendering services to only inpatient acute clients as there were no OT programs available for the outpatient population within the facility. This shift in delivery of care opened the door for outpatient program development.

Current trends which were discovered during implementation of a needs assessment and environmental scan demonstrated a need for an outpatient program and more specifically, what type of treatment was most needed. Needed services

within the program became evident from collecting data from various

activities. A literature search uncovered information regarding the role of OTs in mental health; the use of sensory integration (SI) in treatment; the role of SI with mental health; and evidence regarding the pediatric population in mental health and outpatient services. Utilizing the evidence available, development of a proposal for an outpatient SI clinic was undertaken, beginning with a needs assessment. Tools such as focus groups, interviews, and internal/external surveys tapped into stakeholders. An environmental scan was implemented to investigate systems and forecast program success.

The program design included development of activities, timelines, work flowcharts, and an itemized budget. In addition, an evaluation plan was developed to enable formative and summative data. Results from the formative assessment supported overall program successes at both the individual client and program level. Summative assessment made up of outcome measures, focus groups, and surveys also supported these initial findings. Program evaluation offered data for areas needing improvement and adjustment, and what areas continued to be most effective and efficient. Through this process a self analysis of leadership styles using theoretical models was completed. Learned experiences and findings gathered within

the program evaluation continue to be disseminated.

supervisor at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children in Richmond, VA. Jennifer is SIPT certified and in August 2009 received her OTD from VCU.

About the Author:

Jennifer DeSanto has practiced as an OT for over a decade in the area of pediatrics. She is the OT /RT

Why Support the Department?

It is an exciting time for the Department of Occupational Therapy. We are passing the leadership baton from Dr. Shelly Lane to Dr. Al Copolillo. Under Dr. Lane's tutelage, the department grew to become the largest program in Virginia, with internationally known researchers and faculty, three of which are fellows of the American OT Association (FAOTA credentials). In addition, the Department consistently maintains national ranking by US News & World Report and is currently ranked 13th in the nation.

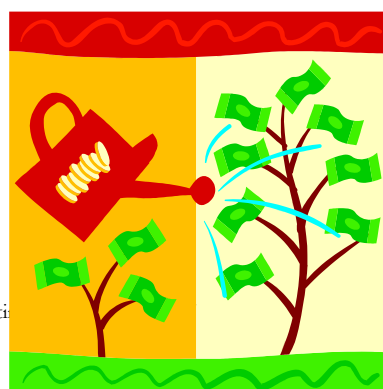
Research and laboratory space will continue to be a priority under our new Chair, Dr. Al Copolillo. Building upon the three different research lines to garner additional research dollars that provide our students with essential research skills upon graduation will remain a priority as Dr. Lane continues her role as Assistant Dean of Research. Our teaching laboratories will continue to help students produce state of the art adaptive products and assistive technology to meet community needs.

Support from alumni is greatly appreciated and will continue to be paramount to our students, faculty and staff. We appreciate what you do for us and look forward to your continued participation and unwavering support in these very difficult economic times. The Department has created the Occupational Therapy Priority Fund and it is to help sustain academic programs, faculty and student development, and equipment and technology needs. These funds help bridge the gap between appropriated state funds and what is needed in order to provide the very best educational experience.

In addition to the Priority Fund, we continue to need Student Scholarship support. Our students continue to receive extensive clinical training and play an active role in the Department thanks to an increased amount of service learning opportunities. Many students are choosing occupational therapy as a second career. Student scholarship support is always needed, especially now more than ever because of the current economic situation.

We hope you will consider making a financial commitment to the Department through a gift that meets your philanthropic desires. All gifts make a difference in the lives of our students and our profession.

“Cultivating Future Therapists Through a Tradition of Excellence”



Make a Gift

I am pleased to support the Department of Occupational Therapy

- I would like to make a one-time gift for the following amount: \$_____.

Make check payable to the Department of Occupational Therapy. Your gift is tax deductible.

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Yes, double or triple my gift. I have matching gift opportunity through my employer or my spouse's employer. Enclosed in my matching gift form.

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If you have any questions please contact: Jessica F. Gurganus at (804) 828-3269 or jfgurganus@vcu.edu.

Return to: VCU SAHP Department of Occupational Therapy
PO Box 980008, Richmond, Virginia 23298

Thank you for your generosity!

“Cultivating Future Therapists Through a Tradition of Excellence!” Code: 3616-2010

MCV Alumni Association Website

by Barbara Payton, Executive Director, MCVAA

The MCV Alumni Association is pleased to announce its new user friendly Web site located at www.vcu-mcvalumni.org/mcvaa . We hope that you will visit the site often as we create an online alumni community to help you stay connected with your classmates, your department, and your university. An online alumni directory will be introduced in March but you must be a dues paying member of the alumni association to access this special feature. Please join the MCV Alumni Association today to keep **Scarab** coming to your mailbox twice a year, to provide scholarships for worthy MCV Campus students, and to help us congratulate each new Occupational Therapy graduate at the annual **Connections** event. The MCV Alumni Association has been a proud sponsor of **Connections** each year since it was introduced in 2005. Your tax deductible membership dues will help us continue to sponsor this wonderful rite of passage. For more information, reach us at (804) 828-3900, (800) MCV-7799, or bpayton@vcu.edu



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