



VCU Department of Occupational Therapy

Greetings from the Chair...

Al Copolillo, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA

I am happy to announce that a new School of Allied Health Professions building to be located between 9th and 10th Streets, fronting on Leigh Street on the MCV Campus, has been approved, with plans for its completion in 2019. The building will be adjacent to the Larrick Center and 5-story parking Deck, and will be in close proximity to the School of Nursing. It will be a multi-story high-rise building consisting of an 8-story wing along the west side and a lower 4 story wing on the south side. This will allow for substantial natural light to an exterior courtyard planned for the center of the site. While the building represents a stronger, more explicit unity between all departments of the School, we will maintain our disciplinary identity, in part by occupying the entire fifth floor. This has been a year of planning for classroom and teaching lab space, including a state of the art

simulation lab and an apartment with smart-home features shared by multiple Departments. Our Department will house three research laboratories, a classroom for up to 50 students, an ADL laboratory and a “maker” space. We look forward to moving the Department early in 2019 to begin classes in June of that year. The School is grateful to President Michael Rao, Dean Drain, and Senior Associate Dean Lex Tartaglia for their diligence in planning and designing a building that will provide greater opportunities for interprofessional collaboration, advanced teaching/learning through simulation space and model health care environments, and an inviting atmosphere for meetings and social events. After many years, our alumni and friends should feel proud of the collective contribution you have made to making this dream a reality.





I am also pleased to welcome Dr. Patty Laverdure to the faculty. Most recently, Dr. Laverdure was the Director of Occupational and Physical Therapy Services for Fairfax County Public Schools. An occupational therapist since

1980, Patty has been actively involved in pediatric practice in school systems and health care facilities, and she has held leadership roles in both AOTA and VOTA. Dr. Laverdure will serve as the Director of Fieldwork for our new entry level OT doctoral program. As a resident of Virginia for the past 12 years, she is well-known to the community and a welcome addition to the VCU faculty.

Al Copolillo, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA
Associate Professor and Chair



WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE OUR ALUMNI?

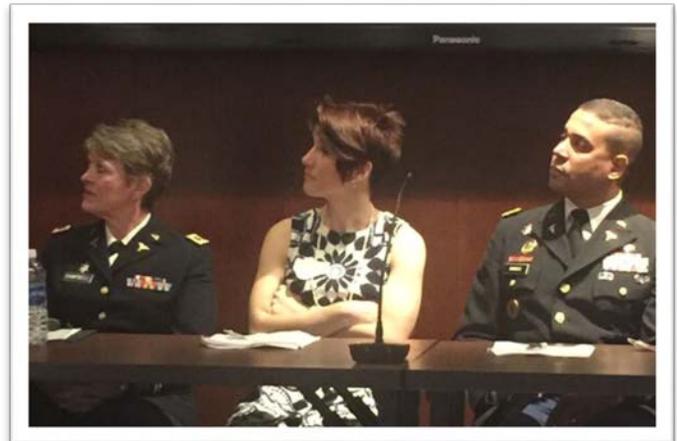


Lisa Borcheller (M.S., 2015) appeared on Channel 8 in Richmond on April 1 in an interview about the benefits of animal-assisted therapy at Hanover Healthcare.

increased public attention to the issue of brain injury and expressed support for the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s newly launch broad investigation into the causes of concussions.

Audrey Kane’s (SAHP Ph.D., 2013) dissertation, *Sensory Modulation Disorder: Impact on Coping*

Maria Elena Calle (M.S., 2001) in the marathon at the World Olympics this summer (see related story in this issue).



and Occupational Performance was featured on the VCU Scholars Compass Webpage. It had been downloaded over 300 times as of April.

Jacque Cherry (M.S., 2008) was elected Treasurer of the Virginia Occupational Therapy Association for 2016 and is excited about the opportunity to serve the profession in this role. Jacque is employed by Sheltering Arms, working weekends at their St. Mary’s Hospital location in Richmond, VA, and occasionally at their Hanover Inpatient Rehab site.

Cathy Piersol (SAHP Ph.D., 2013) has been selected as the American Occupational Therapy Association’s representative to the American Academy of Neurology’s Dementia Measurement

Colleen Cruice (M.S., 2014) was a featured speaker at the National Brain Injury Awareness Day held in Washington, DC on March 16. As part of the day’s advocacy initiative, Colleen also met

with Representatives Pascrell (D-NJ) and Rooney (R-FL), Co-Chairs of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force and hosts of the event. She urged

Set Workgroup. Cathy is an Associate Professor at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

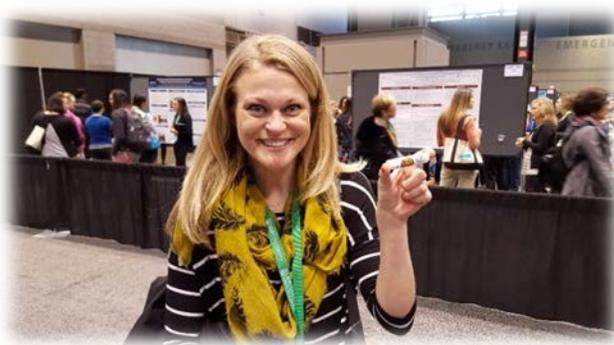
Karen Mock (M.S., 1982) retired from Florida Gulf Coast University after 19 years as the founding Fieldwork Coordinator. Previously she worked at Fairfax County Public Schools for 21 years as teacher, OT and administrator. For retirement, Karen is going to discover why people come to SW Florida to retire.

Some alumni of the **M.S.O.T. Class of 2016** can be found in the following **NEW JOBS!**

- **Becky Balog** – Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCUg
- **Caitlyn Berry/Wright** -- The Greater Richmond ARC, Richmond, VA
- **Emily Burgess** – Rehabilitation Associates in Richmond, VA
- **Rachael Cammisio** – Glenburnie Health and Rehab, Richmond, VA.
- **Mike Cardile** – acute care at VCU Health Systems, Richmond, VA
- **Candice Castaneira** – Leaps and Bounds in Washington, DC

- **Sam Costanza** – Exceptional Children’s Center in Midlothian, VA
- **Lauren Fenlon** – Sheltering Arms in Richmond, VA
- **Lisa Gervasoni** – Henrico County Public Schools System
- **Colleen Gibbons** – Lucy Corr in Henrico, VA
- **Nava Hymowitz** – Sibley Memorial Hospital, Washington, D.C.
- **Rebecca Kim** – Westport Health and Rehab
- **Rita Milletich** – Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters in Norfolk, VA
- **Ricky Price** – McGuire Veterans Administration Center in Richmond, VA
- **Brittany Sapilway** – Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, Norfolk, VA
- **Sarah Wagner** – Theraplay in Newtown, PA
- **Whitney Whitmore** – acute care at VCU Health Systems and Rehab Associates (prn)

The Traveling OT Lip Gloss spotted in Chicago



Amazingly, the traveling OT Lip Gloss made an appearance at the 2016 AOTA in Chicago!!

VCU OT Alum Goes to The Olympics in Rio!!!

Maria Elena Calle (M.S., 2001) has had to cut back recently on her full-time job as an occupational therapist. It's understandable though—not only did Maria get married to Brad Lowery last year, she also qualified to represent Ecuador, competing as a marathoner in the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A July 9 article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* described her as “the brightest track and field star in VCU history”. While maintaining academic excellence in our rigorous OT program, Maria simultaneously broke the VCU records for a number of track events, ranging from a mile to 10k, and was honored 6 times as an All American.

According to the article, Maria had hoped to run in the 2012 Olympics in London, but a right quad injury hampered her performance in the qualifying events. This year though, her speed in the Houston Marathon qualified her as one of the three fastest runners in Ecuador. It's an emotional victory, in that Maria had been wondering if, at age 41, she was too old to remain competitive (apparently not, Maria!). She then began working with Ben Rosario to adapt her training for more long-distance running, and her feet covered 75-80 miles of pavement each week this summer.

In the Rio Olympics, Maria Elena ran the marathon in 2:48.39, finishing 99 out of 156 starters, only 27 minutes behind the first place winner! Congratulations Maria Elena! Clearly this is a thrilling opportunity for Maria and her family, and for her VCU and OT family as well.

More information and photos can be found at www.oiselle.com/athletes/maria-elena-calle or on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



A Salute to Becky Gusich, MS. OTR/L: Retired Fieldwork Educator

By Jayne Shepherd with Becky Gusich

Becky Gusich is a proud graduate of the Class of 1978, MSOT, from VCU and a dedicated fieldwork educator who volunteers to take students, even at the last minute! Becky has actively participated in the Virginia Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Council and always brings a different perspective to the group. Over the years, Becky has supervised VCU students in Fieldwork I and II. Since entering the public schools, Becky would take 2 to 3 students a year!

Her first job began in Adult Psych at MCV Hospital. She ended up loving psych OT where she was able to work with gifted staff, and keep in touch with the OT school. Most notably, she connected with Gary Kielhofner and learned about MOHO and published her first article in OT in Mental Health, using the MOHO to work with patients with chronic pain.

In 1987, Becky left MCV Hospital with other team members, to start a “day treatment” facility that became the first to be licensed in Virginia, Basava Day Clinic (it’s an eastern Indian word meaning “holistic health”). Becky was the Director of OT and worked for 3 years with a great team of psychiatrists, psychologist, nurse, social worker. During her time there, Becky worked with her first VCU OT FW II student, Lynne Silverman (now Dr. Lynne Umbarger). Lynne was an excellent student, and she wanted to “write an article about Basava” which was published in OT in Mental Health, as well as “OT Advance” and “OT Forum.” From then on, Becky continued taking FW students as often as possible.

In 1999, Becky took a job with Henrico County Public Schools where she has had FW I and FW II students steadily throughout her career in the school system, usually, FW I in the spring and FW II in the fall. Becky says, “I tell each one of my students about my career path, with the moral of the story being ‘never say never’ about where you want to work as an OT.” I feel that I have benefitted from each job. I’m also a strong believer that “things happen for a reason,” and I feel that God has led me to and through each job as a part of my life’s journey. I also tell students that I am here to learn from them as well, and constantly want to upgrade my education with new theories and practices. The students from VCU have been excellent, and have not disappointed.

It’s been a joy to be a part of the VCU fieldwork education program – it is so organized, effective, and well-respected. I have felt fortunate to keep our relationship going. I strongly believe that it is our task to educate the next generation to successfully carry on the profession. That is why I do it!

“In my retirement” I plan to keep working part time. I will be in a post-retirement employment program with the schools, where I’ll work for 28 days of the school year, and get a portion of my salary and benefits. I also plan to go back into Home Health as a prn employee. Otherwise, my husband and I will continue volunteer activities, maybe go see our son (now 30 years old) in Chicago, and help our extended family with childcare, etc. – I don’t think I’ll be “idle”

Here's what students say about Becky:



Emily Wallace, (MS., 2013): Becky is a compassionate and patient person; two of the highest qualities of which I believe make up a great OT. It was under her leadership that I learned the most about what it means to not only be an outstanding OT but also an outstanding person. I think these two things actually collide. She is a reflection of all of the core values of our profession. It has been an honor to know her.



Colleen Cruise, (M.S, 2014): In the Fall of 2014, I had the privilege working alongside

Becky Gusich as my FW II supervisor in Henrico County Public Schools. Throughout my fieldwork experience, Becky did an excellent job exposing me to a variety of school-based evaluation tools, therapeutic interventions and students. Becky was very supportive and approachable, which helped me focus on building my confidence and competence as a young practitioner. Her love for children, families and OT always pushed me to go the extra mile to ensure students received quality occupational therapy services. I am forever grateful I had the opportunity to learn and work alongside an amazing occupational therapist.

Lisa Gervasoni, (M.S., 2015): I think what struck me about Becky when I was her fieldwork student is that she knows so many people and has managed to remain on good terms with **all** of them. I don't think I met anyone during my time with her that didn't have something nice to say about her. Her ability to develop rapport with others, especially while working in so many different schools with so many different people, is amazing. Everywhere we went, she developed relationships and found common ground to build on, which is something that I continue to strive for now as a new therapist.

A salute to Becky Gusich, Fieldwork Educator Extraordinaire! VCU students and especially Carole Ivey and Jayne Shepherd will miss her enthusiasm and willingness to be part of student education. **We hope you enjoy a busy retirement!**

Make a Gift

More than 75 percent of students on the MCV Campus receive some type of financial aid to pursue their dreams of a career in the health sciences. We are most grateful for the support of our faculty, alumni, and friends who make it possible for the Department of Occupational Therapy to award student scholarships. Through your support the department can recruit and retains today's most promising students – students who contribute to the vitality of the classroom and are most likely to become tomorrow's preeminent clinical professionals, dedicated educators, and civic leaders.

I am pleased to support the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy!

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Thank you for your generosity and loyalty to the Department!

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VCU's OT Graduate Program ranked
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"Cultivating Future Therapists through a Tradition of Excellence"