OT Program Update
Joyce Salls, OTD, OTR/L, OT program director

2010-2011 has been an active year for the occupational therapy programs at Chatham University. In the fall, we welcomed 40 new Master of Occupational Therapy students to our program; 37 will be heading to fieldwork in January, 2012. Our online Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy Program enrolled 32 new students this year from locations all across the country. In January, 2011 we launched our new Bridge to the OTD program, providing an avenue for practitioners with a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy to obtain their OTD degree at Chatham University.

Our program focuses on developing evidence-based practitioners and leaders of the profession who will contribute to our Centennial Vision. As such, we are proud of the work that our students have accomplished over the past year. From student posters and presentations at state and national conferences to our presence on Capitol Hill, our students are actively engaging in the profession through scholarship and advocacy. We are also excited about the global connections we are making this year as a faculty member travelled to Africa and we work towards developing fieldwork opportunities for our students in both Africa and Ecuador.

The majority of the articles in this issue have been written by our second year MOT students. Read on to learn more about what Chatham University OT students and faculty have been doing over the past year…

Meet Mr. Ed!
Stephanie Aleandri, OTS; April Broadwater, OTS; Katie Jeffries, OTS

The Chatham occupational therapy program recently acquired a 140 pound life-size mannequin named “Mr. Ed.” He resides in the OT apartment bedroom and provides occupational therapy students with the opportunity to practice their intervention and assessment techniques, including bed mobility and positioning, dressing, and maximal assistance transfers. These OT interventions are commonly used with individuals who have physical disabilities, such as a spinal cord injury.

Mr. Ed gave verbal and written consent for the following interview and provided photo clearance. Within the past year, Mr. Ed sustained a spinal cord injury at level C7-C8 following a car accident and has been working with occupational therapists to regain skills in the areas of self-care and daily living skills, as well as continued participation in his most loved occupations. He recently arrived at the Chatham University occupational therapy program. When OT students arrived in the OT apartment, Mr. Ed’s demeanor was bright and cheery. Occupational therapy students Stephanie, Katie, and April assisted Mr. Ed in sitting up in bed for his interview for this newsletter. After chatting with Mr. Ed and getting to know him better, the OT students took turns asking Mr. Ed the following questions:

OT: What were some of your responsibilities before your car accident?
ED: I have been married for 10 years and have two kids, a boy and a girl. Tommy is 7 and Gracie is 5. So I have to take care of them and provide for my family; this is very important to me. I’d love to see them grow up to be more than just crash dummies (laughs).

OT: Family is very important and such a crucial part to your recovery, I agree. Does your wife have a job?
ED: Yeah, she has a full time job and works 9-5 at the bank. My sister comes over to make sure the kids get safely off the bus at 3:30 since she works until 5:00 and I used to work until about 6:00 too.

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Faculty Scholarship

Our faculty has been active in scholarship this past year with publications and presentations at state and national conferences:

Publications


Conference Presentations


MOT Program Hosts Fieldwork Educator Appreciation Event

Cathy Dolhi, OTD, OTR/L

The MOT program hosted its second annual Fieldwork Educator Appreciation Event in conjunction with the 2011 Open House on Thursday November 17. Approximately 25 fieldwork educators were on hand to participate in a session titled Meeting the Challenges of Generational Diversity: Strategies for Effective Teaching and Mentoring, presented by Clare Fletcher, Director of Service Excellence at Forbes Regional Hospital. In her presentation, Ms. Fletcher provided an overview of generational differences typical of occupational therapy students and fieldwork educators and also shared some of the best practice research evidence related to teaching and learning. The group had the opportunity to consider common scenarios encountered in the fieldwork setting and engaged in problem-solving and solution-identification that would facilitate effective teaching and learning in that context.

The fieldwork experiences in which our students engage are a critical component of the learning process. The MOT program at Chatham is most appreciative of the time and commitment that our fieldwork educators provide to our students.
Our story began in August 2010, as 36 females and two males gathered together in the occupational therapy (OT) classroom at Chatham Eastside. Representing six states and a variety of majors, we began our 22-month journey as OT students. From classroom lectures and hands-on labs, to clinical site visits and fieldwork opportunities, this past year and a half has provided our class with several educational experiences to professionally grow as individuals. Our professional growth and development at Chatham was observed as we presented our research capstone projects at the 2011 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) conference in Erie, PA. The foundational knowledge and skills gained throughout our scholastic endeavors is a result of the substantial time, dedication, and guidance of our professors. It is because of these individuals that we feel proficient and prepared to embark on our final educational journey as Level II fieldwork students.

From Philadelphia for the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) conference to Washington, D.C. for Capitol Hill Day, our class has created memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. We have spent countless hours furthering our professional development through extensive research and dedication to the global vision of occupational therapy. Close friendships were made outside the classroom as we went to Pirates games and organized potluck dinners. The friendships and memories that we have made in Pittsburgh will continue to grow as we open the next chapter in our lives.

As we turn the page and begin our journey to Level II Fieldwork, many of us will be parting ways and traveling to various states. As we begin this phase of our education, we are eager to gain new experiences, but anxious for what lies ahead. However, we are confident that all of our experiences thus far have prepared us for the challenges we may face in the future.

This past August, Chatham’s OT program welcomed 33 women and 5 men traveling from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, New York, Michigan, West Virginia, and New Jersey to join together to become the class of 2013. These 38 new faces have a diverse background of undergraduate degrees including: exercise science, psychology, elementary education, business administration, pre-occupational therapy, graphic design, communications, sociology, occupational science, interdisciplinary Judaic studies, biology, evolution and ecology, human resource management, rehabilitation science, health policy and administration, environmental economics, special education, communication science and disorders, and speech and hearing science. As the students’ various backgrounds emerge throughout the progression of the program, it will be exciting to see how they will enhance their learning experiences.

The class of 2012 would like to welcome the class of 2013 to our OT family! Before you know it, your time at Chatham will be coming to an end, and you will be preparing for your Level II fieldwork assignments. Study hard, take advantage of opportunities for professional growth and development, become involved with class events, and set aside time for fun! Good luck as you find your “OT niche” within the profession! We look forward to seeing all the exciting attributes that you will bring to the profession as you write the chapters of your own OT journeys!
Lending a Hand: Community Outreach and OT

Leah Koontz, OTS; Caitlyn Krzywiecki, OTS; & Chelsea Mummert, OTS

Chatham’s Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program includes a community-based fieldwork experience in which students advocate for the importance of OT at sites that currently do not offer OT services. Chatham MOT students implemented a Lifestyle Redesign program plan at each of the sites described below.

Firstly, three groups of MOT students were placed at sites working with the aging population. Penn Hills Senior Service Center provides Penn Hills area adults over 60 opportunities for increased quality of life and well-being through social, emotional, and physical support. Orion Assisted Living Residence provides assisted living, short term care, rehabilitation respite, Alzheimer’s care, and hospice. Orion strives to be characteristic of a bed and breakfast with an extended family atmosphere. Concordia Lutheran Ministries is a non-profit continuing care retirement community that holds its clients financial security as a primary concern. Services are offered in the areas of adult day care, home and community, hospice, medical, personal care, rehabilitation, retirement living, skilled nursing, and tele-caringiving.

Other MOT students provided care to children and young adults. The LIFE Program is a subsection of the Career Development center of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit which provides a transition from school to the community for young adults aged 18 to 21. Chartiers Mental Health and Retardation Center at the Pathfinder School is a private non-profit agency offering services on a sliding fee scale. Services include support groups for families and friends of the mentally ill, service coordination, community activities for teens and adults with intellectual disabilities, and selling of crafts made by clients of the facility. The Woodlands Foundation is a non-profit camp that provides socialization, recreation, culture, and spirituality for children and young adults with disability and chronic illness. Specific camp programs involve art, music, fitness, and transitional living skills. The Northland Public Library offers various film discussion groups, book discussion groups, a knitting group, writing groups, and an amateur astronomy club. The Barber Institute offers educational, vocational, residential and behavioral health services to children, adults and families. The institute offers residential programs, group homes, and a day service program. St. Bonaventure Preschool is a Christian school for children ages 3-5 which fosters basic math, language, and reading skills needed to enter kindergarten. Temple Emanuel Early Childhood Development Center (TE ECDC) is a Jewish focused preschool and pre-kindergarten where students are offered classes from movement and dance, music and cooking, to religious studies, physical exercise and creative play and crafts.

Lastly, Chatham MOT students worked with organizations providing services to specific populations. Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania, a non-profit, human service organization, is a branch of Goodwill Industries International. Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania provides services to eight counties and employs individuals with special needs. Milestone Centers, Inc. delivers assistance and programming to individuals with both intellectual and behavioral disabilities across the Southwestern Pennsylvania area. This not for profit, private agency provides opportunities for inclusion, community reintegration and recovery.

Community Service Activities

Rebecca Brand, OTS; Christina Kail, OTS; & Sarah Maust, OTS

The MOT Class of 2012 has participated in a variety of community service activities throughout their time at Chatham. In the beginning of the program, students collaborated with Lauren’s Work to assemble packages of personal care items for soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lauren’s Work is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization that is comprised of a Creative Team of young adults (18+) with developmental disabilities, as well as high school, post-secondary & graduate student volunteers who come together and participate in activities that give back to others in need.

In the summer term, students and faculty participated in Pittsburgh’s first annual 5K Cure Sarcoma Walk/ Run. Sarcoma is an aggressive cancer that develops in soft tissue, such as fat or muscle. The Pittsburgh Post Gazette reported that the race raised more than $20,000 for Sarcoma research and more than 650 runners and walkers attended the event. Chatham is proud to report that five students and two faculty members participated. Student participants included Jesse and Melissa Bender, Rebecca Brand, Sarah Maust, and Kaitlynn McQuinn. Faculty members Cathy Dolhi and Joyce Salls, along with their family members took part in this event as well. Our very own Jesse Bender came in second place in the race overall!

During the fall of 2011, students collected canned food items for the Pittsburgh Zombie Walk/Fest. This festival was created in part to support the local community food bank. The Zombie Festival consisted of a range of activities, including live music, Zombie Olympics, and other creative events. Chatham’s involvement in the event was coordinated by Kaitlynn Mackey from
Community Outreach, Continued from page 4

United Cerebral Palsy of Pittsburgh offers legal services and community respite care. Assistance incorporates independent living skills training both in the classroom and in the community for children and adults with cerebral palsy. The Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh has been helping people who are blind, deaf-blind or vision impaired to become more independent for over 100 years. The center offers custom and individualized programs in areas such as Personal Adjustment to Blindness Training, and Computer Access Technology. The center also offers vocational and employment services, a low vision clinic, employment through the manufacturing division of PBA Industries, and a day program. The Chatham Eden Hall Campus is a 388-acre campus in Richland Township housing the School of Sustainability and the Environment. Here, students study in the Master of Arts in Food Studies program and can access the Rachel Carson Institute. New programs are and will continue to be added, with the newest being the Certificate in Sustainable Management classes beginning in 2012.

Specific programs implemented included social skills training for campers, free public relations campaigning, activity kit creation, and employee team building sessions at The Woodlands Foundation. Within the LIFE Program, occupational therapy students implemented four sessions which taught young adults real-life home repair skills. These repairs included battery replacement, light bulb replacement, screwdriver use, and toilet plunging. Lastly, at the Temple Emmanuel Early Childhood Development Center, students implemented a classroom session plunging. Lastly, at the Temple Emmanuel Early Childhood Development Center, students implemented a classroom session

Interprofessional Panel

Twice a year Chatham University hosts an interprofessional panel for all students enrolled in any of the health science programs. This gathering affords students the opportunity to meet and collaborate with other up-and-coming professionals in the healthcare field. Those programs invited to this endeavor include: physician assistant, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and psychology. Usually the event is held in the Chapel, as it is one of the only spaces large enough to accommodate the large number of students in these flourishing academic fields.

Each interprofessional panel is arranged a bit differently from the last, but always retains the same basic goals. Students are split up into groups of 6-8. Ideally, every team has at least one representative from each of the five aforementioned disciplines. Everyone is given a checklist of competencies. The first task is for each member to complete his/her own form, deciding which of the five professions would claim a particular domain. This sheet is collected and analyzed as a pre-test. Next, each group is given a case study. The study outlines one patient’s journey from intake to discharge. The group members have to collaborate and leverage the unique roles and responsibilities of interprofessional partners to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of patients and populations served. Once finished, each group has the opportunity to present to the rest of the panel what unique services they could offer to each patient.

During these bi-annual panels, competencies and practice domains are reviewed for each profession. By reviewing these diverse competencies, the hope is that our health care system can be transformed to provide collaborative, high-quality, and cost-effective care to better serve every patient. A thorough understanding of these competencies is imperative in order to provide integrated, high-quality care to patients within the nation’s current, evolving health care system. By embracing the diversity between health care teams, students see how differentiation and specialization can come together to foster the most coordinated comprehensive patient care.

Interprofessional panels such as these are invaluable opportunities to experience what it is like to work as part of a healthcare team. One can expect that as a health professional, regardless of the position, he/she will be working alongside others outside of their own discipline. The opportunities to develop interprofessional competence will prepare us as students for life as health care professionals. Rather than trying to develop all interprofessional skills after entering the workforce, learning to collaborate with other professions while in the education system could prove to be an invaluable asset to students and their future patient population, alike.

At its roots, Chatham University strives to foster a globally connected student population. As of recent, interprofessional education has been viewed as an innovative approach to tackling the global health workforce challenge. This collaboration will essentially provide the patient with the best care possible.
On November 17, 2011 the Chatham Master of Occupational Therapy program presented its annual Open House event at Chatham Eastside. This year’s theme, consistent with Chatham University’s mission of sustainability and global awareness, was “Sustaining Health Through Occupation in a Global Environment.” The event highlighted how occupational therapists help people sustain health through engagement in meaningful occupation throughout the lifespan.

The 9 interactive stations are described below:

Aging in Place
This station was located in the OT apartment. The organizers had several age-related deficits and household tasks written on note cards. Participants were invited to choose a note card and then simulate the deficit while completing a home task. The primary goal of this station was to give participants a chance to experience age-related deficits and the impact it has on occupational performance, learn ways to modify the task or environment to promote aging in place, and identify resources that enable sustained participation in occupations to age in place.

Primary Prevention in Children
Information pertaining to properly packing a backpack was located at this table. Sustaining health by utilizing proper body mechanics was presented. There was also an X-box Kinect set up to promote staying active to prevent childhood obesity and sustain a healthy lifestyle. The third program was the “Bully or Buddy” poster, which offered an interactive session to promote equality and self-worth in school aged children. All of the activities promoted sustaining mental health through the occupation of social interaction and a positive student role.

Sustain your Brain
Individuals obtained facts and information about brain injury and dementia in the form of true and false and multiple-choice questions on a poster. OT students simulated cognitive deficits and then had individuals engage in the occupation of gift-wrapping. The students gave examples of different environment and task modifications and then the participant wrapped the gift again using the OT interventions. The goal of this station was to educate individuals on methods to sustain brain health, and to provide a hands on activity to simulate a brain injury while engaging in a functional activity incorporating OT methods and adaptations.

Digital Get-Down
This station focused on sustaining Health Through Technology. Participants learned how to include technology such as the Wii, iPad, and a computer into a person’s daily routine and/or therapy sessions. The Wii Fit station focused on the geriatric population and on sustaining health through the occupations of health management, health maintenance, and leisure through participation in Wii fit games. The iPad station was geared towards children and young adults. The goal of this station was to promote the occupation of communication. Finally, the technology research poster and laptop station, which targeted the geriatric population, emphasized sustaining health through the occupation of health promotion and social participation.

Ergonomics
The goal of the this station was to have participants gain an understanding of the fundamental principles of ergonomics, understand the impact of improper ergonomic design and its effects on engaging in occupation, and demonstrate how to incorporate proper body mechanics and ergonomic design into one’s own work/home life. These goals were obtained through engaging and educating participants on the basic principles of proper body mechanics and ergonomic design. Visitors then had the opportunity to use their new knowledge and skills to redesign the improper setup.

Vietnam
Here group members offered participants a brief glimpse of the nation’s culture through snacks, demographic information, traditional music, a visual slide show, and the opportunity to make a moon festival lantern. Organizers of this station also highlighted components of sustainability in Vietnam through conversation of therapeutic practices and the need for occupational therapy within those practices. Lastly, participants learned how Vietnamese people sustain their health through diet and exercise.
Recycled Interventions
Due to the current economic recession, occupational therapists and clients
may not have access to desired materials. Materials and objects that would
normally be discarded in the trash can be turned into wonderful creations. At
this station participants observed and interacted with many different recycled
interventions that included sensory activities, homemade play dough, air paint-
ing, corn hole, and a recycled scrabble board. Guests were provided with great
ideas to help them begin creative creations for affordable interventions.

Fit To Engage in Occupation
Americans on average sit for nine and a half hours a day. This can lead to
fatigue, health problems, and emotional issues. Fitness is important to sus-
tain health and engage in desired occupations throughout life. At the fit to
engage station, participants learned and participated in seven different yoga
poses that can be completed while seated. These exercises can help to reduce
fatigue and repeated stress injuries. Exercise is also important for children to
help them regulate emotions that may often feel overwhelming. Here the OT
students taught participants different animal walks and also “walk abouts”
that help to get children up and moving so that they can effectively engage
in classroom and play activities, and of course to stay fit. There was also a
section dedicated to the education of proper portion sizes.

Soldiers
At this station, guests learned about the role of occupational therapists in
helping soldiers to reintegrate into society after serving our country. A slide
show was presented which demonstrated the types of interventions occupa-
tional therapists implement when working with this population. Participants
were informed of the issues soldiers face, how OTs can help, and methods of
coping with stress to sustain health.

This year’s open house was a great success, with nearly 100 visitors in
attendance! Guests included current students in all disciplines, prospective
students, occupational therapy fieldwork educators, and family members.
Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the
2011 MOT Open House event!

Community Service, Continued from page 4
the MOT class of 2012 who posted flyers to advertise for the event. Collection recep-
tacles were also placed around the Eastside campus for those who wished to donate
but could not attend. Participants were encouraged to donate canned goods as their
admission to the event. Over 4,000 people attended the event and roughly 3,000
pounds of canned goods were donated to the Pittsburgh Community Food Bank!

On December 2, students volunteered at Orion, a personal care home in Allison
Park. The population at this site is older residents who primarily have a diagnosis of
dementia. Students interacted with the residents and helped them engage in mean-
gful leisure activities, such as bowling, bingo and conversation. This is currently a level
I community fieldwork site and the administrator expressed interest in having more
community involvement in the future. Chatham is looking at this site to broaden stu-
dents’ opportunity to reach out to the community and give them more exposure to the
older adult population.

The 2012 MOT class has engaged in a range of service projects. From collection
drives to the Sarcoma run/walk and volunteering with older adults, Chatham’s occupa-
tional therapy students have supported various causes and populations. We hope that
Chatham continues to incorporate community service into the MOT experience with
these and additional volunteer projects in the future!
In August of 2010, a new class of OT students embarked on their scholastic journey. As the year of 2011 draws to a close those students are ready to put their skills to use at their Level 2 Fieldwork sites. This year’s class will be gaining their practical experience in a variety of settings. The fieldwork experience is divided into two 3 month rotations. The sites chosen are meant to provide students with versatile, hands on learning experiences to help them become well rounded OTs. In most sites, students are expected to carry a full workload upon completion of the fieldwork experience. The assignment of fieldwork locales is tailored to each individual’s area of interest.

This class will be participating in fieldwork in seven different states. For the first three months of the field work experience 28 students will span the state of Pennsylvania, from Lancaster to Erie, with several locations in between. In addition to Pennsylvania, students will be in Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona and Iowa. For the second three month field work experience, 27 students will remain in Pennsylvania. Other locations will include Ohio, Georgia, Arizona and West Virginia.

Students decided to pursue out of state ieldwork for a variety of reasons. Aubrey Landis described her reasons for going to Georgia, “It is an opportunity to go somewhere without commitment.” Rose Heacock’s reasons were a bit different. “I wanted to go back to Iowa to go back home and find a place to live free. Also I wanted to get a better perspective. I wanted to diversify my regional education.”

Along with regional variations, the clinical settings of each experience reflect the variety of practice areas the class is interested in. Eight different areas of practice are represented in the fieldwork assignments. Over the entire 6 month field work course, 19 students will gain experience in a variety of pediatric settings. This experience will range from school based to outpatient rehabilitation settings. Thirteen students will engage in work in Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF), while twelve students will work in Inpatient Rehabilitation settings. Ten students have the opportunity to experience the faster pace of Acute care, and three students will work in Long Term Acute Care (LTAC). Outpatient Rehab clinics, a Traumatic Brain Injury unit, and a Hand Therapy clinic will each be hosting two Chatham students.

Pam Boutton described her emotions regarding the level 2 experiences, “I’m really interested in TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). I want to work with the TBI population. For the outpatient setting, I think it would be good to just get the experience.”

Some students expressed nervousness, but at least one student feels ready. Caitlyn Kryzwiecki said, “I think that our education has been a build up for it, and I’m excited. It’ll be nice to get to put everything we’ve learned to use.”

Ready or not, here comes a new class of occupational therapists to embrace the fieldwork experience, and gain a plethora of clinical skills.
On Tuesday, September 13, 2011, Chatham University’s second-year MOT students participated in the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)’s National School Backpack Awareness Day. Backpack Awareness Day is a nationwide event that gives occupational therapy practitioners, educators, and students the opportunity to provide education in their communities on the prevention of back injuries and pain that can result from carrying heavy bags. Students, teachers, and administrators are taught safety tips and strategies for packing and carrying their school bags to help them live life to the fullest.

Chatham’s MOT Class of 2012 focused their efforts on three elementary schools in the Pittsburgh area: The Ellis School in Shadyside, St. Bonaventure Parish School in Glenshaw, and DePaul School for Speech and Hearing in Shadyside. The thirty-eight MOT students divided into three groups, and each visited one of the schools to provide an hour-long presentation. Because a child’s backpack should never weigh more than 15% of his or her body weight, each program included weigh stations to weigh each of the children and their backpacks. The children were given a slip of paper to take home with their recorded body weight, along with a determined safe weight for their backpack. The children were also given packets containing Backpack Awareness Day stickers, word searches, and informational handouts to share with their parents.

St. Bonaventure Parish School

The OT students began their presentation to the fourth graders at St. Bonaventure by explaining to the children why backpack safety is important and giving them some tips on how to safely pack and carry their bags. The fourth graders participated in a backpack relay race and a verbal quiz to test their new knowledge. The highlight of the St. Bonaventure visit however, was undeniably the entertaining skit put on by the OT students, complete with costumes and props. The skit was an a version of The Tortoise and the Hare in which the hare loses the race against the tortoise due to his over-packed heavy backpack and poor carrying habits. The fourth graders were highly entertained by the performance and seemed to grasp the message.

The presentation at St. Bonaventure was so well received that the OT students were asked to come back and give a similar presentation at a meeting of the Parent Teacher Guild (PTG) later in the school year.

DePaul School for Speech and Hearing

The group of MOT students who went to DePaul School for Speech and Hearing gave an hour-long presentation to a group of about thirty students. A group of three MOT students presented a skit demonstrating the incorrect and correct ways to wear a backpack. The children loved the theatrical skit and participated by answering questions about what the actors did incorrectly while carrying their backpacks. After the skit, the MOT students educated the children and staff on preventing backpack related injuries and the proper way to organize and wear a backpack. To add some more fun to the mix, and get the children actively participating, the MOT students organized a relay race. The participants were separated into small groups and worked together to organize and correctly pack one backpack. The children really loved this activity and learned effective techniques on how to pack their own backpacks correctly.

The Ellis School

One group of MOT students visited The Ellis School in Shadyside. In order to demonstrate how to properly pack backpacks using safe body mechanics, they planned creative and interactive games to involve the students in the learning process. They held a fashion show where each student wore her backpack and performed her best “runway walk.” Following the weigh-in stations, they were quizzed on what they had learned from the presentation. Students were also given a handout to take home to their parents sharing the backpack safety tips.

All in all, Backpack Awareness Day proved to be a great success! It was an educational and fun experience for both the Chatham MOT students and the elementary school students at each of the three schools.
Pursuing a Leadership Role: Chas Tressler, MOT ’11

Kayla Matthews, OTS & Cathlene Ondechek, OTS

Charles (“Chas”) Tressler is a graduate of Chatham University’s MOT class of 2011. He is currently working a PRN position at a skilled nursing facility. Chas enjoys seeing his patients make progress and regain their independence, which he finds the most gratifying part of his job. In recognition of Chatham University, he is pleased with the education that he has received and feels that the program has prepared him well. Chas states, “the courses provide quality material that is essential to prepare you for a basic knowledge of the profession, as well as to help ensure that my field-works went very smoothly. Taking what you learned at Chatham and combining it with your own personality and skills helps you to create your own style of being a great OT.” In the future, Chas wants to acquire his doctorate degree in occupational therapy as well as attain a teaching position at a university.

This past year, Chas participated in AOTA’s Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP). The choice of the participant of the ELDP program is a highly selective process; therefore, it is an honor to be selected. The ELDP is available through the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and is designed to help identify, train, and support new occupational therapy graduates/professionals develop and take on an active leadership role in the profession. Individuals interested in the ELDP are required to be a second year student and/or a practicing occupational therapist with less than five years of experience. Each participant is matched with a mentor that has experience in an area in which the participant plans to progress. The ELDP participant commits to a one-year leadership project that is co-developed with their mentor, but as Chas commented, “the skills learned, connections and relationships that you foster could last a lifetime.”

Chas has been given many wonderful opportunities to learn and grow from his mentor, Yvonne Randall. Yvonne is the speaker of the Representative Assembly (RA) and also serves on the AOTA Board of Directors. According to Chas “Yvonne is an amazing OT to learn from.” Chas has had the opportunity to go to Bethesda, MD to the AOTA headquarters and attend a leadership-training program. Yvonne also has given him the opportunity to attend the Board of Directors strategic planning meeting. Chas has participated in conference calls on the proposed changes to the structure of the RA, which was debated and voted on at the recent AOTA annual conference in Philadelphia. He also attended the 2011 AOTA conference, held in Philadelphia, and was invited to sit in on all of the RA debate sessions, voting sessions, and RA leadership planning meetings. He has also participated in conference calls on leadership development with the ELDP cohort. In addition, Chas has talked to groups of students about AOTA and the ELDP to help encourage growth of both entities.

On a more personal level, Chas stated he has “been given an opportunity to meet so many wonderful people. It is encouraging to know how wonderful the people who are currently in leadership in our profession are. It is also very encouraging to see the motivation of the next generation of leaders. The examples of leadership that I have been shown have helped to strengthen my resolve to take an active role within the OT community. I have also been given access to many wonderful contacts to help enhance my journey into the OT profession.”

Janet Watkiss ’97, MOT ’99

Janet Watkiss is a 1999 graduate of Chatham’s MOT program and a 1997 graduate of Chatham with an undergraduate degree in biology. Janet enjoyed her education at Chatham and commented that the MOT program provides students with opportunities to foster both professional and personal skill development. While Janet’s studies took place on Chatham’s Shadyside Campus, she is now working with current MOT students at Eastside as a fieldwork IC advisor! We are fortunate Janet has remained close to Chatham’s MOT program faculty since her graduation. She has graciously fostered our skill development through volunteering at the graduate program’s Open House, supervising both Level I and II fieldwork students, and assisting faculty with prospective student interviews. Due to Janet’s ongoing involvement with our program, she was the recipient of Chatham’s Distinguished Alumni Award this past May!

Janet’s professional interests have led her to specialize in the treatment of infants and toddlers with developmental delays. Her passion for this population has not waned since being a student. She has been employed for the past seven years with Therapeutic Early Intervention Services (TEIS), an early intervention provider in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, and Westmoreland counties. Janet provides client treatment and family support services as well as supervision and mentoring of staff from a variety of disciplines including physical therapy, speech continued on next page
The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) held its 91st Annual Conference and Expo April 14-17, 2011 in “always sunny” Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, home of Philly cheese steak sandwiches, the Rocky statue, the Liberty Bell, and the television sitcom “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia,” made room for occupational therapy practitioners, academicians, and students for this exciting event. Eleven MOT students representing Chatham University attended the conference. We were welcomed as a part of the city of brotherly love while we experienced occupational therapy (OT) in High Definition (HD). This was an excellent opportunity for us to experience OT outside of the classroom.

We congregated with our peers before the opening ceremony for a Cupid Shuffle flash mob. We started the conference off “to the right, to the right.” After the opening ceremony, more festivities were presented, beginning with the Expo grand opening. The Expo consisted of a plethora of exhibits and vendors that offered new technologies for sensory integration, adaptive equipment, and potential job offers. We had the opportunity to network with other professionals within the OT community.

Networking also included the opportunity for us to meet many influential OTs, such as Dr. Florence Clark and Dr. Beatriz Abreu. Dr. Clark, the president of AOTA, gave an inspiring speech at the opening ceremony. A few of us were lucky enough to have our picture taken with Dr. Clark. Dr. Abreu had the honor of giving the Eleanor Clarke Slagle lecture on how to “Accentuate the Positive: Reflections on Empathetic Interpersonal Interactions.” She encouraged us to go back to the roots of OT by emphasizing each person’s unique skills and abilities to promote engagement in occupation. Dr. Abreu called upon fieldwork educators to encourage and support students through recognition of their strengths, and the importance of life-long learning. She reminded us to always talk to our clients rather than about them.

The conference provided us with an opportunity to attend a variety of educational sessions ranging from beginner to advanced levels. These educational experiences occurred throughout the day, but there were still plenty of things to keep us immersed in HD. All Chatham alumni, current students, and faculty members were invited to attend the Chatham Alumni Event. The event gave us the opportunity to talk with Chatham alumni about what life is like after graduation while we enjoyed delicious appetizers, deserts, and drinks. Another event was the 5k fun run. Chatham students and faculty joined other conference attendees on this 3.1 mile race through the streets of Philadelphia. Naturally the Rocky Steps were part of the course proving OTs to be the “eye of the tiger.”

Overall, the AOTA 91st Annual Conference and Expo was a rewarding experience for us as Chatham students. We created long-lasting relationships with other OT students and colleagues. We also brought back important knowledge to share with our peers. The conference showed us what it was like to be an OT in High Definition. We left the conference even more excited about the OT profession and about what our futures will behold.
This year, Dr. Cathy Dolhi, president of the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association, led the annual Pennsylvania Occupation Therapy Association conference held in Erie, PA., and it was a huge success!

Many vendors and employers were present at the Exhibit Hall to display occupational therapy equipment and resources, such as ramps, wheelchair positioning and fitting, and adaptive equipment. Universities were also represented at the Exhibit Hall including but not limited to Chatham University, Temple University, and Thomas Jefferson University. Employers included companies such as HealthSouth, Genesis, and EBS.

Many were inspired at this year’s POTA conference due to an impressive presentation by keynote speaker, Major Kathleen E. Yancosek, PhD, OTR/L, CHT. In her presentation, Living Life to the Fullest . . . in an Army Uniform!, she shared the dynamic role of occupational therapy through her 14 years of experience working as an army OT. She presented real-life cases of how OT significantly impacted the lives of wounded military service members and their families. Patricia Chongolola, a second year Chatham occupational therapy student commented, “The keynote speaker was my favorite part of the conference because she was very inspiring and dynamic. She reflected many of the things we learned in our OT classes and she works with the population I would ideally like to work with. She used client-centered practice and evidence in her interventions and it was awesome to see how she used art and different things to increase productivity.”

There were 55 sessions, two of which were presented by Chatham Faculty. The Transformational Experiences of Post Professional OTD Students was presented by our very own Ingrid Mary Provident Ed.D OTR/L, Emily Eckel OTD, OTR/L, CHT, and Joyce Salls OTD, OTR/L; and Mentoring an Experienced Clinician into an Online Faculty Role presented by Ann E Stuart OTD, OTR/L and Ingrid M Provident Ed D, OTR/L.

There were 29 posters presented at conference and ten of those were presented by Chatham MOT students. The Chatham University graduating MOT class of 2012 had a 100% acceptance rate for their capstone posters this year!

Poster Titles included:
- Occupational Impacts of Internet Usage for Geriatric People
- Occupational Balance: Supporting Parents of Children with Disabilities
- Motor Recovery: Making Thoughts a Reality
- Life at Retirement: The Power of Creative Occupations
- Efficacy of Occupational Therapy Health Promotions Programs for School-aged Children
- Yoga and Self-Regulation: Where is the Evidence?
- Preventing PTSD: OT for Soldiers with Combat Stress
- OT Effectiveness for Caregivers of Persons with MS
- I’m Concussed - Where’s My OT?
- The Efficacy of Summer Camp Based Therapeutic Interventions

Each group did a wonderful job presenting, and all poster participants were proud to be Chatham students!

POTA is a wonderful opportunity for occupational therapy practitioners and occupational therapy students to come together and share knowledge and information. Attending the annual POTA conference engages all participants in new learning experiences and offers them a chance for professional growth. Sessions ranging from beginner to advanced levels allow all participants to become involved!
On September 19, 2011, a total of 20 students and one faculty from Chatham University journeyed to Washington D.C. for the American Occupational Therapy Association’s (AOTA) Capitol Hill Day. Prior to attending Capitol Hill Day, the students researched current political issues affecting the practice of occupational therapy. The students then advocated for the provision of these issues on Capitol Hill in order to positively impact the future of the profession.

The students who attended Capitol Hill Day represented both Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Those who represented Pennsylvania met with staff members of Congressman Mike Doyle, Senator Pat Toomey, and Senator Robert Casey. Students representing Massachusetts spoke to the staff members of Congressman John Oliver. Both groups addressed three main concerns: the Medicare Access to Rehabilitative Services Act, the Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

This year, participants of Capitol Hill Day were especially focused on gaining support for the Medicare Access to Rehabilitative Services Act. This act was set to repeal the Medicare outpatient therapy cap put in place through the Balance Budget Act of 1997. If the therapy cap is neither repealed nor provided an extension, a cap on Medicare coverage will go into effect on January 1, 2011. This cap will limit the amount of Medicare coverage for outpatient occupational therapy services to $1,870 per patient, per year, and a will limit the combined services of outpatient physical therapy and speech-language pathology to $1,870 per patient, per year. If the therapy cap were repealed, patients would have the freedom to receive the services necessary to return to their prior level of functioning before being discharged. This would assure patient safety and could potentially prevent future therapy needs, reducing medical costs. AOTA is encouraging therapists to continue advocating for support of the Medicare Access to Rehabilitative Services Act until an appropriate long-term solution is developed.

The Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act was also discussed with the congressmen and senators at Capitol Hill Day. This act ensures the most appropriate health care professional be sent into a patient’s home to conduct his or her initial evaluation. Under this act, however, occupational therapy services are not considered a qualifying service. This means that an occupational therapist cannot enter the home to treat a patient unless deemed necessary by the individual who conducted the initial evaluation. In some cases, health professionals conducting the initial evaluation may not be aware of the skilled services an occupational therapist can provide, and may therefore overlook a necessary referral. Occupational therapy services may also be overlooked in cases where a patient may only benefit from occupational therapy, and may not require home health services from additional health professionals. In this case, there is no way for a patient to receive an occupational therapy referral because they are not in need of additional services first. It is important that therapists continue to advocate for occupational therapy to become a qualifying service in home health. This does not only benefit occupational therapists, but also greatly benefits patients.

Another issue addressed at Capitol Hill Day was the reauthorization of IDEA. In order to advocate for this issue, occupational therapy students first discussed the individuals affected by IDEA, and the role of occupational therapy in this act. Part B of IDEA covers pre-school and school-aged children 3-21 years of age who require school related assistance, while Part C of IDEA covers children aged 0-2 with a focus on developmental milestones and family centered care. The occupational therapy students asked for support of the reauthorization of IDEA. Supporting the reauthorization of this act will maintain the positive role occupational therapy has on the educational and developmental success of children in the school setting.

Attendance of this year’s Capitol Hill Day was at an all-time high. Over 400 students and practitioners came together to discuss important issues with our nation’s representatives, and pave the way of the future for occupational therapy.
Meet Mr. Ed, Continued from page 1

OT: Where did you work? What were your duties there?
ED: I worked in the human resources department at the Regional Chevrolet Office. I had to handle employee complaints and address them as fast and efficiently as possible. I also searched for possible candidates to come work for Chevrolet and did interviews. I want to return to work when I’m done with therapy. Yeah, that would be amazing.

OT: What are things you love to do in your spare time?
ED: Cake decorating. And definitely anything with cars. I’ve always had a passion for modifying vehicles and anything having to do with mechanics and how things work. Oh! Here’s my favorite magazine – Popular Mechanics. I’m having some trouble gripping turning the pages, they’re just so thin. Maybe you could help with that?

OT: Oh, yes, that’s definitely something we can help you out with! Do you have any cars of your own that you made into performance vehicles?
ED: Yeah! I modified an Acura Integra to get some more horsepower – it’s pretty sweet! We also have two family cars: a family van and a four door sedan.

OT: Great! Can you describe for me the general layout of your home?
ED: We have a two story home in a suburb of Pittsburgh. The kitchen, dining room, living room, and a guest bedroom are downstairs. And we have three bedrooms and a full bathroom upstairs.

OT: Do you have a full bath on your first floor too?
ED: No, just a half bath. I’m kind of worried about how I’m going to take a shower in my house.

OT: There are definitely lots of options out there to help you with that – anything from sponge bathing, to portable tubs, to even small home renovations. We can definitely look into any options you think would work with your house and family. Is there anything else in your home you are concerned about?
ED: I’m worried about entering my house in the first place. There are two steps to get onto the porch to enter my home and the back door has three steps. If I could levitate, this would not be a problem (both laugh).

OT: You said your wife has a full time job – is there anyone who might be able to help you at your home for safety reasons or if you ever need assistance?
ED: I think my sister could come over. She lives just down the street and we have always had a pretty good relationship. I’ll have to ask her.

OT: Okay! We could even ask her to come into a few therapy sessions so she can see what’s up.
ED: Yeah, she has been asking to be more involved in what I’m doing now and making sure I’m spending my time wisely while I’m in rehab!

OT: What are some other things you are having difficulty with that you would like to work on in therapy?
ED: Well, I’d really like to be able to dress myself and do everything I need to in the bathroom, if you think that would be possible. I’d like my wife to have a little bit of a break, and I don’t want my sister to have to do that stuff for me. Basically I want to be as independent as possible with all the “personal” stuff.

OT: Well, we can definitely give you some adaptive equipment to help you out- you can try different things to see what works best for you? We can show you how to use a Sock Aid and a reacher to put on your socks and pants, as well as help you learn how to get on and off of the toilet and manage your legbag. If you’re having trouble gripping the handles, we can build them up for you! You have lots of options for learning to take care of yourself again!

Mr. Ed is a wonderful addition to the tools utilized by occupational therapy students; he is virtually unbreakable and does not often mutter words of complaint. Mr. Ed is the model (literally) of an ideal patient for the OT Program and with his compliant assistance, students in the Chatham Master of Occupational Therapy program will get a jump start on their competence and confidence.