OT Department Raises Funds for East Bay Recovery Center

By: Laura Heinemann, MOT2

Occupational Therapy students in their second year at Samuel Merritt University get a rare opportunity during their coursework for Theory and Practice in Psychosocial Dysfunction: working hands-on in mental health facilities all over the Bay Area. For almost a decade, instructors for this course have been sending second-year students to local mental health sites to lead groups, interact with clients, and observe Occupation Therapy in action. The class of 2012 marked the ninth consecutive class to have the opportunity to work at East Bay Community Recovery Project (EBCRP) in Oakland—a facility that has been working with clients with concurrent mental health and substance abuse diagnoses since 1989. Last semester, students rotated through the facility, working in small groups to facilitate leisure, art, and cooking groups to an average of 20 clients each day.

The Occupational Therapy department also put on a breakfast for all Occupational Therapy students, to raise funds for a Thanksgiving feast at EBCRP. The breakfast, which took place on November 3, was the continuation of a tradition in its seventh year and included pastries, breakfast casseroles, fresh fruit and hot coffee, all prepared and served by the Occupational Therapy department faculty members. “It’s nice to know that our program is coming together to support these individuals—a small amount can go a long way at an organization like East Bay and they have such a great need for additional resources,” said Nicole Pierce, MOT2, of the experience. Three-weeks later, students prepared the Thanksgiving feast at EBCRP. Following a semester of service at EBCRP, Samuel Merritt’s Occupational Therapy students were keen to support the facility. On their last day at EBCRP, the students present a check for a hundred and fifty dollars to Sarah Ashbrook, Program Manager at EBCRP. Dr. Gordon Giles and Professor Beth Ching co-taught last semester’s Theory and Practice in Psychosocial Dysfunction class. “Beth and I greatly appreciate the ongoing support of current and past students in providing this service to the community,” said Dr. Gordon Giles of his class’ efforts.

Friends and Family Day: Silent Auction Items Needed

By: Jennifer Warner, MOT2

SOTA is seeking donations for the silent auction and raffle at Friends and Family Day (2/11/2012 from 10am-12:30pm). All donations are tax-deductible and contributors will be recognized during the event as well as in the University’s Report to the Community with a circulation of approximately 12,000.

Suggested donation items: gift certificates, gift baskets, professional services, sports events tickets, sports memorabilia, fine wine, electronics, weekend getaways, craft (knitting, sewing, jewelry making) projects etc.

If you have an item that you would like to donate to the silent auction please contact Jen Warner at jennifer.warner@samuelmerritt.edu.
CoachArt’s mission is to improve “the quality of life for children with chronic and life-threatening illnesses and their siblings by providing free lessons in the arts and athletics.”

Are you looking for opportunities to give back to children with special needs and/or medical issues? CoachArt, a local nonprofit organization is looking for volunteers to assist with a variety of community events that engage children with disabilities in leisure activities such as art, dance, and sports.

CoachArt’s mission is to improve “the quality of life for children with chronic and life-threatening illnesses and their siblings by providing free lessons in the arts and athletics.”

In December 2011 SOTA also sponsored a campus wide Holiday Food Drive to support the Alameda County Community Food Bank. Food collection barrels were located throughout campus for the two weeks prior to the Winter break and we collected over 250 pounds of nutritious, non-perishable food items. The Alameda County Community Food Bank in coordination with other local organizations provides food assistance to over 49,000 low-income children and adults in Alameda County each week.

Two MOT students and one faculty member attended the annual Abilities Expo in San Jose, CA on November 18-20, 2011. This annual, free event features cutting edge products and services as well as workshops and activities (such as a therapy dog demonstration) and is attended by persons with disabilities, family members, healthcare workers, salespeople, and the general community.

Second year student Cheryl Crow attended to view the Disability Film Festival, which featured short documentary films. Her favorite was Drona and Me, about the relationship between two young brothers, one of whom has autism. Assistant Professor Ginny Gibson attended with her family in order to investigate the possibility of bringing an adaptive automobile to campus for one of her classes.

This year’s conference will be on November 16-18, 2012.
Notes from the SOTA Chairperson: Friends and Family Day approaches!

By: Darlyn San Jose, MOT2

Every year, the Student Occupational Therapy Association hosts a Friends and Family Day event, where all occupational therapy students are encouraged to invite their family and friends to learn more about the masters of occupational therapy program and most importantly what occupational therapy is.

This is a great opportunity for students to show case what they have learned and what is in store for them in their remaining semesters. Friends and families will get a tour of the anatomy cadaver lab, the pediatric/adult clinic, and the human occupation lab with various adaptive devices and equipment as well as different physical agent modalities such as splints. There will also be a silent auction and raffle where all the proceeds will go to SOTA.

This is a wonderful event that brings all the faculty, students and their families together in celebration of an amazing and life-changing career that the students will soon embark on. Friends and family day is a culmination of the dedication and hard work from the board members of SOTA and the support from the faculty. We hope you can join us from 10am-12:30pm at Friends and Family Day on February 11, 2012.

Newsletter Editor’s Notes: Reflections on the AOTA National Conference

By: Cheryl Crow, MOT2

Sometimes, the most educational experiences take place outside the classroom. This was certainly the case when I attended the American Occupational Therapy Association’s (AOTA) national conference in Philadelphia, PA last year.

Four weeks before the event, I received a call letting me know that I had won the AOTA Student Video Contest and that my video would be screened in front of 6,000 OTs and students at the opening ceremony. I was initially hesitant to attend because it was the 3 days before finals week, but ultimately decided to go.

I learned more about what OT is during those 3 days than in any other short period before or since. How can I describe the energy and excitement that reverberated through each room in the conference? One minute I was talking to a hospice OT about end of life care, the next I was chatting with a PhD student focusing on how cell phone use effects on the small finger joints, then I would grab a snack with other students from across the country and compare notes on the education process. Since many people recognized me from the video, I also felt proud to represent SMU.

I've learned that I truly am a “big picture person,” thus nothing could have been more helpful for me at this stage in my education (after one year in the classroom) than this experience. It is easy to miss the big picture during the rigorous classroom work, and I have found myself using my experience at AOTA to motivate me throughout my second year. I would truly encourage every student to attend next year’s conference, especially since it is after finals this year!

National Affairs: AOTA Conference & Video Contest

By: Cheryl Crow, MOT2

As mentioned above, the national AOTA conference is a one of a kind, yearly event bringing OTs from all disciplines together to talk about the latest and greatest developments in the field. Students will enjoy discounted rates (particularly if they are AOTA members) and registration is currently open at this site.

This year’s contest is open to all AOTA members. Early Registration (with significant discounts!) ends on March 7th and the housing deadline is March 30th. For more information, click here.

Special note: Groups of 20 students receive a 10% discount, contact Cheryl Crow at Cheryl.crow@samuelmerritt.edu if you plan on attending.
Student Spotlight: Fun with Pets!

Read the boxes below to get to know your fellow Masters in Occupational Therapy students and how they enjoy the “Care of Pets” IDAL!

Janet Alexander, MOT2—Ceara and Kimba: “Ceara on the left is a 2 1/2 year old "rotten hound" - she’s rottweiler and hound dog. Kimba on the right is 11 years old and we’re not sure what she is!

Karen Sommers, MOT1, and dog Riley: “Riley is a 70 lb black lab. My parents got him through a lab rescue, so we believe he is about 3 years old, though still acts like a puppy sometimes. He is very loving and loves any kind of attention. We go on runs and walks in the neighborhood. He gives me a good excuse to be outside! He is pretty well behaved, though he will eat anything in sight!

Jade Keys, MOT2, and dog Imani: “Imani is amazing. She provides me with daily comic relief, on top of the unconditional love. She has also been happy to help me study—she sits on my lap and snores while I read and write.

Carly Keller, MOT2: & pet cat Bruno

Kristin Dunn, MOT2: & pet bird Hey Dude

Jennifer Warner, MOT2’s cat Chubbs

Erin Farrell, MOT1 and Maddy

Jennifer Warner, MOT2’s cat Chubbs
Mikaela Dubin, MOT2, with Spike and Emma. “My pets bring so much happiness into my life. I enjoy taking them for walks (yes the cat comes too) and they are always full of love and a positive spirits. I am so lucky to have Emma and Spike as pets because they always make me laugh, and are a great stress reliever. Emma and Spike are true members of my family.

Karol Kinzly, MOT2: Otis

Darlyn San Jose, MOT2, and Chihuahua Bambi

Laura Heinemann, MOT2, and Nowata in the Creek

Marie Nicopulos, MOT2, and Indi

Kelly Ma, MOT1: Fluffy enjoys howling along any live instrumental performance, chillaxing on the top of the sofa backrest, and exploring curious objects by putting them in her mouth.

Cheryl Crow, MOT2, Eva and Wally (+ fiancé Gabe)
Book Review: Meaning and Illness

By: Erin Niland, MOT2

Susan Sontag, in her book *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, argues that illness metaphors have a powerful influence on how a particular disease is constructed and understood, setting up a potentially negative association between an illness and an individual diagnosed with that illness.

Sontag was undergoing cancer treatment when she first published her book in 1978. During her interactions with other patients diagnosed with cancer, she found that popular attitudes and interpretations of cancer often hindered people from seeking proper treatment. She hoped that by highlighting the literary uses of cancer, she might strip it of its metaphorical meaning, and expose it as, an often treatable illness.

She updated her book in 1988 as she saw the emergence of a new illness --AIDS. She nicely illustrates the popular discourse surrounding AIDS and the particular lifestyle choices that became associated with it, arguing that the risk factors linked to AIDS became markers for a person with the diagnosis. These markers prevented people from seeking proper treatment for fear of being exposed. Her comparison of an emerging illness with cancer attempts to minimize what she saw as a sensationalized fear surrounding AIDS.

*AIDS and Its Metaphors* is a reminder that there will always be emerging diseases and emerging theories about how those diseases and illnesses are understood. The risk factors associated with disease, although certainly helpful to understand in terms of prevention, can also be interpreted as a blaming of the victim. In order to be client-centered, it may be important to understand how a client has come to understand his or her illness. It is additionally important to understand and become aware of our own preconceptions regarding a diagnosis, so that we can more clearly see the illness and not the political and literary meanings attached to that illness.

Movie Review: Murderball

By: Cheryl Crow, MOT2

The documentary film *Murderball* (2005) chronicles the lives of serious male athletes who compete in wheelchair rugby (also known as “Murderball”). While the film culminates in a satisfying “will they or won’t they win?” drama on the paralympic stage, the athletic dramas are arguably less gripping than the interpersonal ones deftly captured by filmmakers Henry Alex Rubin and David Adam Shapiro.

The juxtaposition of team captain Mark Zupan (pictured to the left), who has generally adapted to life in a chair after years of angst ridden adjustment, with a youngster newly paralyzed after a motocross accident showcases the role of wheelchair sports in providing hope to those struggling to adapt to their new lifestyle options. Notably for a genre sometimes accused of idealizing persons with disabilities, the film honors the athletes’ humanity by showing their shortcomings along with their positive attributes. For example, Canadian coach and former American Murderball champion Joe Soares is shown being indifferent (bordering on mean) to his unathletic, able-bodied son, whom he makes dust all his trophies, and various athletes are shown cajoling / swearing at each other during temper flare-ups characteristic of high stakes sports.

Of special note to occupational therapy students, rehabilitation specialists are shown giving a patient being discharged a card which he cannot fully open, which I found poignant and illustrative of how hard it is to recognize the difficulties patients face even when one works with in the rehab field. The lack of adequate sexual education is also showcased via an (unintentionally humorous) old fashioned video shown to the newly injured. On the positive side, I found the description from Bob Lujano (whose hands and feet were lost due to a battle with a blood disease) of his recurring dream that he can fly to be incredibly moving.

Overall, I would recommend this film to all MOT students, particularly those interested in spinal cord injuries, due to the comprehensive and moving portraits it provides. The film also showcases the athletes performing myriad activities of daily living/IADLs, from dressing to grocery shopping to leisure, which will help students understand how persons in wheelchairs engage in these activities.

Click here for the trailer.
**Professor Spotlight: Dr. Robyn Wu**

1) **Why did you become an OT?**
I always knew I wanted to work closely with people. As I was exploring different professions, the holistic perspective and creative approach of Occupational Therapy seemed to be an ideal fit for my interests and my personal outlook on life.

2) **What is your "elevator speech" when people ask you, "What is Occupational Therapy?"**
Occupational therapy finds ways for people to participate in the everyday activities that are important to them.

3) **What advice do you have for current students?**
Learn to become an effective test taker. Performing well on multiple-choice exams is a skill in itself...and if I can assist any student, it's required for entry into the OT profession.

4) **What is your favorite movie?**
I am a Star Wars fan. Star Wars has it all: the adventure, the wit and humor, the emotional evolution of the characters over the saga, and Master Yoda's wisdom.

5) **What is your favorite thing about teaching?**
On a big picture level, it is highly rewarding to be educating future occupational therapists. On a personal level, I truly appreciate the enthusiasm of students and enjoy interacting with them. In addition, teaching keeps me accountable for remaining current in my knowledge base, which has made me a stronger clinician.

6) **Something people might not know/expect about you?**
I donate to Locks of Love—so my hair style will be changing next semester.

7) **Your favorite quote:**
"It is highly rewarding to be educating future occupational therapists. On a personal level, I truly appreciate the enthusiasm of students and enjoy interacting with them."

The Four Agreements resonate with me: be impeccable with your word, don’t take anything personally, don’t make assumptions, and always do your best.

8) **Anything else?**
I work as a consultant for the California Department of Education, Child Development Division. Currently the state funded early care and preschool programs in California use two different instruments to measure children’s learning outcomes: one instrument for typically developing children and another instrument for children who have special needs. I am participating in the creation of a new instrument for use with all children, both typically developing and those who have special needs. This has been a very exciting project and has challenged me to integrate my knowledge of child development, children who have special needs, and universal design.

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**Professor Spotlight: Dr. Kate Hayner**

1) **Why did you become an OT?**
My Mom was an OT and I wasn’t very interested in it. When I was in college I enrolled in a Career Explorations class and after completing a battery of tests, I was told NOT to go into business (they never saw anyone score so low) but what about OT? The more I looked into OT, the more I loved it and honestly, every day I feel so lucky to love what I do so much.

2) **Can you share something interesting about yourself outside your role as an OT/educator?**
I have two children ages 14 and 11, a dog, cat and great husband. I love backpacking and hiking - if any of you want me to plan an area day hike, let me know! I hiked the John Muir Trail (250 miles) in the Sierra Nevada Mountains for my first backpacking trip – lots of bears!

3) **What is your favorite thing about teaching?**
The students – for a million reasons. If I can assist any student to look at a client and see them for all that they are, to treat them with dignity and to use their best clinical reasoning skills in treating, than I can’t think of a better thing about this job.

4) **What advice do you have for current students?**
It’s the same thing my father said to me and I say to my kids: “it’s not the grade, it’s what you learned.” Taking some bit of new information, thinking it over and applying it to other knowledge are the keys to becoming a great OT. And if you have more questions once you do this, you are on the right track. Questions to me mean you are thinking things over and applying the knowledge.

5) **Do you have a favorite quote or inspirational saying?** “Eat dessert first so you’re sure to have room for it.”

6) **Is there anything else you’d like to share?**
Yes, I know you all are wondering what one does when they go on sabbatical. I took a friend’s sound advice and woke up early and wrote for 4-5 hours each morning. The rest of the day I worked out as long as I wanted and was home to work with my kids on their homework in the afternoon. I also traveled to the North Carolina Mountains a number of times to write, and play. One article (on shoulder taping) was accepted for publication, the second is in the final drafts, and the third is still in the data analysis process. In all, I feel I completed all I could and I feel so lucky to have had the time to do so.
Top 10 Pieces of Advice From 3rd Year Students

By: Cheryl Crow, MOT2

Third year MOT students gathered together on November 10, 2011 to share fieldwork experiences and complete official tasks. MOT2 students were invited to sit in on the illuminating discussion. At the end of the discussion, I asked them what advice they have for current students; what should we focus on, worry more about, worry less about regarding school and fieldwork? Here are my top 10 take-home lessons from their advice:

1) Fieldwork is where you will do most of your learning.
2) Be assertive during the first 2 weeks about what you need from your fieldwork educator.
3) Your fieldwork educator will understand that you are still learning.
4) Relax and don’t stress about schoolwork now.
5) You can’t prepare for fieldwork by books.
6) It’s ok to say, “I don’t know.”
7) Go into it with an open mind, be humble.
8) Be confident with yourself and your reasoning.
9) Follow Donna’s advice/use Donna as a resource.
10) Know that you have rights and responsibilities as a student!

Around SMU: Gary Karp - Sex on Wheels

By: Laura Heinemann

From basic self-care tasks, to the most complex leisure activities, as Occupational Therapists, we attempt to assist our clients in achieving the highest possible quality of life through independence in as many facets of their lives as we can. Although offering client-centered services is our mantra, most rehabilitation therapists choose to overlook one of the most fundamental aspects of a person’s life- their sexuality. On November 9, second-year Occupational Therapy students in Dr. Guy McCormack’s class, Conditions of Human Dysfunction, were treated to a guest lecture on the topic. Gary Karp, a local author, public speaker, and paraplegic has been coming to Samuel Merritt to discuss human sexuality and life in a wheelchair for almost a decade. His talk addressed human sexuality as an essential consideration in rehabilitation after acquiring an injury, and he emphasized the importance of discussing with clients the possibilities of experiencing connections with significant others, despite spinal cord injury. According to Karp, “Spinal cord injuries are complex sensations may be different, but they are definitely possible. You have to encourage your clients to explore their sexuality and find ways to show and receive affection- it is a part of being human.” As Occupational Therapists, we should be vigilant in addressing every aspect of our clients’ lives, especially those that compose the most intimate and crucial parts of the human experience.

SMU SOTA NEWS
Birthday Celebration Unites MOT Students

By: Kelly Ma, MOT1

Remember when we went to happy hour at 3000? That was so last year! On November 11, 2011, the MOT 1 and 2 classes had a biannual birthday celebration at 3000 Broadway. Of course, paper crowns, cupcakes, and backpacks were the IT items for the scene. After just a few minutes, my MOT 2 buddy had talked me out of any academic anxiety. I do not remember any fall birthday or any specific conversation, but I can still see a very long line waiting to order drinks, smell the extremely salty garlic noodle, and hear all the bursts of laughing. Alright, 3000 was really not too long ago. Hey MOT 1 and 2! Let’s do that again!

Photo Reel: Oct ‘11 — Jan’12

FACULTY AND STAFF FUNDRAISER BREAKFAST—NOVEMBER 2011

NEURO HALLOWEEN!
Upcoming SOTA and MOT Events

1/19/2012: SOTA meeting, noon, 4004 (1st and 3rd Thursdays, same room, for rest of semester)

January 21, 2012: Interviews of potential students

2/11/2012: Friends and Family Day, 10:00AM-12:30PM

February 16: Bake Sale

March, 2012: Birthday Luncheon with MOT1 and MOT2 students

March 2012: SOTA elections for first year students

April 5 (date?) - Research Symposium—required for MOT1 and MOT2 students

April 20, 2012: -OT awareness month, Belated Backpack Awareness Day

April 20: End of year celebration with MOT1 and MOT2s

4/26-28/2011: AOTA National Conference in Indianapolis, IN (look to website for more info)

Why Attend a SOTA Meeting?

By Jennifer Warner, MOT2

All OT students are members of SOTA and can attend SOTA meetings! At SOTA meetings we make decisions about fund raising, how to spend SOTA money, community outreach, and social events. Come give your input and be a part of the decisions that we make!

If you are interested in participating in a committee or are thinking about running for a position next year, come see how you can get involved and what SOTA is all about. SOTA meetings are the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month from 12-1pm in MOB 4004.

This newsletter was designed by Cheryl Crow, MOT2, Newsletter Editor with writing help from the following members: Laura Heinemann, Kelly Ma, Carla Randall, Erin Niland, Darlyn SanJose, Jen Warner, and professors Robyn Wu and director Kate Hayner. We welcome any submissions of content or ideas for future newsletters. Please contact Cheryl by the end of March in order to be included in the April Newsletter. She can be contacted at: Cheryl.crow@samuelmerritt.edu