It is with great pleasure that I write for the first ever PhilaU Occupational Therapy Newsletter! After a great deal of deliberation, we are announcing that the Newsletter will be written and dispersed biannually, every January and every September for students, alumni, professors, and those interested in learning more about our program. We hope that this first issue grabs your interest and perhaps YOU will contribute in the future. Before reading on, I would like to take a moment to thank the columnists that made this possible. Kristen Gill, Emilia Kaczynska, Elyse Kutsop, Stephanie Machulsky, and Brenna Trainer have all gone above and beyond the student call-of-duty to be a part of this venture. To them I owe my sincerest appreciation.

Madeleine Hoden, OTS, Class of ’13

From the Program Director

On behalf of the faculty, I am pleased to introduce this inaugural issue of the PhilaU Occupational Therapy Program newsletter. I am honored to be the director of a program whose graduates have gone on to become excellent therapists and resourceful clinicians in today’s health care delivery systems. You, our students and alumni, have collectively contributed to the reputation that makes the PhilaU OT Program shine.

We have much to report in the way of program and educational changes. In 2009 we initiated a program review and updated the curriculum design. We have aligned Level I fieldwork with practice settings that match our clinical assessment and intervention courses. By completing fieldwork alongside clinical courses students can more regularly apply the information they’ve gained from the classroom into practice. We now offer courses in upper extremity rehabilitation in addition to our traditional practice areas. We also have a separate course in assistive technology design and we’ve added a course on innovative practice to encourage our graduates to go out into the OT world and develop new programs. In keeping with the PhilaU innovation theme, we continue to invest in collaborative projects with our industrial design, fashion apparel, and architecture colleagues.

Many of you have shared your successes. Please continue to stay in touch, keep us up to date, and tell your friends and colleagues about the wonderful educational experience you received at PhilaU. We thank you for your ongoing support.

Wendy Krupnick, PhD, MBA, OTR/L
Associate Professor and Program Director
PhilaU Occupational Therapy program
**PhilaU OT Welcomes New Faculty**

Welcome to Andrea Fairman, PhilaU's new academic fieldwork coordinator and OT faculty! Andrea is an occupational therapist who has over 16 years of experience working in community-based settings with a variety of populations. According to Andrea, “Much of my clinical experience and passion has been in community mental health services. In Pennsylvania, one way to broaden my marketability in community mental health was to also become a Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP)”. Andrea’s first job after graduating with her MOT was at the Psychiatric Rehabilitation program at the Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County, PA. The grant writing and design of this program was her graduate project. Andrea notes, “Not many people get to write their own job description as a new graduate. I felt so lucky!” Andrea has worked as an occupational therapist in public schools, home health and in-patient hospital settings as well. She found that working in community-based behavioral health has afforded her the flexibility to pursue an advanced degree and specialized in autism spectrum disorders.

Andrea is currently in the research phase of her doctoral studies at the University of Pittsburgh where she is a PhD candidate in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and holds an Adjunct Faculty Member position in the Rehabilitation Science and Technology Department. Andrea’s research interests include compensatory strategies for cognitive deficits incorporating assistive technology and principles of telerehabilitation. She earned both her B.S. in Health Sciences and Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy from Duquesne University.

Prior to enrolling in her PhD program at the University of Pittsburgh, Andrea served as the Executive Director of the Spina Bifida Association of Western Pennsylvania (SBAWP) where she developed new programming to address the needs of persons with disabilities including The SBAWP Wellness Program and BluePrints Play Group. In this leadership role, she was successful for securing several large grants for SBAWP to fund these new programs as well as ongoing services provided by the agency.

Andrea grew up in a tiny town called Rural Valley, located in Western PA. For her move east, she has taken residence in Medford Lakes, New Jersey, where she lives with her dog, Bubba. Her daughter, Victoria, plans to move to the Philadelphia area in the fall.

---

**Other OT Program Updates:**

**BS/MS Program**

In addition to meeting the educational needs of working graduate students, PhilaU now offers admission to undergraduate students in a combined BS/MS program. Students choose between two tracks: Psychology or Health Sciences. This unique program is structured so that the undergraduate major and college studies coursework can be completed in three years. The students must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA to accelerate into the M.S. in OT Program during their fourth year of studies. This means that students can complete both bachelor and master degrees in less than six years – a feature that we find to be attractive to potential students.

---

Three Class of 2013 students (Mary Grace Maggiano, Kristen Gill and Sarah Rice Glezman) visited Major Art Yeager (PhilaU Class of ’02) at Walter Reed Medical Center last spring before its closing.

---

**A few PhilaU attendees at the 2011 AOTA conference here in Philadelphia!**

The 92nd annual AOTA conference will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana from April 26-29th
34th POTA Conference Recap
By Sara Schroeder, MS, OTR/L, CHT

On October 28 & 29th, the Ambassador Center in Erie, PA was filled with almost 400 OT practitioners, educators, and students from across the state. The conference kicked off on Thursday night with a conference social including local wine & beer tasting and music by the Misery Bay Dulcimer Club.

Programming began on Friday morning and both Friday and Saturday were packed full of education sessions, poster presentations, and general updates on the status of the POTA and legislative efforts. There was also a full exhibit hall full of vendors and exhibitors to visit.

One of the conference highlights was the Keynote Address by Major Kathleen E. Yancosek PhD, OTR/L, CHT, who is a graduate of Gannon University in Erie. She has been an Army OT for the past 14 years and gave insight into what it is like when "Living Life to the Fullest...in an Army Uniform". She shared stories, pictures, and videos of her experience working with wounded military service members and their families. Her speech was extremely timely and moving--bringing the audience to their feet on several occasions to praise her efforts and those of the men and women of the military as well as the unique contribution that OT is making to the rehabilitation of those injured in the Global War on Terror.

There truly were sessions that catered to all practice areas and levels of experience from the general opening ceremony, business meeting, and legislative forum to the wide variety of education sessions, student conclave, practice issue discussions, and awards ceremony. Attending the POTA Conference is a fantastic opportunity to pick up numerous continuing education credits in a very cost effective way. You can get almost half of your credits just by attending this 2-day conference!

Conference is also an opportunity to hear what the organization has been doing for Pennsylvania OTs throughout the year. This includes hearing what our lobbyist in Harrisburg has been monitoring. The POTA and PAC have been successful in standing our ground and keeping athletic trainers from using terminology in their practice act that would potentially overstep their boundaries into the area of OT. POTA has also made comments to the new licensure changes with the Licensure Board and will support the PPTA in an effort to set a cap on the cost insurance companies can charge as a co-pay. Our lobbyist is also monitoring closely what other disciplines like the orthotics and prosthetics professionals, massage therapists, and others are doing to make sure that OT's territory is safe and protected. If you want to find out more about pending legislation -- like SB 342 which is amending the practice act -- go to http://www.legis.state.pa.us/index.cfm and find out!

Attending conference brings to light all of the fantastic POTA member benefits and what the organization is doing to promote and support Pennsylvania OT practitioners and students. POTA is tirelessly working for us so we need to support the organization by becoming and remaining members as well as encouraging OT colleagues and friends to do the same. Our collective voice needs to be louder and increasing membership will certainly do this! See you all September 28th & 29th 2012 in Lancaster, PA for the 35th Annual POTA Conference!

Sara Schroeder MS, OTR/L, CHT, is Executive Officer of POTA District V and its Delegate to the POTA statewide board of directors, as well as a current adjunct faculty for PhilaU.

POTA Related Events

• “Project Linus” is being held again this year at Philadelphia University! It’s an event where OTs and students get together to make blankets for babies in the NICU. Join us February 18, 2012 at Down’s Auditorium from 9am-3pm.
• POTA’s next dinner meeting will be held at Moss Rehab-Elkins park location with guest speaker, Roz Lipsitt. The meeting will focus on Life Coaching Techniques in OT.
• Save the date! Intercollegiate night is being held at Philadelphia University this year! This is an event where students from various OT programs in the Philadelphia region get together for a complementary event including dinner, a guest speaker, and many networking opportunities with other OT students, various vendors, and rehab facilities! This event is being held on March 15, 2012 @ 5:30pm at the Gallagher Center. Volunteers are needed. Check your e-mail for more information soon!

JOB OPENINGS and SUCH

Looking for motivated and very responsible individuals to work part time in a home health care setting. Please e-mail: Selktar@verizon.net

If you know of someone hiring and interested in getting the word out to students in our program, please contact Anita Quain: quaina@philau.edu

Mega Career Fair
Wednesday January 18, 2012
10 am - 3 pm at Lincoln Financial Field

Preregister by Monday, January 16
Go online to www.philly.com/mega
iPad Applications for OT
By Stephanie Machulsky, OTS, Class of ‘13

The number of iPad apps for people with disabilities seems to be growing by the minute. This is very exciting for OT practice due to the already widespread popularity of iPads in our communities.

iPads are known to carry a high price tag, with the cheapest at around $500. However, used and older versions are much less expensive. Pediatric OTs are loving the lightweight portability of the iPad not only for transporting and storage needs, but for easy manipulation and handling by the kids. Even more alluring is the ability to document a client’s progress by saving their work in a picture format into a folder or emailing it. In addition to the iPad itself, peripherals such as ultra-sensitive microphones, cases, screen protectors, keyboards, and pens add to the hands-on, user-friendly nature of the iPad. Even without the extra gadgets and gadgets, no one can deny the mainstream popularity of the iPad. How great is it that we can incorporate such a trendy and fun tool into OT practice?! So, Let’s Talk Apps!

* Text-to-speech apps serve as speech and language solutions for people with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, aphasia, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or stroke.
* SmallTalk Aphasia is a free text-to-speech app designed for people with aphasia. Natural-sounding male and female voices are used for people with speech and language difficulties. SmallTalk Oral Motor Exercises includes exercises for the cheek, tongue, palate, lip, and jaw designed to strengthen oral musculature.
* ADOC (Aid for Decision-making in Occupation Choice) helps clients express what they want to do and encourages participation in the goal-setting process. This app sells for $28.99. A recent study found that the ADOC app is an acceptable and useful tool for both OTs and their clients.

There are also many free or low-priced apps for medical and insurance terminology, and abbreviations. Schedule and planner apps? You can choose from several. These are just a few of the many ways students and practicing OTs can incorporate iPad apps into academia and when working with clients.

References


Tales from the Fieldwork: Burn Center By Brenna Trainer, OTS, Class of ‘13

Last semester I completed a level 1 fieldwork placement at Crozer-Chester’s Burn Center. This was a unique and incredible learning experience. I had known little about burns before beginning my placement here and was nervous about working in such an acute setting. My supervisor however, eased my nerves from day one. She explained to me that due to the nature of the burn patients’ injuries and the fact that many patients here undergo extensive and painful surgeries, the primary focus for OTs here is maintaining function through ROM exercises and insuring that patients are as independent as possible with ADLs. Some of the patients we saw were not conscious, on ventilators and in very fragile states (multiple amputations due to burns, burns so deep that only muscle remained, etc). OTs can still work with and evaluate these patients by performing passive ROM exercises and assessing the extent of their burns to predict future challenges.

Patients and their families need to be educated about the importance of performing ROM exercises to prevent loss of function due to scarring and begins as soon as the patient is conscious. As burns and grafts turn into scars, the skin drastically tightens up, causing serious and permanent contractures if the skin is not frequently stretched.

My supervisor was excellent about explaining levels of burns, various treatments (topical treatments, splints, medications, surgeries etc.); she explained and showed me different types of grafts—cadaver and from donor sites and the precautions and means to work with each.

Each day I was able to participate in evaluations of new patients, informal assessments such as ADL observations, manual muscle testing and ROM testing. I had the opportunity to work with a variety of patients in different stages of recovery. Some had just been admitted and others were post-surgery and preparing for discharge. I was amazed by the resilience and healing ability of the human body.

I was surprised to learn the cause of the burns I saw, many were caused by burning brush, cooking with hot oil and attempted suicides. I hadn’t previously thought of burning oneself as a means to ending one’s life. The patients who had attempted suicide were particularly interesting and challenging to work with and have made a lasting impression on my life.

This truly was an incredible learning experience. If any of you get an opportunity to complete a placement in a burn care center I highly recommend it.

SOTA UPDATE

Fundraising
- We are still offering our daily snack box and Saturday morning bagel sale just as in previous semesters!
- We are planning to have a Joe Corbi Pizza & Cookie Sale this spring, so please keep your eye out for more information to follow!
- SOTA will be having a “closet sale” this spring where we will be selling previous fundraising items such as t-shirts, travel coffee mugs, water bottles, etc. all at a discounted price!!

Get involved!
- SOTA is currently planning a winter coat/glove/scarf collection to help the less fortunate stay warm this winter! More information to follow.
- SOTA is planning on having a 3rd year OT student present to the classes this spring regarding their experience with Level II fieldworks and their Capstone project to help us all get prepared when our time comes.
- April - OT month is fast approaching! There will be many events taking place such as the AOTA conference (in Indianapolis), OT night at the Phillies + tailgate event (April 12, 2012), and guest speakers on campus. If anyone has any suggestions or would like to volunteer, please let us know!
- Philadelphia University is holding its 4th annual Unity week during March 19-April 4, 2012. This event supports the diverse population of students and faculty within the university community. Suggestions for ways the OT program can get involved are greatly appreciated!!

Personal Updates

Luca, Jon Yencha’s (class of ’13) son cheers on the Cowboys over winter break.

The Class of 2013 had a successful surprise shower to welcome two new members to their “team.” Julia’s little man, Mercer (below), was born December 16, 2011 and Veronica’s beautiful girl is planned to arrive February 2012!

If you have news, pictures, or information that you would like to see included in this Newsletter, please contact Maddy Hoden at hoden4586@philau.edu.
Interview with Rebecca (Becky) Austill, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA  
President/Owner/Founder of Austill’s Rehabilitation Service

By Kristen Gill, OTS, Class of 2013

You may recognize the Austill’s name, known for their high-quality therapy services and team of over 300 dedicated therapists serving both children and adults in the Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey regions. However, not everyone has gotten to know the President, Owner, and Founder of this outstanding company, Becky Austill-Clausen. Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Becky and I would like to share her exceptional story with the readers of OT Link.

Becky Austill-Clausen is an Occupational Therapist and a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Additionally, she is the President, Owner, and Founder of Austill’s Rehabilitation Services. Determined to become an Occupational Therapist since the 9th grade, Becky Austill-Clausen has a more than impressive 35-year career. Deciding on Utica College for its 9-month clinical experience offered to students, Becky received her Bachelors degree in Occupational Therapy in 1976. Furthermore, in 1981, Becky went on to graduate summa cum laude with her Advanced Master’s degree in Occupational Therapy, specializing in Business Administration from Boston University.

After graduating from Utica College, Becky took a truly unique path into her first job opportunities within the field of occupational therapy. In fact, the day after she finished her clinical work, Becky left to head out west for New Mexico. After finding only one job posted, which was then cancelled due to lack of grant funding, Becky resorted to working in a hoagie shop for three weeks. Soon enough, Becky’s entrepreneurial spirit kicked in and she began completing a needs analysis within the local town. After determining what businesses could possibly benefit from occupational therapy services, Becky took to the pay phone and started making “cold calls” for five cents a call. Resourceful, Becky would first call and ask for the president’s name of each company and then call back later asking for the president of each company by their name. Once on the phone, Becky said that she only had about 30 seconds to “sell OT” to each president. With a total of about 15 calls, Becky had 7 interviews and 4 job offers, and started working by the next week as an independent contractor. Those four jobs included two in a school system, one in home health, and the final one with the office of vocational rehabilitation. Undoubtedly, Becky is not only an Occupational Therapist, but also a businesswoman from the start.

Becky’s second and third years post college were just as impressive, as she continued to consult within the New Mexico school system. In fact, Becky was evaluating and consulting in 44 school districts. A pioneer within the New Mexico school system, she trained the schools on how to work with children with disabilities and receive occupational therapy consultation services. Furthermore, in her 3rd year as an OT, Becky was asked to work with the students directly and treat within seven school districts. It was at this time that Becky decided she wanted to teach other Occupational Therapists to work with children in the school system.

After several years of success, Becky decided that her next step would be to teach. Therefore, she took a teaching job at Louisiana State University in New Orleans; where she began teaching occupational therapy students how to consult, complete evaluations, write IEPs, and develop treatment plans within the school system. In addition to teaching, Becky was also the Director of OT for a University Affiliated Facility on Autism and had a private practice. However, it was her work with the Chancellor’s son that inspired Becky to find work in adaptive equipment and also go back to graduate school.

After leaving her teaching job at Louisiana State University, Becky took a job in Delaware working with adaptive equipment for two years as an Occupational Therapist. However, when they wanted her to sell oxygen, she decided it was time to move on and get back into her work as an independent contractor. As Becky began working as an independent contractor, the work soon piled on fast. In fact, the day after Becky was offered her 9th job as an independent contractor, she made an appointment with a lawyer and an accountant. This is how Austill’s Rehabilitation Services, Inc. began! Today, Austill’s still runs on the same principles of high quality, excellence, and cost-effective service. With over 300 therapists serving over 7000 students, Becky insists that therapists always come first at Austill’s with numerous educational and mentorship opportunities available to the therapists. Certainly, with an 8 year 90% therapist retention rate and every therapist working as an independent contractor, Austill’s therapist-centered and excellence-driven philosophies are essential to their success.

What advice does Becky have for students? “When looking for a job, identify your ideal job and go for it! Don’t hesitate. Do what you want now. Don’t wait.” Also, Becky encourages students to become members of their state and national OT organizations. She insists that involvement in these organizations will keep you on the “cutting edge” of leadership and networking.
Interview with Alumni: Bridget Trivinia, MS, OTR/L

By Elyse Kutsop, OTS, class of 2013

Bridget Trivinia is an occupational therapist currently working for Fox Rehabilitation. Within Fox Rehabilitation, Bridget not only works as an occupational therapist, but she also works as a training clinician as well as the mentor services coordinator for newly graduated occupational therapists. Having graduated from the PhilaU master’s in occupational therapy program, as a member of its first graduating class, Bridget has witnessed the growth of the program throughout the years. In addition to her clinical work, she is now an adjunct faculty member for the PhilaU OT program.

After completing her OT master’s degree Bridget worked in acute rehab, a skilled nursing facility, and within a school system. Now in her eighth year with Fox Rehabilitation, Bridget says she enjoys where she is working because it is a natural extension of her OT education at PhilaU. Bridget feels as though she is now working in a client-centered environment, where she can work with patients one on one. The client-centered philosophy is one that she feels was emphasized in her OT education at PhilaU.

From her experiences as an adjunct faculty member, Bridget sees the main difference between the student and teacher perspectives. As a student, she says the focus was always on the grade itself, and doing the best within each class. However, as a teacher, she focuses more on the content that she is teaching, with the goal of better preparing students for the future. Bridget feels the occupational therapy program at Philadelphia University really prepares their students to become solid clinicians. As a student, she felt that the OT program provided her with the ability to become a self-directed learner and an advocate for occupational therapy. Her experiences contribute to her confidence as an occupational therapist.

Given her experience, Bridget is able to provide plenty of advice to current students. First, Bridget suggests all students remember to not only focus on the clients that they will have, but also to look out for the caregivers, who are a vital part of each client’s life. Also, make sure to keep an open mind, as people can be so quick to judge each other. Finally, Bridget also advises students to be prepared to be a lifelong learner. In order to be the best, therapists should review articles, journals, and other resources regularly to help each and every client in the best way possible.

The following is an unsolicited writing by a client involved with the Master’s Portfolio program.

OT Requires Commitment

By Nick Pentzell

I started OT about a year ago. In the past, I questioned my ability to be independent and fought people who tried to teach me, but I am now committed to therapy because I am 33 years old and I need to take responsibility for myself. I am autistic and don’t speak, so I am typing this article using facilitated communication (FC). With FC, a facilitator aids motor control by giving resistance to a person’s hand or arm while the person types. FC has allowed me to experience the world by giving me a voice; I am a college student, writer, and diffability advocate who gives presentations at conferences around the country.

My brain and my body sometimes don’t work together. However, with OT, I think my body is learning to listen to my brain. My therapist, Lisa, has shown me how to do things I couldn’t do before, and now they come more naturally. It’s all about motor planning; I have to do things over and over until my brain and body can coordinate.

Before OT, I used to give up too quickly or allow others to do things for me, so I never learned basics like how to put on and fasten my shoes. Lisa breaks actions into smaller steps and has me perform them repeatedly until I succeed. At first I resisted her because I got frustrated when I failed, and OT sometimes felt like a controlling environment. I wanted to learn, but I was sabotaging myself. I am a perfectionist so it is frustrating to fail, but I need to experience failure in order to succeed.

It took some time, but Lisa and I now work as a team. We effectively communicate; she listens to me and lets me take the lead in deciding what to work on each session. I feel like she respects my opinion, so I am comfortable sharing my thoughts with her.

Lisa gives me the tools, but it is my job to use them, so I need to practice my skills at home. Being successful is my responsibility. Since I want to be a person who is more independent, I can’t ask for help with everything anymore, and I don’t have to now with my new skills.