

TUFTS BSOT Notes



PROMOTING POSSIBILITY

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ALUMNI PROFILE:

Ann Wongsaroj

M.S. '00, Occupational Therapy

ANN WONGSAROJ is many things. She is female, Thai-American, Buddhist, middle class, single, and an occupational therapist. However, she is not easily defined and Wongsaroj wouldn't have it any other way. "I like having so many aspects of culture in my life," she says. "I feel that my family, neighborhood, and school environments have enhanced my sensitivities towards those different from myself and influenced my life choices."

An occupational therapy supervisor at the Hogan Regional Center in Hathorne, MA, Wongsaroj works with men and women who have varying degrees of mental retardation. For Wongsaroj, understanding where these individuals are coming from is crucial to helping them live full, enjoyable lives. "With the people I serve, I really think about their personal histories," she says. "Forty to fifty years ago when these

Message from the Chair

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION of *BSOT Notes*, the newsletter for alumni of the Boston School of Occupational Therapy (BSOT). We hope that you will find *BSOT Notes* both enjoyable and informative reading.

The past year has been one of tremendous strides for the Occupational Therapy Department. Along with welcoming a new class of graduate students, we have solidified our reputation as one of the finest occupational therapy programs in the country as rated by *U.S. News & World Report* (see back cover) and *Gourman's Guide to Graduate Programs*. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hard work of our alumni, faculty, and students.

Along with our strong academic credentials, we have worked diligently to develop the whole student. Our community work and international programs help students gain a new perspective on occupational therapy, thus assuring their clients the best and most humane care possible.

We have also been hearing from our alumni with a greater frequency than ever before. Working everywhere from prisons to high schools, they are helping people from every walk of life lead satisfying and productive lives. Their achievements and efforts are a source of pride for everyone here in the department and we wish them all the best in the future.

Thank you for your continued support. ■



Sharan Schwartzberg,
Ed. D., OTR, FAOTA
Professor and Chair,
Boston School of
Occupational Therapy

MARK MORELLI

adults were born they weren't provided the services they are now. I also think about their day-to-day lives when treating them. People are coming and going, trying to teach them different things and they are being pulled away for programs all the time. There are many stresses in their lives."

Wongsaroj hasn't always been inter-

ested in cultural issues. As a young girl, she lived in a diverse New York community where people got along, regardless of their backgrounds. When Wongsaroj entered Cornell University in 1994, she came face-to-face with some cruel realities. "When I got to college many people were accepting, but

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STUDENT PROFILE:

Monique Davidoff, B.A. '99, Child Development

BEFORE AN AUDIENCE of Tufts occupational therapy students, graduate student Monique Davidoff is telling a story. She tells of how her car crashed on a rainy night in the summer of 1996. She describes the trip to the hospital and how her heart stopped for twelve minutes. She recalls the endless hours of physical therapy that made her broken body whole. But Davidoff remembers the doctors best. When she awoke from her six-week coma, they made a few predictions. They said that she would never walk again, that she would never return to school, that she wouldn't be able to dress herself, that she would live the rest of her life in a semi vegetative state. The doctors missed something, though. They failed to see that Monique Davidoff is tough. Real tough.

Of course, it's hard to see this toughness on the outside. In many ways, Davidoff is a typical twenty-four year old. She enjoys spending time with friends, smiles often, and is good with kids. But, unlike many her age, she possesses a fortitude which is immeasurable. Simply put, when Monique Davidoff gets knocked down, she gets up. "I think the diagnoses of my doctors pushed me

She describes the trip to the hospital and how her heart stopped for twelve minutes. She recalls the endless hours of physical therapy that made her broken body whole.

to accomplish something and make the best of what happened," she says. "It would have been very easy to give up because every expert told my parents that I wouldn't be able to go back to school and that I would never walk again. The accident could have destroyed me. I could have wallowed in my misery. But I didn't."

After she emerged from her coma and her numerous injuries (which



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Monique Davidoff, Current Occupational Therapy Student

included a broken neck and a ruptured spleen) healed, Davidoff spent the following four years regaining her motor and cognitive abilities, which is still an ongoing process. "Speech, physical, and occupational therapists taught me how to breath, swallow, walk, and talk again, things that healthy adults sometimes take for granted," Davidoff says. Today,

along with slightly impaired motor skills, she suffers from ataxia, which causes uncontrollable body movement but which is barely noticeable in regard to Davidoff.

During the rehabilitation period, Davidoff also returned to Tufts as a part-time undergraduate child development student. She missed only one semester of study due to her accident and, by attending classes continually for the next two

years, completed her undergraduate studies in four years. In the fall of 2000, Davidoff entered the graduate program in occupational therapy at Tufts and continues to overcome every obstacle in her path. "I find that Monique teaches me about resilience," says Janet Brooks, Davidoff's adviser and Tufts lecturer. "She is living proof of what we teach, that people can return to productive and meaningful lives even in the most dramatic of circumstances."

Davidoff plans to graduate in the next year and a half and would like to work with children who have suffered similar injuries. "I want to help children who have sustained brain trauma regain the capacities that they have lost or maybe never developed," she says. "I want to be the first person children see when waking up from a coma, the first person they look to when asking for help. I want to let them know that they can relearn everything."

And if they have any doubts about that, Monique Davidoff will start them off with a story. Her own. ■

FACULTY *spotlight*



Deborah Rochman
M.S., OTR
Clinical Instructor,
School of Dental Medicine;
Lecturer, BSOT

MS. DEBORAH ROCHMAN teaches courses in clinical reasoning and pain management. She has worked in hospital, outpatient, and community-based settings as a clinician, as well as a manager of therapy services. Her research interests involve chronic pain, in particular, pain knowledge, education, and training of rehabilitation professionals. She is actively involved in state, national, and international pain societies. Ms. Rochman is a clinical instructor at the Gelb Orofacial Pain Center, Tufts University School of Dental Medicine and practices client-centered occupational therapy

with people who have chronic pain and pain-related disability. Prominently mentioned in a recent *On Call Magazine* article titled “Looking Pain in the Face,” Rochman believes that the occupational therapist can prove invaluable when helping people living with chronic pain. “The people referred to me are patients who have pain problems over and above what regular treatments can correct, control, or resolve,” she says. “The ultimate goal for occupational therapy and people who have pain-related disabilities is to help them learn to control their pain and pursue daily routines.” ■

Post-Professional Master’s Degree

Do you have an entry-level bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy? Are you interested in expanding your practice competencies? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, you may be interested in the Tufts Post-Professional Master’s Degree. “The faculty in the Occupational Therapy Department was very accommodating and supportive, allowing me to pursue my degree while working full time,” said former student Scott Trudeau, an occupational therapist with the Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) and a lecturer at Tufts.

A flexible program that can be completed in as little as a year, this master’s track offers evening classes and an individualized course of study. ■

Learn more about the Post-Professional Master’s Degree by calling 617-627-3720 or emailing olear01@emerald.tufts.edu

Community Work

MOST PEOPLE CAN’T WAIT FOR WARM WEATHER after an unforgiving Massachusetts winter. With the coming of spring, they rush outdoors to spend their afternoons reading on a bench or relaxing under the shade of a tree. Tufts occupational therapy graduate students are a bit different. When spring comes, they head indoors.

In coordination with a group practicum class, BSOT students work in day-care centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, homeless shelters, and a variety of other locations during the spring semester. This work fulfills one of the fieldwork requirements



Kathryn Barton is just one of many occupational therapy students making a difference in the community.

of the department and also lets students apply their knowledge to community needs. The experience is a learning process for all those involved. “Every day I spend with these children is fulfilling because I’m always learning from them,” says Kathryn Barton, an occupational therapy graduate student working at the Boys & Girls Club of Medford/Somerville. “The results of the sessions have shown me how beneficial sharing experiences with a peer group is.”

Aiming to improve anything from balance to fine motor skills, this community work gives students the opportunity to gain valuable experience, while remaining true to the tenets of occupational therapy. “Ours is a profession that has its roots in serving the public,” says Sharan Schwartzberg. “This experience brings the fears and realities of impoverished situations, loss, and grief before our students’ eyes. But it also brings the gains and opportunities that help them become agents of change in people’s lives.” ■

Breaking News

U.S. News & World Report has ranked the Tufts

BSOT program #5 best OT program in the country

Wongsaroj

Continued from cover

many had never been exposed to other cultures or other nationalities and they were very ignorant. I realized that the world wasn't as open-minded as I thought." While many might have been frustrated by this lack, Wongsaroj decided

"Our professors were always mentioning the culture of the individual and how this would relate in treatment. Their support helped me become a successful and confident therapist."

to pursue the issue of culture further. As a graduate student at BSOT, Wongsaroj benefited from a faculty dedicated to cultural education. "Our professors were always mentioning the culture of the individual and how this would relate in treatment," she says. "Their support helped me become a successful and confident therapist."

Wongsaroj, an Association of Tufts

Alumnae (ATA) 2000 award recipient, has been busy of late. Along with her duties at Hogan, she recently published an article titled "Culture and Occupational Therapy" with the online magazine *Advance for Occupational Therapy Practitioners*, www.advanceforot.com. The piece is an honest account of how she has become culturally educated over the years.

She writes, "Through my research, talking to other students and professionals, and my own personal reflections, I have found that culture is not something that can be taught in one class or through one learning experience. It's something that needs to be addressed on an every day, every class basis. The first step towards cultural awareness and sensitivity is being honest with yourself." ■

BSOT NOTES

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