

# TUFTS BSOT Notes



PROMOTING POSSIBILITY

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## STUDENT PROFILE:

### Martina Piercy

*B.Sc. (Hons.), 1998, Occupational Therapy, Oxford Brookes University*

THINGS AT BSOT ARE A BIT CALMER than what Martina Piercy is used to. For starters, there aren't any protests. There are no rallies, either. It's a quiet place where knowledge is shared and future occupational therapists are nurtured. It's the perfect spot for a former activist embarking on a new mission, one whose weapons of choice are hoists and stair lifts.

Before she came to Tufts, Piercy, a post-professional master's student, worked as a volunteer for Survival International, a human rights organization that advocates for the land and human rights of indigenous peoples. As an activist for the organization, Piercy was known to stir things up from time to time. "One of the groups we supported was the Yanomami tribe of Brazil," says Piercy. "Their land interests were being threatened so we demonstrated outside of the Brazilian embassy in London. Every week, I would be one of many protesters standing on the street,

## Message from the Chair

THE BOSTON SCHOOL OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY is going places. And we want you to come along for the ride. Over the past year, our alumni, faculty, staff, and students have brought BSOT to new and exciting heights. They are involved in innovative and creative work aimed at improving the lives of those in need. Whether it's alumnus Daniel Craig, who has been featured in *OT Practice* and *Advance for OT Practitioners*, working with injured performing artists or our students leading groups in community settings like the Boys & Girls Clubs, one thing is clear: we are making a difference.

We are currently working on a variety of projects that will help spread the word about the good work of our alumni, faculty, staff, and students. The goal is to not only promote their achievements, but to educate the general public about our profession and how it benefits scores of people everyday. As part of this process, we are redesigning our web site, stepping up our public relations efforts, and researching new ways to communicate with our alumni. In this vein, I would like to thank our alumni for responding to the 2001 alumni survey. The valuable data we collected will help us develop our mission and objectives for years to come. The "Did you know" facts, located on page 6, are a mere glimpse at some of the information we found.

But we still need your help. We want to hear about what you're doing and how you're helping to improve the lives of others. You can contact us 617-627-5720 or e-mail [mary.barnes@tufts.edu](mailto:mary.barnes@tufts.edu).

Thank you for your support and we look forward to hearing from you. ■



*Sharan Schwartzberg, Ed. D., OTR, FAOTA professor and chair, Boston School of Occupational Therapy*

MARK MORELLI

holding a banner and protesting. It was a great experience."

Piercy, who is supported by the Elizabeth Casson Trust, has been interested in helping others for some time. As an undergraduate majoring in Anthropology and Psychology at the University of London, she became interested in the lives of native people and soon learned that mining and logging companies were forcing many indigenous groups off their land. When Piercy graduated in 1990, she sprung into action and signed up with Survival Interna-

tional. "When I read about how these different tribes and groups were being abused, I wanted to do something," Piercy says. "I wanted to raise people's awareness about what was happening."

While at Survival International during the early 90s, Piercy was also involved with the Rise Center, a community rehabilitation clinic in London. At the center, she worked with those suffering from mental health problems, assisting in group work and organizing activities. It was at Rise  
*Continued on page 5*

# Spirituality and Religion in Occupational Therapy

by Joanne Farrar, M.S., 1995

**M**Y INTEREST IN THE relationship between occupational therapy and spiritual/religious life began several years ago. Before I entered BSOT in 1993, I had been working as an administrative assistant for Dartmouth College's Christian and Jewish chaplains. Dozens of Dartmouth chaplains had been working on a brochure concerning the politically sensitive issue of sex on campus. This inspired me to research spirituality in medical practice. Realizing the importance of my own religious upbringing in navigating the white waters of life, I reasoned that occupational therapists might be able to optimize recovery by using the client's religion or spirituality as another resource to promote wellness. However, I was concerned about whether occupational therapy supervisors and team members would find this appropriate. These topics were not mentioned in occupational therapy schools in the U.S. at that time, and very

how. Some of the respondents echoed my opinion that the spirit is the source of meaning in a client's life, whether it is in raising a child, fishing, gardening, singing in a choir, or practicing one's religion. Therefore, our functional goals for our clients should be flavored with these personally meaningful elements in order for us to provide high quality occupational therapy. Occupational therapy literature since 1995 supports these findings.

How can we address spirituality or religion in practice? When we do therapeutic exercises, we can incorporate specific exercises that will enable the client to continue to do favorite daily activities. In short, we can use whatever brings joy to the client's life to motivate recovery. As far as goals are concerned, we could have the client resume childhood rituals such as saying grace or prayers or listening to religious music. Addressing the clients' spirituality is an adjunctive modality rather than a billable service. Customizing goals to a client's

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little occupational therapy research on spirituality had been done in the states.

My thesis, *"Client's Spirituality and Religious Life: Challenging the Scope of Occupational Therapy Practice,"* was a survey of hundreds of occupational therapists in Canada and the U.S., assessing whether the client's spirituality or religion was being addressed. The results showed that some therapists were addressing spirituality and most thought these topics were important to look at but they didn't know

lifestyle requires no extra time, just clinical reasoning skills in which we perceive therapy according to the client's lifestyle, and we bill for occupational therapy using our customary billing codes

How can we address spirituality? We address spiritual crisis in our clients (or the parents of our pediatric clients) when they are overwhelmed with grief that impacts function. When we are not able to effect a positive change, we should refer them to team members such as the chaplain, their



Joanne Farrar

clergy, social workers, nurses, or psychiatrists. The American Psychological Association (APA) has published guidelines that can be used to address the client's religion. The APA recommends that health care providers not impose their own religious beliefs on the client, and not pass judgment on the client's beliefs. Learn the basic tenets of the client's faith and support the client's religious convictions. As occupational therapists we can build a therapeutic alliance by inclusive acknowledgement of diverse faith practices. We may ask clients if they have a faith perspective that is important to them and if they would like to include it in goal setting. In my practice, clients often brighten up when spirituality is mentioned because many of them are coping with some degree of spiritual crisis involving discouraging changes in function, fear of unknown consequences of illness, or end of life issues. Occupational therapists' training in grief management, stress management, and life skills training, positions us to address the spiritual crisis resulting from an event like the September 11 tragedy. In these days of pressure to shorten stays, we can enable the client to practice his or her religion as a way to improve compliance and encourage community reintegration. ■

*Joanne Farrar's thesis has been published by the Haworth Press. She currently works at the Concord Hospital in New Hampshire doing inpatient occupational therapy. She also works in home care and nursing home settings.*

# FACULTY *spotlight:*

**HOW DID DIANA BAILEY**, an associate professor at BSOT, spend her sabbatical? Well, she packed up the car, filled the tank, and headed west. The destination: Southern California. The goal: to research how lesbian couples create a home.

Last spring, Bailey researched the occupation of homemaking by lesbian couples with co-researcher Jeanne Jackson of USC. While this topic has garnered some interest in the past, the Bailey-Jackson collaborative marks the first time that there has been a substantive study of this topic. “When we first started our research, we found two or three articles that looked at the division of labor between straight, gay, and lesbian couples but there was nothing about how lesbian couples went about making a home together,” Bailey says. “I guess we wanted to break the ice on this.”

To find out how these couples lived, Bailey and Jackson went to the source—the couples’ homes. “Around 90 percent of the interviews occurred where these couples lived,” Bailey says. “I really enjoyed seeing how they established and chose to set up their homes, how they decorated, and what was important to them.”

Bailey’s research delved deeply into the lives of these couples. With questions ranging from how finances were arranged to who did the cooking, the study provided Bailey and Jackson with a

staggering amount of data that will shed much needed light on how lesbian couples create a home. “What we were doing was basic research in the field of occupational science,” Bailey says. “This has not been applied to the field yet, and even though more research

needs to be done, we are starting to develop the foundation needed to apply it to occupational therapy.”

How can this research be applied to occupational therapy? “Well, society is loaded with gender expectations around day-to-day behavior and this is also true about activities in the home,” Bailey says. “Similarly in therapy, we might be tempted to make assumptions about home-making tasks according to the gender of our clients.”

Exhaustive research has been done on heterosexual couples and the resulting data has given occupational therapists a firm foundation to work from when dealing with these couples. When it comes to lesbian couples, though, this groundwork hasn’t been developed. But the Bailey-

Jackson collaborative has started the process.

There are many steps ahead for Bailey and Jackson. They have data to analyze and more research is on the horizon. But the first step has been taken. And, before long, occupational therapists everywhere will have some valuable information about lesbian couples in the natural environment of their home. ■



*Associate Professor Diana Bailey*

## Making their mark...

Through their research and sabbatical activities, the faculty and staff of the Boston School of Occupational Therapy are making their mark. Here are just a few of their achievements over the past year:

- Associate Professor Olga Baloueff spent a week in the Ukraine last summer, providing occupational therapy consulting services to a school for children with special needs. Baloueff was joined by Professor Donald Wertlieb and Associate Professor Rebecca New, both of the Tufts Child Development Department.

- Lecturer Deborah Rochman was featured in the Winter 2002 edition of the *Tufts Dental Magazine*. The article focused on Rochman’s role in helping people suffering from orofacial discomfort.
- Department Chair and Professor Sharan Schwartzberg published her latest book, *Interactive Reasoning in the*

*Practice of Occupational Therapy*, through Prentice Hall last fall.

- Mary Barnes, a fieldwork coordinator for BSOT, and recent alumnus Amy Thornton contributed a chapter on supervision for *The Successful Fieldwork Student* which will be published by the Slack Publishing Company this May.

- As part of her fall foundation course, Lecturer Pina Masciarelli-Patel coordinated a “Promoting Occupational Therapy” project. Students went into the community to educate the pub-

lic about occupational therapy, doing everything from publishing an article in a local Chinese newspaper to attending the Walk for Life and handing out cards identifying what occupational therapy can do for those with or recovering from breast cancer.

If you would like to get copies of any of the articles mentioned above or would like to learn more about the work of our faculty and staff, please call 617-627-5720 or e-mail [mary.barnes@tufts.edu](mailto:mary.barnes@tufts.edu).

# Another Perspective on Occupational Therapy

Bob Bochnak

IT'S 11 A.M., AND THE POOL AT THE Veterans Administration Hospital in Bedford, MA, is hopping. Veterans, many of whom have seen combat, slide into the pool, and before long, the surface bubbles with activity as they swim lap after lap. The veterans use the pool often, getting in their daily exercise and catching up with old friends. But chances are their conversations do not include Tara Bass. They probably don't even know who she is, but that doesn't matter. They know her work.

Bass, a recent BSOT graduate, spent five months working at the Bedford VA, fulfilling one of her fieldwork requirements. "Part of my role at the VA was to help develop policies for things like the pool and the gym, making sure that the veterans had proper access to both. At one point, an outside contractor wanted to rent the gym and the pool, and we really had to advocate for the veterans. We had to balance their needs with those of the hospital, which is a business that needs to generate money," Bass says. "Addressing needs like this as an administrator in a health-care

setting was definitely a new experience for me, but it was also one from which I benefited greatly."

This administrative fieldwork experience was a first for BSOT as well. Fieldwork students generally go into schools, medical and health-care facilities and other locations, offering hands-on assistance

could not have been successful without the guidance and assistance of my supervisor."

Bass' responsibilities at the VA also included labor management, quality control and program development. "I was responsible for making sure staffing was okay for a given day. I also assisted in getting things like braces, wheelchairs and

**"Part of my role at the VA was to help develop policies for things like the pool and the gym, making sure that the veterans had proper access to both. At one point, an outside contractor wanted to rent the gym and the pool, and we really had to advocate for the veterans."**

while learning professional competencies. Bass' fieldwork was unique for its non-clinical emphasis and its collaborative focus. "Unlike other affiliations, where students work to become independent of their supervisors, mine was one in which collaboration was very important," Bass says. "I

eye glasses to the veterans who needed them," Bass says. "We had to look at the big picture."

Bass didn't deal with the big picture alone. She had a lot of inside help. BSOT lecturer Scott Trudeau is the director of rehabilitative services at the Bedford VA and was Bass' supervisor. "The most enjoyable part of my affiliation was the opportunity to work closely with and learn from Scott Trudeau," Bass says. "He was a great mentor. I could pass ideas by him, tell him how I felt about things, and he gave me great advice."

Now an occupational therapist at HealthSouth-New England Rehab, Bass credits her time at the Bedford Veterans Administration Hospital with altering how she views occupational therapy. While it is a helping profession aimed at developing an individual's ability to handle everyday tasks and activities, there is also the administrative side that makes it all possible. "From this work, I have gained a new appreciation for all that is involved in occupational therapy," Bass says. ■



Tara Bass

MARK MORELLI

*This article originally appeared in the March 2002 issue of the Tufts Journal.*



## BSOT Announces New Scholarship Fund

**T**HE BOSTON SCHOOL OF Occupational Therapy is honored to announce the creation of the Joy Ann Greisen Scholarship Fund. The scholarship is named for the late Joy Ann Greisen, a 1970 graduate of BSOT, and it will support students who have excelled academically, distinguished themselves as campus leaders, and require financial assistance to attend Tufts. "All of us here at BSOT cannot thank the Greisen family enough for their support," says Sharan Schwartzberg. "This scholarship is a special gift for BSOT and it will help students who might not otherwise have an opportunity to earn an advanced degree in occupational therapy."

The first recipient of the scholarship is Anne Grygiel, a current occupational therapy student who will be spending her summer affiliation working at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, MA. "I feel very proud to be the first student to receive this scholarship," Grygiel says. "And I look forward to one day being able to provide the same support and encourage-



*Daniel and Ronald Greisen*

ment to a future occupational therapy student."

If you would like to make a gift to the Joy Ann Greisen Scholarship Fund please mail your contributions to:

Joy Ann Greisen Scholarship Fund  
Boston School of Occupational Therapy  
Tufts University  
26 Winthrop Street  
Medford, MA 02155

For more information, please call 617-627-5720.

## AOTA Comes to Tufts

Joseph Isaacs, executive director of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), visited BSOT on February 22 to discuss ways to promote the work of the department and the field of occupational therapy in general. Isaacs met with department Chair Sharan Schwartzberg and several other high-level Tufts administrators, commenting favorably on the strides that BSOT has made over the last year. "We are fortunate to have the support of the AOTA as we move ahead with several exciting new initiatives," says Schwartzberg. "This collaboration will also give the field more exposure so people who had never thought about pursuing a career in occupational therapy might be inclined to do so." ■



*Isaacs with Department Chair, Sharan Schwartzberg*

## Piercy

*Continued from cover*

where she was exposed to occupational therapy for the first time. "While I was at the center, I came across an occupational therapist who was working there. I was impressed by what he was trying to accomplish and I would have liked to extend my stay. But then the money came in and I was off."

The money was insurance compensation for a bicycle accident that Piercy had been involved in while she was at the University of London. It took three years for the payment to come through. It took six weeks for Piercy to find herself in Malaysia. Piercy, who had wanted to travel abroad for some time, joined the Asian campaign's office of Survival International. "I went to places like the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia as part of the Asian campaign. I lived with tribal peoples and it was a great opportunity to see how other people lived." Eventually, Piercy tired of traveling and returned to England. One day, while paging through a newspaper, she saw an ad for an occupational therapy assistant and took

a position at the Mayday Hospital. "I enjoyed working with Survival International but the issues we were dealing with were so big, and our movement was so small that it would take years to see any change," Piercy says. "At Mayday, I was able to see more immediate improvements." Piercy worked at the hospital for a year, spending the majority of her time with stroke patients. "I remember the older people best," says Piercy, who earned a Bachelor of Science degree with Honors in occupational therapy from Oxford Brookes University in 1998. "Some of them were in their eighties and they had such a will to improve. There was one man I worked with who was in a wheelchair and I taught him how to use it. He was just so determined and positive. He really inspired me."

Martina Piercy has come to BSOT to learn about everything from setting up an occupational therapy practice from scratch to important management and policy issues. She has also come to start a new mission. And while she doesn't take to the streets anymore in protest, Martina Piercy hasn't stopped trying to improve the world. She just prefers to do it one person at a time. ■

**Did you know . . .** that over 500 alumni responded to our 2001 alumni survey? ...that the majority of our alumni survey respondents said that they were "Very Satisfied" with their current employment position? ...that our alumni ranked Non-medical Corporate/ Industrial Settings and Ergonomics Consulting as the number #1 emerging field in occupational therapy?



## Save the Date

**T**he Boston School of Occupational Therapy will be holding an alumni reception during the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) Conference in May. **The reception will be held on Friday, May 3 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.** in the Lafayette Room of the Miami Fontainebleau Hilton. Come enjoy good food and drink with fellow alumni, faculty, students, and fieldwork educators. We look forward to seeing you there! ■

*Nancy Brescia, BSOT'83, attended last year's conference with daughter, Ashley.*

### BSOT NOTES

#### EDITOR

Robert Bochnak

#### CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Joanne Farrar, BSOT'95

#### DESIGN

Department of Publications

#### For more information:

Boston School of Occupational  
Therapy  
Tufts University  
26 Winthrop Street  
Medford, MA 02155

Tel: 617-627-5720 Fax: 617-627-3722

E-mail: [oolear01@emerald.tufts.edu](mailto:oolear01@emerald.tufts.edu)

Website: [www.ase.tufts.edu/bsot](http://www.ase.tufts.edu/bsot)

*BSOT Notes* is the alumni newsletter for the Boston School of Occupational Therapy.

#### **We'd like to hear from you**

If there are comments you would like to make, issues you would like to see covered, an article you would like to contribute, or if there is a fellow alumnus you would like to see interviewed for a future article, please contact us at the address above or e-mail [robert.bochnak@tufts.edu](mailto:robert.bochnak@tufts.edu)

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