

TUFTS BSOT Notes



PROMOTING POSSIBILITY

Winter 2006

Tufts-BSOT Receives Largest Gift in History

The Tufts University Boston School of Occupational Therapy (BSOT) has received a significant gift from Anita Bekenstein, G'86, and Josh Bekenstein to establish the *Bekenstein Family Endowment at the Boston School of Occupational Therapy*. Funds from the gift will be used for scholarships to support the financial aid needs of occupational therapy master's and doctoral students. This gift marks not only the largest single contribution in the school's/department's eighty-seven year history, but is only the second endowed scholarship that exists at Tufts-BSOT.

Each year, Tufts-BSOT loses a few high quality candidates to peer institutions due to less competitive aid packages. The Bekenstein gift will infuse, on an annual

basis, critical resources into the department's financial aid budget, thus enabling it to enhance aid packages for top applicants.

"We are extremely grateful for this generous gift," says Sharan Schwartzberg, professor and chair of the department. "It will allow us to be more competitive with other graduate programs in occupational therapy and enable us to pick from the brightest and most diverse students planning to pursue occupational therapy as a career."

To be considered for a Bekenstein Scholarship, applicants will need to exhibit, among other requirements, financial need, leadership qualities, and the potential to make a difference in the arenas of service delivery, policy development, research

or teaching. Scholarship recipients will be selected by the admissions office and Tufts-BSOT faculty and administrative staff.

"These scholarships will expand the ranks of students aspiring to be researchers, faculty, and leader practitioners," says Schwartzberg. "It will also allow us to support a more diverse group of students who will add to the diversity of the profession and fill the ranks of the under-represented groups so much needed to properly deliver occupational therapy services in the United States."

To learn more about this scholarship program, contact Sharan Schwartzberg at sharan.schwartzberg@tufts.edu or 617-627-5920.

ALUMNI PROFILE

Jody Sakamoto

M.S., Occupational Therapy, G'03

For the past year, Jody Sakamoto has had some company while working with her patients. This company doesn't say much and only moves when it's told. But once Sakamoto steps aside and turns things over to it, a future avenue for occupational therapy practice becomes clear.

"I work with veterans in inpatient acute rehabilitation," says Sakamoto, an occupational therapist with the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. "I am also part of a multi-site research project looking at the efficacy of using a robotic arm



Jody Sakamoto, G'03, with Zaven Ghezalshouri, a health science specialist at the VA, and a veteran involved in the study.

with patients who have had strokes with upper-extremity hemiparesis."

The purpose of the project is to see if a robotic arm can help stroke victims regain lost function. As a discipline, occupational therapy was a natural fit to be part of this

study due to its ability to understand the needs of patients in terms of upper-extremity function.

Once a veteran is selected for the study, he or she is randomly assigned to a control, low-level, or high-level group. The members of these groups receive typical occupational therapy treatment, but when it comes to the robotic arm the services differ. The low-level and high-level research groups work with the arm once and twice a day, respectively. The control

group, on the other hand, uses the robotic arm for one or two sessions for the experience, but receive no treatment with it. "With the robotic arm, the occupational therapist follows along different movements

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Alumna Named Easter Seals National Volunteer of the Year

Caroline Larson was named the Easter Seals Volunteer of the Year at the organization's National Convention in Washington, DC in October 2005.

Larson, a 1973 graduate of Tufts-BSOT, was a Girl Scout when she first volunteered in an Easter Seals swim program to earn her "aide to the handicapped" badge. The swim program has since ended, but Larson's involvement with Easter Seals Massachusetts has continued as a board member, fundraiser, and advocate for people with disabilities.

In accepting her award, Larson said her long involvement with Easter Seals was inspired by the people she has met through her volunteer work.

"Two teenagers serving as camp counselors at an integrated camp—one uses a wheelchair, the other is deaf The

fourth grader who cannot speak but tells me a knock-knock joke with his computer device The wheelchair basketball star who now travels with his new baby son in his lap instead of a basketball," said Larson. "Their perspectives and life experiences have changed my life forever."

Larson's volunteer work with Easter Seals also inspired her career choice. Today, she is a pediatric occupational therapist in private practice and she and her husband run the Equipment Shop, which offers catalog and Internet sales of therapy equipment.

Sakamoto continued from page 1

and different planes that represent different functional movements that the person would normally do, but cannot," says Sakamoto, explaining how the robotic arm works. "The arm kind of puts the person through the movements and if the individual can help a little bit, the robotic arm will push him or her the rest of the way."

The robotic arm is connected to a computer nearby and as the client is working

with it the data is sent there. Once all the data has been collected, it's then forwarded to California's Palo Alto Institute for Research and Education where the multi-site study is being coordinated.

While Sakamoto believes that the robotic arm is helping the veterans she works with, she cautions against focusing on this technology alone in an occupational therapy setting.

"I feel that the robotic arm is beneficial for the movements it focuses on, but I wouldn't just rely on that," says Sakamoto, who earned her master's from Tufts-BSOT in 2003. "I'm not as close to the patients I work with through the robotic arm as I am with those that I work with on a daily basis. I like to get to know the patient more and know everything that they are going through."

To learn more about the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, go to <http://www.gla.med.va.gov/>. Jody Sakamoto can be reached at jody.sakamoto@med.va.gov.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Winter 2006



There has been a lot of activity in the Tufts-BSOT community since the last edition of *BSOT Notes*. I am sincerely grateful to all of our alumni for their devotion to our department and service to so many individuals and communities. This help comes in many forms. In this newsletter, you will read reports about a generous gift to support student tuition scholarships and alumni recognition and innovations, both nationally and internationally. Our faculty, students, and alumni are actively contributing to the promotion of occupational therapy in Massachusetts and across the nation—influencing how policy is formed and populations are served.

As the Tufts University School of Arts and Sciences furthers its mission of civic engagement and scholarship, Tufts-BSOT continues to actively support these endeavors. Our program has continued its dedication to the promotion and integration of research, the dissemination of knowledge, and enabling people to participate in what gives their lives meaning. The stories covered in this issue are about the involvement of our alumni, students, faculty, and staff in their various communities, as they engage in research, scholarship, philanthropy, and practice.

I am proud to share in our collective successes and innovations. Together, we really can, and do, make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharan L. Schwartzberg".

Sharan L. Schwartzberg
Professor and Chair

CATCHING UP WITH

Marcela Haro-Juarez

M.S., Occupational Therapy,
G'92

The accidents happen far from Marcela Haro-Juarez's office at Liberty ART in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Because of this, she doesn't see the faces of people rushing for shelter as cranes collapse and fall to the ground. She doesn't feel the mountains tremble when an explosion rocks one of Argentina's mines or hear the rumbling of trucks as they usher the injured to the hospital, either. Instead, in the seconds it takes for a life to be changed forever, Haro-Juarez is sitting in front of her computer working as she waits for the dust to settle. Once it does, she springs into action.

As the Coordinator of Vocational Rehabilitation for Liberty ART in Buenos Aires, Marcela Haro-Juarez makes sure those injured in work-related accidents, like the ones described above, get the rehabilitative care necessary to resume their former lives and, if necessary, embark on new ones.

"A case involving one of our insured clients who is injured on the job is usually followed by a claim adjustor and me," says Haro-Juarez, during a recent phone interview. "We have professionals and doctors who support this claim adjustor. Once a client is referred to a rehab clinic, the claim adjustor and I do a lot of brainstorming and teamwork to see what kind of decision we're going to make about a particular case. Sometimes, it involves visiting the rehab places to see what the progress is of the person or to talk more with the rehab professional to see what else can be done if we think the progress is not as good as we would expect."

Originally from Argentina, Marcela Haro-Juarez earned her master's from Tufts-BSOT in 1992. After graduating, she stayed in Boston to work as a practitioner at the Liberty Mutual Service Center, an occupational health and rehabilitation center created to treat the company's workers compensation patients. Following changes to workers compensation laws in Argentina (legislation which required employers to provide, among



Marcela Haro-Juarez (middle) with a client.

other things, medical care and rehabilitative services to those injured in work-related accidents), she was contacted by Liberty Mutual International and offered a position at one of its offices in Argentina. Since 1996, Haro-Juarez, a former college professor, has worked for Liberty ART which, as its web site states, "offers workers compensation products and services to businesses of all sizes and is recognized as one of the largest writers of workers compensation in Argentina."

When she first took the position, Haro-Juarez spent most of her time meeting with doctors and visiting rehabilitation clinics around the country to get a sense of what services each location could provide.

"There are different levels of rehabilitation services [in Argentina] and we had to create and provide a network and that's why we had to evaluate," she says. "I evaluated the infrastructure of the rehabilitation clinics and saw what we could count on when we hired them. In the past, these clinics would give rehab treatments, but they were not used to registering periodically the progress of patients with measurable short and long-term treatment goals, as is done in the United States. We had to educate them to do that, now all treatments, evaluations, and progress have to be recorded."

Once the network was in place, Haro-Juarez assumed her current role, which includes working with claim adjustors,

purchasing prosthetic equipment for her insured clients, and advising the occupational therapists she hires. In this advisory role, Haro-Juarez rarely gets involved with minor cases (i.e., broken limbs, minor lacerations, etc.), unless some complications arise and her input and suggestions for intervention are needed. But with major injuries like amputations, paralysis, or serious burns, the injured often need more than rehabilitation. They need a fresh start as well.

"I coordinate the return to work programs," she says. "The workers [those with major injuries] may be fired by their employer because they cannot perform their previous jobs due to the injuries they have suffered. We do the functional evaluation of the worker and the job site visit to analyze the jobs. Because of the volume we have, I am not able to do this myself, so I contract the service out to occupational therapists all over the country. I am in close contact with these therapists because these are the people who represent me when they go to our insured clients. The occupational therapists, in the job site visits, do the recommendations for return to work and if the injured worker is fired, we implement work training for these individuals."

Once the training is complete, those who have lost limbs or are confined to wheelchairs can start new lives.

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The Right Stuff

Captain John DaLomba

M.S., Occupational Therapy,
G'97

A steady rain falls as a bus enters New York City's Port Authority Terminal. As it comes to a stop, occupational therapy graduate John DaLomba gathers his belongings and makes his way to the exit with the rest of the passengers. Once outside, the enormity of the event becomes even clearer. The usually bustling terminal is quiet, save for the grim-faced newsmen and newswomen who appear on the televisions sprinkled throughout the space. People walk by with blank, expressionless faces. Airline baggage tags dangle from the numerous suitcases that litter the floor. Time passes by slowly, before seeming to stop altogether. Those wandering the terminal are supposed to be somewhere else. Vacations had been planned, business trips scheduled, and reunions arranged. But these plans are now irrelevant, altered by something that, days earlier, seemed unimaginable, something that changed the lives of millions in an instant. Still, though, they come, this teeming mass of people, this cross-section of America, to a bus terminal in New York City with one goal in mind—to find the way home.

“On September 11, 2001, I was living in California, but I happened to be in Rhode Island for my grandmother’s funeral,” recalls DaLomba. “The funeral was held on the morning the attacks happened. I had to go back to California on a bus because all the flights were grounded.”

After a few hours, DaLomba left the terminal, climbed onto another bus, and headed for the West Coast, where his son and pregnant wife, fellow occupational therapy graduate Elaina (Salto), waited.

What followed was a three-day, cross-country trek that took DaLomba everywhere from the fields of Iowa to an empty Las Vegas strip. Along the way, he met a rap artist who had been in New York to finalize a record deal, a former actor who had appeared in several Kentucky Fried Chicken commercials, and an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) from San



Captain DaLomba, G'97, working in Iraq.

Diego, California. As the bus sped forward, DaLomba took time to reflect on the events of September 11th, the people he had met, and what the future held for him and his family. And as he passed through an America that few have the opportunity to see, John DaLomba kept returning to a single question.

Why not me?

This story would still be intriguing if it ended with John DaLomba running up the steps of his home to embrace his wife. One could imagine that there would be more hugs and laughter as the hours passed. Phone calls would be made to family and friends, and DaLomba would assure them that everything was fine. Later that night, when the world was silent once again, he might tell his wife about the smoke-filled hole he saw as he departed New York or he might spare her from the details of how, when seeing the wreckage, he felt a lump in his throat and stopped breathing for a moment. He might speak of the people he met, how the mountain ranges of Pennsylvania seem to touch the sky, and that there are few things as breathtaking as driving through Colorado on a sun-soaked day. Regardless, life would continue as it always had. John DaLomba would wake up the next day, inhale the brisk morning air as he

took off on his morning jog, and think of the clients he would see that day in his role as an occupational therapist at the Community Medical Group in Riverside, California.

But this is not what happened. Well, at least not entirely. When John DaLomba returned home, he did embrace his wife, call his family, and share what he had experienced. But along with the memories he had gathered, he had brought something else with him as well, something that made the prospect of continuing life as he always had impossible. It was the question.

Why not me?

After speaking with his wife and praying with her for guidance, John DaLomba had his answer.

“On my trip from New York, I had plenty of time to think,” he says. “During those couple of days there was nothing but the terrorist attacks on T.V. When I was watching, I thought to myself, ‘well, somebody has got to do something. Why not me? I’ve got the skills and I could probably help the cause in some way. I know I work in a profession that they have a need for so why not give it a shot?’ I felt an obligation to do something and help my country in some way. When I got back to California, I talked about it with my wife

and prayed. I gave an Air Force recruiter a call, and within a week or two, I was in the recruiting station going through a physical. A few months later, I entered active duty.”

A Different Kind of Practice

It’s moving in day for the DaLomba family. Boxes filled with clothes and pots and pans are everywhere. Naturally, the air conditioner doesn’t work and the refrigerator just gasped its last breath, but these technical difficulties aside, everything is well. It’s the family’s second move since John DaLomba, now a Captain in the Air Force, entered the military in 2002. The first move took them to San Antonio, Texas, where Captain DaLomba served as an occupational therapist at the Lackland Air Force Base, and the most recent relocation has brought the family to Shiloh, Illinois. In a few days, the Captain will report for duty at the Scott Air Force Base, thus continuing his mission to make a difference in the lives of the servicemen and servicewomen who seek his help.

“My goal has always been to do the best I could, to help people out as I could, and hopefully enable the ones who needed to get back to work do so,” he says. “For me, the best part about being in the military is just being part of an organization that has a clearly defined mission and knowing that I’m helping to support the mission of the Air Force and supporting what the government stands for. I’m sworn as a military officer to uphold and defend the constitution and that means a lot to me.”

While assigned to Lackland, Captain DaLomba was called to serve in Iraq as an occupational therapist. While there, the Captain, a certified hand therapist, focused primarily on fractures, soft tissue and tendon injuries, assorted sprains and strains, and amputations. Although he couldn’t elaborate on his time in Iraq during a phone interview, citing safety concerns for the men and women still serving, Captain DaLomba was able to share what it’s like being an occupational therapist in the military.

“It [serving in Iraq] challenged my skills quite a bit,” he says. “In the military, I’m credentialed to do a few more things than a civilian therapist could do. For example, in the United States I’m allowed to order X-rays. I can order an MRI. I’m not allowed to diagnose what I see in the



Captain DaLomba with one of his sons.

MRI, that has to be done by a radiologist, but [in the military] I can actually read the report back to the patient, kind of explain what the report says. Very often what the report says is just as confusing to the patient as anything else. In Iraq, I was able to do more things like this.”

While in Iraq, Captain DaLomba also developed close ties with the orthopedic surgeons he worked with, which provided additional opportunities to expand the range of services he delivered.

“If we felt we could handle it, we

other than the fact that we are able to do more things,” he says. “I still have a caseload that I have to maintain. I’ve got to maintain a certain level of productivity. I have to be competent in my job. I have to attend continuing education.”

Back Home

Captain John DaLomba is six months into his latest assignment at the Scott Air Base and he spends his days conducting evaluations and follow-up sessions with his patients. If a complex surgical or trauma

And as he passed through an America that few have the opportunity to see, John DaLomba kept returning to a single question. *Why not me?*

helped orthopedics by doing a lot of their triage,” he says. “If somebody walked in and said ‘my hand hurts’ or ‘I hurt my shoulder playing basketball’ we would take their history or order the tests that needed to be done, like X-rays. We would also get orthopedics to help us out. What I liked most about it [serving as an occupational therapist in Iraq] was that I worked so closely with the surgeons. I was able to interact with them, not on a different level, but more closely than I ever had in the past.”

With the possibility of serving in a dangerous environment and being away from one’s family aside, the Captain believes that there are also several similarities between military and civilian occupational therapists.

“It’s really not that much different,

case surfaces, Captain DaLomba handles these himself, but most of the time treatments are delivered by the military technicians he oversees. The Captain plans to stay in the military, and if he’s needed again in Iraq he will, in his words, serve proudly and happily. Until that time comes, Captain DaLomba will do what he always has. He will be the best man, husband, father, Airman, and occupational therapist he can be. And when each day ends, he will pack up his things, shut the lights off in his office, jump into his car, and once again take that road which leads to the best place in the world.

Home.

Captain John DaLomba can be reached at jdalomba@alumni.tufts.edu.

News

Several Tufts-BSOT alumni, students, faculty, and staff attended the Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy's (MAOT) Annual Conference in October 2005. Student presenters from Tufts-BSOT included Carrie Carman, Amanda Harris, Lisa Jackson, Jessica Merkin, Caryn Mervis, and Sameera Qureshi. Alumna Midge Hobbs, MA, OTR/L, presented her research on the Network for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns in Occupational Therapy. Other presenters included Assistant Professor Sharon Ray, ScD, OTR/L and Fieldwork Coordinators Mary Alicia Barnes, OTR/L, and Mary Evenson, MPH, OTR/L.



Tufts-BSOT students (l-r) Carrie Carman, Sameera Qureshi, Amanda Harris, Caryn Mervis, Jessica Merkin, and Audrey Philatre.



Alumni, students, faculty, and staff from Tufts-BSOT at the 2005 Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy (MAOT) Conference.

Tufts-BSOT Faculty and Alumni Develop Guidelines for Occupational Therapy in Massachusetts Public Schools

For the past three years, Tufts-BSOT alumni Jan Hollenbeck, MS, OTR/L; June Bunch, MHA, MS, OTR/L; Diane Blengs Walker, MS, OTR/L; and Assistant Professor Sharon Ray, ScD, OTR/L, have worked to clarify the role of occupational therapy in Massachusetts public schools. The work of this group, all of whom were members of a Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy (MAOT) School Special Interest Task Force, led to the development of: *Guidelines for Provision of Occupational Therapy Services in Massachusetts Public Schools* (Hollenbeck, J., Ray, S., Walker, D., & Bunch, J. (2005). Waltham, MA: Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy). The guidelines were created at the request of Massachusetts school-based occupational therapy practitioners who were looking for support when it came to decision-making about occupational therapy services. The guidelines, which can be found at www.maot.org, are intended to clarify the role of occupational therapy in the Massachusetts public schools according to legal mandates. They include a review of federal and state legislation that supports school services, definitions and scope of practice as outlined by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and the literature, and examples of practical application. Resources such as sample documentation methods and suggested evaluation tools are also provided as part of the text.

The guidelines provide information useful to occupational therapy practitioners, administrators, school personnel, families, and other vested stakeholders.

To learn more about the guidelines, go to www.maot.org.



(l-r) June Bunch, MHA, MS, OTR/L; Sharon Ray, ScD, OTR/L; Jan Hollenbeck, MS, OTR/L; and Diane Blengs Walker, MS, OTR/L, at the 2005 Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy (MAOT) Conference.

Tufts-BSOT and My Professional Journey

By Scott Trudeau, T'85, G'98

I have a long-term relationship with Tufts. I completed my B.S. in 1985 and for the first ten years of my career I worked as an occupational therapist in acute adult mental health. In the mid '90s, I began what became a very important shift in my career when I took a position working as the fieldwork education coordinator at the Bedford, Massachusetts Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC). At this time, my relationship with the Tufts Department of Occupational Therapy was rekindled. I began working on my advanced professional master's—receiving an M.A. in February of 1998, at which point another opportunity arose, and I began teaching here in the fall of 1998. Since then, I have had the pleasure of working with many students through teaching a range of courses exploring health conditions, occupational therapy practice with mental health and geriatric populations, clinical reasoning, and adult development. While I have clearly observed growth in my students, it is difficult to articulate how much I have learned from my teaching!

While I have clearly observed growth in my students, it is difficult to articulate how much I have learned from my teaching!

During one memorable experience, I learned a lot about juggling a variety of student needs when I taught a course on aging a couple of summers ago. Since it was a summer offering, it was anticipated that the enrollment would be seven to ten



Scott Trudeau, T'85, G'98

students, mostly from the occupational therapy program. The pre-registration roster confirmed this with 11 students signed up for the class. I had designed the course around this, expecting that it would be

mostly a seminar format with readings and discussion. The students would facilitate various discussion sessions and complete a final presentation that would be used to calculate their grades. Imagine my shock when I arrived for the first session to a group of thirty-eight students, crammed into the classroom. In the midst of all this chaos, I became aware that this was a significantly more diverse group than I was used to teaching. Included in the class mix

were a couple of undergraduates, a woman in her 70s from the community who was “getting ready for when she got older,” and four international students. Of particular interest was one of the undergraduates who was from Japan, where her mother ran a chain of nursing homes. Rather than focusing blindly on the prescribed syllabus, we were able to adapt content to the needs and interests of the students. I think that this became a very beneficial learning experience for the entire class. We were able to capitalize on the experiences of those in the class, and probably exceeded the original course objectives. Had we just plowed ahead with the course as prepared, this richness would have been lost. I would guess that I easily learned more than I taught that particular summer.

I have enjoyed my career evolution into the areas of teaching and research so much that I am currently completing a Ph.D. at Boston College. As my academic roles have become defined, I am looking forward to further establishing a program of research in the area of community-based care for elders, especially elders with dementia, and their care partners.

Scott A. Trudeau, M.A., OTR/L, has recently taken on the role of full-time faculty at Tufts-BSOT. As a lecturer at Tufts, Scott brings his many years of clinical and administrative practice to the classroom, drawing on his experience in psychiatric and geriatric healthcare. Scott's primary research interests center around factors contributing to successful aging. Scott has studied the contributions that occupations make to maintaining elders in the community with enhanced quality of life. Scott's current work explores topics of home safety, personal care, the dynamics of care giving, and the role of lifelong learning for community dwelling elders.

Stay connected! We are seeking class stewards, individuals who are interested in acting as a liaison between their graduating class and Tufts-BSOT. If you are interested, please contact Mary Alicia Barnes at 617-627-5960 or mary.barnes@tufts.edu.

Haro-Juarez *continued from page 3*

“We worked with someone who got injured working in the mines because of an explosion,” says Haro-Juarez. “He lost one leg and one arm, so after he got the initial medical treatment we organized his referral to a rehab center where he could live for a few months because we knew that in the province he lived in he wouldn’t get the rehabilitation he needed. I visited him a couple of times to check on his progress and I was there when he got the prostheses for his leg and arm. We also arranged work training for him and he got trained for doing gardening. Hopefully, he will get some work as a gardener.”

To learn more about Liberty ART in Argentina, go to www.libertyargentina.com.ar. Marcela Haro-Juarez can be reached at marcela_haro@libertyart.com.ar.

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Tufts-BSOT Notes is the newsletter of the Tufts University-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/a you would like to see interviewed for a future article, please contact us at the address above or e-mail BSOTNotes@tufts.edu.



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