T
o many, the term “occupational therapist” conjures an image of a professional who helps clients address sensory or motor problems or assists with daily living tasks. But to those in the field, the profession encompasses much more: Occupational therapists are creative thinkers, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Their holistic training and approach to improving quality of life make them ideal game-changers in a range of careers.

Take Beth Jackson-Gagne, MS, OTR/L, for example. A 1995 graduate of the Tufts Department of Occupational Therapy, Jackson-Gagne worked in early intervention and public school settings before her son Luke was born in 2004. At six weeks old, Luke was diagnosed with Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), a condition that caused him to cry often and sleep little. Although specialists advised Jackson-Gagne to elevate one end of Luke’s crib to keep him upright while sleeping, she could not find a product that prevented the baby from sliding down. And each time Luke slid down, he woke up as his mother repositioned him. Both mother and baby were exhausted.

Finally, Jackson-Gagne put on her “OT hat” and decided to design her own positioning system. “I thought: ‘I’m an occupational therapist. I can fix this,’” she recalls. Jackson-Gagne sewed Velcro straps onto her son’s crib sheets and secured her baby in position. “Luke slept more that first night than he had in three months! And so did we!” she says.

A year later, Jackson-Gagne went back to work, helping autistic children with feeding issues. Encouraged by colleagues and parents of children with GERD—many of whom had experienced similar positioning struggles with their babies—Jackson-Gagne began exploring the possibility of marketing her system. “I was a therapist, not an entrepreneur, but after the success I had had with my son, I wanted to share this product so other babies and parents could get some much-needed sleep!” she says.

Jackson-Gagne took her idea to Daniel Hannon, an engineering psychologist and professor of the practice in the Tufts School of Engineering’s mechanical engineering department. Hannon helped her develop the product using precise calculations related to a baby’s weight and the angle of placement in the crib.

Just a few years later, Jackson-Gagne launched Baby Stay-Asleep, LLC (http://www.babystayasleep.com), an internet-based company that sells her sleep positioning system. Consisting of a wrapping device that swaddles the baby like a diaper, a bumper system, and a fitted sheet with built-in Velcro that holds the system in place, Baby Stay-Asleep has already gotten rave reviews from parents, though it has only been on the market a year.

Jackson-Gagne is excited about her new business and how her ability to think outside the box helped her solve a difficult problem. “OTs are resourceful people. We know how to make adaptations to fit our clients’ needs—and those adaptations are often solutions for others. For me, it was not a big leap to go from occupational therapist to inventor,” she says.

Disaster planning for special populations
A
other Tufts alumnus, Michael Steinhauer, OTR, MPH, FAOTA (’76), is also using his extensive occupational therapy skills in a unique job. He is the special populations planner in the Department of Emergency Management in Dane County, Wisconsin. Steinhauer is Wisconsin’s only full-time, county-level employee assigned to educate state, county, and local governments, service organizations, and the disabled community about disaster planning for people with disabilities. “We consult and distribute information about preparing for an emergency,” Steinhauer says. “I also work with other states who want to adopt our model. This project is ‘one of a kind’ in the United States.”

While all states have emergency preparedness programs, only in the past year have they begun focusing specifically on special populations. “Since 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, the government has pumped billions into disaster planning for the gen-

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
Occupational therapy profession invites creativity, innovation

outsidethebox FALL 2010

P R O M O T I N G  P O S S I B I L I T Y

Tufts-Boston School of Occupational Therapy • The first school of occupational therapy in the country

Outsideshow continued on page 2
“Community practice” is the latest emerging practice area AOTA is promoting in its Centennial Vision—and it is an area in which Tufts has excelled for years. Our students have often participated in community-based practice through practicums, service learning, and fieldwork, and the Department of Occupational Therapy is known for its strength in this arena.

This year, however, we have expanded our community partnerships through two key initiatives. In keeping with a national push to expand diversity in the health professions, Somerville High School asked to join forces with the Department of Occupational Therapy, the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, and the Department of Education to help promote the health professions to the high school’s diverse population. Through curriculum development and internship opportunities, we are exciting young people of color about careers in health care.

This initiative supports our department’s own strategic agenda, which includes attracting a more diverse applicant pool. If we can engage an ethnically varied group of students at a young age, when they are considering their college and career paths, we can help expand the diversity of the profession.

The second initiative, called 3LPlace: A Community for Life-Long Learning, will provide young adults with autism spectrum disorders a college campus experience. In collaboration with experts and parents of children with the disorder, members of our department are developing a curriculum based on self determination to help these students explore opportunities after high school. As the program evolves, Tufts faculty and students will help implement the curriculum and participate in program-related research.

Two new faculty members—Sarah Everhart Skeels, MPH (http://ase.tufts.edu/bsot/facultySkeels.htm), and Jane Koomar, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA (http://ase.tufts.edu/bsot/facultyKoomar.htm), are also furthering our emphasis on community practice. A para-Olympic skier and disabilities advocate, Everhart Skeels is teaching courses in health and community systems and health promotion this year. Jill Siebeking, OTD, OTR/L, our recruitment coordinator and an alumna of our OTD program, will co-teach with Everhart Skeels, bringing her community-based occupational therapy experience to the course.

Koomar, a renowned sensory integration specialist (http://www.otawatertown.com), joins us as a professor of the practice, teaching Occupational Therapy Practice in Pediatrics. Joining her is Jean Martens, MS, OTR/L (http://ase.tufts.edu/bsot/facultyMartens.htm), an experienced pediatric and school-based practitioner who has taught kinesiology at Tufts.

With these new faculty members and community-based partnerships in place, we are better preparing our students to meet the growing national trends in healthcare while helping individuals live meaningful lives in their communities.

Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Professor and Chair
HEALTH QUALITY OF LIFE LAB (HQLL) UPDATE:
Students and faculty contribute through research, presentations

Anadee Nikte assists with Parkinson's research
Linda Tickle-Degnen and her students at Tufts' Health Quality of Life Laboratory (HQLL) continue to disseminate their work locally and nationally. Anadee Nikte ('10), who earned her BS in occupational therapy at Maharashtra University of Health Sciences in Mumbai, India, worked as a research assistant at HQLL as part of her post-professional masters program. Nikte was attracted to Tufts because the program offered “very in-depth study and a lot of practicum experience. I wanted to expand my knowledge of occupational therapy, particularly in working with older adults,” she says.

Tickle-Degnen's research at HQLL offered a perfect fit for Nikte. She assisted with ongoing studies about how facial masking affects the social behaviors and caregiver response of those with Parkinson's disease. One study she participated in, Parkinson's Disease: Seeing beyond Symptoms, under the supervision of HQLL doctoral student Kathleen Bogart, will be presented at MAOT's conference in October, 2010. As Nikte explains, “The symptoms of Parkinson's disease can be a barrier to forming a therapeutic relationship. Information from this study could help practitioners develop a better rapport with their patients.”

Nikte says her post-professional work at Tufts has significantly enhanced her understanding of older adults with disabilities, and she is proud of her participation in HQLL. “Working in the lab was a great experience. Linda Tickle-Degnen is a supportive and motivating mentor, and I hope my contributions to her research will provide new directions for future studies.”

Presenters offer insights
Throughout the academic year, student and faculty researchers from within and outside of the Tufts community have presented their project ideas on a range of topics at HQLL's Working Group series. The series gives HQLL presentation participants’ opportunities to share their work, often in progress, and to brainstorm and discuss possible future directions. This year's presentations were:

• Timothy W. Bickmore, Northeastern University College of Computer and Information Science: Creating rapport using computer agents: Implications for healthcare
• Simone Gill, PhD, OTR/L, Boston University: Adaptation to change in children's gait
• Heather Gray, PhD, Tufts HQLL: A meta-analysis of emotion recognition in Parkinson's disease
• Kathleen D. Lyons, ScD, OTR/L, Dartmouth Medical School: Integrating physical and psychosocial interventions for older adult cancer survivors
• Michael Roberts, MS, OTR/L, Tufts Department of Occupational Therapy: Research possibilities in Wii-habilitation
• Lisa Ryan, OTS ('10), Tufts Department of Occupational Therapy: HQLL: A men's group for Parkinson's disease
• Elizabeth Warner, PsyD, SMART Project Director; Senior Supervisor, Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute: Coding affective displays in children during psychotherapy.

De-stressing at school
Fiona Jensen, OTR/L ('85), has also used her occupational therapy thinking to address a serious problem at her children's high school in Barnstable, Massachusetts. In the past two years, this small Cape Cod community has suffered through the suicide of two students and the unexpected deaths of three others. “As I watched my children and their friends go through these traumas, I looked at their life skills, which weren’t very good. Many of the kids were falling apart from the pressure. They were learning science, math, and history but nowhere were they getting the coping strategies they needed to deal with such stress,” she says.

So Jensen applied her holistic thinking skills and personal knowledge of mindfulness-based stress reduction to see if she could help. She approached Adam Liss, a Cape Cod stress relief counselor, who worked with Jensen to design a school-based mindfulness and stress reduction course that includes mental and physical relaxation exercises, resiliency training, and classroom discussions. Piloted in January, 2010, the program has been so successful that Barnstable High is running three courses for freshmen this fall, and the Cape Cod town of Mashpee has adopted it for the district's entire fourth grade.

While local schools have recognized that the program fulfills a pressing need, funding is a challenge. Last year, Jensen organized a 5K “De-Stress Express Road Race,” to raise money; the now-annual event took place this year on October 17th. Over the past six months, she has also turned her stress-reduction idea into a community-based nonprofit.

OUTSIDE THE BOX continued on page 8
Ann Randall Blazes a Trail for Diversity in Occupational Therapy

When Ann Randall, MBA, MS ('69), was at Tufts in the late 1960s, she had many experiences that “reminded me that I was different,” she recalls. As the first African-American graduate of BSOT, Randall remembers that while classmates within occupational therapy were accepting, “many other students on campus were not. It was a different—and a difficult—time.”

“Many students had never interacted with a black person before,” she recalls. “In the 1960s, it was better to be a foreign student from Africa than to be a black American.”

Despite these hardships, Randall was determined to become an occupational therapist, a dream she had held since eighth grade, when she wrote a paper about the profession. As a girl scout in high school, she volunteered at a cerebral palsy clinic, which solidified her desire to join the profession.

Randall’s family was very supportive of her chosen career path, despite the discrimination she might face in college. “My parents encouraged me to be an occupational therapist, to be the best I could be. And I got an excellent education at Tufts,” she says.

Randall has held a range of occupational therapy positions in her 41-year career. “I’ve done a lot of everything and worked with the entire age span of patients. My youngest patient was a 2-day-old infant; my oldest was in his 90s. I’ve always loved being an occupational therapist,” she says. Currently, she is the occupational therapy assistant program director at Brown-Mackie College in Indianapolis.

Randall feels occupational therapy has provided her with a holistic approach to life; her own challenges as a civil-rights-era college student have helped her understand the importance of keeping a broad perspective, coupled with compassionate support. She credits the BSOT faculty, especially Professor Helen Smith, with encouraging her to reach her goals.

“She encouraged me to move beyond my struggles on campus, to see my abilities and to embrace them. She reminded me not to fear my intelligence and to be the best I could be.”

Now, more than four decades later, Randall hopes other students of color will strive for careers in occupational therapy. She is pleased that AOTA’s Centennial Vision includes increasing diversity in the profession. “Historically, occupational therapy has not attracted black or other minority populations. I think we have to work hard to change that,” she says.

As she nears retirement after a rewarding career, Randall sees the benefits the occupational therapy profession can offer students of color. “It all comes down to whether young minority men and women can envision themselves in this profession. If they can see themselves as confident, as good occupational therapists who have something to contribute, then they will shine,” she says.

Alumni corner

Christine Chen Develops Functional Assessment

Christine Chen’s research is coming in handy for occupational therapists who work with clients with upper extremities conditions. An associate professor in Clinical Occupational Therapy within the Department of Rehabilitation and Regenerative Medicine at Columbia University, Chen, ScD, OTR/L, FAOTA ('82) has developed a unique assessment tool, called the Manual Ability Measure-36 (MAM-36), that therapists can use to measure patients’ day-to-day task-oriented abilities.

As an assessment, MAM-36 focuses on one single domain, that is, patients’ functional abilities. It asks patients to rate their perception of ease or difficulty in performing everyday tasks such as using utensils, pouring water from a half-full pitcher, and opening child-proof pill bottles. According to Chen, “while occupational therapists spend a lot of time evaluating patients’ deficits in the arms and hands, such as range of motion, sensation, and strength, ultimately...
they are interested in patients’ functional abilities and functional improvement.”

That’s why Chen and colleagues felt the need to create MAM-36, which stresses the patient’s own perspective of his or her abilities. Chen’s work on MAM-36 began when she was a post-doctoral fellow in rehabilitative medicine with Carl Granger, MD, at SUNY-Buffalo. With Granger, Chen completed a comprehensive literature review and developed an “item bank” of 83 functional tasks. With the help of hand therapists and surgeons, Chen pilot-tested this first list on patients with hand injuries to obtain preliminary evidence of its validity. She then landed a National Institutes of Health (NIH) career award in 2003. The grant allowed her to expand her research to patients beyond hand diagnoses, and subsequently develop and validate the MAM-36, the first-of-its-kind patient-reported hand function assessment.

Studies using MAM-36 were published in the American Journal of Occupational Therapy in June, 2008, with further psychometric validation recently published in the March, 2010, Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20298833). Chen is currently working on developing a shorter version of the assessment and is collaborating with clinicians and researchers in the United States, Taiwan, and Israel to use MAM-36 to study therapy outcomes.

According to Chen, MAM-36 is an easy-to-use tool that complements other measures. It is validated across a wide range of diagnoses, from orthopedic injuries to neurological conditions. She believes the scale offers a useful addition to the battery of tools occupational therapists and rehabilitative specialists have at their fingertips. “It’s important to measure hand function in an objective way, but it’s also important to assess how a patient perceives his or her disability. As occupational therapists, we have to listen to patients, to what they really care about,” she says.

Medical Mission: Debbie Paul Goes to Haiti

Alumna Debbie Paul, OTR/L, CHT (’74), a hand therapist at Procare Physical Therapy and Hand Center in Portsmouth, NH, traveled on a medical relief mission to Haiti after the devastating January, 2010, earthquake. What follows are excerpts from a story she wrote about her experiences.

You can only go to Haiti for the first time, once. For me, that first time was in 1977. I was young, recently married, with no children. My husband and I chose Haiti for our adventure. While he worked at Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Deschapelle treating malaria, tuberculosis, and leprosy, I explored different options. Already an occupational therapist, I made splints for children who had been burned, made a toy chest and filled it with toys, and played with hospitalized children. On weekends, we traveled; my Creole got better and better.

Fast forward 33 years; in January, 2010, as I sat in a doctor’s waiting room in the U.S., an article about Haiti caught my eye. It showed beautiful beaches and discussed Haiti’s booming tourism. I don’t believe in coincidences, so when the earthquake struck the following day, I couldn’t ignore my desire to help. A co-worker and I began collaborating on planning our trips to Haiti with the Northwest Haiti Christian Mission. My colleague traveled down first and set up a “hand therapy clinic” there; after her return, and with the support of donations from family, friends, and clients in our Procare clinic, I arrived in Port au Prince on April 8th.

When I stepped off the plane, pleasant memories came flooding back but were compounded by the sadness of what had happened. Three months after the earthquake, there were still areas of terrible disarray. The greatest devastation was in Port au Prince. Because the mission was 90 miles from the capitol, and no buildings there had suffered structural damage, the area had experienced an influx of 60,000+ people, which strained its resources.

The mission included two orphanages, surgical centers, a birthing center, an emergency room, a daily medical clinic (where people lined up at 4 a.m.), a home for the elderly, and our little clinic, which didn’t look much like a clinic at all. My first patient came to me for a trigger finger. Soon people were lining up at the door. I saw fractures, lacerations from machetes, tendonitis, and arthritis. I even treated and splinted leg injuries.

The people at the mission are an integral part of the community. The mission provides many Haitians with jobs as doctors, nurses, cooks, interpreters, builders, and more. I found the Haitians to be a resilient people, rarely complaining and grateful to those lending a hand. Despite the hardships they faced, their strength and hope remained.

MEDICAL MISSION continued on page 8

Debbie Paul works with a client at the hand clinic in Haiti.
Students and Alumni in the Limelight

Tufts occupational therapy students and alumni are shining stars in the field, and we love to applaud their accomplishments. If you have an OT success story to share in BSOT Notes, please let us know!

This issue, congratulations go out to several students, faculty, and alumni:

Tori (Spielman) Channell, MS (’06), recently completed the Evelyn J. Mackin Hand Therapy Fellowship at the Philadelphia Hand Center. A six-month program, the fellowship offered Tori specialized clinical training in hand management and patient care, including pre- and postoperative assessment, splinting, and return-to-work outcomes. In addition to attending lectures while managing her own caseload, Tori taught a splinting class at Thomas Jefferson University, and received intensive mentorship from specialists in the field. “Hand injuries are very limiting and I really enjoy helping people become more independent in their work and hobbies. The fellowship gave me great experience in a field I love,” she says.

Masters student Vanessa Vega (’11) has been quite busy since she started her graduate studies at Tufts in January, 2009. In her second semester, she did an independent study with Sharan Schwartzberg, EdD, researching the role of gender in therapeutic settings and its impact on function. “For the first time, I experienced what it was like to work with academics from diverse backgrounds. I was hooked,” she says.

That experience helped Vega realize her desire to expand the breadth of her occupational therapy career to include a role in academia. She discovered GIFT (Graduate Institute For Teaching), an initiative run by the Center for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT), a division of the Tufts Office of the Provost, which strives to promote teaching innovation and to support teaching-related initiatives. Launched in 2007 and open to graduate and post doctoral students, GIFT gives future faculty hopefuls a strong foundation in teaching pedagogy.

The first non-PhD student ever to attend GIFT, Vega says the program has been a highlight of her Tufts education and helped her advocate for her profession. “Educators in the field of occupational therapy are often valued for their practice experience, and rightly so. However, I feel that instruction and experience in teaching are equally important to be able to effectively transmit one’s knowledge, skills, and values,” she says. (For more information on GIFT, visit: http://gs.as.tufts.edu/teaching/GIFT/)

Vega’s desire to learn by doing and promote occupational therapy also led her to take on another challenge this summer. In July, Vega participated in a service trip to China through the non-profit organization HandReach (http://www.handreach.org). In Changsha and Beijing, Vega worked with Handreach Executive Director Brecken Swartz, whom Vega had met when Swartz visited the Department of Occupational Therapy as a guest lecturer in a health conditions class. “She was an inspiring speaker, and I knew I had to find a way to be part of her cause,” Vega says.

Vega then recruited Tufts professor Monica Pessina, PhD, OTR/L and a group of rehabilitation/prosthetics professionals to promote the use of rehabilitation among Chinese burn specialists. Vega, whose previous rehab experience was limited to her work at Tufts, says, “In China, a prominent burn surgeon asked me: ‘Is it your belief that with proper rehabilitation, these children can really become functioning members of society?’ This question speaks to the sharp contrast between our society and China’s in terms of what health and wellness mean. I found myself advocating strongly for the importance of occupational therapy in the recovery process, while simultaneously firming up my own knowledge of what an occupational therapist can do for pediatric burn survivors. It was an incredible learning experience.”

Mary Alicia Barnes, OTR/L (’85), Tufts Fieldwork Coordinator, and Michael Roberts, MS, OTR/L (’95), Tufts Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, joined forces with alumna Becky Simon MS, OTR/L (’97), Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, NEIT, to represent Tufts and the New England Occupational Therapy Education Council, Inc., (NEOTEC) at the Aca-
As a practitioner, I feel I bring a unique perspective to the board. I can offer insights about what might work in the ‘real world,’” she says. “Also, being from a rural area, I can provide the small-community perspective.”

Sheri is excited to take a leadership role in AOTA and to work on its Centennial Vision. “I think (AOTA President) Florence Clark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, has great ideas for the future, and I am motivated to help AOTA move in these exciting directions,” she says.

Alumna Deborah Lieberman, MHSA, OTR/L, FAOTA (‘73), has worked at AOTA for 16 years, most recently as the program director for evidence-based practice (EBP) in the Professional Affairs Division, and staff liaison to the Commission on Practice (COP). Originally a practicing occupational therapist and active AOTA volunteer, Deborah enjoys working on the national level to promote best practices and to advocate for the profession. As program director for EBP, she has launched many initiatives that give AOTA members access to clinically relevant literature that informs practice and improves care. As staff liaison to COP, she works closely with AOTA members to help promote the quality of occupational therapy and to develop practice standards and other official documents.

Deborah says her Tufts education and early work as a practitioner prepared her well for a career at the administrative and management level. “Tufts taught me that education doesn’t end in the classroom, that occupational therapy is not just a job, but a career. My work at AOTA has offered a perfect blend of my interests in practice, education, research, and advocacy,” she says.

Susan M. Higgins, MA, OTR/L (‘86, ’02) was recently appointed clinical fieldwork educator on AOTA’s Commission on Education (COE). Sue’s first “assignment” for the COE is working in conjunction with the Commission on Practice (COP) and other members of AOTA to examine issues related to student fieldwork; in particular, she is looking at the impact of Medicare policy on opportunities for fieldwork, as it relates to OTA fieldwork in skilled nursing facilities. Sue welcomes this challenge and “hopes to develop a leadership role in the realm of fieldwork education,” she says. Sue was featured in our last issue of BSOT Notes as a trainer for AOTA’s Fieldwork Certification Program for the New England region (http://ase.tufts.edu/bsot/newsdepartment.htm). To read more news and accomplishments, go to http://ase.tufts.edu/bsot/newsdepartment.htm.
Faculty/Staff Publications


Faculty/Staff Presentations


Student Research Presentations

Estrela, M. L. (May, 2010). Enhancing participation in physical and leisure activities outside of school settings for young children with autism spectrum disorder. Tufts University, Department of Occupational Therapy, Medford, MA.


Cook, K. (April, 2010). School-based occupational therapists use of the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Practice to address play in preschool. Tufts University, Department of Occupational Therapy, Medford, MA.

Fenton, S. L. (April, 2010). Exploring the construct of dignity from residents’ perception of care while living in skilled nursing facilities. Tufts University, Department of Occupational Therapy, Medford, MA.
Tirella, L. (April, 2010). Development of a survey for internationally adoptive parents regarding their child’s family adjustment. Tufts University, Department of Occupational Therapy, Medford, MA.

Bogart, K. (April, 2010). Moebius syndrome psychology research, New York Times: [link]. Companion piece multimedia slide show about Kathleen’s personal experience with Moebius syndrome: [link].

Faculty/Student Grants, Fellowships & Awards


Professional Service

Barnes, M. A. Human Rights Committee Member, Walnut Street Center.

Bedell, G. National Advisory Board Member, Sarah Jane Brain Project.


Bedell, G. Editorial Review Board Member. Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation.

Doherty, R. F. The Brain Aneurysm Foundation, Occupational therapy liaison.

Koomar, J. AOTA Steering Committee Member, Mental Health Special Interest Section.


Schwartzberg, S. L. Board Member, American Group Psychotherapy Association.


Schwartzberg, S. L. Mentor, UIC occupational therapy students.

Schwartzberg, S. L. Editorial Review Board Member, Occupational Therapy in Mental Health: A Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Research.

Schwartzberg, S. L. Editorial Review Board Member, Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy.

Tickle-Degnen, L. Advisory Board Meeting Member, NIH K12 Program.

Tickle-Degnen, L. (May, 2010), External Advisory Board Member, K12 Rehabilitation Research Career Development Program: Preparing Occupational and Physical Therapists for Faculty Positions. NIH National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research and National Institute of Neurological Disorders & Stroke.

Tickle-Degnen, L. (2010) Delphi Panel Member, Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health Initiative. U.S. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases, in collaboration with the Wellcome Trust, the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.


SOTA Club

• Donated shoes for Haiti’s earthquake victims through Soles for Souls

• Ingrid Larson, OTS; Alison Thurston, OTS; and Teresa Landgraf, OTS ran the Boston Marathon as part of Tufts President’s Marathon Challenge “to support nutrition, medical, and fitness programs at Tufts University, including research on childhood obesity at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy” [link].

• Donated Toiletries to Women’s Lunch Place [link].

• OT Month activities on campus (educational flyers & giveaway items)

• Raised funds to support students attending AOTA Conference and led department wide post-conference information session

• Participated in Tufts Kids’ Day [link].

Sarah Porter, OTS with Kids’ Day Participants.
OUTSIDE THE BOX continued from page 3

organization called CALMER Choice (www.calmerchoice.org). (CALMER stands for Cultivating Awareness, Living Mindfully, Enhancing Resilience). Jensen is now seeking grants and other funding to expand her program offerings throughout Cape Cod and beyond.

“Little did I know that this idea of getting mindfulness-based stress reduction into Barnstable High would turn into a grassroots partnership reaching out to schools at all levels! It is quite powerful, moving, and exciting,” she says.

An occupational therapist with the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Cape Cod, where she has worked for 20 years, Jensen believes her education and training have given her the “whole-picture mindset to recognize and solve problems,” she says.

“In forming CALMER Choice, I witnessed the chaos high schoolers were facing and assessed how to address the problem. That is what I bring to the VNA as an OT, and it’s also what I bring to the schools as a parent. Being an occupational therapist has taught me to be flexible, to look at the whole problem, to constantly reassess what’s working and what’s not. That is a true gift.”

MEDICAL MISSION continued from page 5

Before I left Haiti, at 3:00 a.m. on April 17th, I had one last chance to go look at the night sky. With no light pollution, it was the most beautiful sky I had ever seen. Constellations stood out and shooting stars fell before my eyes.

What a juxtaposition of two cultures when I landed in New York! On my immigration form, I lingered over the question “business or pleasure” about my trip to Haiti. I didn’t check either. When the immigration officer asked me what I had been doing there, I said “medical mission.” He studied my face, tilting his head to one side.

“Welcome home,” he said. The tears that had never flowed while I was there flowed steadily.