A JUST-RIGHT CHALLENGE:
New England Disabled Sports Offers Internship for OTs in Training

At Loon Mountain in New Hampshire, skiers and snowboarders with a range of disabilities schuss and ride down the slopes as participants in New England Disabled Sports (NEDS). In front, behind, and beside them are the many volunteers who teach, support, and keep safe these participants as they master the skill of skiing and/or riding with a disability.

According to Jessica Harney, DPT, PT, OTR/L, Tufts lecturer and president of NEDS, the organization serves more than 500 skiers and riders per year at Loon and Bretton Woods, NH, teaches over 1,000 lessons, and utilizes 200 volunteers a season. Many volunteers who instruct at NEDS have little experience working with disabilities; others come from professions such as special education, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. All share a love of winter sports.

Tufts Senior Lecturer Janet Curran Brooks, EdD, OTR/L, who has been a NEDS ski coach for six years, says adaptive skiing/riding gives people with disabilities a chance to thrive, challenge themselves, and enjoy time with their families. It’s also an ideal place for occupational therapy students to gain experience working with this population in the context of “real life.” "Volunteers help participants don clothing and equipment, get on and off chairlifts, and safely navigate the terrain; they have to challenge participants to do more, and also assess when a skier might be too tired or cold to try the next trail,” Brooks says.

That’s why NEDS has provided a perfect learning opportunity for Tufts occupational therapy students. For the past two years, students have been placed at NEDS-Loon Mountain for a one-week, intensive Level I Fieldwork and service learning opportunity; beginning in January, 2017, Tufts will also offer a 12-week Level II Fieldwork experience. Harney says the new Tufts Fieldwork will be modeled after the University of New Hampshire’s Level II Fieldwork program, which started in January, 2015. After witnessing the success of both UNH’s Fieldwork II model and Tufts’ short-term program, Harney “wanted to create a longer-term, enriching learning opportunity for students that went beyond the traditional clinical or hospital setting. Community-based programming is one way the OT profession is moving.” Brooks agrees. She says the Level II experience at NEDS will give Tufts occupational therapy students an in-depth look at participants interacting joyfully with family and friends—a context that’s very different from what students see in more traditional practice settings. “When our students do fieldwork in a hospital, nursing home, or school, they are often helping clients ‘fix’ problems. But with skiing and riding, individuals are out with their families enjoying their weekend, rather than being off with a caregiver. They are thriving, despite their disabilities or injuries,” she explains.

Tufts students Jenny Quinn, Kirsten Prue, Hannah Koch, and Sarah Sherman will be the first to participate in the NEDS Level II experience in the winter of 2017. Quinn, a second-year student, says she got her first exposure to adaptive sports when she participated in the one-week program in March. She is excited to return to Loon for a three-month stint this coming winter. “There is so much to learn in this positive and unique environment. You learn about the equipment, about your clients’ needs, how to teach, how to communicate with them as they try out new skills,” Quinn explains.

For Quinn, the community engagement provided by adaptive sports “is a really good thing. I don't think you can ever overestimate NEDS, continued on page 3
A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In this issue of News and Notes, we explore a range of topics with a common theme—interdisciplinary innovation. Whether our students and faculty are working with skiers with disabilities on the slopes (p.1), running dance workshops to help patients with Parkinson’s disease (p. 6), or prototyping assistive technologies in the Maker Studio (p. 4), they are all approaching occupational therapy through a creative, collaborative, interdisciplinary lens. This approach is at the heart of occupational therapy, and with it comes extraordinary outcomes. The stories in this issue highlight just a few of the areas in which students and faculty are leading the field through interdisciplinary activities.

This year, I resume leadership as interim chair for the department, as Gary Bedell is on a research sabbatical. Gary is working on exciting endeavors, including measuring outcomes for teens with traumatic brain injuries (see story, below). Margaret Morris will assume the role of coordinator of our Doctor of Occupational Therapy program. Others, such as Amy Fleischer and Linda Tickle-Degnen, are taking a multi-team, multi-faceted approach to solving problems as diverse as fabricating assistive devices for people with disabilities to promoting healthy aging in older adults. Jessica Harney brings her occupational therapy and physical therapy training to her courses; Beth Marfio and Keren Ladin teach from both an occupational therapy and public health perspective. I am also working on two inter-professional teams: I am co-teaching with Daniel Carr, MD, in the Pain Research, Education, and Policy (PREP) Program at the Tufts School of Medicine and co-teaching and developing curricula with Ellen Patterson, MD, at the Tufts School of Dental Medicine and Ellen White, MEd, OTR/L, occupational therapy supervisor at Tufts Medical Center, Inpatient Psychiatry. Together we have developed an oral health group intervention program for the inpatient unit, co-led by Tufts dental and OT students Kathryn Colleran and Hannah Polshuk. Our team, along with dental students Holly Fadie, Bailey Klein, and Hayley Sacks, are developing plain-language educational materials and an oral health screening tool.

Our new building—the Collaborative Learning and Innovation Complex (CLIC)—has also provided a learning environment that facilitates partnerships. During the past year, this new space has supported student cooperation; provided us with access to innovative technologies; encouraged collaborations with engineers, child development, and community health; and pollinated cross-disciplinary thinking. In the years ahead, we will continue to focus on graduating students who are both leaders in the field of occupational therapy and productive members of inter-professional teams. In addition, during the coming year we will be looking to develop an entry-level doctoral program in order to keep pace with the field, while also conducting a search for a full-time senior lecturer and director of our entry-level professional programs.

Regardless of whether our students and faculty are helping their clients dance, ski, scuba dive, or live their daily lives, they all benefit from the multiple perspectives that arise from an interdisciplinary approach. From this collaboration comes innovation.

Sharah L. Schwartzberg, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA, CGP, FAGPA
Interim Chair, Department of Occupational Therapy

CATCHING UP WITH:
Gary Bedell

Even with the extra duties that came with being chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy, Gary Bedell, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, found time this past year to be an innovator. In 2016 he was a keynote speaker in the Netherlands, obtained two new grants, and developed web-based and mobile technologies to promote participation in children with disabilities.

In March, Bedell gave one of the keynote addresses at the 11th World Congress of Brain Injury at The Hague. There he spoke about measuring and promoting participation among children and youth with acquired brain injuries (ABI). During the Congress, he also presented research and sat on expert panels focused on interventions to promote social participation.

Bedell explains that “participation”—or “involvement in life situations”—can be restricted for children and youth with TBI or ABI. The severity of injury, age at time of injury, cognitive and behavioral functioning, along with other factors, can all impact how well

Children can participate in their homes, schools, and communities. Measuring and promoting participation—an area in which Bedell is well versed—is an integral part of helping children and families rehabilitate after a TBI.

He is the primary or co-author of several measurement scales for assessing participation in children with TBIs and other chronic conditions. He is in his last year of one of his grants awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services—National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), which has involved development and testing of a new intervention: Social Participation and Navigation (SPAN) intervention. SPAN uses smart phones, a mobile

Gary Bedell, continued on page 8
Dan Houlihan Explores the Depths of SCUBA and OT

Occupational Therapy Doctoral (OTD) student Dan Houlihan, MS, OTR/L, focuses on a different type of adaptive sport—not on the slopes but in the water. An avid scuba diver and certified SCUBA instructor, practicing occupational therapist, and lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, Houlihan understands the calming effect being under the sea can have. After starting in the Tufts OTD program in Fall, 2014, he went in search of an opportunity to combine his love of diving with his desire to help combat veterans be successful in returning to civilian communities.

In 2014, Houlihan discovered Operation Blue Pride, a scuba group for veterans that was looking to start a chapter in Boston. He now supports the group as an instructor, support diver, and public presenter. For his OTD leadership project, he is studying the lived experience of veterans involved in scuba, paying particular attention to the supports, barriers, and motivations of their engagement.

Houlihan hopes his research will offer insight into how scuba diving can help veterans reintegrate into their communities after they return from combat. With nearly 1.5 million veterans of recent combat reintegrating into civilian life over the next five years, “there is an urgent need to find leisure activities that will engage the varied interests and capabilities of these veterans and potentially support reintegration,” he explains. While many veterans do transition to civilian life with little trouble, nearly half experience difficulty with physical and mental health issues. Research suggests that nature-based leisure activities with peers can help returning veterans improve their health, well-being, and participation in daily life.

Houlihan calls diving “the great equalizer.”

Houlihan says scuba diving fits that description perfectly. “Scuba uses adaptive gear in a highly structured setting—most veterans are comfortable in this type of environment. It is widely adaptable for individuals with an array of abilities and helps them enjoy the beauty of nature. It also requires mutual reliance on peers—that ‘life or death’ interaction veterans are very familiar with,” he explains.

The “blue space” under the water also provides a calming therapeutic milieu for this population, many of whom avoid the traditional therapies and support services offered by the VA and other groups. “Diving offers a completely different sensory motor world. It’s unweighted; locomotion and sound are different. You have to focus on what’s right in front of you, on your positioning, on your breathing,” he explains. “For some it’s an adrenaline rush and for others it’s quite calming. Either way, diving is a great equalizer.”
JUMBO’S WORKSHOP: New Maker Studio Builds Creations and Collaborations

In a spacious laboratory at Tufts Collaborative Learning and Innovation Complex (CLIC), students and faculty from many disciplines measure, sew, solder, and 3-D print. They tinker with tools and manipulate materials—all with an eye toward helping actual people with disabilities.

Welcome to the Maker Studio, an interdisciplinary "maker space" where members from occupational therapy, human factors, mechanical engineering, and the Center for Engineering Education and Outreach (CEEO) collaborate. The shared vision of Amy Fleischer, MS, OTR/L (’15), Gary Bedell, and others in the occupational therapy and engineering departments, as well as in the larger Maker Network, the Maker Studio provides an interactive workspace where students, staff, and faculty can design and fabricate assistive technology solutions for clients with disabilities. It also functions as an interdisciplinary think tank. "At the Maker Studio, we all bring our different perspectives to assess real clients’ needs and to use what’s close at hand to address those needs,” Fleischer explains.

For example, in Peggy Morris’ Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics class, OT students collaborated with members of an electrical and computer engineering class on creating mobile medical devices (MMD). The engineering students learned about occupational therapy as a profession, were briefed on a pediatric case—a child with a traumatic brain injury—and then teamed up with OT students to discuss and design a MMD, with the OT students acting as “consumers” for the engineering students. The OT students also made a piece of adaptive equipment for the child.

Other classes, such as Janet Brooks’ physical dysfunction course, have used the Studio to experiment with methods of making adapted grips out of splinting material scraps. Fleischer recently worked with a friend who uses a wheelchair to create a 3-D printed prototype that would allow him to be more independent in his transfers. Says Fleischer, who is an accomplished artist as well as an occupational therapist, “imagining something that effects change for an individual” is the essence of the profession.

Known at CLIC as a "curator of collaborations," Fleischer saw the potential of the Maker Studio back in the fall of 2015, when it was first being used as a workspace for the assistive technologies course. For the past year, she has worked closely with the School of Engineering to expand the Maker Studio’s prototyping capabilities—including 3-D printing and laser cutting—to foster greater collaborations across disciplines. In spring, 2016, Fleischer and Bedell, along with Jennifer Buxton, MA, OTR/L, were awarded a Tufts Innovates seed grant to develop a new course, Assistive Technologies Innovations, and to further develop the studio. The new course, which Fleischer and Buxton co-designed and which will launch in spring, 2017, incorporates rapid prototyping technologies and current fabrication methods to solve real problems. According to Fleischer, “the goal of the course is to combine the relevant problems that OTs help people with disabilities to address with the user-oriented studies of human factors students and the fabrication knowledge of engineers.”

Fleischer says this hands-on, interdisciplinary approach is what makes this course, and the Maker Studio, such an exciting addition to Tufts. Students and faculty from different departments are accessing new modes of learning, participating in project-based learning experiences, and approaching tangible problems with real solutions. "With so many diverse perspectives under one roof, there is an incredible opportunity to collaborate by designing and fabricating assistive devices for individuals across the lifespan,” she says.

NEDS, continued from page 3

dents “a vision of what’s possible for people with disabilities—a vision they will share with their own clients down the road,” Brooks explains. “Even if someone with a disability or newly acquired injury doesn’t aspire to skiing or other adaptive sport, an OT with this experience can offer that client hope—hope that life offers them many opportunities to thrive.”
BOOMER GOES TO SCHOOL: OT and STOMP Collaborate on Doggy Designs

For Sue Higgins, OTD, OTR/L, occupational therapy has “gone to the dogs.” The Tufts academic fieldwork coordinator and lecturer recently teamed up with STOMP, the Tufts Student Teacher Outreach Mentorship Program, to help her 12-year-old pug Boomer gain mobility. Boomer has degenerative myelopathy, a chronic back condition that affects his ability to walk. In looking for ways to help Boomer, Higgins reached out to Amy Fleischer at the Maker Studio, who suggested they enlist students from STOMP to come up with ideas.

Run through the Tufts Center for Engineering Education and Outreach (CEEO), STOMP partners Tufts students with teachers in the Boston area to bring innovative engineering curricula and activities to the classroom. Higgins saw STOMP as a perfect opportunity to introduce the “real-world perspective” of OT to the children, while also getting help for Boomer. She and her dog visited classrooms at the Argenziano School in Somerville and the Josiah Quincy School in Boston, where she introduced the students to Boomer and to occupational therapy as a profession. “I explained how OTs work to help people function and that their job was to help Boomer function as a dog!” Higgins says.

The children had a wonderful time designing modes of transportation for Boomer, Higgins explains. “He was a great motivator for them to come up with original ideas. Although Boomer now uses a cart for mobility, there are many more things the kids can design for him, like easier access to his food and water. We hope to bring Boomer back to school for many more visits!” she says.

ALUMNI PROFILE: Dolores York, BSOT ’46, Sheds Light on 50 Years of OT

Dolores (Laurie) York has seen it all when it comes to occupational therapy. A graduate of the BSOT class of 1946, the 92-year-old York has helped veterans make crafts, painted bright colors on hospital walls, led group therapy sessions, and directed efforts to deinstitutionalize psychiatric patients.

This past spring, York shared these stories and more during Professor Beth Marfeo’s class Occupation and Adaptation, Adult Years. Before an audience of more than 40 students, York captivated the class with her history of the OT profession, her role in bringing psychiatric patients back into the community, and above all, her energy and enthusiasm. She identified the vast changes in OT over the past 50 years, challenged students to think about their role and goals, and even led the class in a “7th-inning stretch” activity.

When she first graduated from BSOT, York worked for the Boston Psychopathic Hospital, the first mental health hospital in Massachusetts, where she developed innovative approaches to in-hospital care for psychiatric patients. She later went on to establish mental health and occupational therapy departments at various state hospitals along with her husband, Richard York, PhD. In the 1950s and 60s, she helped lead the charge to get patients out of psychiatric hospitals and to provide services for them in the community. “The hospitals were being emptied but communities were not equipped to handle what these patients needed,” she told the class. “Occupational therapy was instrumental in developing community-based services,” which is the lifeblood of the profession today.

Raising her family on Cape Cod, York launched Pilot House in

Laurie York encourages OT students (l-r) Hannah Koch, Hannah Polshuk, Michelle Moser, and Arielle Danziger to follow their passions.
Parkinson’s and the performing arts—That was the topic of the day on April 2, 2016 as an interdisciplinary group of faculty, students, staff, and individuals with Parkinson’s disease (PD) glided across the floor in the Jackson Dance Lab. Sponsored by the Departments of Occupational Therapy, Drama and Dance, and Community Health, the unique workshop—Dance and Healthy Aging with Parkinson’s Disease—demonstrated how aging with Parkinson’s can be approached as performance art in progress. The workshop was led by Pamela Quinn and David Leventhal, renowned teachers of dance and movement for people with the disease.

Throughout the full-day event, Quinn and Leventhal took participants through experiential movement activities that presented dance as a form of daily occupation and art that buoy body and spirit. According to Quinn, “dance by its very nature contributes to everyday health: working and stretching muscles leads to strength and flexibility; learning and remembering movement tones the brain; touch and partnering provide social contact, and creative context promotes expression and use of the imagination. People of any age, especially the elderly, need movement, fun, challenge, and connection. This workshop allowed participants to experience all those things first hand and helped them understand how to create such an environment for others as well.”

In addition to two sessions that introduced how dance and movement can help people with PD, the workshop included a panel discussion with Quinn, Leventhal, and faculty and student participants. The interactive day helped form connections between different ages and ability levels, while fostering a collaborative, multidisciplinary environment between arts and sciences departments at Tufts.

According to Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, professor of occupational therapy whose scholarship focuses on quality of life and Parkinson’s disease, people with PD want to focus on normal, healthy aging. “These individuals have the same values and needs as other older adults. They’ve had active lives, but now their movement is impaired. Dance not only improves movement—the external rhythm of the music aids coordination and balance—it also supports healthy aging aspirations.”

Tickle-Degnen says one inspiration for the workshop came from the film Capturing Grace, a 2014 documentary about David Leventhal and the Mark Morris Dance Company creating a dance performance for people with PD. “I love a phrase from this film, ‘There are no patients. There are only dancers,’” she says, “because it perfectly captures that dance is occupation, regardless of who’s doing it.”

In addition to facilitating this workshop, Tickle-Degnen also recently designed an online course in conjunction with the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation (PDF) entitled Occupational Therapy: Across the Parkinson’s Disease Continuum (support.pdf.org/occupationaltherapy). The course prepares OT practitioners to better care for the growing population of people living with PD. “Losing the ability to work, exercise, or perform daily tasks can be devastating for people with Parkinson’s,” says Tickle-Degnen. “Occupational therapy can help clients maintain these important activities and their independence for as long as possible.”

She says the dance workshop offered an excellent opportunity for students, faculty, and others to learn how meaningful occupation—in this case in the form of dance—can help people with Parkinson’s experience a better quality of life. “Dance is a wonderful milieu for people with PD—it is social and joyous and improves quality of life. But whether it’s dance, or singing, or trips to a museum that people with Parkinson’s aspire to, the important thing is that they are staying engaged in healthy, meaningful activity as they age.”

Go to https://vimeo.com/181088027 for a slide show of the Parkinson’s and Dance event.

Peggy Morris (l) with OT students Jenny Quinn, Tiffany Chen, and Arielle Danziger practice creative movement techniques. Background: OT students John Read and Tondalaya Brainard

about the workshop leaders

Pamela Quinn is a professional dancer and movement consultant for people with Parkinson’s; she has had the disease for more than 20 years. Her personal and bodily experience of dance and Parkinson’s gives her a unique perspective from which to analyze physical function and to imagine creative solutions to the problems posed by Parkinson’s.

David Leventhal is a professional dancer and a former member of the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in Brooklyn, NY. He is currently the program director and founding teacher of MMDG’s Dance for PD, a nonprofit collaboration of MMDG and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group that leads dance classes around the world.
Awards, Honors, and Grants

Awards
The following awards were received at the Spring, 2106 GSAS Awards Ceremony:

Marjorie B. Greene Award: Master’s degree student Temor Amin-Arsala

Bekenstein Family Endowment Award: Master’s degree students Samantha Cooper & Taylor Rose

Greisen Award: Master’s degree students Temor Amin-Arsala, Michele Jacquin, Colleen Dunwell, & Jaye McLaren

Virginia Nedved Cook Collaborative Research Award: OTD students Mary Alicia Barnes, Nicole Picone, & Cailin Donahue

Rob Hollister Award for Citizenship and Public Service: OTD Student Dan Houlihan

2016 Teaching with Technology Award, Tufts Technology Services, Educational Technology (April 2016): Full-time lecturer Margaret Morris

Honors
Sue Higgins, OTD, OTR/L, was recently appointed to the AOTA’s Commission on Education.

In May, lecturer Monica Pessina, PhD, received a 2016 Proctor & Gamble Outstanding Basic Sciences Faculty Award at the Boston University Goldman School of Dental Medicine.

Grants


Tickledagain, L., “Tufts A&S Dean Funding,” (January 2016). Congratulations on these impressive achievements!

Publications


Presentations
Higgins, S., & Duncombe, L., “Fieldwork educators certificate program,” AOTA, Tufts University, Medford, MA (June, 2016).


Schwartzberg, S. L., “Ethical dilemmas in group therapy: Leader and member perspectives,” American Group Psychotherapy Association Annual Meeting, New York, NY (February 2016).


AOTA Conference 2016
Poster Presentations


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Laurie York, continued from page 5

Hyannis, one of the first day programs for psychiatric patients. She also started small community centers in Massachusetts for children being released from state hospitals and worked in nursing homes, training and overseeing OT professionals. “The work of occupational therapy is a social justice issue. It is our imperative to help those who are most disadvantaged,” York explained.

The nonagenarian, who still skis, gardens, and sails, attributes her good health to her active lifestyle and to finding meaning in everyday occupations. According to first-year student Michele Bokun, “Laurie is a vibrant example of OT in action. She further confirmed my belief that occupational therapy will be a very fulfilling career for me and that I can make a difference in people’s lives.”

With her sharp mind, bright sense of humor, and deep insights about the profession, York not only motivated students to follow their passions; she also encouraged them to trust their instincts. “Adaptation and innovation—that’s what OT is all about,” she said. “Be an innovator. If you think something is adaptable and appropriate for your client, do it.”