



Eastern Michigan University
Occupational Therapy Alumni Network

Welcome Spring 2017!

Warmest wishes to our alumni and friends!

The beginning of 2017 marked a successful end to the yearlong 75th Anniversary Celebration of the Occupational Therapy Program at EMU! The year's festivities culminated in September with our 75th Anniversary Gala and Silent Auction and the 6th Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship & Conference with Endowed Lecturer Dr. Glen Gillen.

In November of 2016, we received news that EMU's Alumni Association Board of Directors had chosen to recognize our OT Alumni Network as a Chapter of Excellence for 2016. We

were presented a certificate at the November Board of Director's meeting (pictured below). At that same meeting, our very own Kathleen (Kathy) Siler was awarded the Inaugural Volunteer of the Year Award, recognizing her wonderful service to our Network over the past six years.

Ending 2016 with such great momentum has only invigorated our drive to continue to shape our alumni network to meet the needs of the thousands of alums we have across the country. Please continue reading for upcoming events, updates on alumni, and a recap on our Fall 2016 events.



2016 Chapters of Excellence and Volunteer of the Year Award Recipients

2017 Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lecturer



The Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship Advisory Committee is happy to announce that Winifred (Winnie) Dunn, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, will be the 7th Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lecturer.

SAVE THE DATE for September 23rd so you don't miss Dr. Dunn's lecture entitled: "When We Emphasize Strengths, Possibilities are Endless."

[Follow the Spelbring](#) on Facebook to read the full abstract and stay tuned for conference itinerary and registration information.

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2016 Spelbring Lectureship & Conference: You Helped Our Dreams Take Flight



The 6th annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship and Conference coincided with the EMU OT Program's celebration of 75 years generating highly skilled and successful health professionals! The Spelbring committees set a lofty goal to fundraise \$75,000 for the Spelbring Lectureship by the 75th anniversary celebration. This goal, this dream, would allow the conference to be sustainable and successful into the future. Such future aspirations include the advancement of practice through education to promote leadership in the profession of occupational therapy for the betterment of clinicians, students, faculty, and health professionals. As the 6th annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship and Conference approached, the dream of reaching "75 by 75" looked bleak. Spelbring committee mem-

bers and students poured their hearts and souls into fundraising efforts and connecting with alumni.

Efforts paid off, as the 2016 Spelbring conference was a huge success! Session topics included neuro and play, transitioning home, Parkinson's disease, leadership, vocational rehab, and sexuality. During the luncheon, keynote speaker Dr. Glen Gillen focused on the inter-connected circles of "professed occupational therapy philosophy throughout our history, evidenced based occupational therapy practice, and actual practice patterns".

Following his inspiring and energizing keynote lecture, the audience was informed the Spelbring was just a few hundred dollars shy of its \$75,000 goal. With one last fundraising effort, ornamental birds (pictured right) were given to those who could contribute any additional money toward the

Spelbring. In just a few minutes, the birds and our dreams had indeed taken flight. The goal had been met to the tears and applause of everyone there! The passion, dedication, and generosity of EMU's OT students, alumni, faculty and friends is inspirational, regenerative, and contagious. Thank you to all who attended and contributed! We were thrilled that such a large number of alums were there to help us celebrate the occasion and milestone! We invite those who are familiar and those who are not, to join the legacy of the Spelbring at this year's conference on September 23rd!



Alumni In Action

OT Alumni Story: Michael O'Connor ('94)

We are delighted to feature Michael (Mike) O'Connor, a 1994 graduate of EMU's OT Program.

Mike has worked in the field of rehabilitation since 1988 earning a B.S. degree in occupational therapy with a minor in gerontology from EMU in 1994. His part-time jobs while a student, and his various experiences in neuro-rehab, contributed to his passion to serve those with a primary neurological diagnosis, and contributed to his ability to provide individualized, goal-directed, functionally based occupational therapy that is meaningful to patients and their families.

Mike has served patients across a continuum that includes acute care, inpatient and subacute rehab, long term care, and community integration neuro-rehab programs. His OT roles include direct treatment to being a clinical director. And his broad knowledge base made him a perfect fit as a college adjunct instructor, where he taught medical terminology and anatomy/physiology for nursing and allied health students, and neuroanatomy when they started a COTA program.

In 2001, Mike established, O'Connor Occupational Therapy Services, PLLC in Lansing; serving individuals with a

primary diagnosis of traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury in their home or community setting, or his outpatient office or gym.

In addition to professional development and continuing education, Mike completed requirements established by the National Association of Home Builders for designation as a Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist ("CAPS"), which serves him well since a significant amount of his referrals are one-time evaluations for home modifications. He is also a Certified Brain Injury Specialist Trainer ("CBIST") by the Academy for Certification of Brain Injury Specialists.

Because Mike believes we're called to community service and advocacy outside of work roles, he is committed to providing education by sharing training and information on topics related to brain injury, and safety and prevention to groups like the Brain Injury Association of Michigan and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. He's also active with AARP of Michigan; volunteering with their "Home Fit" and "Car Fit" programs providing safety, prevention and community education programs to well elderly and their support persons to enable them to remain 'at home' as long as possible.

His favorite work-related occupations include fatherhood and general parenting roles. "The majority of people referred to me have been catastrophically injured; often with brain or spinal cord injuries; some with multiple fractures or limb loss. I consider it a privilege to support them toward re-establishing meaningful roles in parenting and (often) resuming work and vocational roles."



Outside of work Mike enjoys running, kayaking, hot yoga, craft beer, and spending time with friends and family, especially his daughter Grace (21) and son Patrick (16).

"Nearly two decades after my EMU education, I still have frequent "aha" moments thinking: now THIS is OT. **Valerie Howells**, my Level 2 field-work educator for CMH Cross Street Station, was invaluable in challenging and developing my clinical reasoning and documentation skills. Three years after graduation I moved back to Michigan for a new job. The previous OT left many craft supplies and whenever I used a basket weaving kit I thought about how proud **Betsy Francis Connelly** would have been if she knew I was basket weaving -- realizing it *really* was about the PROCESS not the PRODUCT. I continue to be grateful to **Ben Atchison** for his professional and personal friendship over the years, and his role model of strength and sensitivity as a male in a field dominated by women."



EMU Alumni Volunteer of the Year: Kathleen Siler ('92 & '97)

Our sincerest congratulations go out to EMU OT Alumni Kathleen (Kathy) Siler for being named the EMU Alumni Association's Volunteer of the Year for 2016. Kathy was presented a certificate at the November Alumni Association Board of Director's meeting and was recognized for her support and commitment to our network and the community. Alumni Board of Director President, Patrick Barry, cited EMU Foundation Developmental Director Rae Anne Yuskowatz, who called Kathy "an amazing graduate of the Occupational Therapy Program always being a tried and truEMU am-

bassador for Eastern Michigan University."

While we may be biased, we agree fully with the Alumni Association's choice to recognize Kathy. She has been an integral part of our Alumni Network and has worked diligently to help guide and support us, in addition to being key to the success of the Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lecture-ship & Conference. Thank you Kathy for dedication and commitment to the OT Alumni Network!



Above: Kathy receiving her award from Alumni Association Board of Directors President, Patrick Barry

Upcoming Events

Come join us

Eastern
Michigan
University

Occupational
Therapy Program

ALUMNI, STUDENTS,
FRIENDS & FACULTY

Get-Together >> Following the
AOTA Expo

THURSDAY
30 MAR
2017

7-9:00 pm

Thirteen Restaurant & Bar
Marriott Downtown Hotel
1201 Market St, Philadelphia, PA

Save
THE DATE | SEPT 23 2017 |
Lyla M. Spelbring

ENDOWED LECTURESHIP AND CONFERENCE

Keynote Speaker:

WINNIE DUNN,
PHD, OTR, FAOTA

Distinguished Professor at the University
of Missouri School of Health Professions



Hosted on Eastern Michigan University's campus
BY THE EMU OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

UPDATE US!

We are constantly updating our contact information databases and need your help. If you haven't recently notified us, please send us your name (first, last, maiden), year of graduation, address, employer and email address so we can update your information!



Find us on:
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Email us at:

emuotalumni@gmail.com

[Click here](#) to visit the
EMU OT Program's
website.



We need you! Please consider the following ways to get involved:

- *Send us your photos & EMU stories*
- *Update us on alums you know*
- *Join us at an upcoming event*

Network Officers

Adrienna Bartnicki—2014

Katie MacDonald—2006

Kathleen Siler—1991



*Email us your ideas
for a future newsletter
feature!*



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