

**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
ALUMNI CHAPTER NEWSLETTER**

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

**2014 SPEL-  
BRING RECAP** 2

**ALUMNI IN AC-  
TION** 3

**UPCOMING OP-  
PORTUNITIES** 5

**UPDATE FROM  
THE OT PRO-  
GRAM** 6

**CONTACT US!** 7

**ALUMNI NEWS AND EVENTS**

Greetings fellow alumni! We hope this newsletter finds everyone warm and toasty this winter and enjoying 2015! After taking some time with our families over the holiday season, the OT Alumni Chapter Board is back to work and eager for all that 2015 has in store; including warmer spring weather!

In September, we had the wonderful opportunity to assist the OT Program with hosting the 4th Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship and Conference. Not only did we have the pleasure of welcoming our endowed lecturer Dr. Betty Hasselkus to Eastern's campus, we were also honored to welcome back so many of our alumni, who represented more than half of all conference attendees! We hope the Spelbring will continue to be a great "homecoming" for our alumni in the years to come. (Read more about the 2014 Spelbring on page 2).

This year our goal is to continue to seek out our alumni we may have lost contact with, update our information database, and recognize all our alums for the great work and service they are doing at their workplaces and in their communities. In addition, we will continue planning for events and brainstorming new ways to provide our alums with opportunities to network, mentor, enjoy continuing education, and celebrate the wonderful legacy of EMU OTs! Continue reading for information about upcoming opportunities and other exciting activities of our alumni!

**CONTINUE READ-  
ING FOR DE-  
TAILS ON THESE  
UPCOMING  
EVENTS:**

- Our Annual Alumni Gathering at AOTA in Nashville
- 75th Anniversary Celebration
- The 2015 Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship & Conference

*Submitted by: Katie MacDonald (2006), Chapter President*

We enjoyed a spectacular autumn day and equally wonderful crowd for our 4th Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship and Conference on September 27th. We were delighted to see so many OT alums in attendance and three alums were also workshop presenters: **Camille Skubik-Peplaski** ('84); **Amy Ansara** (2010) and **Reggie Campbell** ('69).

Those who spent the day with us enjoyed a breakfast bar and socializing before choosing from several workshops. The morning and afternoon sessions covered a variety of topics and practice areas including: A presentation on how to provide a framework for occupational therapists to develop creative, cost effective and sustainable positive aging programming within the context of a retirement community. More effective ways to treat the physical and psychosocial aspects of hand pain with the result being an increased quality of life. An exploration of a variety of brain differences that have been identified in persons with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) as compared to "neurotypical" individuals, and their implications for behavior and occupational performance. An interactive session with therapy animals that explored applications and implications for their use in practice. Reviewing ideas for the development and distribution of home programs that serve to promote health literacy and self-management to prevent hospitalization or re-hospitalization. An overview of home modifications, features and products that make a home safer and more comfortable for everyone even as their needs or abilities change to help people age in place. An overview of a research study describing increases in motor recovery of persons with strokes, and clinically relevant improvement in client satisfaction and performance using a variety of interventions. Attendees also enjoyed afternoon snacks while browsing several developing scholar posters by EMU MOT students.

The highlight of the day was the inspiring luncheon-lecture by Dr. Betty Risteen Hasselkus who explored recent trends in theory and practice that embrace family groups, communities and social systems, and provide new understanding of concepts like occupational deprivation and social justice.

Congratulations to these EMU OT Alums who won the drawing for 4 massages and EMU goodies and gear: **Carlie Daniels** (2010), **Penny Helfrich** ('84), **Mary Hypio** ('90), **Noel Marie Robertson** ('98), **Melissa Rudolph** (2010), and **Camille Skubik-Peplaski** ('84).

Heartfelt thanks to the planning and advisory committee members, EMU OT faculty, presenters and student volunteers, community donors and sponsors, as well as all the attendees who made our 2014 Spelbring another rousing success!

"Like" the Spelbring page on Facebook to see more photos of the 2014 Lecture & Conference: [www.facebook.com/EMUSpelbring](http://www.facebook.com/EMUSpelbring)

*Submitted by: Kathleen Siler ('91)*



Dr. Betty Risteen Hasselkus presents the 4th Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lecture

**HEARTFELT  
THANKS TO  
ALL THOSE  
WHO  
HELPED  
MAKE THE  
2014  
SPELBRING  
A SUCCESS!**



2010 alumna Amy Ansara presents during the 2014 Spelbring Conference.

### Dr. Valerie Howells adds FAOTA to her credentials

We are button-bursting proud and excited to share the news that one of our own: Dr. Valerie Howells ('74) will be inducted into the American Occupational Therapy (AOTA) Roster of Fellows during the awards ceremony at this year's 95th AOTA Annual Conference & Expo in Nashville Tennessee.

The Roster of Fellows award recognizes occupational therapist members of AOTA who with their knowledge and expertise have made significant contribution to

the continuing education and professional development of members of the Association.

Val's nomination for this award extolled the accomplishments of her illustrious 39 year career, and highlighted various aspects of her exemplary leadership and advocacy in mental health practice, mental health research, and occupational therapy education to advance the practice of occupational therapy. Gifted communicator, passionate advocator, innovative, transformative and visionary leader, as

well as a generous and quietly dedicated mentor to countless students and new practitioners are just a few of the adjectives and phrases used to describe her.

We are beyond thrilled that what many of us admire about Val personally will be recognized and celebrated by the OT profession by bestowing upon her this prestigious induction into the AOTA Roster of Fellows. Congratulations, Val!



Alumna Dr. Valerie Howells will be inducted into the AOTA Roster of Fellows this April 2015.

*Submitted by:  
Kathleen Siler ('91)*

Going to AOTA this year?  
Come help us celebrate  
Val's accomplishment at our  
**Annual Alumni Gathering!**  
See page 6 for more details!

Have you or an alumni you know reached a professional milestone/ accomplishment or received an award or special recognition? We want to hear about it!!! Please help us recognize the great things our alumni are doing!

### EMU OT Alumni Story: Sherrie (Bennett) Buckley '99

Sherrie (Bennett) Buckley is a '99 graduate of the EMU OT program who has really "gone green!" While working on an acute psychiatric unit in Maryland, Buckley saw an advertisement in *Advance for OT Practitioners* looking for OTs to work in Ireland. Sherrie landed the job and, in 2002, began working in Laois, Ireland (approximately fifty miles outside of Dublin). As an OT providing community-based care in rural Ireland, Sherrie not only had the challenges of traversing rural Irish roads (and driving on the left side of the street), but also occasionally worked with older adult clients without running water or indoor toileting facilities and, while she admits her EMU education was exceptional, nothing could have prepared her for that! Since then, Sherrie has held a variety of clinical and managerial positions, including working as the

Practice Education Coordinator for the University of Limerick's

two-year entry-level Master of Science program before accepting her current OT management position at St. Patrick's Mental Health Services in Dublin, the largest independent provider of mental health services in the country. Sherrie admits that her OT classmates may find the fact that she works in mental health ironic, as she "made quite a fuss" about having to complete a mental health placement in school.

In addition to serving on a variety of committees at St. Patrick's, Sherrie completed driving rehabilitation training with Adaptive Mobility in Orlando, FL. She currently heads up the driving rehabilitation program at the hospital, and was successful in obtaining a grant for a driving simulator. She was awarded a scholarship from the University of Limerick to pursue her PhD and is using a mixed-method, multi-phase study to explore the impact of major depressive disorder on fitness to drive. Sherrie has served as vice chairman of the Association

of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI), chaired the Education Committee for AOTI and served as a member of the AOTI council. She currently serves as co-editor of the *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy* and notes that they are always looking for submissions (hint, hint)!

In her free time, Sherrie enjoys spending time with her husband Tony and her dog, Heidi. She is an avid golfer, enjoys running, catching a rugby match at the local pub, and taking Heidi for walks.

When questioned about the differences she's noted between working as an OT in the US vs. Ireland, Sherrie stated that she arrived in Ireland at a time when there was a shortage of OTs, so she had the opportunity to work with a variety of clinicians from all around the world and, that "an OT is an OT anywhere because much of the training is very similar regardless of the country you were educated in." She noted that the dissimilarities between the health



**ARE YOU AN ALUM WHO HAS EXPERIENCE WORKING ABROAD? WE'D LOVE TO HEAR YOUR OT STORY AND MAY FEATURE IT IN AN UPCOMING NEWSLETTER!**

care system of Ireland and the US does have an impact; pointing out that the average length of stay for patients in their acute psychiatric unit is thirty-three days before they are followed in the community if needed.

Thank you for sharing your EMU OT Story Sherrie!

*Submitted by :*

*Katie MacDonald (2006)*



### SAVE THE 2015 SPELBRING DATE!

Although **September 26, 2015** seems a distant date on the calendar, planning for the 5th Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship and Conference is well underway by a group of dedicated individuals that includes, EMU OT faculty, students, alumni and clinicians.

We are excited to announce that **Charles H. Christiansen, EdD, OTR (C), FAOTA** has graciously accepted our invitation to present this year's lecture. Dr. Christiansen ("Chuck") is a dynamic leader, a charismatic speaker and esteemed researcher.

Dr. Christiansen assumed duties as Executive Director of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation in March 2008. Prior to that, he served as Vice Provost for Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota Rochester and Founding Director, Center for Allied Health Pro-

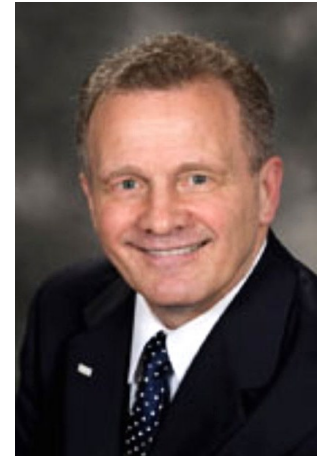
grams. From 1993-2006, Dr. Christiansen served as Dean and George T. Bryan Distinguished Professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch and earlier as Professor and Director, School of Rehabilitation Sciences at The University of British Columbia. His academic career has spanned over three decades. He is a fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and has served on the boards of several professional organizations including AOTA.

Dr. Christiansen's 1999 Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture: "Defining Lives: Occupation as Identity: An Essay on Competence, Coherence, and the Creation of Meaning" epitomized his beliefs about occupation and our profession. In his words: "... *self-identity is the pathway by which people, through daily occupations and relationships with others, are able to*

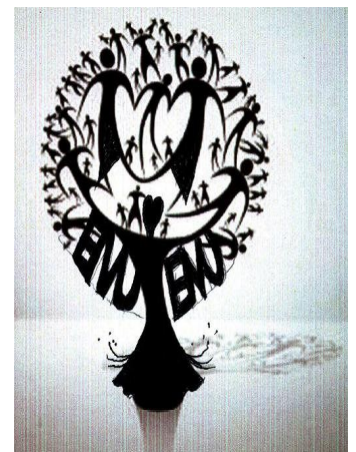
*derive meaning from their lives... and as a profession, occupational therapy is positioned uniquely to meet the challenges confronting people whose identity is threatened by impairments, limitations to activity, and restrictions on their participation as social beings*".

We anticipate that Dr. Christiansen's Spelbring lecture will inspire and motivate all who have the opportunity to experience it. Watch for more details on the EMU OT webpage or our Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship in Occupational Therapy Facebook page. We hope many of you will join us on September 26<sup>th</sup> for this "not to be missed" event!

*Editor's Note: Some information in this article was taken from the [AOTF webpage](#). You can read Dr. Christiansen's Slagle in its entirety [here](#).*



**CLICK  
HERE TO  
FOLLOW  
THE SPEL-  
BRING ON  
FACEBOOK!**



### Anticipating our 75th Silver Jubilee Celebration

Our amazing EMU Occupational Therapy program will mark its 75th anniversary in 2016!

Eastern Michigan University's Occupational Therapy Program was established within the College of Health and Human Services in 1941. Since that time, many occupational therapy students have graduated the program to work at a local, state, national, and international level improving lives through supporting occupational engagement. Many EMU OT Alumni have gone further to make exceptional contributions to occupational therapy practice, research, advocacy, and leadership.

Plans are already underway for **EMU's Occupational Therapy Program's 75th Silver Jubilee celebration** as well as the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Lyla M. Spelbring Lectureship and Conference, both of which will be held on **September 24, 2016**. This is an exciting time in our history, growth and development, and we want YOU to be part of it!

#### Here's how to get involved:

Our EMU OT Alumni Chapter would love to hear from you! Please send us your favorite stories from your experience in EMU's OT Program and any pictures you would like to share! We will be compiling 75 years worth of memories and photos in a special 75th Anniversary newsletter; stories and photos can be emailed to the Alumni Board at [emuotalumni@gmail.com](mailto:emuotalumni@gmail.com).

We are also looking for **Alumni Ambassadors** for each EMU OT class to be a contact person for communications between the OT program and alumni. This will allow us to keep alumni informed of news as well as extend invitations for exciting events and opportunities. Please contact us at the email address above if you are interested! We look forward to hearing from you! Thank you in advance for helping us celebrate 75 years of OT at EMU!

*Submitted by: Adrienna Bartnicki (2014)*

### Update from the OT Program

#### **Accreditation Update**

*As many of you know Eastern Michigan University's Occupational Therapy program was up for re-accreditation the past fall. We recently received our final report from the Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) and received a seven year accreditation! We are grateful to the alumni who participated in meetings with our onsite team and for the support in our re-accreditation efforts. Our success would not have been possible without the support of all of you!*

#### **Class of 2017**

*In January, 38 new students entered the halls of Marshall to join the Eastern Michigan University Occupational Therapy programs Class of 2017!*

#### **AOTA Annual Conference Alumni Gathering**

*The EMU Occupational Therapy Faculty and Alumni Board invite you to join us at an alumni reception at the AOTA annual conference in Nashville on Friday, April 17th from 730-830p.m. at the Omni Nashville. We look forward to celebrating Dr. Valerie Howells induction to the AOTA Roster of Fellows that evening!*

*Submitted by Dr. Amy Lamb, Eastern Michigan University Program Director*

**WINTER 2015**

### 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!

### CONTACT US!

[emuotalumni@gmail.com](mailto:emuotalumni@gmail.com)

or via Facebook Group:

**"EMU OT Alumni"**



Don't forget that April is OT Month! Tell us how you plan to celebrate! Send us photos of your OT Month celebration and we may feature them in our next newsletter or on our Facebook page!

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

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

### CHAPTER OFFICERS

Adrienna Bartnicki—2014

Katie MacDonald—2006

Kathleen Siler—1991



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



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