



Stony Brook  
University

# SOTA Newsletter

Winter 2012

School of Health Technology and Management  
Occupational Therapy Program

## Empower Spinal Cord Injury (SCI): An Independent Living Facility at Stony Brook University Campus

*By: Mary Squillace, DOT, OTR/L*

Empower Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) is a residential rehabilitation program designed to provide the knowledge, tools, support and strength that the individual with a chronic spinal cord injury needs to live a happy, independent and meaningful life. This program was designed in response to a decrease in average length of stay in inpatient rehabilitation hospitals, poor timing of intensive rehabilitation opportunities, and clear benefits of comprehensive rehabilitation on quality of life in individuals with spinal cord injuries. Empower SCI is a non-profit organization dedicated to the intensive, residential rehabilitation for individuals that have had the time to adapt to the drastic physical changes that an injury to the spinal cord can cause. There are several key factors that Empower SCI incorporates into the program that have proven to directly affect the quality of life of the individual following a spinal cord injury. As the time in rehabilitation following a spinal cord injury dwindles, the time to learn life skills and gain knowledge about living with a spinal cord injury is also limited. Education during each one-on-one therapy session (occupational therapy, physical therapy, and strength/conditioning) at Empower SCI provides participants with the knowledge in life-skills that they were not able to take advantage of during their short inpatient rehabilitation stay. Peer mentorship allows for new learning techniques and support that they may not have been exposed to during their time in traditional rehabilitation settings. Stony Brook University has partnered with Empower SCI to share in their efforts in developing a strong foundation for this program and its future on our campus.

*(Story continued on page 4)*

---

### Inside this Issue:

- 1 Empower SCI
- 2 Student Perspective
- 2 OT Global Day of Service
- 3 Alumni Connection
- 4 SOTA Events
- 5 Empower SCI Continued
- 6 Notes from the Chair
- 7 Executive Board
- 8 December/ January Calendar

# Student Perspective

## Assisting the Victims of Hurricane Sandy

*By: Leo Castro, Class of 2015*

On October 29th, immediate effects were felt from Hurricane Sandy. While everyone attempted to gasp for a breath of hope, gas shortages, broken power lines, flooding, and a Noreaster made it near impossible. Heather Auer and Jacklyn Ianniti, first year OT students, put together a plan to help victims at the center of the storm- in Far Rockaway and Breezy Point. Stony Brook OT students collected supplies, mainly consisting of clothing and personal hygiene products. The first

trip reached out to the Far Rockaway community. We made stops at different neighborhoods and handed out supplies. The devastation was real. Boats were pushed from one side of the bay to the other, damaged cars lined the streets, and graffiti stated “nothing to take, you are too late” and “FEMA help us.” At one house, we saw firsthand what it is like to reside in a damaged house. The floors were piled with mud, and every inspired breath was penetrated by a mix of mud and raw sewage. We met a family of five that slept in one bed in an attempt to create body heat to make it through the cold nights. On our second trip, we brought a Thanksgiving dinner to the families in Far Rockaway, before going to Breezy Point to drop off more needed items. Four weeks after the hurricane, Breezy Point residents had just been let back into their homes, and Army aid stations were set up along the main road. In addition, church gyms and community centers imitated supermarkets as one-stop centers where residents could pick up essential items. We donated 90 turkey sandwiches, 4 homemade pies, 6 pumpkin pies, shoes, clothing, and other necessities. A special contribution was made by *Bagel Boss* located in Hicksville: 7 dozen bagels, 2 tubs of cream cheese, and 2 large tubs of butter. As a group, we helped a local church move items piled outside into their gym for storage. It was amazing to see people’s desire to help those in need



as items filled the gym wall to wall. The water damage was evident; the entire gym floor was warped from undercurrents. Stony Brook students made this outreach project possible by participating in



On December 5, Stony Brook OT Faculty organized another trip to go back to Breezy Point as well as Long Beach, another hard hit area, for a day of volunteering. Students and professors worked together to prepare and serve food, separated clothes, and load materials onto trucks.



# Global Day of Service

*By: Gregory Bustamante, Class of 2015*

To participate in OT Global Day of Service on October 27<sup>th</sup>, a group of Stony Brook students volunteered at Handicapped Adults-New Directions in Suffolk. The students helped the HANDS organization run its annual Halloween party and costume contest at the New Village Recreation Center in Centereach. HANDS is a self-help group of adults and older youths with disabilities. The group meets monthly to provide advocacy, community awareness, and education for its members. The volunteers helped by serving food, distributing beverages, selling decorations, and judging the costumes. A green M&M, an angel, a band of pirates, a witch, and even the grim reaper made an appearance at this friendly and lighthearted celebration of the season. Randy Altschuler even took a moment to stop by and mingle with the various characters of the event. Students enjoyed interacting with the members of HANDS, and took time to speak to them about the profession of occupational therapy. The students and HANDS members learned much about each other's lives and personal experiences throughout the day. The volunteers were invited to return next year and were profusely thanked for their help with smiles and candy.



## Alumni Connection

### ***Ronald Nonaillada, MPA, OTR/L, Class of 1998***

Ron was the recipient for the 2012 Distinguished Alumnus Award for the Occupational Therapy Program of SUNY at Stony Brook's School of Health Technology and Management. The award was given in recognition for his contributions to the occupational therapy profession and to academics. Since graduating, Ron has worked in a variety of settings, including: hospital-based acute care, sub-acute rehabilitation, outpatient, school-based pediatrics, and neonatal ICU. Currently, he takes on an administrative role at North Shore-LLJ Rehabilitation Network. To date, his greatest professional accomplishment came when he was invited back to teach OT students at his alma mater. He enjoys the opportunity that he has to interact with all professors and students. He has fond memories from his time at Stony Brook and the relationships he formed with his classmates and professors. He looks forward to the opportunity to instill the same passion he has for the profession in the students he teaches.



# Stony Brook SOTA Events



## **Winter Bake Sale (December 11<sup>th</sup>)**

Join SOTA for our Winter Bake Sale to continue to raise funds for the club and its selected ASD delegate for the AOTA Conference in April. Our table will be located on Level 2 by the elevators in the HSC from 10am to 4pm.

## **Wear Holiday Apparel (December 13<sup>th</sup>)**

Join SOTA in wearing holiday gear to show pride in occupational therapy and the winter season. Please make sure all clothing is appropriate for the school setting.



## **Goodsearch (On Going)**

Don't forget to use goodsearch.com as your search engine. Every search leads to a \$0.01 donation to SOTA. It is perfect for all your holiday shopping! Here is the direct link for the SOTA search page:  
<http://www.goodsearch.com/cause-selected/stony-brook-student-occupational-therapy-association-sota>

## **Student Occupational Therapy Association Formal (March 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

Come join us for a fun filled night with music, dancing, cocktail hour, and dinner as you bond with fellow students, professors, and alumni. This annual event is sure to be a night for all to remember as we celebrate the success of the SOTA organization. The price is only \$60.00 for a beautiful experience at the Woodlands in Woodbury, LI. For more information and/or to pay your \$20.00 deposit, contact Lauren Santoro, the social committee chair at

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



**Sign up to join SOTA's team for Relay for life:**  
[www.relayforlife.org/stonybrookuniversityny](http://www.relayforlife.org/stonybrookuniversityny)

*(Continued from page 1)*

In order to bring these individuals together under one roof, a group of dedicated people need to be contracted to provide the daily assistance that the participants require to surmount the list of challenges that each day presents. The residential assistants undergo formal training from the peer mentors and staff therapists to improve their knowledge base with respect to spinal cord injury and learn appropriate techniques to employ while providing care for participants. Many of the residential assistant staff are students from the Health Technology and Management programs at Stony Brook University.

There are three major goals of Empower SCI:

(1) Improve the quality of life in individuals with spinal cord injuries through improvements in quality of life, independence with both physical and occupational function, social integration and successful identification and completion of vocational rehabilitation; (2) Establish a collaborative, community-centered program with a local university and independent living center to create a sustainable, lasting impact on the local and national communities of individuals with spinal cord injuries and (3) Improve healthcare workers' and future healthcare workers' attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. During the one-week pilot program that took place in this past July, the participants showed enormous gratitude towards the efforts that the Empower SCI team had made for a positive experience and hopeful future, especially with a focus on recreation and sporting activities. This year, the four-week residential rehabilitation program will run from July 14, 2013 to August 10, 2013. There will be a custom focus on therapeutic recreation that will give participants the exposure and feeling of accomplishment that is associated with participating in recreational opportunities that they may not have realized that they could perform. Not only formal therapy, but informal knowledge-sharing will occur during their stay at Empower SCI through peer interaction. Peer interaction and peer mentoring will play a crucial role in improving mental health, as well as an opportunity for participants to share their own techniques and strategies on how they have learned to survive life with a spinal cord injury. During this one-month program, Stony Brook University will have the opportunity to conduct various levels of research with a focus on rehabilitation processes and new possibilities for this population. At this time, the occupational therapy staff are completing grants and conducting fundraisers in order to obtain funds for the start up and maintenance of the Empower SCI program. Along with grant writing we are waiting approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB) to conduct a pre and posttest design, quasi-experimental study that will examine the status of the SCI clients at the time of their arrival on campus and then again at their departure. This will be done using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measures. The purpose of this project is to look at changes in occupational performances using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) and to determine how much change an individual with spinal cord injury has experienced with their perception of themselves and their performance tasks. We will then use these outcome measures to promote and maintain an independent living status during a one month residential rehabilitation program through patient education, maintaining and improving strength and skills that do exist, facilitate mobility and to optimize lifestyle options.

***The one-month event will take place July 14<sup>th</sup> through August 10<sup>th</sup> of 2013. We are in need of volunteers and students who are willing to dedicate some of their time in helping the Empower SCI team and their participants during their stay on campus. If you are interested in participating within the Empower SCI event this year, please contact Professor Mary Squillace or Professor Pamela Block. Depending on your level of interest in the various areas of participation, we will place you accordingly. This is an excellent learning opportunity for the students to truly have a grasp on spinal cord injury and the interventions that are involved, including psychosocial, physical, recreational, activities of daily living and leisure.***

# Notes from the Chair

## Putting Action To The Words

*By Eva Rodriguez, PhD, OTR/L*

The Mission Statement of the Occupational Therapy Program is a five part statement. A mission statement is a declaration of what a program sets out to do. Our mission statement sets out to provide a comprehensive education and to instill in our graduates the value of scholarship, including reading about current research outcomes, while maintaining evidence based practices. One could argue that the first two strands of our mission statement is the same as any other OT program in the country, and that argument would definitely be true. What does set us apart from other OT programs are our last three strands: Service, Leadership and Advocacy, and Globalization.

The strand of Service isn't just about providing OT services in traditional healthcare, it's about providing service to the community in nontraditional ways. When Stony Brook OT students go a local school to provide respite care for families with children with special needs, we show the community at large the value of OT in nontraditional ways, what may seem just a "baby sitting activity", is really the provision of OT services to support the other roles these parents have and the need to continue to develop and strengthen these roles to continue with a strong family unit. The presence of our students allows these families to strengthen their commitment as partners while decreasing the stresses of having a more complex family structure than a typical family.

When our students engage in fund raising activities for NAMI and participate in the annual walk, these actions are a reflection of non traditional OT leadership and advocacy roles. When we advocate, such as what we do for NAMI , for those who are marginalized in society, we show the community at large that all people can bring value and purpose not only to themselves, but to others as well, demonstrating leadership role for OTs at the same time. Last week, we showed how the last strand, Globalization, was another opportunity to show how OT can make a difference. With both students and faculty, we went to two local communities, Long Beach and Breezy Point, devastated by Storm Sandy. In one community, one group helped clean up the local ice skating rink area, allowing the community to begin resuming its routines of hockey games, skating lessons, and just plain old fashioned skating fun. In the other community, we cleaned up a play area in a temporary community center , and served hot meals to the local residents who are still without electrical power and are slowly rebuilding their homes. This temporary center provides the only hot meals, and community socialization they have. Through these opportunities, we have shown local communities how OT can help them regain their occupations, their roles, and their meaningfulness and purpose.

We need to continue to make these differences and even more, because we are OTs, and more importantly, we are Stony Brook OT. I am very proud of all your efforts to make a difference in this world. May you all be safe and be surrounded by love and friendship during these days of festivities.



# SOTA Executive Board



Jessica  
Hammer



James



Sandy  
Chung



Danielle



Jacklyn  
Iannitti



Lauren



Nina  
Tikkanen



Samantha  
Truono



Kimberly  
Waletitsch

**President:** Jessica Hammer- [Jhammer910@gmail.com](mailto:Jhammer910@gmail.com)

**Vice President:** James Descalso Jr.- [jdescalsojr@gmail.com](mailto:jdescalsojr@gmail.com)

**Secretary:** Sandy Chung- [Sandy.Chungot@gmail.com](mailto:Sandy.Chungot@gmail.com)

**Newsletter Editor/Public Relations:** Danielle Hefets- [Daniellehefets@yahoo.com](mailto:Daniellehefets@yahoo.com)

**Community Service Chair:** Jacklyn Iannitti- [jacklyniannitti@yahoo.com](mailto:jacklyniannitti@yahoo.com)

**Social Chair:** Lauren Santoro- [LaurenDSantoro@gmail.com](mailto:LaurenDSantoro@gmail.com)

**Fundraising Chair:** Nina Tikkanen- [ntikkanen@gmail.com](mailto:ntikkanen@gmail.com)

**Historian:** Samantha Truono- [srtruono@gmail.com](mailto:srtruono@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Kimberly Waletitsch- [kimberly.waletitsch@gmail.com](mailto:kimberly.waletitsch@gmail.com)

## **Liaisons:**

1<sup>st</sup> year: Erin Skelly- [erin.skelly@stonybrook.edu](mailto:erin.skelly@stonybrook.edu)

2<sup>nd</sup> year: Lauren Jaklitsch- [Jakllm98@gmail.com](mailto:Jakllm98@gmail.com)

3<sup>rd</sup> year: Joseph Brunner- [jbrunner@ic.sunysb.edu](mailto:jbrunner@ic.sunysb.edu)

Weekend 2<sup>nd</sup> year: Raquel Mahon- [raquel\\_mahon@yahoo.com](mailto:raquel_mahon@yahoo.com)

Weekend 3<sup>rd</sup> year: Joshua Diaz- [jdiaz726@gmail.com](mailto:jdiaz726@gmail.com)

2<sup>nd</sup> year HSA Delegate: Chelsea Igoe- [chelsea.igoe@stonybrook.edu](mailto:chelsea.igoe@stonybrook.edu)

1<sup>st</sup> year HSA Delegate: Gregory Bustamante- [greg.bustamante@stonybrook.edu](mailto:greg.bustamante@stonybrook.edu)  
[chelsea.igoe@stonybrook.edu](mailto:chelsea.igoe@stonybrook.edu)



## SOTA Calendar: December 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6 SOTA meeting 3:30	7	8
9	10 Social Committee Meeting 1:00	11 Winter Bake Sale 10-4:00	12	13 Wear Holiday Apparel Day	14	15 Have A Great Winter Break!
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

## SOTA Calendar: January 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2 Back To School!	3 E-board Meeting 12:00	4	5
6	7 Fundraising Committee Meeting 9:30	8 Social Committee Meeting 12:00	9	10 SOTA Meeting 12:00  2 <sup>nd</sup> Formal Deposit Due	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 Newsletter Committee Meeting 12:00	18	19
20	21 Newsletter Committee Meeting 9:30	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 Newsletter Committee Meeting 12:00		