Class of 2014 Trip to Pilgrim Psychiatric Center

by Danielle Hefets, OTS

When I first drove onto the grounds of Pilgrim, the overall dreary atmosphere took me aback. The old abandoned brick buildings, unkempt grass, and disserted parking lots added to the eerie feel of the psychiatric center. Not to mention, the misty/foggy weather perfectly accentuated the gloominess. My first impressions somewhat confirmed the negative preconceived notions I had regarding long-term mental health facilities, based mostly off media images and movies. Our first stop was at the museum, which was comprised of various objects, books, and pictures salvaged from three of Long Island’s historic psychiatric hospitals. The information we gained from the museum, regarding the past and current treatment of clients, was extremely interesting and enlightening. Obviously, things that were done in the past would be considered inhumane by today’s standards. However, it was all they had to work with back then. They did not have the medical/pharmacological advances that we have today. I was a little surprised to learn that many clients did not want to leave the hospitals during the time of deinstitutionalization. For the most part, it seemed like they enjoyed their time at the hospital, and it became more of a home and support system for clients. Previously, I was under the impression that the majority of the clients were held against their will, spent their days in a hospital wing, and did not get the opportunity to engage in meaningful experiences. It was amazing to see all of the different purposeful activities that were/are available for the clients to participate in (woodshop, media center, bowling, art, greenhouse, farm, gym, etc.). Also, it was interesting to see the large part occupational therapy played in the hospital setting. Although the focus of OT treatment was almost solely craft-based in the past, it was great to see the wonderful things that the clients were capable of creating. I also enjoyed the occupation based farming, animal care, and green house. It was interesting to see how this would be beneficial to the clients at Pilgrim. Over the years, Pilgrim has made the transition from long term care to acute care. They still have long-term residents, however, the number has gone from the thousands to the hundreds, with people being discharged regularly. Long-term care is not as essential as it was in the past, due to advances in medicine, better community support, and an increase in suitable housing. Overall, I found the trip to be very informative and interesting. I had some misconceptions about psychiatric hospitals prior to seeing what the grounds were actually like. There tends to be a negative stigma that goes along with psychiatric hospitals (i.e. the people there are unstable, violent, unhappy, and unable to function in society), thus, I think that it would be beneficial for more people to visit Pilgrim and see what the hospital is actually like.
Alumni Highlight

Dann T. Rocco
Graduated: 1998
Interviewed by Kassandra Cutler, OTS

In what OT fields have you worked?
- Physical Disabilities (Acute/Inpatient Rehab/Outpatient Rehab)
- Adult Psychiatry
- Out Patient Hand Clinic
- Home Care
- Nursing Home

What are you doing now to help further the OT profession?
I am currently employed in the Clinical Informatics Department here at Stony Brook Medical Center. I am involved in a Project to Redesign the Workflow and Electronic Documentation for Therapies. I am currently working with multiple therapy departments (Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy/Speech Pathology/Audiology/ Psychiatric Therapies and other disciplines) to evaluate their process and streamline their workflow and assist with the creation of an electronic record for their documentation in the patient’s chart. I still practice as an Occupational Therapist in the Home Care setting and enjoy having the opportunity to assist individuals in the community reach and accomplish their goals.

What are your plans for the future involving the OT profession?
I have recently returned to school to work towards earning a Master’s Degree here at Stony Brook. I plan to become more involved in teaching in our profession and also plan to work on a few different projects in the near future that could benefit the community.

Community Service Event

by Allison Chemick, OTS

The students and faculty of Stony Brook University have currently raised $34,000 for the American Cancer Societies, “Relay for Life” event at Stony Brook University. The “Relay for Life” event helps raise money and awareness to help the American Cancer Society. This event takes place on April 28, 2012 at 6 p.m. until April 29, 2012 at 6 a.m. in the Stony Brook University Sports Complex. At the event, our team will camp out overnight and take turns walking around the track to raise money and awareness. We participate to help the American Cancer Society create a world with less cancer and more birthdays. This event has 441 participants, 56 teams and has raised $34,282. I want to give a very special thank you to “S.O.T.A.” and the “Pre-Occupational Therapy Society” for both registering to relay and reaching our very own milestone. S.O.T.A. has raised $595 for this event with donations and team members still joining. I would also like to thank the co-chairs of this event, Katrina Rockford and Katelyn O’Connor and the “Relay for Life” committee for all of their hard work. This event includes; a DJ the entire night, and includes: a DJ the entire night, a performance by Two Cent Sam, SBU Belly Dancers, Stony Brook Pipettes, and the SBU Dance Team. Teams will be having their own stations such as bake sales, small craft activities, a cotton candy machine and more to come. Please visit the below link to join S.O.T.A.’s team or make a donation:
http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR?team_id=1160735&pg=team&fr_id=40215

Congratulations to the New Members of Pi Theta Epsilon!

Kristina Albert
Jenielle Metz
Samantha Truono
Morgan Weissman
Hi, my name is James Descalso Jr. and I am currently a senior at Stony Brook University in the Health Science Program with a concentration in Disability Studies. I created this society in hope that it will one day flourish into a traditional organization for years to come in order to spread awareness of the Occupational Therapy field as well as educate and provide members with numerous experiences that they can learn from and help them understand the profession better. I hope to one day explore all the environments that OT has to offer and innovate my own ideas to help this field grow as a professional in the future.

My name is Alex Aronis, and I am currently a senior attending Stony Brook University. I am Health Science Major with a Disability Studies concentration. While pursuing occupational therapy as an undergraduate student, I had little guidance regarding the demands of meeting program requirements. Therefore, as Vice President of the Pre-Occupational Therapy Society, I wish to provide this guidance and support for prospective OT students. I think that starting this society will benefit future students by creating a sense of community that will continuously provide support long after I graduate. After I complete the OT program, I want to serve in the Navy as an Occupational Therapist. I want to work as an OT in the Navy because I feel that the work will be both an educational and rewarding experience.

Hi, my name is Erin Skelly and I am a senior Health Science major. I plan to attend either Stony Brook University (BS/MA) or Nova Southeastern University (OTD) for the basis of my Occupational Therapy career. As Community Service Chair, I hope to help others realize the great reward of volunteering in our community. There’s nothing like the feeling you get when you see the smiles on others faces from what you have personally done to help them and their loved ones. I also hope to expand the knowledge of our under graduate students by offering opportunities to get many hands on and real life experiences.

My name is Kawang Wong and I’m currently a Junior at Stony Brook University. My major is Health Science and I’m applying to Long Island University and Stony Brook University’s OT Program. I was invited to the Pre-OT Society e-board because James has known me for about 3 years now and sees the same passion that he has for OT within me. What I hope to accomplish as a member of the e-board is to spread my understanding of OT to others who think only of PT when they think of doing something in rehabilitative professions.
Hi, my name is Jeevan Thomas and I am a senior history major with a concentration in 20th century Global. I want to use my skills in dance and the performing arts as a tool to better help those in need of therapy. As social and fundraising chair, I bring more awareness to the Stony Brook community about occupational therapy and also give back to those in need the best way possible.

My passion is to help others and enable them to help themselves. Through occupational therapy, I can achieve just that. Having the ability to personalize treatments based on the individual is a unique and rewarding aspect of the profession. As a member of the Stony Brook University Pre-Occupational Therapy Society, I plan to spread the message of occupational therapy and to increase knowledge on the profession throughout campus.

I'm in my senior year of the Health Science Major, and in the environmental health and safety concentration. I am planning on going to OT school. My main goal is to help others find ease in their daily activities. Through helping others regain their ability to function again, I will appreciate what I have and it will further motivate me to become a better person overall. I hope to let more people know about what OT is and help them make an informative career choice in the OT field.

SOTA and the Faculty would like to welcome the incoming class to our O.T. family. We wish you success as you start your journey to becoming Occupational Therapists.
President: Annelise Jochen  
email- ajochen.ot@gmail.com

Vice President: Joe Brunner  
email- jbrunner@ic.sunysb.edu

Secretary: Samantha Heavner  
email- slh186@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Karen Bartlett  
email- k.bartlett@yahoo.com

Historian: Nicole Pecorella  
email- npecorella115@gmail.com

Community Service Chair: Allison Chemick  
email- allison.chemick@yahoo.com

Fundraising Chairperson: Kimberly Kuhnert  
email- ltgkimmie@yahoo.com

Social Chairperson: Donna Napoleone  
email- donnanapoleone@gmail.com

---

Spring Events

February 10:  
Class of 2015 Interviews

March 3:  
Occupational Therapy Formal

March 8:  
Moving up Ceremony for Class of 2013  
Induction to Pi Theta Epsilon

March 10:  
Class of 2015 Interviews

March 15:  
Class of 2014 Trip to Pilgrim Psychiatric Center

April:  
Occupational Therapy Awareness Month

April 12:  
Diversity Day

April 20:  
Occupational Therapy Night at Citi Field

April 28:  
Relay for Life

May 4:  
Little Village Babysitting Night

May 5:  
NAMI Walk

June 29:  
Class of 2012 Graduation Ceremony