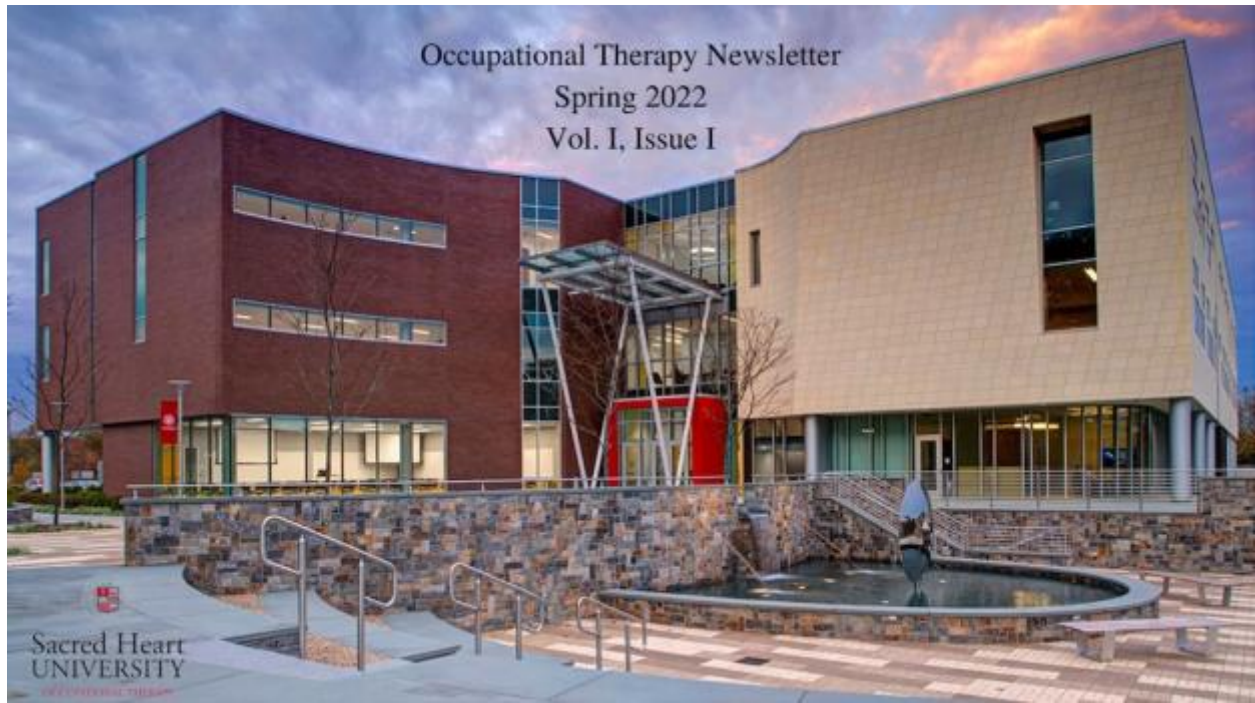


Occupational Therapy Newsletter
Spring 2022
Vol. I, Issue I



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

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Letter from the Department Chair and Program Director



1 - Dr. Sharon McCloskey, Department Chair and Program Director (EdD, MBA, OT/L, DipCOT)

Welcome to the first official Department of Occupational Therapy Newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading about recent program happenings, activities and events, community engagement, grants and scholarships, student and faculty updates, and alumni updates.

Some recent highlights of program development and happenings include:

- This academic year includes the 20th cohort attending our program. We now have more than 60 students per cohort. Long gone are the days of six students per cohort! Sadly, we were unable to host our 20th year celebration because of COVID last year, but please stay tuned for our Summer 2022 celebration. We wish to begin our **#20for20** campaign – donate \$20 for the 20th year for the purposes of developing student scholarship monies. More information will follow on our Facebook page.
- The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) reviewed, voted, and accepted our Interim Accreditation Report, 2021. The program's status remains fully

accredited, and the program is scheduled for its next on-site evaluation in academic year 2026/2027.

- Dr. Jody Bortone, founding Chair of the Occupational Therapy program, retired after 22 years of service at Sacred Heart. Please read our profile below. Jody will be greatly missed by students, faculty, staff, and community partners. Wishing you a very Happy Retirement Jody.

As the New Year begins, I think about how to continue making our innovative occupational therapy program even more dynamic, engaging, and transformative. It is a fact; we are all tremendously challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the faculty, staff, and community partners are deeply committed to shaping and developing future occupational therapy practitioners, and leaders, with a focus on compassionate care and enablement of occupation. I am extremely grateful for the commitment, involvement and resilience of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni within the Sacred Heart University occupational therapy community. Collectively, we continue to focus on excellence in education, including simulation and IPE, occupation-based practice, and service-learning and community engagement. Thank you. Let's move forward and shape our future through occupational therapy.

Letter from the Editor



2 - Carissa Scheier, Public Relations GA

Welcome to Vol. I, Issue I of the Spring 2022 Sacred Heart University (SHU) Occupational Therapy (OT) Newsletter! Sacred Heart University's Graduate OT program is a Master's Level program that offers a "values-based educational approach to OT that is dynamic, engaging and transformative, led by exceptional faculty." We are excited to begin the tradition of releasing newsletters following the conclusion of each semester. It is our hope to highlight important people and events that reflect the values of our program, as well as demonstrate our growth.

It has been a pleasure and privilege to create this newsletter. I would like to thank my supervisor Rebeca Giorgio, Department Coordinator, for developing this newsletter with me, as I could not have

done it without her. I would also like to thank the faculty within the OT Department for their valuable contributions to the newsletter.

On behalf of Dr. Sharon McCloskey, Department Chair and Program Director, Rebeca Giorgio, and myself, we thank you for reading.

Carissa Scheier, OT Public Relations Graduate Assistant

Sacred Heart University, OT Graduate Program

Dr. Joanne (Jody) Bortone Retires



3 - Dr. Joanne (Jody) Bortone (EdD, OT/L)

The Sacred Heart MSOT program began with Dr. Joanne (Jody) Bortone. Dr. Bortone is the founding chair of the program and first director, building the program quite literally from the ground up. The University has had the privilege of Dr. Bortone's continuation in the program as a professor. Now, Dr. Bortone is retiring after 22 years of employment. Dr. Bortone's journey as a person and a professional started long before her groundbreaking contribution to the Sacred Heart MSOT program.

In high school, at the recommendation of a guidance counselor, Dr. Bortone decided to become an Occupational Therapist (OT). She was artistic, enjoyed crafts, and enjoyed psychology. She also had

experience working for an organization called “Instructors of the Handicapped” which taught swimming to children with a variety of disabilities. She additionally taught them the process of showering, dressing, and undressing, and a variety of ADLs. After learning about OT, she decided she wanted to pursue it, specifically at Columbia University. She started writing to the University during her junior year of high school and years later graduated with her bachelor’s degree in OT.

Dr. Bortone spent her first 12 years of OT in mental health practice. In 1990, the educational requirements for OT changed from a bachelor’s degree to a master’s degree in order to enter the profession. She chose to pursue her master’s at a post-professional program at New York University (NYU) while working. She has been practicing OT for almost 48 years.

When Sacred Heart University initiated the development of the MSOT program, a friend called Dr. Bortone to recommend she apply for the position. At the time, her children were too young for her to commit to the position. Three years later, the University reached out to Dr. Bortone again – this time, she said yes. She founded the program based on the ACOTE standards, the NBCOT practice analysis exam, and her own experience as an OT. She had also previously taught as an adjunct at NYU, Columbia University, and Mercy College and LaGuardia Community College’s OTA programs, thus able to tie in her teaching experience. Dr. Bortone faced one main challenge as the founder of the program: changes to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reimbursement for OT services. At the time, CMS established a financial cap on reimbursement of OT services. Many OTs lost or left their jobs and enrollment in OT programs slowed. The first Sacred Heart MSOT class had just eight students. Now, there are 66.

It is axiomatic that despite the challenges Dr. Bortone faced, she created a program that continues to grow and evolve. The faculty continues to utilize high-impact practices and innovative teaching across the curriculum. The strength of the program is reflected by a 100% NBCOT passing rate (<https://www.sacredheart.edu/majors--programs/occupational-therapy--msot/faqs/>). Dr. Bortone has had to adapt to the changing profession as well, specifically by going back to school to receive her doctorate in OT to continue teaching.

Among Dr. Bortone’s major accomplishments are the success and growth of the program, and the positive reputation it holds within the University and within local communities. She noted that employers and supervisors have positive experiences with the MSOT students, describing them as curious, creative, and resourceful. Dr. Bortone not only influenced the MSOT program, but also contributed to the development of the Undergraduate Health Science Major, the SLP and PA programs, and service-learning programs.

After retiring, Dr. Bortone looks forward to spending time with her grandchildren and identifying new occupations. She may continue teaching as an adjunct but does not envision continuing in active practice as an OT. She will miss her SHU colleagues and students the most. When asked about advice she would give an OT student who is considering academia, Dr. Bortone emphasized taking advantage of different opportunities by just saying 'yes,' getting supervision in practice, making connections with OT programs in the area, and learning how to be assertive (for both oneself and for the profession as a whole). She also recommended receiving a research-based degree such as a PhD to build the OT profession's scope of evidence-based knowledge.

The Sacred Heart MSOT program is incredibly grateful for Dr. Bortone's dedication and tenacity. Two of the most admirable qualities about Dr. Bortone are her vision and creativity. The faculty and students will miss her presence, but her work will always remain as the core of the program.

Emma Bass Receives Christine E. Busher Award



4 - Award Recipient, Emma Bass

During the PY2 Capstone presentations on Monday, October 6, 2021 second-year student Emma Bass was presented with the Christine E. Busher Occupational Therapy Memorial Award. Busher was an alumnus and adjunct faculty member at Sacred Heart University and an executive board member and

secretary for the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association. She unexpectedly passed in 2009, after which her friends and colleagues at SHU created the annual Christine E. Busher Award.

[Click here to read more about the Christine E. Busher Award¹](#)

The presenters of the award explained that one OT student is selected every year to receive this award. The award is granted to an MSOT student that shares similar qualities to Busher, specifically her humanitarianism, generosity, and her choice of occupational therapy as a second profession. Congratulations to Emma Bass for being the 2021 recipient of the Christine E. Busher Award!

Dr. Jaimee Hegge Receives Award



5 - Dr. Jaimee Hegge (OTD, MSOT, OTR/L)

The College of Health Professions (CHP) hosted its first annual awards and scholarships ceremony on September 1, 2021. The Occupational Therapy Department is pleased to announce that Dr. Jaimee Hegge received the CHP Alumni Leadership Award. The Award acknowledges an alumnus of a department within the CHP who has given back to the University, has distinction within a profession, and contributes to the college's mission.

Dr. Hegge received her Bachelor of Science in General Studies from Sacred Heart University (SHU) in 2010, her Master of Science in Occupational Therapy from SHU in 2012, and her Occupational Therapy Doctor degree from St. Catherine University in 2018. Her professional interests include home-based care in OT, physical dysfunction, adults and geriatrics, and urinary incontinence management. We are so appreciative of Dr. Hegge's continual contribution to the OT Program and her positive impact on the students.

¹https://sacredheartuniversity.typepad.com/dr_petillos_blog/2011/11/its-been-a-tough-week-here-in-connecticut-after-saturdays-extraordinary-october-noreaster-many-of-our-friends-and-n.html

Link to the full list of CHP scholarships and awards²

Link to Dr. Hegge's faculty page³

Dr. Lola Halperin Facilitates Workshops on *The Use of Play in Fostering Development Among Children Exposed to Adversity* and *Understanding Schizophrenia and the Impact of the Condition*



6 - Dr. Lola Halperin (EdD, OTR/L)

Dr. Lola Halperin has recently facilitated six online training sessions pertaining to the use of play to foster development among children exposed to adversity for teachers and teacher assistants employed by the Alliance for Community Empowerment, located in Bridgeport, CT. The intervention was provided as a part of the treatment fidelity study Dr. Halperin is working on in collaboration with Dr. Amiya Waldman-Levi (Yeshiva University) and a number of SHU occupational therapy students. This project is being sponsored by the SHU Naclerio Faculty Scholars Award.

Dr. Halperin has also recently provided an online workshop titled *Understanding Schizophrenia and Occupational Therapy for Individuals Affected by It* for the Romanian Professional Occupational Therapy Association.

²<https://www.sacredheart.edu/news-room/news-listing/college-of-health-professions-bestows-scholarship-awards/>

³<https://www.sacredheart.edu/phonebook/jai-mee-betts-hegge.php>

The MSOT program at Sacred Heart has had the privilege of Dr. Halperin's contributions since 2010. She teaches and coordinates the mental health curriculum of the program, due to her practice in the mental health field of OT for over 26 years. She has a Bachelor in OT from Tel Aviv University, a Post-Professional Master's degree from New York University, and a Doctor of Education degree from Columbia University. Dr. Halperin has worked with clients in Israel, Canada, and the United States. She also participated in American Veterans Archaeological Recovery (AVAR) digs in New York and Israel.

Link to Dr. Lola Halperin's SHU Faculty Page⁴

Dr. Lola Halperin and Dr. Jaimee Hegge Selected to Serve on the AVAR Technical Advisory Committee

The American Veterans Archaeological Recovery (AVAR) involves world-class fieldwork projects geared toward improving the lives of veterans. The Technical Advisory Committee is a part of the program that elects field-leading specialists in conflict archaeology and excavation, public outreach, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and field safety (<https://americanveteransarchaeology.org/who-we-are/>). The Committee provides training and guidance that permits AVAR to balance the needs of a variety of archaeological missions with the wellness and development needs of the veteran participants.

Link to learn more about AVAR⁵

⁴<https://www.sacredheart.edu/phonebook/lola-halperin.php>

⁵<https://americanveteransarchaeology.org/who-we-are/>

PY2 Students Complete Capstone Project in Collaboration with the Romanian OT Association

Centrul de recuperare Maria Beatrice Romania

In the 3rd year of partnership
ONLINE TRAINING

Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY USA

STAGIUL CLINIC DE ÎNVĂȚARE ÎN SERVICII DE TERAPIE OCUPAȚIONALĂ
THE INTERNSHIP OF THE CLINIC LEARNING IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

11 -15.10.2021

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY, Connecticut, USA
Department of Occupational Therapy, Department of Physical Occupational Therapy

Haley Cook
M.Ed., M.S., OTR/L
Clinical Supervisor
Haley Cook, OTR/L, is a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

Marianne Malina
M.Ed., M.S., OTR/L
Clinical Supervisor
Marianne Malina, OTR/L, is a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

Shelby Covert
M.Ed., M.S., OTR/L
Clinical Supervisor
Shelby Covert, OTR/L, is a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

Mala Duviri
M.Ed., M.S., OTR/L
Clinical Supervisor
Mala Duviri, OTR/L, is a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

Alexandra Popescu
M.Ed., M.S., OTR/L
Clinical Supervisor
Alexandra Popescu, OTR/L, is a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as a clinical supervisor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

Heather Miller Babcock
Ph.D., OTR/L
Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy
Heather Miller Babcock, Ph.D., OTR/L, is an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

Ellen M. Martino
Ph.D., OTR/L
Clinical Professor
Ellen M. Martino, Ph.D., OTR/L, is a Clinical Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as a Clinical Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

MODERATOR:
Michelle Cunniff
Ph.D., OTR/L
Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy
Michelle Cunniff, Ph.D., OTR/L, is an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

MODERATOR:
William Whelan
Ph.D., OTR/L
Associate Professor
William Whelan, Ph.D., OTR/L, is an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. He has a Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. He is currently working as an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

ORGANIZATOR:
Julia Gabriela Olac
Ph.D., OTR/L
Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy
Julia Gabriela Olac, Ph.D., OTR/L, is an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University. She has a Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University and a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Sacred Heart University. She is currently working as an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Sacred Heart University.

PARTENERI / PARTNERS:

Sacred Heart University, APTOS, Centru de recuperare Maria Beatrice, Romanian OT Association, and other partners.

During the fall semester of the second professional year in the program, students take Capstone II which is a course that all students take during their second semester that focuses on research and implementation of OT practice. Capstone II centers on the content, knowledge, and skills students need to implement and complete the capstone projects they initiated in Capstone I. The students complete a proposal for presentation to a professional conference, as well as a professional poster, presentation, and defense. The project is intended to incorporate knowledge, skills, professional behaviors, AOTA's code of ethics, core values, and attitudes (click here to learn more⁶).

All Capstone projects are based in service-learning. Students select their Capstone projects on a lottery basis, meaning they have the option to choose out of several projects proposed by faculty members based on their lottery number. For several years, Dr. Heather Kuhaneck and Dr. Ellen Martino have alternated spearheading a Capstone project with the Romanian OT Association. They have had successful experiences collaborating with the Romanian OT Association and the PY2 students, and this year is no different.

⁶<https://www.sacredheart.edu/majors--programs/occupational-therapy---msot/curriculum/>

Dr. Kuhaneck was introduced to the Romanian OT Association through a friend that had been doing international OT work with them since the 1980s. Occupational therapy was, and is, a fairly new profession in Romania. There are currently four OT schools in Romania and many of the programs are taught by psychologists. They are eager to learn from and collaborate with other OT programs around the world, including Sacred Heart. Dr. Kuhaneck connected with two specific locations in Romania: the Maria Beatrice Center (MBC) and APVN.

Dr. Kuhaneck describes the MBC as a beautiful hospital facility that centers on OT for children that have more physically-involved conditions, such as cerebral palsy and neurological conditions. The other location, APVN, is a school that was created by two parents for children with autism. It is based out of the parents' house which includes a large farm. The younger children take classes, whereas the older children work on developing life skills such as learning how to do laundry, taking care of animals, and cooking meals.

In the past, Sacred Heart students traveled to the MBC and APVN as part of their Capstone, working with the OTs and clients one-on-one. This particular year, Dr. Ellen Martino took the lead for the Capstone project. They have utilized Zoom and Internet-based correspondence to continue working with the Romanian OT Association throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It is common for the Romanian OT Association or the MBC to choose the aspect of OT they would like to focus on each year. The focus of the Capstone 2021 project was on telehealth and developing fine motor skills in clients. Dr. Kuhaneck looks forward to being in-person again to truly immerse the Sacred Heart students in the Romanian culture.

Faculty Members Receive Grants to Assist in the Growth of the Program



7 - Dr. Heather Kuhaneck (Ph.D. OTR/L)

This past year, 2021, is the second year of OT program's involvement in the ASD Grant. The ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Grant was originally developed by Dr. Rhea Paul, chair of the Department of Communication Disorders and director of the graduate Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) program at Sacred Heart. Dr. Paul recruited Dr. Kuhaneck with the goal of bringing together the SLP and OT students to assist children with ASD with their literacy skills. Dr. Kuhaneck saw the grant as an opportunity to work with the OT aspect of literacy with children with ASD, and also an opportunity to introduce OT students to the SLP profession. She participates in the grant by advising and teaching the students that receive the grant.

Sacred Heart received the \$1.25 million five-year grant in 2020. The OT students that apply for and receive the grant complete seminars independent from the rest of their OT curriculum, meet with the SLP students and involved OT/SLP faculty, and complete their Capstone projects separate from the rest of the OT students.

Read More About the ASD Grant Here⁷

⁷<https://www.sacredheart.edu/news-room/news-listing/grant-will-train-shu-students-to-help-children-with-autism/>



8 - Dr. Ellen Martino (OTD, OTR/L)

In early December, Dr. Ellen Martino collaborated with the SLP program to receive a \$73,342 grant from the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA). This grant will fund the "Simulation Training in Feeding Premature Infants" project, which will provide manikins for the OT and SLP programs. Congratulations to Dr. Ellen Martino, as well as SLP faculty members Dr. Ciara Leydon, Dr. Avinash Mishra, and Dr. Rhea Paul for their work!

SHU's COTAD Chapter Raises Over \$1,700 Toward Breast Cancer Research



On October 17, 2021, SHU's Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) Chapter participated in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. The walk was sponsored by the American Cancer Society. The executive board of COTAD organized a team of over 20 OT students and encouraged them to raise money over the span of several weeks. The team raised \$1757 toward breast cancer research, significantly overcoming their original goal of \$700. Top fundraisers were PY1 Hannah raising \$664, and PY2 Erin raising \$402. The SHU COTAD executive board emphasized their desire to advocate equitable access to care for those diagnosed with breast cancer. They were grateful for the support from both SHU SOTA and the SHU Pi Theta chapter in their fundraising efforts.





SOTA and COTAD Elect New Executive Board



9 - Previous Executive Board

On November 16, 2021, the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA, previous executive board pictured left) and the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) held elections for their new executive boards. Congratulations to all nominees on their positions, and thank you to the previous executive board for their outstanding service!

Faculty member Sheelagh Schlegel is the advisor for SOTA and COTAD.

SOTA

- President - Carissa Scheier
- Vice President - Lindsay Shanahan
- Secretary - Daniela Pullin
- Treasurer - Ashley Mackowski
- Historian - Lauren Juchem
- AOTA Representative - Kelsey Santucci

- ConnOTA Representative - Keriann Mussi

COTAD

- Co-Chair 1 - Hannah Fingerhut
- Co-Chair 2 - Kristen Brady
- Secretary - Sabrina Yee
- Treasurer - Kaylee Quinn
- Events Coordinator - Kayla Walewski

Alumni Spotlight: Bianca Timpano



10 - Bianca Timpano (OTR/L)

For Vol. I, Issue I of the newsletter, our alumni spotlight is Bianca Timpano.

Timpano graduated from the SHU OT program in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. She describes her journey within the program as one she will never forget due to her personal and professional growth. Faculty may remember Timpano from her position as a Graduate Assistant (GA) in the OT Department. The GA position, along with the friendships Timpano developed with classmates, were two key aspects

of the program that helped Timpano gain confidence during her first year. Her favorite trimesters involved her Level II Fieldworks and the Pediatrics Trimester because they appealed to her kinesthetic learning style and solidified her interest in pediatrics.

One of Timpano's favorite experiences throughout her time in the program was her involvement in the American Veteran Archaeological Recovery (AVAR) Level I Fieldwork. During this fieldwork, seven first-year students (including Timpano) went to Saratoga, New York for a week. They joined veterans on an archaeological dig at one of the battlefields in the area. The primary goal of the students was to establish rapport and gain trust from the veterans as they dug beside them in all types of weather and shared meals together. The students also provided Kinesio-Tape treatment and educated the veterans on tools that can assist them in a variety of occupations. More importantly, the students established bonds with the veterans which encouraged many of them to share their emotions about experiences that they were previously hesitant to talk about.

Currently, Timpano is working at a private school in Maryland. The school specializes in children from kindergarten to 8th Grade who have ADHD, ASD, social challenges, and mild behavioral challenges. She is the only OT in the school of 56 students. She teaches OT to seven classes, runs small group work, completes one-on-one OT, consultations, and observations. Timpano looks forward to continuing her learning in a pediatric outpatient clinic in the future. She specifically is eager to interact with other OTs to continue learning from them.

Timpano's accomplishments as an OTR/L are vast, considering her recent graduation. She is a Certified Level I Handwriting Specialist and she has already completed her Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for her license. Timpano also created two sensory pathways using a Cricut Machine for the school she works at; one pathway is a nature-themed bear hunt for the elementary school, and the other pathway is spy-themed for the middle school. The children thoroughly enjoy the pathways, thus Timpano's creativity led to an increase in her clients' sensory interactions. Timpano also advocated for her students by asking the school to install a sensory swing in the OT room, which has been beneficial for the students.

The program is proud of Alumni Bianca Timpano's post-graduation experience and wishes her the best in her future endeavors.

If you'd like to contact Alumni Bianca Timpano, her email address is: timpanobvt203@gmail.com

Contact Us

Would you like to learn more?

Visit us on the web at the Sacred Heart University Occupational Therapy Website⁸

Follow our Instagram at @sacredheart_ot⁹

Occupational Therapy Public Relations Graduate Assistant

scheierc@mail.sacredheart.edu

⁸<https://www.sacredheart.edu/majors--programs/occupational-therapy---msot/>

⁹https://www.instagram.com/sacredheart_ot/?hl=en