Focus on Alumni

Julie (Pallasch) DeVahl, PT, MS, OCS
A 1979 graduate of the UND physical therapy program, Julie DeVahl has been employed at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, since 2002, as assistant professor and director of clinical education. She has worked in a variety of clinical practice areas including acute care, home health care, and inpatient rehab, with the majority of her clinical practice being in the area of outpatient care. She also served as a clinical resource for two medical equipment companies for over nine years. Julie earned her orthopedic specialization from the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialists in 2011. Having an active faculty practice at UT Southwestern allows her to continue clinical work for 20 percent time in addition to her teaching responsibilities.

In the area of research, Julie is developing a survey tool that can be used to measure lifelong learning aptitudes of licensed physical therapists. Julie has also been involved with a community-based participatory research project called GoodNEWS. The intervention is education and participation in healthy lifestyle activities throughout churches in south Dallas. She is involved in the assessment of physical activity and its effect on health. In addition, clinical research is an integral part of the faculty practice, as orthopedic residents conduct their research projects with faculty mentors.

Another area of interest for Julie is clinical education, where the academic base for knowledge and the “people skills” are truly integrated, and where she can focus on assisting students in the area of professional behaviors and the development of clinical skills. Julie is also involved in clinical education research with The Texas Consortium for Physical Therapy Clinical Education, Inc. to analyze contributing factors when students have difficulty in clinical education. She states that identification of these factors could lead to proactive interventions and promote successful completion of clinical experiences.

Amy (Tallackson) Elbert, PT
Graduating in 1976 from UND-PT, Amy is currently employed as a faculty member at the UND Department of Physical Therapy where her teaching responsibilities are assisting with orthopedic evaluation, therapeutic exercise and neuro/rehab. She has practiced at Altru Health System in Grand Forks, N.D., and in small, rural hospitals located in Cando, Devils Lake, and Jamestown, N.D.; pediatrics at the Anne Carlson School in Jamestown and also at the North Dakota School for the Blind in Grand Forks; and private practice in nursing homes in Jamestown and Cando. Her areas of specialization include education, acute care, and pediatrics. From

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www.med.und.edu/pt
Cliff Lafreniere, PT

Cliff is a 1976 graduate of UND-PT and is employed by Achieve Therapy, LLC of Grand Forks, N.D. He lives and works in Park Rapids, Minn., and has practiced in a variety of settings, including sports medicine and orthopedics. Although he is still passionate about these areas, for the past five years he has been working with patients having chronic pain issues. He has also served as the reimbursement chair for the North Dakota Physical Therapy Association for over 10 years.

Cliff has been involved with several research projects by UND-PT students as they complete their education. Although he remembers a certain disdain for his graduate course in statistics, the subject matter took on a very functional and practical application with the day-to-day interactions with patients. He especially enjoys practice management and all the challenges it brings into the volatile healthcare service arena. In addition, Cliff has been studying more recently in the area of energy and its influence on health and wellness. He believes the science of quantum physics will change dramatically how health and wellness are viewed in future decades. “The science is catching up to the art of medicine,” he said. “I believe as key players in the area of body work, a great deal of what we do will change dramatically in the years to come.”

For those just beginning their professional careers, Cliff recommends they find their passion, as it will serve them for many years. “Life is too short to simply see your career as a job only,” he said. “If you are in a work situation you don’t like, look to change it. As a PT, you have endless opportunities to take your career where you will find that passion.”

Seven years ago, Cliff and his wife Kathleen moved to their lake home near Park Rapids, Minn. Although they enjoy the simple life of lake country living, he said their greatest pleasure in life is their family, especially their two grandchildren. In his spare time, Cliff and Kathleen spend as much time as possible in their boat on the lake or snowmobiling in the winter.

Robyn (Soderstrom) Nelson, PT

Graduating from UND-PT in 1979, Robyn is a physical therapist for Yuma Elementary School District One and also for Advantage Home Health in Yuma, Ariz. Although pediatrics and geriatrics are her specialties, her patients exhibit a variety of issues including orthopedics, neurological, general medical and developmental. She also services students on the autism spectrum. She received her Autism Specialist Certification from Northern Arizona University and serves on her district’s autism support team. She said that so much of what she has learned regarding her approach to students with autism, can be implemented with the majority of her students on caseload.

Previously, Robyn’s focus was primarily geriatric rehabilitation. She enjoyed the implementation of direct, hands-on care, and in particular, the neuro-developmental treatment approach. “As a PT at the Rehab Hospital in Grand Forks, N.D., I was so blessed to have a wide variety of patients,” she said. “I will never forget Jim Schill assisting me while learning the Cybex, as well as my rotation teaching back class.”

Robyn appreciates how being a physical therapist has allowed her to use the skills of which she is passionate: knowledge, service, and a love of human life. She encourages new practitioners to read, study, implement, be ready to work hard and be open to learning opportunities.

Robyn and her husband Bob, a junior high social studies teacher, have been married for 34 years. She is proud of their three beautiful daughters. All are graduates of Northern Arizona University. Their oldest daughter is a grade school teacher and is married to a graduate from culinary school; their middle daughter is a speech language pathologist with a certificate of clinical competence and is working in a rehab hospital; and their youngest daughter is involved in the hotel/restaurant management field.

For the future in physical therapy, Robyn expects emphasis on best practices using the most time-efficient model with a team approach, where applicable. This model would also include much emphasis on patient, family, and student education.
Clinical Education

We would like to thank all of you who support our program and students by accepting students at your facility for their clinical experiences. The knowledge, expertise, and passion for the profession that each of you share with our students is much appreciated!

If you are interested in working with UND students, please contact Bev Johnson, director of clinical education, (beverly.johnson@med.und.edu), or Cindy Flom-Meland, assistant academic coordinator of clinical education, (cindy.flom.meland@med.und.edu). We are especially interested in obtaining more clinical sites in the area of acute care.

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Deb Sellheim, PT, PhD

Following her graduation from UND-PT in 1977, Deb worked in outpatient orthopedics. She taught at UND from 1981 to 1989 before moving to Minnesota where she was an instructor in the physical therapy assistant program in Anoka, Minn., for two years. She then served as the program director of the Master of Physical Therapy program and subsequently the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at St. Catherine University from 1991 to 2003. Deb taught in a PTA program in Provo, Utah, from 2003 to 2005 before returning to St. Catherine in Minneapolis, where she has been associate professor and curriculum codirector in the DPT program since that time. Her clinical background includes orthopedics and general practice (rural hospital and long-term care facilities). In the area of research and scholarships, Deb focused primarily on PT education-related projects, specifically the hidden curriculum in PT education, factors affecting how PT students approach learning, and the preferred PT-PTA relationship.

Deb has published several articles in the Journal of Physical Therapy Education and completed numerous presentations related to physical therapy education at the national, regional and local levels. She was the 2003 recipient of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Section for Education Stanford Award, honoring the most influential paper published in the Journal of Physical Therapy Education for 2003. In addition, she was the 2006 recipient of the APTA Section for Education, Journal of Physical Therapy Education Feitelberg Journal Founder’s Award. Deb has
Kids Corner

Halle, Brynn and Kaden, children of Kari (Lettenmaier), ’02, and Jeff Braaflat

Abby and Cameron, children of Mandy (Schumacher: ’03) and Jason Runyan

Mikaeli and Mackenzie, children of Denise Decker (Litchfield), ’96

Conner, Olivia and Chloe, children of Heather (Phillips), ’99, and Chris Lundeen

Madelyn, Griffin, Emerson and Charlotte, children of Keith, ’89, and Erin House

Benjamin and Zachary, children of Michele (Brien), ’00, and Jon Morse

Sofia and Chase, children of Katie (Rood), ’01, and Josh Layfield

Kara, Cade, Cody and Celeste (Hansen), ’99

Hailey and Blake, children of

Jacob and Kacie, children of Michael, ’99, and Michelle Rexin
Easton, son of Nolan, ’03, and Kelly Lubarski

Bella and Evan, children of Heather, ’07, and Dustin Martinson, ’07

Sonja and Freja, daughter of Jamie (Schroeder), ’04, and Mikey Evans

Brayden, Nora and Jonah, children of Emily (Hassenstab), ’04, and Chris Kuhn, ’04

Mya and Noah, children of Heather (Alderson ’95) and Keen Chan

Savannah and Emma, children of Tiffany (Anderson), ’06, and Brian Sutton

Caden and Cara, children of Chris, ’03, and Georgette Huravitch

Micah, son of Lisa (Koel), ’00, and Tony Schneider

Josie, daughter of Jennifer (Pederson), ’06, and Cass Brekhus

Nicole, ’02, and Kyle Herda

Kinsey, Isabell and Thomas, children of Tami, ’01, and Scott Parker

Sonja and Freja, daughter of Jamie (Schroeder), ’04, and Mikey Evans

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Josie, daughter of Jennifer (Pederson), ’06, and Cass Brekhus

Nicole, ’02, and Kyle Herda

Kinsey, Isabell and Thomas, children of Tami, ’01, and Scott Parker
Jay Spracklen, PT

Jay is a 1979 graduate of UND-PT and is employed at Lincoln Veterans Administration Medical Center in Lincoln, Neb., specializing in orthopedics. In the past, he worked in a private practice and also in a hospital-based inpatient/outpatient setting. In addition, he offered contract services to area nursing homes. Jay has served as an officer in the South Dakota Physical Therapy Association, as a clinical instructor for PT and PTA students in South Dakota and Nebraska, and as a guest lecturer for the PTA program in Norfolk, Neb.

Jay said the PT profession has provided well for him and his family, and has also been rewarding and challenging. He believes there’s a bright future if the profession adheres to principles and ethics that have made physical therapy what it is today. For recent graduates, he would recommend trying a variety of settings to find which one would be most fulfilling for their career.

In his spare time, Jay enjoys camping, boating, horseback riding, and fishing with his wife Lori and their three sons. Jay said he had a short stint as a private pilot before diapers and formula took over the flying budget!

Mary Jo Wagar, PT

Mary Jo received her Bachelor of Science degree in physical therapy from UND-PT in 1977 and t-DPT in 2005. She completed the Kaiser Hayward Orthopedic Residency Program in 1982 and Orthopedic Specialist Certification in 2000. She is employed at Sanford SouthPointe Clinic in Fargo, N.D., where she is the physical therapy and residency manager. Her areas of special interest are general orthopedics/manual therapy and vestibular rehab. She has worked in a variety of settings including acute hospital, skilled nursing, home health, school system (pediatrics), and private practice. The majority of her career, however, has been in the area of outpatient orthopedics in a hospital outpatient setting.

When asked about her contributions to the PT profession, Mary Jo said she has tried to be an advocate for the profession whenever possible. She has served on the Blue Cross Advisory Committee and the Workforce Safety and Insurance Guidance Council. Membership in the APTA has been an important part of her career since graduating from PT school when non-membership was not ever considered. She stated that her involvement on the continuing education committee and serving as president from 2002 to 2008 was very rewarding.

Mary Jo said it has been a privilege to be a part of guiding each individual’s recovery and seeing the many positive changes the profession has made over the years. “This profession has certainly shaped who I am today, and I’m grateful to be able to have had a small part in moving us forward,” she stated.

For the future, Mary Jo is hopeful that therapists will be able to order diagnostic imaging. She anticipates an increase in the number of self-referrals for physical therapy services with direct reimbursement and is hopeful that PT will be the public’s first thought for the treatment of musculoskeletal pain and movement impairments. As new graduates enter the work force and begin their careers, Mary Jo would encourage them to always continue to learn, adapt and embrace change, remain passionate, enjoy what they do, and be the best they can be.

Mary Jo and her husband John have been married for 35 years. She says he’s extremely supportive of her career and endeavors. They have four grown children. They love the outdoors and have started a small vineyard and expanded garden which has been enjoyable and also a lot of work. Mary Jo also enjoys singing in the church choir, playing in the bell choir, and being involved with the Fargo-Moorhead Drum and Bugle Corps Association.

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Richard Wohl, PT
A 1978 graduate of UND-PT, Richard is employed in the home health department of Trinity Hospital in Minot, N.D., where he has worked for over 30 years. The majority of his time has been in acute care, but he has also worked in area rural hospitals, nursing homes, and outpatient clinics.

Richard said he’s had the good fortune of working with wonderful people from a variety of professions and he continues to learn from the patients with whom he’s cared for. He said he is thankful and appreciative of the skills taught by his various instructors and coworkers, and that he’s involved in a profession that he truly enjoys each day.

For those just starting out in their professional practice, he recommends listening to patients, as there is much to learn from them. He also said that as new practitioners share the skills they’ve acquired, others will benefit, as well.

Focus on Clinical Instructors

Anne Putbrese, MPT
Anne received a master’s degree in physical therapy from UND-PT in 1993. She is employed at Altru Health System Home Health Services in Grand Forks, N.D.

Anne said physical therapists are great people to get to know, and that meeting and interacting with the next generation of PT professionals is very interesting. She enjoys finding out why they chose the PT profession and what they hope to accomplish, in addition to hearing about their goals. In sharing her knowledge and experiences, Anne hopes she will add to their professional growth. She said she may not have all the answers to their questions, but she uses that opportunity to research the answer, or better yet, encourages the student to research and then share the information. She mentioned she tends to be more creative when working with patients as the students are observing and that the patients enjoy meeting these young future professionals and sharing stories with them.

Aaron Reinhardt, MPT
Having received his master’s degree in physical therapy in 1997 from UND, Aaron took a position with Altru working in the outpatient department for seven years. Aaron is now currently employed by Spooner Physical Therapy of Phoenix, Ariz. He is co-owner with UND-PT alumnus Tim Spooner, PT, at the Estrella location. Five years ago, Aaron received his Astym certification which he says is an incredible asset to have in his treatment arsenal. Last year, Aaron became certified as a Nike Golf NG360 performance specialist. During the past five years, Aaron’s focus has shifted to more of a biomechanical treatment emphasis and he has become very interested in the Gary Gray approach.

Aaron said working with students is a process that allows him to share the knowledge he has gained over the past 15 years, while learning from the students, as well. In addition, he stated that working with the students also aids him in staying current with new treatments and not becoming complacent. Aaron also mentioned that he has benefitted from students’ understanding of outcome studies in regard to treatment processes that are utilized in the clinic, allowing the upgrade of treatment validity used in his facility. He indicated the students have always been challenged to provide the reason for the treatment option they have selected and that they are now able to respond with a much more rational reason that can be supported by literature.

Aaron has noticed a trend over the past few years where students enter their affiliations with a more solid knowledge base and an increased ability to become involved with their patients much sooner than in the past. In addition, he has recognized an increased level of confidence of students on clinical rotations, many of them having worked previously in a clinic or outpatient setting.

Reflecting on his own clinical affiliations as a student, Aaron stated there were five rotations and that he was able to learn something new from each instructor. “Looking back, I was always fascinated by how calm and collected my instructors were as they would talk with patients,” he said. “I certainly don’t remember nearly as many specific techniques as I do learning simple, patient-relationship building tactics as being a key in treating patients.”

“As center coordinator of clinical education within Spooner Physical Therapy, I have been able to gain a better understanding of the logistical side of organizing students for a school and for a company,” Aaron said. “I have done my best to ensure that students coming to Spooner PT for their clinical rotation received the best possible educational experience.”

For more information, please contact Aaron at a.reinhardt@spoonerphysicaltherapy.com.
**Stork Report**

Jen, ’06, and Cass Brekhus welcomed a baby boy Duncan on Feb. 9, 2012. He weighed 7 lbs. 9.5 oz. and was 19 inches.

Josie was born to Jen (Peterson), ’06, and Cass Brekhus on January 16, 2012. She weighed 6 lbs. 15 oz. and was 18.5 inches.

Mila was born to Angela (Kiefat), ’02, and Joe DelaCruz on September 9, 2011. She weighed 7 lbs. 14 oz. and was 20.5 inches.

Jamie (Schroeder), ’04, and Mikey Evans welcomed Sonja and Freja on September 27, 2012. The twins were 4 lbs. 5 oz. and 16.5 inches and 4 lbs. 8 oz. and 18.5 inches, respectively.

Ivy arrived at the home of Katey (Bottelberghe), ’08, and Patrick Ferguson on Aug. 30, 2012. She weighed 7 lbs. 14 oz. and was 21 inches.

Jonah was born on August 8, 2012, to Emily (Hassenstab), ’04, and Chris Kuhn, ’04. He weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz. and was 20 inches.

Chloe made her debut on November 12, 2012, at the home of Heather (Phillips), ’99, and Chris Lundeen. She weighed 10 lbs. 8 oz. and was 21.75 inches.

Born on June 9, 2012, Keegan was 5 lbs. 15 oz. and 18 inches. Proud parents are Beth (Enerson) ’03, and Aaron Millage.

Jessica (Nelson), ’02, and Matthew Strand are the proud parents of Leah, born on Aug. 24, 2011. She weighed 7 lbs. 15 oz. and was 20.5 inches at birth.

Lisa (Koel), ’00, and Tony Schneider have a new addition at their home. Hope was born on June 2, 2011, weighing 8 lbs. 15 oz. Also, born on May 9, 2008, in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan, Micah was welcomed into their home on April 25, 2012.

Born to Christia, ’11, and Matt Weckerly, Sierra weighed 6 lbs. 13 oz. and was 19 inches. She was born on June 22, 2012.

**Endowments**

Stonewall “Stoney” E. Gessner PT Scholarship Endowment

The Stonewall “Stoney” E. Gessner PT Scholarship Endowment has been established in honor and memory of Stonewall “Stoney” E. Gessner. This endowment will provide scholarships to second- or third-year students enrolled in the UND Physical Therapy program who are actively involved with the North Dakota Physical Therapy Association. Contributions may be made to the University of North Dakota Foundation, 3501 University Ave., Stop 8157, Grand Forks, ND 58202 or online at [www.undalumni.org/givenow](http://www.undalumni.org/givenow).