

## An Interview with Maggie (Hjalmarson) Leshner

### How did you become interested in OT?

I initially planned to become a physical therapist and didn't know about occupational therapy. However, during my first year at UND, I met a student in my dorm who was an occupational therapy student, and her description interested me as well as her enthusiasm for her field of study. I looked into it further, and liked the combination of physical sciences with a focus on mental/emotional health, and on educating the patient/client, with the outcome being increased independence and participation in everyday life activities. I recall liking the emphasis on therapist-patient/client interaction, and on creativity and adaptability, including the use of ordinary daily tasks and activities to make changes in such things as coordination and muscle strength. I worked part-time as a nurse's aide at the Rehabilitation Center during my first two years at UND and during part of that time, I also worked as an occupational therapy aide, so those experiences helped me identify with occupational therapy.

### Please describe your experience with your education at the UND OT program. Are there any stand-out moments you remember?

I particularly recall the dedication and commitment to excellence of individual occupational therapy faculty members. I especially related to Dr. Ruth Peterson, who made lectures so interesting and was always focused on helping us bridge the gap between theory and "book learning," and the patient/client—how a particular clinical condition would actually look and what we would observe and do to determine what was needed. I recall my surprise at receiving the award for Outstanding OT Student, and feeling a sense of responsibility to live up to the principles embodied in that award.

### How did you come to practice at your current site and setting?

It's a long story! I was immediately interested in pediatrics and physical disabilities in school. I recall a book that was required reading, "The Slow Learner in the Classroom," about kids who seem capable in many ways but have difficulty learning, which piqued my interest further. I was particularly interested in neuroanatomy, and about how damage to specific areas affected movement, memory, perception, motor skills, and other functions. However, I didn't do a pediatric affiliation, and it wasn't until my third job that I treated children a fair amount. After that, I worked almost exclusively with children, beginning with a job at the University of Illinois Institute of Child Behavior and Development, as part of a team of professionals at Colonel Wolfe Preschool. I then worked primarily in a school district, in early childhood special education programs for children age 3 and older, then in a birth to age 3 program providing services in the homes of children identified as having delays or likely to have delays due to their condition (Down Syndrome, premature birth, Cerebral Palsy, etc.). Eventually I completed a master's program in early childhood special education at St. Thomas University, during which I completed a practicum at a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. While working at the school district position, I worked part-time hours, during different time periods, at a feeding clinic, in a home health agency, and at a private clinic. So when a number of parents began to ask me to provide therapy

during summer months or after school, I explored how best to do that. I went through the process of starting a therapy practice and business, following requirements to become a licensed home health agency, which I named Children's Theraplay. All my previous professional experiences and opportunities to collaborate with parents came together to support the multiple challenges of initiating a pediatric practice. Eventually, when a group of speech/language clinicians asked me if I was interested in providing clinic-based services as a separate practice within their clinic, I transitioned to primarily clinic-based services, with home and community visits as needed. Today, Children's Theraplay is an established pediatric therapy practice with a primary clinic and one smaller clinic. We have 14 occupational therapists and two additional occupational therapists who fill in as needed, a physical therapist, and six office/billing and technology support staff, which includes my daughter, Kristin, as the clinic/office manager, and her husband, Mike, as billing specialist.

### What do you most enjoy about being an OT?

I love collaborating with parents and family members to find ways to assist children with participating in usual activities of daily life. I like to find ways for them to practice skills in a way that fits with the family's activities. It is deeply satisfying to see children progress and be able to do tasks and participate in activities along with other children that have more typical development. I like the broad base of services that occupational therapists provide, focusing on increasing individual skills, abilities, and independence; identifying needed adaptations and technology for daily life activities; making modifications in the person's home or school/community; and using supports and interventions to facilitate engagement in play and group activities.



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### Department Vision Statement

All people will be engaged in meaningful occupations supporting health and wellness.



The University of North Dakota

School of Medicine  
& Health Sciences

Occupational Therapy

# Chair's Letter

Greetings from Grand Forks. It is hard to believe we are nearing the end of summer. I had a list of things I was going to accomplish and somehow the list is longer than the time I had allotted for completion. Isn't that the way it usually goes?

We have had a very productive spring and summer in the Occupational Therapy Department. We finished up the self-study for our reaccreditation of the program and shipped it off to our reviewers last month. The onsite team will be in Grand Forks and Casper on Oct. 31 through Nov. 2. We look forward to their feedback and suggestions for continuing to enhance our program.

In May, we celebrated graduation with the class of 2011 in Grand Forks and Casper! This is a rewarding time as our colleagues launch their careers in locations across the country! They have a lot to be proud of; each individual worked hard and is a well-educated entry-level therapist who will be a strong advocate for their clients and a leader in the occupational therapy profession.

Also in May, we started a new class of 36 students in Grand Forks and 12 in Casper! It is exciting to see highly motivated and talented individuals start on their careers in occupational therapy!



This summer brought some sad news with the passing of Sue McIntyre. She was a strong leader, and a tireless advocate for both the program and the profession. She was innovative and very much a visionary, helping establish a strong foundation for both sites of our UND program.

As I am thinking about the program and all that we do as part of UND's School of Medicine and Health Sciences, I am reflecting on our mission. As a faculty we focus on teaching, scholarship, and service. Teaching is our primary focus, but we are definitely growing in the areas of scholarship, and service. Eight faculty members presented at the American Occupational Therapy Conference in Philadelphia, and each faculty member serves on advisory boards and committees locally, regionally, and nationally. I am very proud of the many accomplishments of our students and faculty. We are a strong program that meets the needs of consumers in North Dakota, Wyoming, and the surrounding regions. We make a difference in helping people engage in occupations and have positive quality of life in every aspect of their lives! I am looking forward to a positive accreditation review and another productive academic year!

Warm regards,

Janet Jedlicka  
Chair and Associate Professor  
Occupational Therapy

# New OT Scholarships

The Occupational Therapy Department is delighted to announce the endowment of two new scholarships created specifically for students pursuing a degree in OT at the University of North Dakota. The generous donations to the OT department for these scholarships will help to greatly serve the students to whom they are awarded.

The Amy Lind Scholarship Fund was created based on the generous bequest of Dr. Amy Lind, past chair of the OT program, upon her passing in 2010. Dr. Lind was a recognized leader of the profession and developed a strong foundation for the OT program to build and grow, providing services to the community and meeting the health care needs of the citizens of the region. The Amy Lind Scholarship will help to support individuals with a strong record of leadership and service to the OT profession and their communities.

The Matt and Katrin Hjalmarsen Scholarship Fund was established by Maggie Leshner in honor of her parents. Leshner stated that she was grateful to her parents for their encouragement and for instilling the value of education in her and her siblings. Leshner chose to honor her parents' support through the development of the Hjalmarsen Scholarship in the support of others. Specifically, the Matt and Katrin Hjalmarsen Scholarship funds awards to OT students based on leadership, service, academic performance and to address the needs of individuals in underserved populations.

Both of these scholarships were initially granted in the fall of 2011 based on donor-determined criteria incorporated into a departmentally monitored application process. The OT department is extremely grateful for these generous donations which will well-serve our students for years to come. To contribute to either endowment, contact Dave Miedema, SMHS development director, (701) 777-4933, [davem@undfoundation.org](mailto:davem@undfoundation.org).

# SOTA



Casper SOTA Club Members of 2011: Front Row: (L-R) Sarah Averett, Theresa Podio, Nicole Likewise, Johanna Meister, Emily Reiter. Second Row: Rebecca Lang, Alyssa Lopez, Melinda Cervantes, Erika Swirzcki, Andrea Young. Top Row: Jenni Prevett, Tracy Lord, Jeff Crain, Sam Becker, Cayleigh Herman.

2010-2011 Student Occupational Therapy Association service activities in Casper and Grand Forks included: Alzheimer's Memory Walk, ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) Walk, Potato Bowl Parade, UND Homecoming Parade, Parkwood Place Volunteering, Diabetes Walk, Integrative Medicine Interest Group, The Big Event, Fall and Spring Involvement Expos, Joggin' with Josh, fundraising and gifts for the CVIC, student delegation to the AOTA National Conference in Philadelphia, Assistive Technology public demonstration lab for Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR), Casper Senior Center, MS Society Walk, Meals on Wheels, Special Olympics for Toddlers, Student delegation to the AOTA Student Conclave in Lexington, Ky., Wyoming OT Spring Conference



# Thank You to Tom Clifford, Jr.

To say that Tom Clifford, Jr. is connected to UND is a true understatement. A graduate of UND (Biology, '66) and son of former University President Tom Clifford, Sr., one would think that Clifford's involvement with UND after moving to Wyoming would have continued only on an alumni level. But, Clifford returned to UND in 1993 as part of an innovative and untried educational experience. This May marked the end of Clifford's 18-year role as one of the founders and the Pre-Professional Coordinator of a collaborative agreement between the UND OT Department in Grand Forks, and Casper College in Casper, Wyo., to deliver occupational therapy education outside of North Dakota.



In 1991, then Casper College President Leroy Strausner began looking at the viability of starting an occupational therapy assistant program at Casper College. Dr. Strausner mentioned the possibility to Clifford, who put him in touch with then UND OT Department Chair Sue McIntyre (see related article below). In one of those "what if" conversations that so often lead to experiments and adventures never before attempted, the idea of establishing a UND satellite program at the Casper College campus was proposed. No other university was delivering an occupational therapy program across state lines, and some argued that it couldn't be done. After a lot of leg work at both campuses, the North Dakota State Board of Education approved the program proposal in April 1993. The doors of the UND/CC OT program opened in May of 1993, admitting the first class of 12 UND/CC OT students. As a founding

member of the program, chair of the Life Sciences Division, and chair of the Biology Department at Casper College, Clifford was hired by the OT Department as the Pre-Professional Coordinator to handle inquiries, provide advising and serve as UND's liaison to Casper College.

Clifford provided more than advising over the 18 years he worked with the program. He provided encouragement in various forms. Sometimes it came in the form of anonymous "scholarships" for books, rent or food, and sometimes in the form of a "swift kick" to get back on track. At both UND and Casper College, Clifford's main focus has always been on removing barriers to student success. His loyalty to staff, faculty and students in the program has been constant, and the department would like to thank Tom for his dedication and friendship over the years.

## Maggie Leshner continued from cover.

### What motivated you to start a scholarship with the department in your parents' names?

I feel very blessed, on a nearly daily basis, for some aspect of having my own therapy practice, whether when providing services that are helpful to children and their families, or learning with and learning from them and the occupational therapists and physical therapist that work at my clinic. At some point, I began to think about how far I had come and how I have gone beyond early dreams of what I would be doing. I inevitably came back to UND, thinking of the support and education I received there, and especially from the occupational therapy faculty; I thought of how that experience boosted my confidence in so many ways, supported integration of professional ideals, and gave me a solid start to being a competent occupational therapy practitioner. And it was a short hop from there to thinking of all the sacrifices my parents made, having emigrated from Iceland, and despite many struggles, hoping for better circumstances for their children. My parents were consistently supportive of education. My mother respected my questions, even as a small child, and patiently and thoroughly answered multiple questions, despite having six children and much to do each day. My father encouraged me to go to college, to study hard so that I could be accepted and get financial help, expressing regret that he likely wouldn't be able to help much. Not long ago, my brother Harry (a physicist who did his undergraduate work and master's program at UND) and I had talked about doing something at UND to honor our parents, without a clear picture of what that would be. Eventually I began to think of making a scholarship available to help occupational therapy students like myself, who were doing well academically and also had financial need. It seemed a small, but fitting, thank-you for all that I have been given.

### Anything else you would like to add?

My experience at UND and in the occupational therapy program was life-changing for me. I am so thankful for all that I learned and for the patience and perseverance of faculty and others, who help shape the lives of countless young people there. Despite a most rewarding profession and multiple life blessings, it would be nothing without my family—my husband, Tom, my dear children, Kristin, Michael, and Daniel, and their significant others, and my adorable grandchildren, Tristan (5) and Alayna (17 months), as well as Tom's and my family, including my extended family in Iceland.

## Obit: Sue McIntyre



The OT Department is saddened by the death of Sue McIntyre, assistant professor emeritus in the Department of Occupational Therapy. Sue passed away July 4, 2011, in Grand Forks, N.D., after a lengthy illness.

Born and raised in North Dakota, Sue was a 1964 graduate of UND with her bachelor's and master's degrees in Occupational Therapy. In 1967 she joined the UND OT faculty, and in 1981 she became Chair of Occupational Therapy at UND, a position she held until her retirement from the University in 2006.

Among Sue's most notable accomplishments were the collaboration with Casper College in Casper, Wyo., that led to the Wyoming satellite program being opened in 1993, and the transition of both the Grand Forks and Casper OT programs to the master's degree level.

Sue was a dedicated hockey fan, and had seen her love of the sport fulfilled in her grandson Zane Gothberg, a goalie in his second year with the Fargo Force U.S. Hockey League team, and in her daughter Kelly McIntyre-Gothberg, and granddaughter Jade Gothberg, all of Thief River Falls, Minn.



## UND Faculty 2011 \_ AOTA Annual Conference

**Gail Bass, Ph.D., OTR/L**

Assistant Professor

**LaVonne Fox, Ph.D., OTR/L**

Associate Professor,  
 OT Graduate Director

**Deb Hanson, Ph.D., OTR/L**

Associate Professor,  
 Fieldwork Coordinator

**Anne Haskins, Ph.D., OTR/L**

Assistant Professor

**Cindy Janssen, M.S., OTR/L**

Assistant Professor

**Janet Jedlicka, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA**

Associate Professor, Department Chair

**Breann Lamborn, M.P.A.**

Assistant Professor,  
 Professional Coordinator –  
 Wyoming Site

**Mandy Meyer, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor (jointly with  
 Anatomy and Cell Biology)

**Jan Stube, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA**

Associate Professor

**Carla Wilhite, O.T.D., OTR/L**

Assistant Professor

**Sonia Zimmerman, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA**

Associate Professor, tMOT Director

Scholarship is an important aspect of faculty and student productivity at UND. In April 2011, Occupational Therapy faculty presented poster and workshop sessions at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual Conference, including

- Dr. LaVonne Fox, Dr. Debra Hanson, Dr. Anne Haskins, Dr. Janet Jedlicka, "Learning To Work Effectively With Other Cultures."
- Dr. Janet Jedlicka, Co-presenter, "Changing Practice Settings: Becoming an OT/OTA Educator."
- Dr. Debra Hanson, Panelist, Conference Highlight Forum for Academic Fieldwork Coordinators.
- Dr. Debra Hanson, Dr. Jan Stube, Dr. Sonia Zimmerman, "Strategies to Facilitate Success for Occupational Therapy Online Education."
- Dr. Gail Bass, Allison Hendrickson (MOTS, Kayla Korynta (MOTS) , "Life Skills: An After-School Program for Children With Down Syndrome."
- Dr. Anne Haskins and Matthew Cappetta (OT 2009), "An Exploratory Study Examining Interprofessional Collaboration between Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Practitioners and Students."

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Friday February 3, 2012**

OT Recognition Luncheon/Workshop  
 Motivational Interviewing  
 Gretchen Prohofsky, OTR/L

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Saturday, April 21, 2012  
 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

UND/CC OT Spring OT Conference  
 Casper College Campus,  
 Science Complex