

## Alumni Spotlight: Aaron Irey

### How did you become interested in OT?

I was introduced to OT by my older step-sister, Chris (Wyman) Brown who graduated from UND's OT program two years ahead of me. I always wanted to do something where I could work with others. My original plan was to become a math teacher and coach. Chris convinced me that being an OT would allow me to have a wider career path and still be teaching, just in a different way.



### Describe your experiences with your education at the UND OT program. Any standout moments?

The UND OT program from day one made me feel like I was a part of a family that wanted me to succeed, just as a parent does their child. The classes were organized, challenging and always were applicable to what I needed for my career. The professors all had hands-on experiences that they used to enhance learning. The most important item that I took from all of my instruction was that all treatment in OT needs to be purposeful to the patient.

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

I am currently the director of clinical reimbursement for a skilled nursing facility (SNF) company. For about five years now my job has been to assist SNF interdisciplinary teams by teaching Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rules and regulations, minimum data set (MDS) coding and enhancing reimbursement.

I was introduced to this process during my last traditional OT position as the rehab services manager at an SNF. I believe it ties back to my interest in math calculations that motivated me to learn the MDS and understand the reason for levels of payment related to rules and regulations.

Soon I was teaching this information to other therapists and then facilities.

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

I have always enjoyed the wide variety of settings that you can choose from as an OT. I have worked mainly in the long-term care industry in SNFs but also have spent time working with pediatrics, acute care in hospital settings, and outpatient and home health. However, the main reason I have always loved working as an OT in geriatrics in SNFs is that appreciation from patients and families when you have assisted that patient with being able to recover and return home or to enhance their abilities in what is that patient's new home, all when there is often fear that nothing else can be done.

### Is there anything else you would like to add?

Purposeful activity is the cornerstone to successful therapy treatment. If you can identify what is purposeful to that patient and center your treatment around it, you will have optimal outcomes as now the patient is guiding their recovery. Their treatment sessions have now become enjoyable for them and the therapist.

## Chair's letter

Greetings from Grand Forks,

Happy fall as we move quickly toward the holiday season! Once again we've been busy this spring and summer in the UND Occupational Therapy Department.

In May, we celebrated graduation with the class of 2012 on both the Grand Forks and Casper campuses. We are happy to welcome 39 new therapy colleagues at locations across the country! As confirmed during accreditation last fall, our graduates continue to demonstrate themselves as well-educated entry-level therapy professionals, strong advocates for their clients and profession, and leaders in occupational therapy.

Also in May, we started a new class of 42 students in Grand Forks and 12 in Casper. Late spring always brings exciting changes as we say goodbye and then hello to our student groups.

We are also saying goodbye and hello to colleagues this year, highlighted in this issue with articles on Carla Wilhite and Julie Grabanski. We wish Dr. Wilhite all the best on her new professional endeavor, and look forward to the contributions that Professor Grabanski brings from her previous clinical and educational experience.

As we complete the latest annual department report, I am once again struck by the dedication of our faculty, students and alumni to the advancement of OT through education and scholarship. In this issue are several examples of the work produced by collaborations between faculty and students. If you are interested in a closer look at the work being produced by our students and faculty, information on how to access the online abstracts of scholarly and research activity is also included in this issue. We look forward to hearing from you as you advance your own scholarly practice!

Warm regards,



Janet Jedlicka  
Chair and Associate Professor  
Occupational Therapy

### Occupational Therapy Department Vision Statement

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

## OT Says Goodbye to Dr. Carla Wilhite

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After four years of cowgirl sensibility and a whole lot of laughs, the OT department is saying goodbye to our colleague Carla Wilhite. Carla leaves us in December to accept a full-time faculty position at the University of New Mexico beginning spring 2013. During her time with the department, Carla has demonstrated the best principles of collegiality, a passion for the occupation and creativity of OT, and the widest selection of Western wear and cowboy boots ever seen on a UND faculty member. As president of the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association, Carla has increased association membership across Wyoming, provided timely and evidence-based information monthly through the organization's newsletter and in September coordinated a highly successful and sold-out state conference. She also has taught us

how to cook cake in cast iron over a wood fire, the proper seating positioning in tractors for farmers and ranchers, and shared her extensive knowledge of culturally competent treatment across a wide range of cultures and client populations. New Mexico is getting a treasure. Good luck, Carla, on your newest adventure!

A reception will be held for Carla on Thursday, Dec. 6, at 4 p.m. in the upstairs coffee lounge of the Wold Science Center on the Casper College campus. Please join us if you can!



## Jan Stube Promoted to Full Professor

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The UND Occupational Therapy Department is very pleased to announce the recent promotion of Jan Stube, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, from associate professor to full professor of occupational therapy in July 2013. Full professor is the highest faculty status available and Dr. Stube is the first faculty member in the department's history to achieve this academic milestone. Dr. Stube

teaches primarily physical disabilities and community-based coursework. She greatly enjoys collaboration with students in their scholarly projects and research involving occupation-based and other best practice principles for adults with neurologic or other conditions. Her current research includes development of an occupation-based clinical measure and study of client energy management strategies. The OT Department is grateful to Dr. Stube for her contributions to teaching excellence, scholarship, and modeling of best practice in occupational therapy. Please join us in congratulating Dr. Stube!

## OT Welcomes Julie Grabanski to the Grand Forks Faculty

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We are pleased to welcome Associate Professor Julie Grabanski MSA, OTR/L, as our newest faculty member in the UND Occupational Therapy Department. Julie has 12 years of teaching experience in a variety of higher education settings, most recently as the academic fieldwork coordinator and an instructor for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at Northland Community and Technical College in East Grand Forks, Minn. Julie also has 10 years of clinical experience in pediatric and rehabilitation settings. As an adjunct faculty member, Julie has taught the service delivery course for the UND OT Department's online transitional MOT program and she has collaborated with UND OT faculty members in the development and provision of a number educational and community experiences for OT and OTA students. She is currently in the process of completing the requirements for her doctoral degree from North Dakota State University; her dissertation topic is on active learning in occupational therapy education. Julie enjoys spending her free time with her family, biking, skiing, gardening, and music.



## Wyoming Site Identified as a WICHE Location

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The Casper, Wyo., site was identified as a graduate occupational therapy location for WICHE funding in Summer 2012! Now students can choose either the Grand Forks or Casper locations for their education.

WICHE, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, is a regional organization developed in the 1950s to increase the attendance of students in higher education institutions in 15 Western states. Founded in the need to provide technical, professional, and graduate education in these states, WICHE seeks to draw students to programs in states that traditionally have lower populations and limited ability to develop higher education opportunities in these three categories.

WICHE provides financial support to students participating in the Student Exchange Program, by allowing students from the 15-state region to attend universities in other participating states at reduced tuition rates. According to the WICHE website, Wyoming students have seen a reduction in tuition totaling \$98 million since 1988.

North Dakota became a WICHE participant in 1984, while Wyoming has participated in WICHE since 1953. The identification of the UND Wyoming OT site provides an additional educational opportunity for students interested in occupational therapy.





The Grand Forks SOTA shows what OT is made of.



SMHS Occupational Therapy students pose with ND Sen. John and Mikey Hoeven before the 2012 Homecoming Parade.



Wyoming first-year students maintain Halloween tradition.

## Campaign Update

Thank you to our OT alumni who have thoughtfully given over \$3,300 to the Every Dollar Counts student scholarship campaign since it launched in April. Thanks to a matching gift, a total of \$6,600 has been raised. That's 25% toward our goal. As we approach the end-of-the-year giving season, please consider supporting our program and students. Gifts can be sent to the UND Foundation, 3501 University Ave., Stop 8157, Grand Forks, ND 58202-8157 (memo: OT Every Dollar Counts). Online gifts can be made at [www.undfoundation.org/givenow](http://www.undfoundation.org/givenow) (fund description: Every Dollar Counts), but please note that a 4% fee is added to all online transactions.



## Footnotes

The UND Kappa Chapter of Pi Theta Kappa completed an out-service project this fall to educate political candidates on the potential strain to hands, wrists, and shoulders during the stress of the political campaigning season. A brochure developed with information from AOTA's Grip and Grin project was mailed to state and local candidates in North Dakota, Montana, and South Dakota. The PTK project resulted in expanded education and awareness for OT and the UND program, and elicited many positive e-mail responses. Good work, PTK!

The 32nd Annual Frank Low Research Day was held on April 24, 2012, with a strong show of participation from students and faculty in the OT Department. Michael Nelson and Elizabeth Schleicher received first place in the Allied Health Science category for their poster presentation, in conjunction with Dr. Anne Haskins, titled "Motivation: An Occupational Therapy Guide for Young Male Clients with Spinal Cord Injury." Lindsey Farkas and Elizabeth Reynolds received an honorable mention for their poster, titled "Sexuality, The Missing Activity of Daily Living: A Pilot Study," in conjunction with advisor Dr. LaVonne Fox. Congratulations to all!

Have a Footnote you would like to share? E-mail [breann.lamborn@med.und.edu](mailto:breann.lamborn@med.und.edu).

### Looking for research to support clinical, scholarly endeavors?

Check out the "Scholarly Project and Independent Study Abstracts" tab on the UND OT Department webpage at [www.ot.und.edu](http://www.ot.und.edu). If you would like to see a full project, contact UND's Harley E. French Library of the Health Sciences and ask about Interlibrary Loan.

## Save the Date

### UND OT Department Spring Workshop

Motor Learning and Treatment Intensity:

Two Sides of the Same Coin?

Nancy Flynn, OTR/L, Ph.D.

Friday, February 8, 2013

8:30 a.m.

UND Memorial Ballroom, Grand Forks, N.D.

For more information, call (701) 777-2209.

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