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WINTER 2024

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On the cover: More than 200 alumni, students, employees and community members came together during the inaugural Alumni Reunion & Family Weekend for networking, learning and service.

Dear University Community,



Hello again, fellow alumni! First and foremost, it was great seeing and connecting with so many of you at our first Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend this past September—we had more than 200 alumni and faculty members in attendance! We are VERY excited to announce this year's alumni weekend to be held September 27-28 on the San Marcos, CA campus.. Details will be forthcoming, so be prepared to mark your calendars and make your travel plans.

As the end of my time in office as your Alumni Association president just concluded, please join me in welcoming **Stephen Elam, PT, DPT, EdD**, current vice president of the Governance Committee, as your new Alumni Association President. I have enjoyed my time working with the University and fellow alumni, and I look forward to the association's continued growth and success. Speaking of growth, the Alumni Advisory Board recently added four new members who will serve on our committees going forward!

The Governance Committee, under the leadership of Dr. Elam, continues to improve the Advisory Board self-evaluation document. With his succession to president, we are excited that **Robert Kentner, BSN, MSN, DNP** will assume the vice president role of the Governance Committee. Please join me in congratulating Bob.

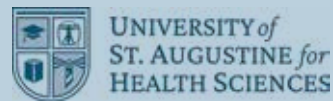
The Advocacy Committee, under the leadership of **Rebekah Jarrar, OTD, MA, MDT, OTR/L**, focuses their attention on growing relationships with the University and continues to add interest groups to monitor. The committee's efforts continue to be a vital part of our mission and to expand our reach with local, regional and national professional organizations.

The Alumni Engagement Committee, under the leadership of **Chris Long, PT, DPT**, spearheaded the success of our inaugural Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend. Thanks to the collaboration of Dr. Long and Polly Crabtree, USAHS Director of Alumni Engagement, in making this weekend such a success!

On behalf of the entire Alumni Advisory Board, thank you to those who are serving on the board. We welcome any alumni interested in this terrific opportunity to give back to USAHS and to its success and growth.

Professionally,

Stephen R. Weyandt, PT, DPT (MPT '00, tDPT '04)
Immediate Past President, USAHS Alumni Association



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Introducing Alumni Chapters!

To engage alumni regionally, the USAHS Alumni Association is introducing **Alumni Association chapters**, with the first few in Atlanta, GA, San Diego, CA, Austin, TX and Miami, FL.

The Atlanta chapter held its first event in January and is guided by alum **Dr. Sam Chukwuma (DPT '18)** and University Representative **April Johnson**. Check social media and usa.edu for event details.

The San Diego, CA chapter will be introduced in late spring 2024 and needs a group leader. The San Diego group will be instrumental in the planning of the 2024 Alumni Reunion & Family Weekend on the San Marcos campus in September 2024.

USAHS alumni interested in volunteering to help with any of these chapters or who are interested in leading an Alumni Association chapter outside of Atlanta, Austin, Miami or San Diego are encouraged to contact alumni@usa.edu.

You're Invited!

The University's alumni engagement program includes offering networking activities, including hosted receptions at conferences.

As these events become available, they are shared on www.usa.edu/about/alumni/, *Accolades Insider* and social media.

All alumni are invited to network with peers at the following hosted receptions. Register early: Use the registration link sent by email or contact alumni@usa.edu.

**American Physical Therapy Association-
Combined Sections Meeting:**
6-8 p.m. ET Thursday, February 15 in Boston, MA

**Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Annual Convention:**

5:30-7:30 p.m. CT Thursday, February 22 in Fort Worth, TX

**American Occupational Therapy Association-
INSPIRE Annual Conference:**

6-8 p.m. ET Thursday, March 21 in Orlando, FL



STAY CONNECTED

As a graduate of the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, alumni are members of an international network that is more than 15,000 strong and growing.

The Alumni Association has several communications channels to provide opportunities for alumni to engage with the University and fellow USAHS graduates. Alumni are asked to keep their contact information up to date, including their mailing address and preferred email address, to ensure valuable information and networking/professional opportunities can be shared. Use the Update Contact Info form on www.usa.edu/about/alumni/helpful-related-links/ to submit current contact information.

Accolades magazine: Published twice a year and mailed to alumni, this publication shares alumni accomplishments, along with University, student and employee updates and news of interest.

Accolades Insider: To supplement the printed magazine, the *Accolades Insider* e-newsletter is emailed monthly to all alumni. It includes timely networking, professional development and resources that are available to USAHS alumni, along with Alumni Association announcements.

USA.EDU website: Accessible through www.usa.edu/about/usahs-alumni/, viewers can find Alumni Association news and benefits, career service resources, past editions of *Accolades* and Class Notes submission criteria, continuing professional education opportunities, upcoming networking and events, helpful related links and Alumni Association Advisory Board activities.

Social media: Alumni can join private groups to connect, network, learn, share ideas and build community. Stay informed about events and activities at USAHS, plus engage and share job postings for USAHS alumni, accomplishments and information of interest with fellow alumni on program-specific Facebook private groups and in the general LinkedIn group. Visit www.usa.edu/about/alumni/.

Inaugural Alumni Reunion & Family Weekend Connects 200+ for Fellowship, Learning and Community Service



More than 200 University alumni, students and employees, along with alumni families and community members, attended the inaugural **Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend**, held September 15–17 on the St. Augustine, FL campus.

Activities included a family barbecue, continuing education sessions, campus tours, a campus fair and community impact activity, alumni/employee reception and an in-person Alumni Association Advisory Board meeting, plus free time to enjoy the St. Augustine area.

Says Director, Alumni Engagement **Polly Crabtree**, “We’re thrilled to have brought together the USAHS community and the wider community for this event on our first USAHS campus. It was an ideal opportunity for us all to connect, learn, have an enjoyable time and recognize the impact of the work USAHS and our graduates are doing.”

The event kicked off Friday evening with a festive barbecue celebration featuring games for the whole family, followed by a morning of learning with continuing professional education sessions on topics such as leadership, communication and innovation.

Student, alumni, community and clinical partner groups exhibited during the Campus Fair, sharing information regarding the healthcare professions supported by the University. During the Campus Fair, volunteers created 100 hygiene kits to distribute to a local



clinic and an area youth shelter.

Crabtree says the sensory experience activity held during the fair was one of the highlights. University occupational therapy Flex students and faculty led a craft project activity designed for sensory input for 27 children from St. Augustine Youth Services.

Alumni Association Advisory Board member and officer **Rebekah Jarrar, OTD, MA, MDT, OTR/L (MOT '17, OTD '23)** says participating in the inaugural reunion was fun and rewarding. “Connecting with other graduates of USAHS was a definite highlight for the Advocacy Committee. Local community partners, including adolescents from the St.

Augustine Youth Services, came to our campus to learn about different areas of practice, have fun with a sensory fair, and meet with both students and alumni. The OT students developed interventions for the kids to help them with emotional regulation, social and play skills,” she says. “Planning outreach efforts that our alumni and their families can participate in and then seeing our students, faculty and alumni work together to impact the local community is the definition of grassroots advocacy in action. We are already looking forward to highlighting advocacy opportunities at our next alumni reunion.”



“Alumni in attendance shared that the weekend far exceeded their expectations, and they cannot wait for the next annual reunion event.”

Also on Saturday, alumni and faculty participants completed continuing professional education courses and attended a lunch where information about the University was shared with an interactive contest. Saturday evening approximately 60 alumni, faculty and staff mingled and networked during a reception that included appetizers, beverages and entertainment.

“The weather was perfect! Alumni in

attendance shared that the weekend far exceeded their expectations, and they cannot wait for the next annual reunion event, which will be held on our San Marcos, CA campus September 27-28 this fall,” exclaims Crabtree. “A big thank you to our event sponsors for the 2023 weekend—PT Solutions, Upstream Rehab/Benchmark Physical Therapy and PRN—Physical Rehabilitation Network.”

SAVE THE DATE



TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEYS:

Original Graduates Reflect on Their Impact

Nestled in the historic city of St. Augustine, FL, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) stands as a beacon of excellence in healthcare education. Renowned for its commitment to producing exceptional graduates, the University takes pride in the transformative impact its alumni have across healthcare education.

In 1979, Dr. Stanley Paris took the first steps toward shaping outstanding healthcare professionals with the inception of the Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) program. Many distinguished individuals began their professional careers as MPT students in St. Augustine, and some returned to the University as esteemed faculty members.

Dr. Lisa Chase (MPT '97), Dr. Megann Schooley (MPT '97) and Dr. Steve Vighetti (MPT '97) were part of original graduating classes of the MPT program. While their career paths have diverged, they share a common thread of unwavering dedication to their profession and a commitment to advancing the field of physical therapy (PT).

Their time as students profoundly shaped their approach to teaching and practice, instilling a deep understanding of challenges faced by aspiring physical therapists. Armed with this knowledge, they bring a unique perspective to the classroom, offering insights that only those who have walked the same path can provide.

As some of the original graduates, what unique perspectives do you bring to your USAHS role?

Dr. Chase: The historical perspective. I think we have to learn from our history



Dr. Steve Vighetti (MPT '97) with Vighetti & Associates Sports Physical Therapy staff members Dr. Megann Schooley (MPT '97) and Dr. Megan Dickerson (DPT '16).

to plan for the future. As students, we were exposed to different areas of practice and learning styles. Seeing the diversity of areas where PTs can work was a part of our curriculum. I like to make students aware of that, keeping their minds open as they enter into practice.

Dr. Schooley: When I was a student, the professional and academic standards were exceptional. We were instructed and mentored not just as students but as future colleagues with the intent to advance our profession and care of patients. I try to take that approach when mentoring students.

Dr. Vighetti: When I was a student, the program wasn't accredited, resulting in rigorous expectations and high standards set by the strict faculty. Tough love was a defining element, backed by strong mentoring relationships with PTs. That's my approach in the classroom. I will be tough but not without that same sort of tough love. My hope in continuing that approach is to make the next generation of PTs better than the last.

How has PT evolved since you graduated?

Dr. Vighetti: Dr. Paris played a crucial role in shifting PT from physician-prescribed treatments to referrals, empowering physical therapists as movement specialists. The emergence of cash PT clinics allowed autonomous practice, enhancing patient care.

Dr. Chase: To me, the obvious one is technology. Electronic medical records and robotics need to be integrated into practice. The volume of care and patients to manage has increased. Consequently, we are integrating all forms of technology into our practice and teaching.

How do you ensure your teaching methods resonate with the current generation of students?

Dr. Chase: I have to be real with them and honest. I try to be an effective teacher by getting to know the learner, then set expectations to prepare them for the real world.

Dr. Schooley: I've been teaching for 20+ years, and the students have changed a lot. I've had to adjust teaching methods to meet individual student needs. I've learned about unique needs of different generations, which require an open mind to different ways of instruction and interaction. Simple adjustments can make a big difference in meeting student needs.

What are your thoughts on the importance of alumni events in fostering connections and celebrating the University's growth?

Dr. Chase: The University and the field of physical therapy are experiencing exponential growth. When students and alumni give back to support where they came from, it helps the University grow while remaining a family. I think that's one of the things that makes USAHS different.

Dr. Vighetti: The University fosters a family atmosphere, with a close-knit bond among graduates. With its large and extensive alumni network,



“Alumni events and opportunities to connect with colleagues are critical. The PT world is small, and the USAHS network is likely the largest network within it. United, we can have a significant positive influence on the growth and advancement of the profession. Our combined resources have a much greater effect than individual resources.” — Dr. Megann Schooley (MPT '97)

we stand out, speaking a unique but shared language. I think it's important to leverage our strength in numbers with these kinds of events to elevate the PT profession, maintain professional standards and advance as a united force.

What advice would you give to students aspiring to become successful PTs or future faculty?

Dr. Schooley: My advice is to see your schooling as the start of your professional career. Building relationships, developing professional habits, and embracing learning and feedback should start now. Your instructors, directors and classmates are your future professional colleagues. As a student, you should strive to live like the PT you want to become.

Dr. Vighetti: Make the most of your time in school. It offers invaluable one-on-one mentoring from experienced clinicians. Utilize resources fully,

develop excellent habits early and build strong bonds with instructors and classmates. Learn for the long term, not just for exams, as the knowledge gained will be crucial throughout your career.

Dr. Chase: Live and practice with integrity. In my opinion, integrity is the foundation of your character and the cornerstone of your professionalism. Practicing and living with integrity is going to set you apart as a clinician, a faculty member, but most importantly, as a human. You will be different.

Distinguished alumni, like Drs. Chase, Schooley and Vighetti, embody the University's vision and dedication to advancing physical therapy. They bring valuable insights to their roles, shaping the next generation of PTs. With the ever-evolving field, USAHS emphasizes evidence-based practices and the integration of technology. Alumni events foster connections and support

the growth of the University and the profession as a whole. The advice from these accomplished professionals encourages aspiring PTs to embrace integrity, dedication and lifelong learning on their journey to success.



Dr. Lisa Chase teaches the Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation course on the St. Augustine, FL campus.

Lisa Chase, PT, PhD, holds a diverse educational background, including a Bachelor of Science in Adult Fitness and Sports Medicine, Master of Science in Exercise Physiology and a pioneering interdisciplinary PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on Exercise and Wellness from Arizona State University. In 2000, she began teaching for USAHS in the DPT program on the St. Augustine campus. Alongside teaching, she finds fulfillment in outpatient orthopaedic practice and engages in paramedic and EMT instruction as a certified EMT.

With 20 years of experience in orthopaedics and sports, **Megann Schooley, PT, DPT, SCS, MTC, CSCS, CEEAA**, contributed to corporate/occupational injury prevention for Orlando's entertainment/theme park industry. She excels in program development and education, holding multiple certifications while working as a core faculty member in the DPT program on the St. Augustine campus. She also works at Vighetti & Associates Sports Physical Therapy, in outpatient orthopaedics and home health.

Steve Vighetti PT, MTC, CSCS, Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists and owner of *Vighetti & Associates Sports Physical Therapy*, boasts more than two decades of experience in the field. His diverse career includes coaching roles, working with athletes from various disciplines and running biomechanics through Refine Your Run, which assists St. Augustine's runners in enhancing their performance.

At Your Service

If you have an idea for a service event or have participated in community outreach efforts that *Accolades* can highlight, please email details and photos to alumni@usa.edu.

Community outreach is an important part of the University's mission, and service learning is a key component of our programs as a **Certified B Corp Institution**. The following is just a snapshot of some of the community service activities that have occurred across our campuses.

CALIFORNIA

The Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) **restored playground equipment donated to the Fisher House** in 2016, citing the value of play in promoting cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. The **Fisher House** provides housing and support services to military and veteran family members.

Students in the physical therapy and occupational therapy programs hosted a collaborative collection campaign supporting **Toys for Tots** and were able to donate more than 40 new toys to families in need.



More than 60 USAHS student and employee volunteers joined forces with the **Stoke for Life Foundation** September 7-10 to support adaptive surfers and promote the therapeutic benefits of adaptive water sports. Volunteers assisted in beachfront tasks, ensured safety and facilitated athletes' participation in the U.S. Open Adaptive Surfing Championship.

FLORIDA



More than 40 USAHS students and faculty engaged with attendees at the **Be Resilient And Voice Emotions (BRAVE) Summit**. The event, which welcomes more than 1,000 teenagers from across Florida, is held annually to initiate meaningful conversations and combat stigma about mental health, and empower young individuals to foster mental well-being within themselves and their communities. The volunteers participated in activities such as writing positive messages on the BRAVE wall and facilitated groups to introduce stress- and anxiety-reduction techniques to attendees.

Students on both USAHS Florida campuses joined the walk and volunteered November 4 in the **ALS Association Florida Chapter's Walk to Defeat ALS**. The student volunteers helped to direct traffic, coordinate parking and set up booths, as well as provided wheelchairs and children's activities, distributed refreshments and supported event attendees.



FLORIDA

In June, alum and Program Director and Associate Professor **Gabriel Somarriba, PT, DPT, EdD (DPT '09, EdD '21)**, who is a PT Clinical Director for the Special Olympics, facilitated **Funfitness** screenings at the **Special Olympics World Games** in Berlin. The Funfitness screenings allow physical therapists to assess and promote the well-being of the athletes. His responsibilities also included conducting onsite **training for American Physical Therapy Association** representatives who were volunteering at the World Games.



More than 40 USAHS students and alumni participated in the 2023 **Pink Up the Pace 5k** as volunteers or walkers/runners. The annual event was held October 7 at St. Augustine Beach. Pink Up The Pace is a non-profit organization founded in 2009 by alum and Faculty Lab Instructor **Cindy Ortiz Chaconas, PT, DPT, ATC (DPT '07)**. The organization raises money to assist the uninsured and underinsured in the St. Augustine, FL area in the early detection of breast cancer and for imaging services to detect breast cancer.

TEXAS



The Breast Cancer Survivorship Support Group (BCSSG) launched as part of the University's Pro Bono Clinic. Coordinated by Contributing Faculty **Tiffany Bystra, MS, OTR/L** and Assistant Professor **Lesley Khan-Farooqi, PhD, OTD, OTR/L**, BCSSG targets post-treatment breast cancer survivors seeking to enhance their physical, mental, cognitive and overall well-being. Supported by occupational therapy doctoral students, the sessions foster peer-support discussions, engaging activities and educational resources centered on various aspects of health and wellness.

Student Physical Therapy Association students volunteered at the Dallas, TX **Ronald McDonald House** to help make and serve homemade tacos to families staying there. The Ronald McDonald House provides housing and activities for families that travel for hospital needs in the area.



Students with SOTA participated in a volunteer event with **Safe in Austin**, an animal shelter and rescue ranch. Students worked on projects around the property, such as clearing the chicken, pig and rabbit coops and removing tree limbs that had fallen during a recent ice storm. Safe in Austin's mission is to save animals that have been mistreated or that have disabilities. The organization designs activities that encourage children with special needs the opportunity to interact with and take care of these animals.



Physical therapy and occupational therapy students on the Austin, TX campus hosted the **Clayton Fun Fitness Evening** October 4. More than 100 children and 30 USAHS volunteers participated in the event at Clayton Elementary, a neighboring elementary school to the Austin campus. USAHS volunteers led the Clayton Elementary children through movement-based activities and exercises.



Doctor of Physical Therapy student **Hailey Ladner** received an **award for social responsibility** from the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Academy of Leadership and Innovation Global Health SIG. Her research project titled "Increasing Access to Hippotherapy Using Horse Riding Simulators for Children with Cerebral Palsy" was designed with assistance from Assistant Professor **Kaelee Brockway, PT, DPT** and Assistant Professor **Janis Henricksen, PT, DPT, ScD**.

OT Student Gains Confidence and Expertise through USAHS Mentor Pairing



As an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, **Alli Yingling (MOT '19)** fell in love with occupational therapy (OT). Working toward a psychology degree, she interned at a large pediatrics clinic that employed physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists.

"After spending time with the owner, who was an OT, I decided I liked the philosophy behind occupational therapy," she says. "I also enjoyed seeing the confidence build in the kids I was working with and watching them blossom and come out of their shells."

Upon graduation, she made a bet with her father on getting admitted to the OT program at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences. "It took several rounds of applications, and there were a lot of necessary pre-requisite classes, but I made it in 2017! This was the year UNC won the national basketball championship, which I took as a sign," she declares.

Yet, her USAHS student journey and fieldwork assignments were not a slam dunk. She first interned in Georgia at an acute care and rehab medical facility, followed by another public school-based experience in Florida, where she assessed student need for school-based OT services.

"My experience was not what I was expecting, and it took awhile to understand the subject matter and hone skills I had learned in class," says

Yingling. "I knew I didn't want to do the type of work I was doing in my fieldwork but instead find something with home health with children. With the pandemic, this was especially difficult. I moved to Georgia to an OT clinic for 1.5 years, but I was barely getting by."

At this point Yingling decided to reach out for help. She had noticed on the usa.edu website information about USAHS' new student/alumni geographic mentorship program and thought she'd try it. After six months in the program, Yingling says she was able to take steps on her own to make course corrections and move her career in the right direction.

"I was the only OT at the outpatient

clinic, so there was really no one to go to with questions. That's when having a mentor became really important," she says. "My mentor, Paige, was continuously available to me for consultation on technique/strategy. Just talking it through with someone allowed me to advance my practice by helping me stay focused on providing evidence-based strategies."

Yingling says that her mentor introduced her to resources such as STAR Institute, which she uses to deepen her understanding of sensory processing, and that she is challenged with interesting cases that her mentor shares from her own practice.

"When I started as an independent

Make a Difference— Mentor USAHS Students!

Alumni are needed to help **mentor USAHS students**. There are many ways that alumni can assist students as they prepare for their careers as healthcare professionals. Just a few are:

- **Join the USAHS Upnotch Community** and be available to students looking for a mentor.

- **Serve as a Geographic Mentor** to a student heading out on a clinical or fieldwork rotation in an area they are unfamiliar with (but is familiar to you). Emails are sent to alumni located in a requested area.

- **Serve as a Clinical Instructor** in the workplace (to learn more, email clinedsa@usa.edu.)

Mentoring can take many forms—some students are looking for quick answers to a few questions, some students are looking for a longer-term mentorship relationship that can help them build their professional network. Sharing your experience can make a real difference to a student who is just starting out. Contact alumni@usa.edu or visit www.usa.edu/about/alumni/news-and-benefits/ to learn more.

contractor, Paige was available to help me with planning for required equipment, which has given me the confidence I need going forward for running my own clinic one day," states Yingling. "The obstacle I am proudest of overcoming was building my caseload and setting up my therapy room. It was intimidating having to plan my own therapy space as the sole OT. Providing my own supplies has taught me what clinic items do and do not actually get used in treatment, and I know what to expect in terms of budget for setting up a therapy space."

"The obstacle I am proudest of overcoming was building my caseload and setting up my therapy room."

Yingling is now a pediatric occupational therapist at Children's Therapy Group in Lawrenceville, GA. Passionate about pediatric occupational therapy, she's excited about the use of play to build skills for a living.

Another benefit about her USAHS experience: Alli Yingling met her fiancé, Steven, during her second term at USAHS at her college roommate's wedding! With her own wedding planned for this spring, Yingling's USAHS roommate will be by her side as a bridesmaid.

DNP Alum Propels Innovation in Healthcare

With her philosophy of "Encourage the heart, lead by example and inspire a shared vision to maintain the highest standards," **Jessica Hovland, DNP, RN, CPAN, NE-BC, PMGT-BC (DNP '20)** is taking her innovation and leadership learnings and putting them to practice.



Dr. Hovland graduated from the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences with a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) with an emphasis in nurse executive leadership. When pursuing her DNP, her research involved blending multimodal analgesia and virtual reality (VR) to offer surgical patients a non-opioid treatment option to postoperative pain, creating an innovative approach to pain management.

During the last year of her doctorate program, she shared that "Nursing leaders are the drivers of change" and how the use of VR is a notable example of nursing presence within the ever-growing field of healthcare technology. "VR is no longer a vision of the future but an existing capability that can enhance our practice in excellence. If we fail to adopt evidence-based practices and envision them as disruptive, we will never grow with resiliency and adaptability," she wrote.

Innovation in Action

Fast forward four years and now, as the Administrative Director, Ambulatory Surgery Center at UT Health Austin, she is a leader in nursing disruptive innovations with a focus on the latest technologies (i.e., VR, artificial intelligence) to propel healthcare organizations to excel beyond their competition and to provide personalized patient care.

UT Health Austin's Ambulatory Surgery

Center (ASC), which Dr. Hovland helped open in January 2021, gives patients and their physicians a convenient and safe alternative for outpatient and selected short-stay surgical procedures. Fully equipped with the latest technology and state-of-the-art preoperative and post-anesthesia areas of the center, the ASC is staffed to provide same-day surgical

care. According to ASC's [website](http://www.usa.edu), the center was recently recognized for having implemented advanced technologies and leveraging those technologies in innovative ways that have realized meaningful outcomes.

"I continue to work with our team to implement innovations in perioperative medicine. We're currently working on an expansion plan to scale the ambulatory surgical services and provide more outpatient surgical care to the constantly growing community of Central Texas," she states.

Inspiration through Leadership

Specializing in organizational and system leadership, Dr. Hovland has expertise in developing patient- and family-centered care approaches.

"In my role, I must ensure the accountability for the quality of outpatient perioperative health care and patient safety, which starts with the nursing and administrative staff," she states. "One of the best ways to foster a supportive perioperative culture is to understand your workforce and apply different leadership styles to varying challenging situations. My doctorate and education helped me to understand the soft and hard skills needed to lead a culture of positivity and adaptability."

(Alumni Spotlight continued on page 19)

Working Together for a Better Future through Advocacy

Advocacy is about taking action and garnering support to bring change or awareness to a cause or issue. Through small but significant steps, such as writing letters, mentoring or speaking publicly, advocacy can occur in many impactful ways. Regardless of the chosen path, anyone can become an advocate with the goal to make things better—whether it's by influencing and guiding healthcare policies, being involved in a professional association or through volunteerism and community service.



Dr. Hohman signed up to be a key APTA contact for her district in Florida four years ago. One year later she was in Washington, D.C., talking to senators and representatives on Capitol Hill about issues that matter to her constituents. She shares her thoughts about how to have your voice be heard on issues that are important in the health sciences professions.

“The best first steps are supporting the Alumni Association’s efforts and becoming a member of your discipline’s association or society. For example, APTA provides excellent templates and contact information to help its members reach out to local legislators on issues that PTs are facing. I urge you to contact your local legislators for a sit-down meeting, so they can put a face with the issues that matter to your discipline,” she says.

“As advocates for one of the most phenomenal professions in the world, it is our obligation to educate as much as we can (in whatever way we can) to enhance patient and community awareness. This can be through social media platforms, a company website, blogs/articles and good ol’ fashioned face-to-face interaction.”

“As advocates for one of the most phenomenal professions in the world, it is our obligation to educate as much as we can.”

Take it from **Katie Hohman, PT (tDPT '10)**. She has owned and operated a private physical therapy practice since 2009. Dr. Hohman is an active member of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and sits on the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) Alumni Association Advocacy Committee.



“No step is too small in terms of advocacy.”

Rebekah Jarrar, OTD, MA, MOT, OTR/L (MOT '17, OTD '23), who serves the Advocacy Committee as its vice president and chair, is an active member of her local community and a passionate advocate for children and their families. Dr. Jarrar has some encouraging words of advice for alumni wanting to become involved: “No step is too small in terms of advocacy.”

Dr. Jarrar recommends reaching out via USAHS alumni social media or directly to the Advocacy Committee, which regularly reports on issues needing immediate attention.

“We are currently monitoring an urgent action alert put out by AOTA (American Occupational Therapy Association) to ask Congress to prevent Medicare cuts to occupational therapy,” she says. The call-to-action link is www.votervoices.net/AOTA/Campaigns/109385/Respond.

She also recommends keeping membership to professional national and state organizations active. “Each organization fights on our behalf and has opportunities to volunteer, sign letters of support and read about current legislation affecting our practice areas. As an alumni group of 15,000 strong, we have a huge opportunity to amplify the voices of both the University and our individual practice areas by standing together behind crucial legislation,” Dr. Jarrar states.



“When many people work together, there’s more hope for a brighter future for our profession and our patients.”

Advocating for change by championing legislation, USAHS Director of Physical Therapy Clinical Education Coordination **Derrick F. Campbell, PT, DPT, DSc** wants to ensure healthcare professionals have adequate training for awareness and

intervention in situations involving human trafficking. As the Texas Capital Area District Delegate for supporting adoption of RC-6-23 SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION THAT INCLUDED IDENTIFYING SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, he has continued efforts to advocate for populations marginalized by this crime. Dr. Campbell was the motion developer and delivered the support statement to the floor of the APTA House of Delegates this past summer in Washington, D.C.

“Advocacy is encouraged in states where such training is not mandated by reaching out to state boards,” says Dr. Campbell. “This proactive approach empowers healthcare providers to support and intervene for victims of human trafficking effectively.”

The range of advocacy interests and topics concerning healthcare professionals is broad, and experiences are diverse.

“Your experience and passion are encouraged,” says Dr. Jarrar. “When many people work together, there’s more hope for a brighter future for our profession and our patients.”

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MONITORS PERTINENT HEALTHCARE ISSUES

The Alumni Association Advisory Board’s Advocacy Committee regularly monitors pertinent issues affecting health sciences as well as actions of 10 organizations to stay abreast of the work being done in both the community and legislative arenas. The committee’s report also includes a list of action items that need engagement from alumni and the USAHS community.

Together, USAHS alumni can advance issues that matter. Your profession needs you! To get started:



Support the USAHS Alumni Association by being an active member.



Join your professional society or association.



Stay up to date by reading the Advocacy Committee recaps on the usa.edu alumni pages.



Raise your hand to volunteer or put your name on the sign-up sheet when it’s passed around.



New St. Augustine, FL Campus Construction Is Underway

The countdown begins as the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences eagerly awaits the grand opening of its leading-edge, flagship campus in St. Augustine, FL. Relocating to 1 News Place, construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

The project is a \$74 million investment in the future of USAHS and the advancement of the University's mission to prepare exceptional health care practitioners. This investment also demonstrates USAHS' continued commitment to the St. Augustine local community with a thriving university that provides access to high-quality health sciences education, health care outreach and economic development.

The expansive campus at 1 News Place is less than two miles west of USAHS' current location at 1 University Blvd. It is planned to be 122,000 square feet built to the University's specifications and includes restoring and renovating the historic portion of the building. The facilities concept includes expanded spaces for the Center for Innovative Clinical Practice; assessment rooms, simulation rooms and student lounges; added spaces for cadaver and Anatomage anatomy labs; and enhanced outdoor, engagement spaces including covered patios and walking paths.

Learn more and see artist renderings of the new campus at www.usa.edu/blog/usahs-announces-future-location-of-its-new-st-augustine-campus/.



USAHS LAUNCHES HYBRID IMMERSION MOT PROGRAM

The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences introduced the **Hybrid Immersion Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT)** program on the Dallas, TX campus for the 2023 Fall Term. Designed for students who prefer the flexibility of living almost anywhere in the U.S., students enrolled in this format come to campus just two times per trimester for three-to-five-day lab immersions. The hybrid immersion occupational therapy program includes online synchronous and asynchronous classes, as well as immersive, in-person learning while allowing students to finish their degree in as little as two years.*

Learn more at www.usa.edu/blog/hybrid-occupational-therapy-programs/.

**Time to completion may vary by student, depending on individual progress, credits transferred and other factors.*



PEDIATRICS CLINIC OPENS ON SAN MARCOS CAMPUS

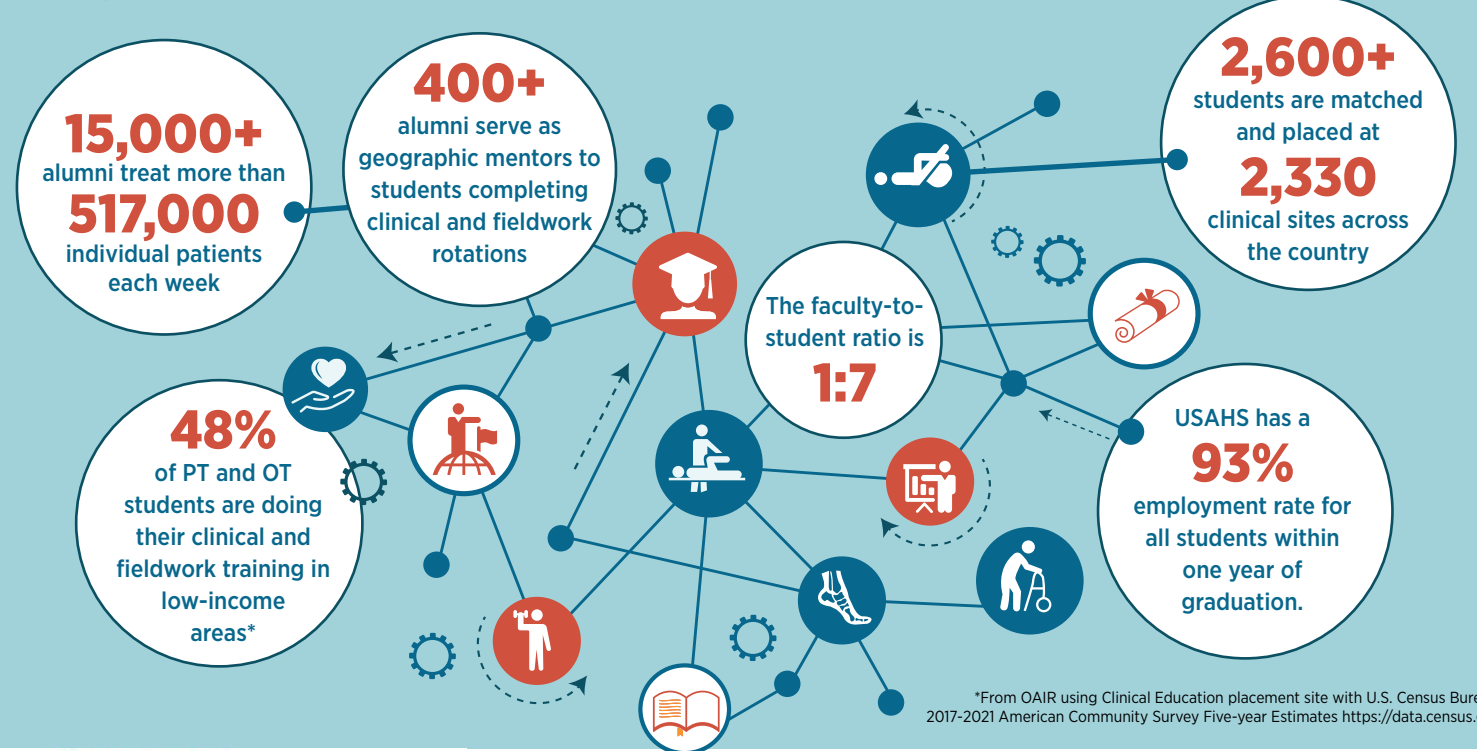
The University has introduced a Pediatric Neuroplasticity pro bono clinic on the San Marcos, CA campus for Residential and Flex Doctor of Physical Therapy students. The clients attend the clinic for locomotor training on a treadmill and traditional physical therapy. During the six-week program, the students are responsible for all treatment documentation.



USAHS GRADUATES ARE CHANGING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE



As one of only a few universities in the nation solely dedicated to graduate studies in health sciences, the **University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS)** is educating rehabilitative sciences practitioners, advanced-level nurses and others to address the nation's shortage of healthcare professionals. Here's a snapshot of how USAHS and its alumni are making a profound impact on the transformation of healthcare:



Addressing high shortages of OT, PT and SLP practitioners in the three most populous states, **USAHS' five campuses span California, Florida and Texas**, with national reach available through online and hybrid programs.

USAHS is investing more than **\$100 million** in the next five years on maintaining state-of-the-art campus infrastructure.

USAHS alumni are located in all **50 states** and **26 countries**.





Jennifer Hobson, PT, DPT, MTC, CFC, CMTPT (DPT '04) recently interviewed Dr. Mariano Rocabado and Dr. Stanley

V. Paris, the founding fathers of Craniofacial therapy in the United States. During the podcast “How the Pioneers of Craniofacial Therapy Are Transforming Dentistry and Physical Therapy,” Dr. Hobson delved into the history and evolving dynamics of Craniofacial therapy and temporomandibular disorder (TMD) treatment.



Krisi (Young) Probert (OTD '06) was promoted to Executive Vice President of Operations Excellence at

Upstream Rehabilitation, the nation’s largest pure-play outpatient rehab provider. Dr. Probert has also completed the Harvard Business School’s Business Analytics Program.



PHOTO COURTESY JOHNNY PREHN

Shauna Russell (DPT '06) was featured in *MidWeek*, published by *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, on utilizing

techniques of strength sports to promote functional fitness with patients/clients. Dr. Russell has been a physical therapist on Hawaii for more than a decade and employs three physical therapists at Pakolea Rehab (“physical therapy” in Hawaiian). Visit www.midweek.com/shauna-russell/.



Andrea (Piri) Adighibe (MOT '07) was the first-place winner of the 2023 Sarah Baskin Award for Excellence in Research at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

for publication on upper extremity assessment.



As a Major League Physical Therapist for the Texas Rangers Baseball Club, **Regan Wong, DPT, SCS, MTC, CSCS, Cert. DN (DPT '08)** says he is thrilled

to see the Texas Rangers win the 2023 World Series, the organization’s first-ever title. Read the blog at www.usa.edu/blog/texas-rangers-physical-therapist-champions-a-motion-fueled-lifestyle-ushers-team-to-world-series-triumph/.

Doctor of Physical Therapy alum **Penny Goldberg, PT, DPT, ATC (OTD '12)** has co-published *The Insurance Road Map for Rehab Providers: Get in the Driver's Seat on the Billing, Coding, and Documentation Highway*. With a focus on addressing frequent questions raised by students and combining them with material taught in clinical education, Dr. Goldberg equips aspiring and practicing clinicians with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful practice.

Ashley (Stull) Sousa (MOT '15) opened Thrive Pediatric Therapy and Family Services in Myrtle Beach, SC. The facility enables Activities of Daily Living (ADL) work and provides comfortable spaces for routines-based and play-based therapy. Sousa works with families to set treatment goals and helps to create therapeutic activities for families to use at home.



Jamal Cort, DPT (DPT '19) achieved his goal of becoming the Head Athletic Trainer and Director of Rehabilitation for the Utah Jazz in 2022.

In his role, Dr. Cort employs manual therapy techniques such as soft tissue manipulation and joint mobilization. Read the blog at www.usa.edu/blog/usahs-dpt-alum-lives-dream-lands-coveted-role-in-the-nba/.

Marla Davis (ppOTD '19) started two new businesses in Lancaster, PA—Play for All Consulting, which provides consulting on inclusive playground design to playground and recreation companies, and Bloom Pediatric Therapy & Wellness, a mobile pediatric occupational therapy clinic. Her areas of practice have focused on pediatrics, including preschool early intervention and school-based services.

President of Steps4Love **Gerry Morigerato, PT, DPT (DPT '20)** spoke to underinsured amputees about pro bono services at the 2023 Amputee Coalition National Conference held August 2-5 in Orlando, FL.



Jonathan Pabon, PT, DPT, SCS (DPT '20) began his role as Assistant Minor League Physical Therapist for the Atlanta Braves in February 2023.

Dr. Pabon focuses on preventing and treating injuries for athletes, specializing in shoulder, elbow, knee and hamstring injuries. He works mainly with minor league players who require long-term rehabilitation. Read the blog at www.usa.edu/blog/passion-for-sports-drives-usahs-graduates-milb-physical-therapy-career/.



Jumpstart, an organization that assists current and former prisoners re-entering society, has showcased **Kimberly Kenely (OTD '21)** in a YouTube video titled “Occupational Therapy Is Helpful and Needed in Prison Rehabilitation.” The organization applauded Dr. Kenely for her dedication in developing an occupational therapy program in the criminal justice setting for individuals with mental health disorders.



Tracy Nornhold (EdD '21) was honored by the American Occupational Therapy Association Rehabilitation and Disability Special Interest Section as a SpOTlight OT for her work integrating occupational therapy into emergency preparedness and disaster response. Dr. Nornhold started her own consulting business to help organizations and

individuals develop emergency preparedness plans for people with access and functional needs (disabilities) and presented at the 2023 AOTA Inspire Annual Conference about the role of occupational therapy in emergency management.



Hayley Shank, OTR, OTD (OTD '22) has received approval from the **Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA)** for her continuing education course on sleep dysfunction. **Mary A. Smith, PhD, OTR/L**, “The Treatment and Management of Sleep Dysfunction: An Education Course for OT,”

provides occupational therapists with valuable information on identifying and addressing sleep problems in patients.



Mary Grace Lagasca (OTD '23) presented a poster display at the sixth World Parkinson Congress July 4-7 in Barcelona, Spain. Dr. Lagasca says her abstract, titled “Comparing the Benefits of Cognitive Mapping and Motivational Interviewing with the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure to Provide Better Person-Centered Care,” was inspired

by firsthand experiences and the increasing prevalence of Parkinson’s disease worldwide.

Alumni may submit updates about their professional or personal lives to share with fellow USAHS alumni. Use the Class Notes form on www.usa.edu/about/alumni/.



(Alumni Spotlight continued from page 13)

MS-SLP GRADUATE EXPLORES THE EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF STUTTERING

When **Shayna Conner DeLoach**

(MS-SLP '23) first met her husband Colton, she observed that he stutters occasionally. “I noticed, but it seemed natural,” she says. “At first, I was worried that talking about it would psych him out, but it brings us together a bit.”



Interested in biomechanics, Conner had originally wanted to be an engineer. In undergrad, after seeing a model of a cochlear implant that piqued her interest so much, she changed her major to speech.

“Colt’s speech is very fluent,” she explains. “Most people wouldn’t notice that he stutters. However, I notice him avoiding certain situations, like talking on the phone or ordering when we go out to eat. Or he might start a sentence, then start over and totally change what he was saying. He will experience blocking from time to time, mostly in emotional or unfamiliar situations.” (Blocking is the temporary inability to utter a word.)

She has shared what she learned in her Fluency and Fluency Disorders class with DeLoach. He even bought her a mug with speech terms on it that he’d learned from their conversations about her classes.

DeLoach says he plans his sentences in advance. “I keep a tab on myself all the time, to override it. If you talk too fast and get ahead of yourself, you will stutter. So, you speak as if you’re reading it.”

“At first I would get mad at him for wanting me to make phone calls,” Conner says. “I have more empathy now—but I know he can do it. I want to bring his confidence up, but I also can help him plan what to say. If he gets too anxious, I’ll do it. That’s teamwork!”

Conner is currently completing her clinical fellowship with Broad River Rehab at a skilled nursing facility. The couple live in Akron, OH and got married in August 2023, after Conner graduated from the Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP) program in April. “It [the wedding] was truly a beautiful day,” she says. “We are excited for our next adventure!”

Read the full blog at <https://www.usa.edu/blog/students-explore-the-emotional-aspect-of-stuttering/>





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