



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™

University of Central Arkansas Department of Occupational Therapy

2024 Cohort
Doctoral Capstone Abstracts

Taylor Rae Ahart

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

Program Evaluation of Community Connections and Exploration of Volunteer Retention

Abstract:

This capstone project primarily focused on research and leadership. The purpose of this capstone project was to explore parents' perceptions of the outcomes of their child participating in Community Connections programs, evaluate the effectiveness of the Community Connections parent support group, and explore volunteers' perceptions of the volunteer experience with Community Connections through a program evaluation research study. This study was a convergent mixed methods design and had a total of 50 participants, with 25 who completed the program evaluation parent survey, four who completed the parent support group survey, and 21 who completed the volunteer survey. This study found that, on average, parents agreed that their child demonstrated improved social skills, improved self-confidence, developed new skills, and was exposed to diverse experiences after participating in Community Connections programs. Additionally, the parent support group was found to be "very helpful" to all participants that completed the survey. Further, all participants who completed the volunteer survey rated their overall experience with volunteering with Community Connections either a four or five on a 5-point scale. However, on average, volunteers reported a neutral response when asked about the helpfulness of the training they received before volunteering. Program specific volunteer expectation handouts were created for all Community Connections programs to supplement the established training for volunteers because of this capstone project. Additionally, resources were created based on the needs identified from the parent support group survey. Finally, summary reports of results from each program type were created and provided to Community Connections' administration.



Madison Grace Bowlan

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brandy Pate, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS, Low Vision Certification

Made for More: Reaching Life's Full Potential as an Amputee

Abstract:

Made for More: Reaching Life's Full Potential as an Amputee is a doctoral capstone project inspired by the student's personal experience with limb loss and a desire to help improve the quality of life for other amputees. As evidenced by many amputees and rehabilitation facilities across Central Arkansas, there is an overall lack of resources and education for these individuals. This project focused on advanced clinical and community practice, education, and advocacy. The student enhanced clinical skills by observing occupational, physical, and recreational therapists in various settings, and gained community practice insights through observing prosthetists and volunteering at Camp No Limits, a camp for children with limb loss or limb differences and their families. These experiences provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by amputees, facilitated the opportunity to meet many individuals with limb loss, and gave insight into various lenses of clinicians on an amputee's team. Using knowledge gained through these experiences, as well as experiences of her own, the student collaborated with therapists at Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute to update their Amputee Education Manual, created educational resources for therapists to use across Central Arkansas, and began writing a book for amputees based on personal experiences, testimonials from other amputees, and educational insights about the amputee life journey. Throughout the project, the student advocated for improved quality of life and mental health support for individuals experiencing the life-changing impact of limb loss.



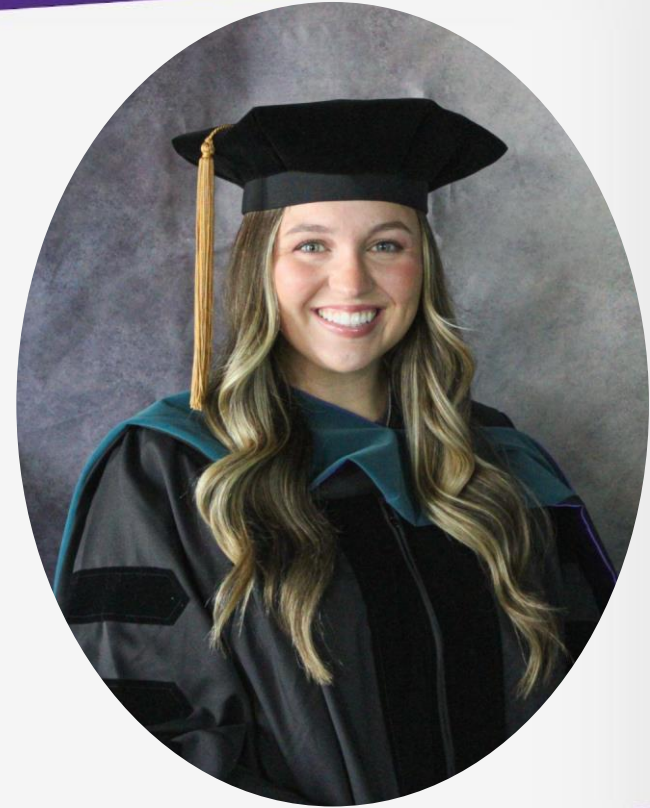
Brooke Nicole Braden

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Tina Mankey, Ed.D, OTR/L

Cheers to Inclusion: An Inclusive Cheer Camp for Children with Disabilities in a Rural Community

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project, entitled Cheers to Inclusion, was a 14-week experience that included various components related to the development and implementation of a cheer camp. The student completed several trainings and certifications, and volunteered with a cheer program for children with disabilities, listened to various podcasts on related topics, assisted in special education classrooms, and helped provide therapy treatment to the students. The implementation portion of this capstone was a weeklong summer cheer camp designed for students, K-12, with intellectual and physical disabilities. Cheers to Inclusion was hosted by UCA occupational therapy student Brooke Braden at the White Hall Middle School gymnasium and was possible with the help of several community sponsors. The purpose of this event was to provide kids with disabilities a cheer camp experience similar to summer sports camps that their peers and siblings have the opportunity to attend. The camp not only educated the students on basic cheer skills, including tumbling, motions, stunts and dancing, it also fostered inclusion, peer engagement and confidence. A post-program survey found that participants would attend the event again and would recommend it to others.



Tykira Ja’Niya Bullins

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brandy Pate, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS, Low Vision Certification

Promoting the Role of Occupational Therapy in Women’s Health

Abstract:

This capstone project aimed to shed light on the vital but often overlooked role of Occupational Therapy (OT) in women's health, focusing on pelvic floor health. The primary objective was to showcase the diverse contributions that occupational therapists can make to enhance women's well-being in this area. Pelvic floor disorders pose complex challenges that impact not only physical health but also the emotional and social well-being of women. With a holistic approach, occupational therapists are uniquely suited to address these issues, promoting functional independence and quality of life. The project emphasized the necessity for specialized OT interventions in managing pelvic floor disorders, such as bladder/bowel incontinence and pelvic pain, which significantly affect daily activities and overall life satisfaction. By raising awareness of the underutilized potential of OT in this field, the capstone highlighted the essential role that OTs play in improving healthcare outcomes for women. Aligned with the UCA OT Program guidelines, this project focused on enhancing clinical skills and educational practices through interprofessional collaboration. It aimed to integrate resources and foster teamwork with various healthcare professionals, advocating for a multidisciplinary approach to women's health. Ultimately, this capstone project sought to advance OT practice and education, providing a blueprint for future practitioners. By addressing a critical gap in the current OT curriculum, this capstone aimed to prepare Occupational therapists to tackle the unique challenges of women's pelvic health. The outcomes included three learning modules (pelvic anatomy, common conditions, and interventions) and a brochure for OT students at fieldwork sites.



Jaci Elizabeth Chenowith

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brandy Pate, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS, Low Vision Certification

Pediatric Low Vision and Visual Perception Interventions and Resources

Abstract:

Background: Our nation has 601,972 children between the ages of 0-17 years with vision loss. (CDC, 2022). Eighty percent of a child's learning comes through their visual pathways (Russ, 2021). Their vision will affect every area of their life, including ADLs and IADLs, meeting developmental milestones, playing, meeting educational standards, and has many psychosocial factors (Pediatric Low Vision, 2023). **Objective:** This paper outlines the development of a pediatric low vision and visual perception interventions and resource guide. This capstone project advanced the students' clinical practice skills in pediatric low-vision and falls under the AOTA practice area of children and youth. (AOTA, 2018) **Interventions** were gathered from evidence-based literature and clinical observations of experienced occupational therapists. "As a profession, we need to validate the interventions we are using and provide evidence to guide practitioners in selecting appropriate interventions." (Nastasi, 2019). Evidence-based interventions will lead to the best possible outcomes for our clients. **Methods:** The student worked with therapists specializing in low-vision and directly with the pediatric population. The focus population of this project is outpatient pediatrics and school-aged children with vision impairments. The student also created a pediatric screener with low vision components. The screener was for ages newborn to 5 years of age. **Conclusion:** The student collected qualitative data through interviews to get feedback on the resources. All feedback was positive, and there were no suggestions for improvement.



Kizzie Mae Citty

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brandy Pate, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS, Low Vision Certification

Developing, Fostering and Nurturing Success: Occupational Therapy in Foster Care

Abstract:

The goal of this capstone project was to help prevent children in the foster care system from falling through the cracks of receiving occupational therapy services through education, advocacy and advanced clinical skills and community practice. I was able to learn from occupational therapists who work with foster children and gain advanced clinical skills through learning about trauma informed care. An occupational therapy screening tool was developed to gain insight to a child's needs through a trauma informed lens, this tool was shared with DTS (Durocher Therapy Services) and the UAMS PACE clinic to be used with foster children. A website was developed (fostering-ot.com) to provide education about OT in foster care, the impacts of trauma, TBRI, developmental milestones, and primitive reflexes. There are also resources available on the website to improve fine motor skills, visual motor skills, reflex integration, and feeding. Additional resources including fact sheets, continuing education courses, trauma informed care resources and the screening tool created are also accessible on the site. Children's needs often go undetected in foster care due to fragmented care and this capstone project aimed to fill those gaps through advocacy and education.



Alyssa Colette Clark

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Tina Mankey, Ed.D, OTR/L

Breaking Down Pediatric Brain Injury: Exploring School Transition Needs and Family Experiences

Abstract:

This capstone experience focused on research and advocacy related to pediatric neurorehabilitation practices and supports. Currently, long-term rehabilitation, life and educational transitions, and management for children with brain injuries are based mostly on clinical experience rather than research, and current health, educational, and emotional support for these children and families varies by state (CDC, 2019). Current neurorehabilitation practices and discharge procedures were explored through clinical experiences in inpatient rehabilitation facilities that serve pediatric clients, and a mixed-methods study was conducted to explore return to school needs in Arkansas public schools. Quantitative data was collected via surveys completed by school professionals (educators, administrators, school-based therapists, etc.). Qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interviews with parents of children who sustained brain injuries. Results illustrated that both school staff and families feel that schools may not be prepared to appropriately serve children with brain injuries. Survey responses indicated that overall knowledge, confidence, and district support among Arkansas educators is low when serving these students. This poses implications for school-based therapists to help with the return to school process as well as provide long-term support to students, educators, and families in contextually relevant settings. The results of this study expand on current research by including both the educational team and caregiver perspectives on the return to school process. Study results were shared with staff at the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Return to School Program, and a research manuscript was developed to submit for publication.



Ryan Osral Cox

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

The Fun Starts Now: Helping Retired and Retiring Adults Engage in Meaningful Activities in the Community

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to engage the retiring and retired adult population in a variety of community activities. As occupational beings, we have an innate desire to participate in meaningful activities. Often individuals struggle with the transition to retirement as they lose access to the activities that formally occupied the majority of their time. To help local individuals fill the occupational void after retirement, the student developed a program to assist the adult population in finding and safely participating in purposeful occupations. The student partnered with various community facilities including College Square, Mayflower Senior Center, Ola and John Hawks Senior Center, and UCA HPER Center to coordinate various physical and educational activities. These activities included disc golf, pickleball, shadowboxing, and exercise classes. Additionally, the student provided injury prevention material for the participants to empower them with the knowledge to safely participate in these activities. Further, the student participated in a continuing education course focused on Kinesio Taping and Manual Therapy to promote professional development. At the conclusion of this project, the student observed that even though there are several opportunities available in the community for this population to participate in, there is still a general desire for more. Additionally, this population generally desired to participate in activities but was often restricted by fear of injury or lack of knowledge. Therefore, it was observed that individuals were more likely to participate when provided with injury prevention education. This material provided them with increased knowledge and confidence to continue their occupational journey.



Kassidy Rose Dahlem Brown

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Rural Respite Resource: Fostering Occupational Balance for Families of Children with Disabilities in a Rural Community and Promoting Access to Inclusive Child Care

Abstract:

The aim of this capstone project was to aid in the occupational balance of families of children with special needs by providing a community respite program as well as advocating and educating childcare workers on strategies for working with children with special needs. The project included advanced clinical experience with a pediatric occupational therapist working in a developmental daycare/preschool setting to increase the student's knowledge, experience, and clinical competency in working with this population. Additionally, the student developed and implemented the community program with the guidance of the expert mentors with experience in this population and community programming. Finally, the student compiled knowledge from the clinical experience, research, and educational courses to develop learning resources for childcare providers as well as for the parents of children with special needs participating in the respite program. Parents reported satisfaction with the respite program and their child's experiences.



Jillian Rae Diamond

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

The Efficacy of the Safe and Sound Protocol in Children with Sensory Processing Difficulties

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience focused on research and advanced clinical practice within two pediatric outpatient clinics to examine the efficacy of an auditory-based intervention called the Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP). Advanced clinical skills were obtained for five weeks at Fusion Therapy Center in Bentonville, AR, where I observed the SSP in practice. A mixed-methods research design was utilized to gain insight into the caregiver and therapist's perception of the intervention. The SSP was delivered within the clinic during the child's regularly scheduled occupational therapy session for approximately seven weeks. Caregivers completed two questionnaire-based assessments and a semi-structured interview prior to their child beginning the intervention. Overall themes of the interviews included poor emotional regulation, impulsivity, sympathetic activation (fight-or-flight), and a goal for their child to increase appropriate social participation. Throughout the intervention delivery, caregivers have expressed how their children are "doing better" and are "more regulated in their behavior with fewer meltdowns." Assessments and interviews will be completed again after the participants have completed the five hours of listening. Data will be triangulated, in addition to in-session field notes, to determine the efficacy of the SSP in children with sensory processing difficulties.



Sarah Elizabeth Dillard

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brandy Pate, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS, Low Vision Certification

Adulting Done Right: Providing At-Risk Youth with Leisure Skills, Life Skills, and Work Skills to Become More Independent Adults

Abstract:

This capstone experience was a program implemented through Deliver Hope and City of Hope Outreach (CoHO) Academy in Conway, AR, to educate at-risk youth about life, leisure, and career skills. The project aimed to expand my skills in advocacy, leadership, education, and advanced community practice while helping at-risk youth develop these skills for a successful transition into adulthood. I began by volunteering with Deliver Hope and CoHO Academy, gaining insight into program development and building rapport with the participating youth. I viewed primitive reflex testing with a licensed professional and applied this knowledge to test the youth. I then developed and implemented a curriculum at Deliver Hope and CoHO Academy, teaching various life, leisure, and career skills. I collaborated with professionals and researched to ensure the curriculum was comprehensive. I also educated a site supervisor, an instructor, a parent, and some youth on the importance of integrating primitive reflexes. In my role, I advocated for occupational therapy's benefits in a community setting, taught valuable skills to the youth, and engaged effectively with the adults involved. Upon completing the program, I prepared individualized packets and curriculum binders to help the programs continue or repeat the curriculum, ensuring ongoing support for at-risk youth.



Kiyaonda Fisher

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Hidden Injuries: Unveiling the Intersection of Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and the Need for Occupational Therapy in Women's Shelters

Abstract:

The capstone project, *Hidden Injuries: Unveiling the Intersection of Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and the Need for Occupational Therapy in Women's Shelters*, was designed to advance the student's clinical practice skills and education with TBIs and women who've experienced domestic violence or intimate partner violence. For this project, the author committed to 3-weeks of onsite learning at the North Little Rock Veteran Affairs Hospital under a neuro-specialized occupational therapist for advanced practice, hands-on experience, and to gain more knowledge about working with the brain injury population. Knowledge enhancement for the brain injury population was further achieved through podcasts, videos, self-study (books, articles, etc.), and online research. The author also utilized an occupational therapy lens to provide education, a group therapy session, resources, and two brain injury screening tools to Conway and Little Rock Women's Shelter, focusing on increasing IADL engagement, managing emotional distress, and improving executive functioning skills.



Joniya Jobree Flowers

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brandy Pate, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS, Low Vision Certification

From Maternity to Motherhood: Navigating the Journey of Processing Trauma Experiences and Their Impact on Motherhood

Abstract:

This qualitative study investigates the unique challenges faced by mothers as they transition from maternity to motherhood following traumatic experiences. Our objective is to identify specific adversities these mothers encounter and to enhance support mechanisms, thereby improving their overall well-being. Trauma, defined as events perceived as threatening, adversely impacts functioning, particularly in the context of motherhood. This includes a broad spectrum of emotional and physical repercussions, potentially leading to psychological distress and impaired maternal role efficacy. Building on existing literature, such as Nochi (2000) and Tkach et al. (2023), which highlight the influence of chronic illnesses and perceived threats on daily activities and trauma, this study explores the reconstruction of self-narratives in coping with traumatic brain injuries and other conditions. Our research aims to delve into the challenges faced by mothers with trauma histories, seeking to understand these experiences and identify strategies to foster their well-being and facilitate their motherhood journey.



Hadleigh Elizabeth Griffin

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

Summer Handwriting Camp: Program Development and Research

Abstract:

This project consisted of program development, program implementation, and research of free summer handwriting camps in local communities in Arkansas. The goal of developing the handwriting camp was to meet children's handwriting needs during the summer break. The objective of the research was to assess parent and student perceptions of the handwriting camps in addition to assessing the effectiveness of the handwriting camp on improving student handwriting. Pre-surveys and post-surveys were given to the parent, kindergarten, 1st through 2nd grade, and 3 through 5 grade groups to assess their perceptions of handwriting and the handwriting camp. Handwriting Without Tears Screeners of Handwriting Proficiency were given to each student group based on their grade level in school. The data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive analysis and thematic analysis, and the results from the pre-screeners and post-screeners of handwriting proficiency were compared. The findings indicate that parents and students had an overall positive perception of the handwriting camp. Additionally, the findings indicate that the students had a positive experience at the handwriting camp. The screeners of handwriting proficiency were unable to be statistically analyzed due to low post-screener response rates. The findings from this research indicate that there are positive perceptions of summer handwriting camps in the communities assessed, and parents reported that they hoped that the handwriting camp would continue in the future and expand into other towns in Arkansas.



Sara Elizabeth Grygus

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Some Voices Take Time: Educating Healthcare Professionals, Students, and Communicating with Persons with Aphasia

Abstract:

According to the American Council of Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), this project demonstrates in-depth exposure to clinical practice, research, leadership, and advocacy (2018). A comprehensive needs assessment and literature review indicated the need for education on aphasia diagnosis in academia and healthcare. This doctoral capstone project aims to enhance communication strategies for healthcare professionals, students, and caregivers when interacting with persons with aphasia. The project's core initiative involves developing and disseminating an educational in-service presentation. Grounded in the Occupational Adaptation Model, which assumes that individuals naturally seek to adapt and overcome challenges, this project supports the notion that adaptive responses can lead to greater mastery when engaging in meaningful activities (Schkade & Schultz, 1992; Schultz & Schkade, 1992). Therefore, this presentation aims to equip others to effectively support individuals with communication deficits, ensuring they receive optimal care and outcomes. Key components include the implementation of both virtual and in-person training sessions, as well as leveraging resources from leading aphasia support organizations. Evaluation of these training sessions, through pre-test ($M = 5.54$) and post-test ($M = 8.53$) assessments among participants ($N = 92$), demonstrates significant improvements in knowledge and self-confidence in communicating with aphasia patients ($SD = 1.586$, $r = 0.420$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the project integrates a personal and professional development dimension by advancing clinical practice in neurorehabilitation and pursuing certification as a Certified Brain Injury Specialist. These efforts collectively aim to enhance the quality of care and support provided to individuals with aphasia across healthcare and educational contexts.



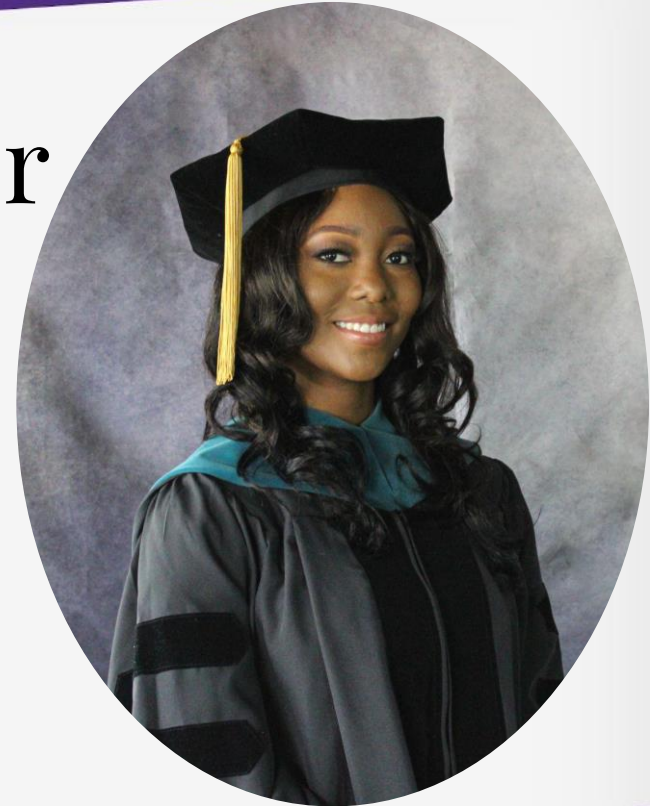
Philencia Michelle Huyler

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Enhancing the Quality of Life Among Community-Dwelling Adults with Neurological Disorders in The Bahamas

Abstract:

Access to programs and resources for individuals with neurological disorders remained limited globally, particularly in The Bahamas. This capstone project aimed to enhance the quality of life for adults with neurological disorders in The Bahamas through a comprehensive community program. The program, implemented at the Persis Rodgers Home for the Aged and All Saints Anglican Church, included educational handouts, resource information, and physical and cognitive activities for individuals and their caregivers. Significant improvements were observed in participants' functional abilities and awareness of neurological disorders. Key lessons learned included the importance of cultural sensitivity, addressing resource limitations creatively, and the need for medical partnerships. Future recommendations involved developing sustainability plans, expanding the program to other islands, integrating with healthcare systems, and advocating for supportive policies. This project addressed the needs of an underserved population, advocated for essential resources, and educated individuals affected by neurological disorders and the citizens of The Bahamas.



Madison Grace Joyner

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Occupational Therapy Services for Justice-Involved Youth

Abstract:

This Doctoral Capstone explores the impact of community-based rehabilitation programs on juveniles within the Faulkner County Juvenile Justice System (FCJJS), with a particular focus on the Drug Court program. According to ACOTE standards, this project includes the focus areas of program development, advanced community practice, and advocacy within the juvenile justice system (JJS). Instead of incarceration, the mission of the JJS is to provide the rehabilitative support necessary through involvement in alternative programs for juveniles to reintegrate successfully into society in hopes of preventing future recidivism. This project centers around the creation and implementation of an occupation-centered community program. This program offers a structured yet supportive environment with an emphasis on transitional and life skill development and creating positive adaptive responses which are critical for producing long-term positive outcomes and reducing delinquent behavior. The program evaluation suggests that through the supportive environment of a community program, including positive role modeling and consistency, juveniles develop these skills and adaptive responses thereby supporting the juvenile to choose a different path over delinquency. This Capstone contributes to the understanding of effective rehabilitation strategies within the JJS and advocates for the involvement of occupational therapy in the rehabilitation process to support at-risk youth and demonstrates the potential of occupational therapy rehabilitation programs to improve the lives of justice-involved youth, offering them a chance to choose a better future through consistent support and positive engagement.



Andrew Dylan Knopp

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

The Influence of Occupation Through Wheelchair Basketball

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to develop a program that promotes health and wellness by creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage in meaningful occupations through the sport of wheelchair basketball. This doctoral capstone experience was centered around program development, program implementation, and advocacy of occupational therapy amongst individuals whose engagement in leisure activities is hindered by barriers such as disability and the lack of access and inclusivity to opportunities within sports. The student had the opportunity to work and play wheelchair basketball with eight young men (ages 16-29); four able-bodied participants, and four participants who experienced disability such as spinal cord injury, amputation, or cerebral palsy. Each week, the program gave the participants a chance to learn the sport through drills and games, as well as providing a safe opportunity for social interaction with peers, and sharing each other's stories to increase motivation. Resource brochures were also created for the participants, and the parents/guardians, while the student helped families self-navigate through opportunities for community engagement, physical activity, and acquiring adaptive equipment. These brochures included a variety of information, including other adaptive sports programs within the community, venues that welcome adaptive sports, grants and companies that assist individuals in pursuing adaptive equipment, and motivational podcasts by adaptive sports organizations.



Cora Lee Lentz

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

THINK Inclusive: Brewing Success Through Adaptive Work Training

Abstract:

This Doctoral Capstone Project was a program development, leadership, education, and advocacy project comprised of two primary goals: adapting the current training program at Think Coffee's Dave Ward location to be more inclusive for employees of all abilities and conducting a disability awareness training for all management and staff of the same location. The Capstone Committee included Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L as the Faculty Mentor, Reese Partin, M.S., OTR/L as the Expert Mentor, and John Kieth as the Site Supervisor. The need for this project was identified through interviews with THINK Coffee leadership and employees, encompassing diverse perspectives from those with and without disabilities. This project was developed and implemented in two phases: the first including the development of training materials and gaining insights regarding disability in the workplace through literature, podcasts, and observations at Project SEARCH. The second phase included further development and refinement of materials such as training protocols, visual aids, checklists, and labels. This phase of the project also included the implementation of the disability awareness training for management and staff of THINK Coffee Dave Ward. Evaluation of the project was conducted via pre- and post-training surveys among leadership and staff, the responses of which indicated a significant increase in knowledge and skills related to disability inclusion and fostering an inclusive work environment. Positive feedback from the training materials and investment in the project from THINK management demonstrates good potential for the initiative to be well-sustained in the future.



Amanda Dibee Locknar

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

The Virtual Baby Container: An Analysis of Factors Contributing to Infant Screen Time and Play

Abstract:

Despite a greater understanding of the consequences associated with greater screen exposure for children aged birth to 3 years, infant and early child exposure to digital media continues to surpass American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines. This study analyzes caregiver values, habits, and perspectives associated with infant screen time and play. A sample of 31 participants completed the Parent Play Questionnaire (PPQ) to gain information about general habits and attitudes related to parent-infant play and screen habits. 25 survey participants elected to complete one-on-one interviews to provide information on personal values, knowledge, and routines that contribute to or protect against health screen time habits. The themes that emerged included caregivers' need for personal knowledge, engagement in activities that exclude screens, caregiver identity, the value of connection, and the value of learning. Overall, a gap in knowledge and professional advice in the areas of early play milestones and implications of early screen use was identified.



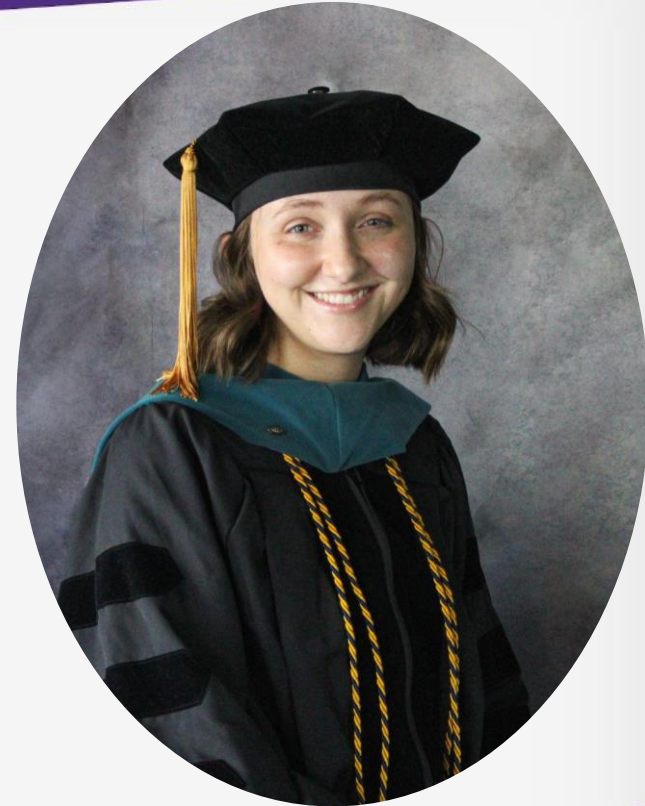
Adrienne Brooke Moran

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Learning Through Movement and Gestures: Conveying the Value of Specialized Pediatric Therapies to Caregivers

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone experience focused on education and advanced practice. The purpose of this capstone project was to educate caregivers on the potential benefits of specialized therapies (i.e. hippotherapy, canine-assisted therapy, and aquatic therapy) and to educate pediatric therapy professionals on beginner-level American Sign Language. The doctoral capstone student also used this experience to teach herself more about specialized therapies and American Sign Language. Caregiver education on specialized therapies was provided via the production of plain-language (i.e. fifth-grade reading level) pamphlets on hippotherapy, canine-assisted therapy, and aquatic therapy. Pediatric therapy professionals were educated on basic ASL via posters which included basic signs for general practice as well as practice incorporating specialized therapies. Finally, the capstone student was educated about specialized therapies and ASL via independent study and six advanced practice experiences. The more tangible outcomes of the present capstone project include three pamphlets, four ASL posters, quick-reference guides to the five domains of the Animal-Assisted Intervention Profession practice analysis, completion certificates for four AAT online courses, and quick-reference charts for various topics relevant to occupational therapy practice. Intangible outcomes of this experience include increased confidence in providing and educating others about specialized therapies. The evaluation method used—a survey regarding the value of the materials—indicated that the resources were easy to understand at any level of education, were relevant to clinics providing specialized therapies, and made caregiver education easier and more efficient.



Emily Elise Moran-Godsey

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD., OTR/L, ATP

A Two-Pronged Approach to Promoting Health Equality for Transgender and Gender Diverse Patients

Abstract:

In an environment that strives to provide equitable care, such as the US healthcare system, why do transgender individuals still navigate a maze of misunderstanding and inequity within the very system designed to support their well-being? As we confront the staggering disparities in health outcomes faced by the transgender community, it becomes evident that the barriers are not only systemic but rooted in a lack of awareness and education among health practitioners. This capstone project explores a dual approach to transforming transgender health care: by equipping health professionals with the knowledge and sensitivity needed to provide inclusive and culturally responsive care, and by empowering LGBTQ individuals to assert their health needs and rights. The first prong of this dual strategy, aimed to improve practitioners' abilities to care and advocate for transgender and gender diverse (TGD) clients through education programs focused on improving knowledge and perceptions of the TGD community and the barriers they face and confidence in caring, communicating, and advocating for these clients. The second prong of this project is to educate the LGBTQ+ community on patient rights and self-advocacy.



Halah June Nelson

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS

Oncology Rehabilitation Program Development

Abstract:

This capstone experience aimed to develop a program and gain clinical practice skills in oncology rehabilitation. Oncology rehabilitation is a growing field of practice in which occupational therapists are well-equipped to work. With cancer rates continuously increasing, reaching 2 million projected new cases in 2024 (American Cancer Society, 2024), this field is becoming more and more necessary. Texarkana is a city surrounded by rural small towns. While the hospital has an oncology program, no current rehabilitation program focuses on this population. Dallas and Little Rock are the closest cities that have these services. Not only is distance a significant factor for these clients, but with the town's lower socioeconomic status, frequently traveling for appointments can also be a significant financial strain. By developing an oncology rehabilitation program within the umbrella of Christus St. Michael's outpatient services, a need is being met for the community. This project laid the groundwork for this program and a collection of resources and handouts for the client and students to use within the clinic. This groundwork entailed the creation of a binder of over 40 pages to help a new clinician work within this specialty. It allowed the student to shadow, read, and attend courses to improve her knowledge of the subject matter and become educated on oncology practices and common treatments. It also provided an opportunity to build relationships with other practitioners, coworkers, bosses, physicians, and community-based organizations to provide well-rounded treatment, education, and expertise for the client.



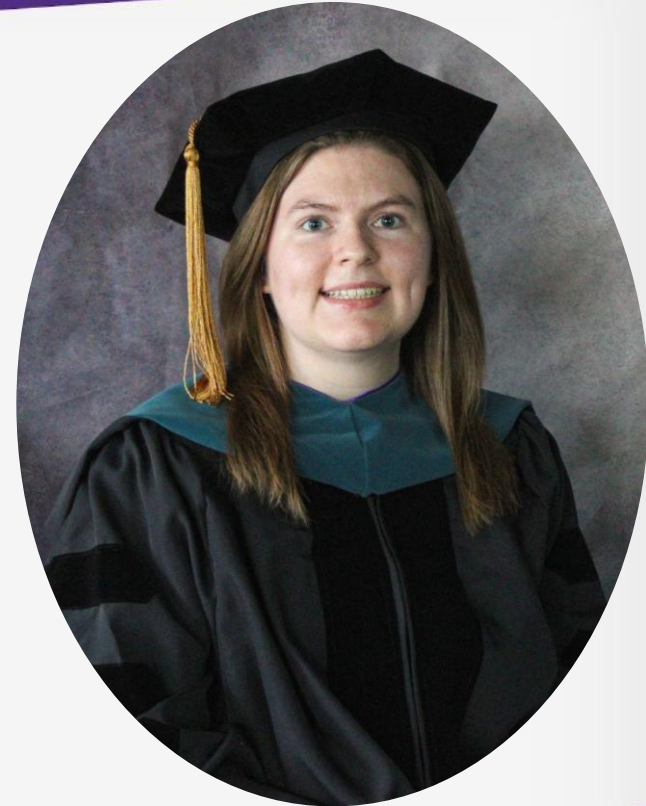
Carrie Grace Page

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Occupational Therapy's Role in Anti-Human Trafficking: A Capstone Experience

Abstract:

The purpose of this doctoral capstone experience was to increase education and awareness of human trafficking in the United States and occupational therapy's role in the restoration process. Educational modules on the basics of occupational therapy, occupational therapy in mental health and community-based settings, and occupational therapy's role in human trafficking restoration served to educate the public, occupational therapy students, and anti-trafficking organizations on how occupational therapy can benefit this community. Original research completed on current anti-trafficking programs, knowledge of occupational therapy, and perceptions of occupational therapists working within anti-trafficking organizations suggested that many organizations offer programming that could improve daily living such as life skills and job training but lack a focus on meaningful occupational performance and participation. 31 participants, from non-profit organizations working with victims and survivors of human trafficking across the United States, completed a survey, and six volunteered and participated in an interview to further discuss their organization and occupational therapy. The general perception was that occupational therapists could benefit current anti-trafficking organizations and survivors of human trafficking by offering a perspective that brings deeper meaning and purpose to someone's life after trafficking. Information gathered during the capstone experience including educational modules and research results was posted online to increase accessibility for viewers and learners.



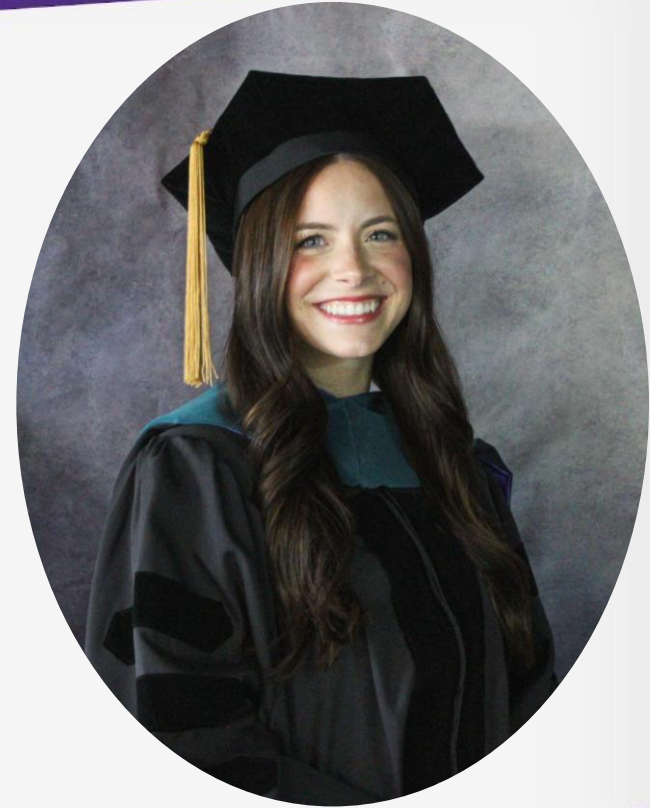
Madison Lee Paine

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Therapeutic Gardening Among Veterans with Mental Health Issues

Abstract:

Over the past 14 weeks, I completed a capstone project examining the therapeutic benefits of gardening on the mental health of veterans. This project aimed to explore how gardening impacts social participation, occupational participation, and overall well-being among this population. Utilizing my knowledge and skills learned throughout my educational career, I facilitated therapeutic gardening interventions tailored to the individual needs of the veterans. The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model, which emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the individual, their environment, and their occupations, provides a structured framework for assessing and addressing the unique needs of each veteran. Throughout this project, veterans voiced satisfaction and enjoyment from participating in gardening, with many discussing the mental health benefits, including decreased stress and reduced symptoms of depression. Gardening served as a therapeutic intervention providing purpose, relaxation, and social connections. This project highlights the potential of therapeutic gardening as an effective intervention for enhancing the mental health and well-being of the veteran population.



Loida Eunice Perley

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Navigating Transition Hand in Hand (Navegando la Transición Mano a Mano)

Abstract:

Navigating Hand-In-hand was centered on providing and demonstrating education, advocacy, and leadership for Latino parents of transition-age youth with developmental delays (TAY) within the community. The purpose of this project was to help guide Latino families of TAY with developmental disabilities through the postsecondary transition process with the creation of a Spanish website page and parent-in-service. The Spanish website page and parent-in-service were utilized to reduce educational disparities experienced by Latino parents due to linguistic barriers, in order to improve parent self-efficacy and knowledge on the parent role in the postsecondary transition process. The initial focus of this project was spent on understanding parent needs and priorities through parent interviews to tailor individualized educational materials and advocacy within this capstone project specific to this population. The results from the parent interviews also served to provide avenues to advocate for this population while seeking out answers to specific questions and needs within the community. Through this project, the student was able to collaborate with Arkansas Transition Services in order to create a free website page with resources to help support Latino parents of TAY in understanding the postsecondary transition process, the parent role, resources to support the parent role, resources for important agencies in the community, and resources to support occupation within the transition to adulthood. In addition, the student was able to perform active outreach and collaboration with the Department of Human Services through a parent-in-service to bridge the gap of knowledge on the postsecondary transition process.



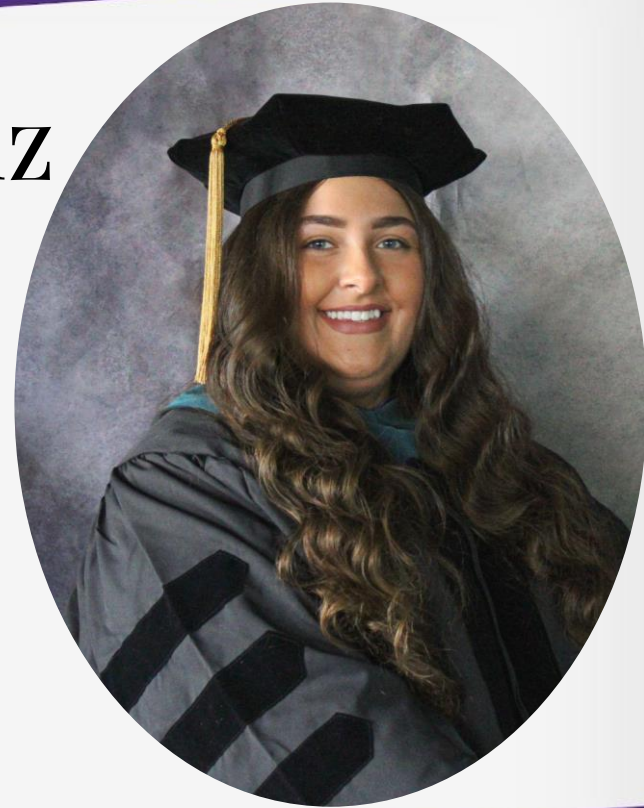
Summer Francesca Rameriz

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Restoring Occupation in Women Recovering from Addiction

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to enhance the cultural competence of occupational therapy students and professionals in serving the Hispanic population, thereby improving healthcare quality on a holistic level. The project encompassed a 14-week clinical immersion at a bilingual pediatric clinic and other community settings, facilitated through collaboration with Amigos Pediatric Therapy Services LLC. and a local Spanish church. Activities included regular engagement with the Latino USA podcast and Spanish language lessons to prepare for module development. The project yielded educational materials aimed at enhancing practitioners' understanding of Hispanic cultural nuances, comprising five videos, eight module quizzes, and two surveys. Content covered foundational topics such as General Communication Within the Hispanic Population, Customs, Beliefs, and Meaningful Occupations Within the Hispanic Population, as well as specialized areas like Pediatric and Adult Occupational Therapy within this demographic. Evaluation through pre and post-module quizzes and participant surveys demonstrated significant improvements in knowledge and cultural awareness among participants, highlighting the project's success in promoting cultural humility and competence in occupational therapy practice.



Mckinsey Rae Ramos

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Ashley McClain, OTD, OTR/L

Educating Occupational Therapy Practitioners on Differing Cultural Backgrounds for Improved Intervention

Abstract:

The purpose of this capstone project was to enhance the cultural competence of occupational therapy students and professionals in serving the Hispanic population, thereby improving healthcare quality on a holistic level. The project encompassed a 14-week clinical immersion at a bilingual pediatric clinic and other community settings, facilitated through collaboration with Amigos Pediatric Therapy Services LLC. and a local Spanish church. Activities included regular engagement with the Latino USA podcast and Spanish language lessons to prepare for module development. The project yielded educational materials aimed at enhancing practitioners' understanding of Hispanic cultural nuances, comprising five videos, eight module quizzes, and two surveys. Content covered foundational topics such as General Communication Within the Hispanic Population, Customs, Beliefs, and Meaningful Occupations Within the Hispanic Population, as well as specialized areas like Pediatric and Adult Occupational Therapy within this demographic. Evaluation through pre and post-module quizzes and participant surveys demonstrated significant improvements in knowledge and cultural awareness among participants, highlighting the project's success in promoting cultural humility and competence in occupational therapy practice.



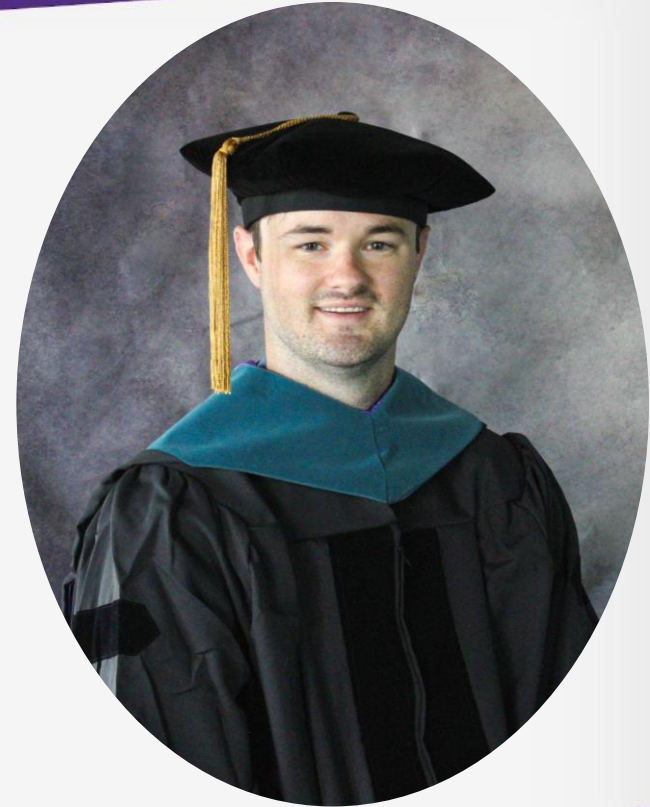
Landon Joshua Reed

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS

The Road to Driving Readiness: A Driving Program for Transition-Aged Youth with Developmental Delays

Abstract:

The Road to Driving Readiness was a driving program developed to narrow the gap that exists between transition-aged youth (TAY) with developmental delays and driving readiness. With no such driving program in the state of Arkansas, this program provided driving habilitation services to this underserved population regarding driving skill development. The methods through which the Road to Driving Readiness provided these services were interactive driving activities, educational experiences, and driving simulations on a Virage VS-500 driving simulator. Fundamental components of this program included a collaborative, client-centered approach with no costs and a safe place for TAY with developmental delays to learn and practice various driving skills. The Road to Driving Readiness accumulated 52 total sessions over its 10-week pilot which expanded across ten different participants. These participants evaluated the program based upon a Self-Concept Driving Likert Scale and a Post-Program Survey via a Google form. The foundation for The Road to Driving Readiness is built on the principle that resources for driving should be extended to all individuals who aspire to become independent drivers.



Justice Breann Ross

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS

Balancing Act: Exploring the Impact of Lymphedema on Mental Health and Caregiver Burnout

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone project is centered around education and advocacy. The aim of this project was to bridge the gap and enhance mental health within individuals diagnosed with lymphedema and caregiver burnout associated with lymphedema. This capstone project took place at AR Lymphedema in North Little Rock, AR. Throughout the doctoral capstone experience, the doctoral student advocated for individuals with lymphedema through the development and implementation of resources to be utilized in occupational therapy settings (handouts and pamphlets). Additionally, learning opportunities were obtained through clinical experiences, webinars, podcasts, and outreach. Evaluation of this doctoral capstone experience was achieved through a pre assessment and post-evaluation survey.



Maxwell Edward Senger

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

DIR Floortime and DIR Principles

Abstract:

The focus areas of my doctoral capstone project were clinical practice skills and leadership. Through participation and successful completion of the DIR 201 and 101 courses, I learned how to apply the basic principles of DIR Floortime in clinical practice as proven by earning my basic certification in DIR Floortime. I learned how to meet clients where they are at and follow their lead, I utilized affect to develop a relationship through play, I attuned to a client's individual differences, catered my interactions towards supporting FEDC's 1-4 for my clients, and I effectively reflected over treatment sessions to continue my personal growth. The most important lesson I learned is that non-verbal communication is just as important if not more important than verbal communication. All learning occurred through completing two case study presentations, assigned forums, written assignments, active learning in the clinic, reading and listening on DIR Floortime, and attending course lectures. During the time spent in the DIR 201 course, I was a leader for the field of Occupational Therapy as I was the only member of this field in the class. I had to display the values and insights that Occupational Therapy brings to an interdisciplinary team as many other fields were represented including SLP, Early Intervention, and Mental Health. Through utilizing the skills learned during my coursework I was able to bring an Occupational Therapy lens to the class to help each other grow in our understanding of DIR Floortime.



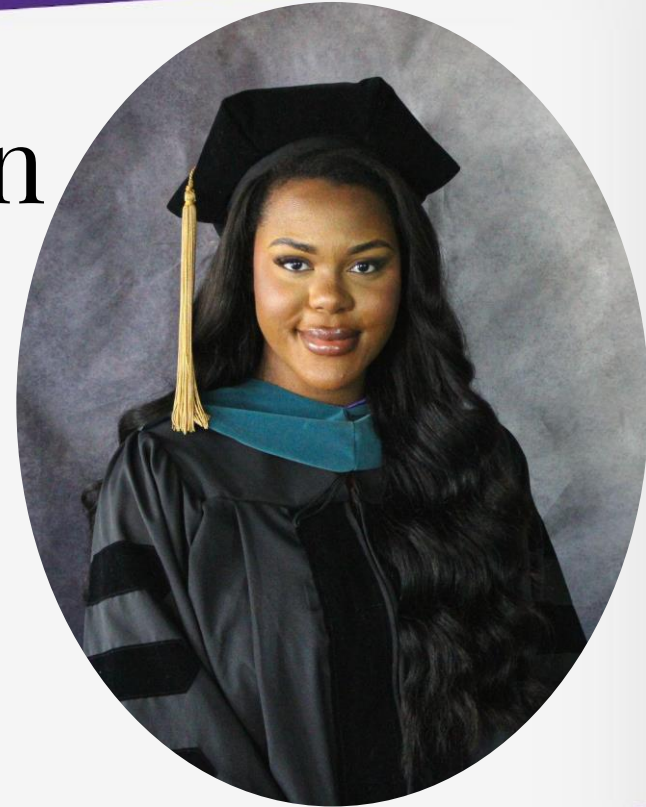
Shalexis Shardae' Shelton

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Operation Occupation: Increasing Diversity and Awareness of Occupational Therapy

Abstract:

Operation Occupation was a capstone project aimed at increasing diversity and awareness in the field of occupational therapy. The project's type was focused on program development, education, and advocacy of occupational therapy. The project's mission was to educate and inspire a broader range of students to pursue careers in occupational therapy, with a particular focus on reaching rural and underrepresented communities. To achieve this goal, the project comprised two main components: outreach and education. Outreach efforts centered on creating and broadcasting radio advertisements to rural areas, highlighting the vital role occupational therapy plays in promoting health and well-being. These advertisements aimed to raise awareness of the profession and its benefits among populations that may have had limited exposure to occupational therapy. The educational component involved hosting two workshops for students interested in pursuing occupational therapy careers. The first workshop provided guidance on the application process for occupational therapy programs, including tips for standing out as a competitive applicant. The second workshop focused on preparing for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and navigating the occupational therapy school interview process.



Kelsey Nicole Sherwood

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Experiential Learning in Occupational Therapy Education

Abstract:

Medical Improvisation, is blending the spontaneity and other skills of improv theater with the precision of healthcare, to equip medical professionals to provide optimal care to clients by engaging with them meaningfully. Medical improv provided an elevated learning experience to the occupational therapy students at the University of Central Arkansas, especially in meaningful engagement of learning and skill development. The outcomes of the student's learning experience during capstone were adaptability during treatment sessions and improvement in communication and confidence. This project included development and implementing three workshops in the Formative Competency Course among the first-year occupational therapy students at the University of Central Arkansas that targeted related topics to the course: the code of ethics, transfers, OT/OTA collaboration, and preparation of triple jump. Thirty-five participants were involved in the workshops, which demonstrated a significant increase in relative mastery, their perceptions of benefits over skill development and a different way of learning, and preparation of the triple jump workshop. A guide for faculty was created to use medical improv to teach students course materials in an alternative learning strategy called Medical Improvisation Guide for Faculty and Students. The project included the dissemination of the capstone project at the AROTA conference, a podcast called The ImprovMed Show, social media platforms, in-services, and classes.



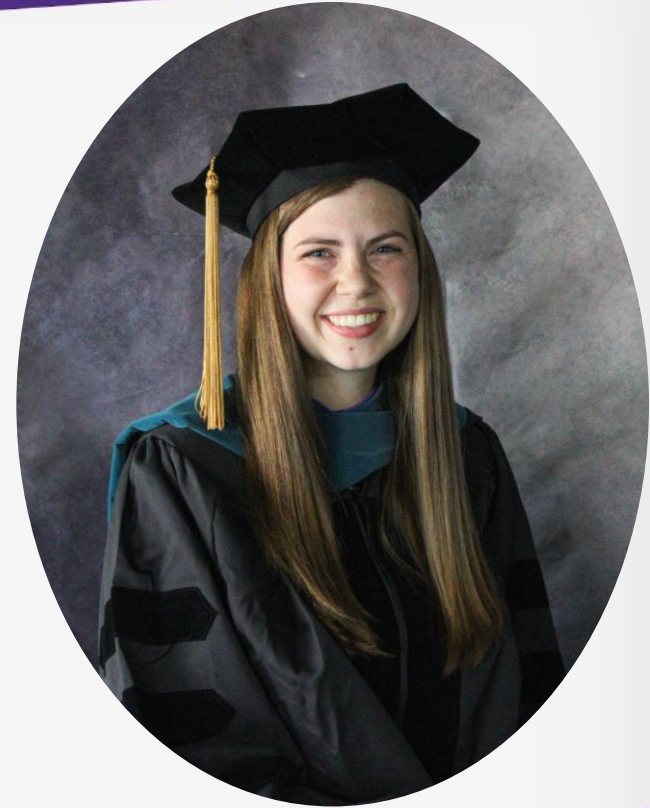
Hope Erin Smith

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

Leisure and Mental Health for Foster Children and Families

Abstract:

This capstone project utilized research, program development, and education to focus on the benefits of leisure participation for the mental health of foster children and families. A research study was conducted to explore foster parent perceptions of the impact fostering has on their mental health and their ability to engage in leisure occupations. Results from the focus group showed that foster parents struggle with their mental, physical, and emotional health due to the difficulties of foster care, and they experience many barriers to participating in leisure occupations such as time constraints, exhaustion, and differing interests of their foster children. The program development part of this project aimed to add an OT, leisure, and mental health-based lens to Sparrow's Organized Activities for Kids (SOAK) program hosted in Searcy, AR for local foster children and their families. The capstone student organized three new activity days for the program participants, including a yoga day, a farm day, and a science experiment day. Finally, educational resources were created for the foster families at Sparrow's Promise in the form of video content and handouts to be used during foster parent training.



Grace Sykes Smothers

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Use of Occupation and Evidence in Occupational Therapy Practice

Abstract:

Occupation and evidence-based practice, tenets of our profession, help us provide quality interventions, but can often be limited by time constraints, limited resources and space, or inadequate facility support. This capstone experience focused on research, education, and advocacy to explore these barriers and educate practitioners on how they can support themselves to carry out evidence and occupation for best practice. A mixed methods study was conducted to identify and explore the supports and barriers to practitioners' use of occupation- and evidence-based practice within a variety of settings in Arkansas. 93 practitioners participated in a digital survey to produce data which was further clarified by a focus group. Time constraints were reported to be the most prevalent barrier to practitioners' use of evidence and occupation-based interventions. Environmental access to resources through their facility and intra/interprofessional teams were the most supportive factors for practitioners in providing quality therapy supported by evidence and occupation-based interventions. In-person learning experiences were also completed in various settings to explore how these supports and barriers play out in practice. The information gained through research and in-person experiences was compiled and shared in the form of educational resources for practitioners.



Addison Bates Starkey

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Aiding REcidivism and Re-entry Efforts Through an Occupational Therapy Lens

Abstract:

As of 2022, the recidivism rate in Arkansas is 50.6 percent. Within the state of Arkansas, 17,109 people are imprisoned and that number is only expected to increase within the next decade (Incarceration, 2023). This is an emerging practice area of occupational therapy and this population could benefit from our lens and expertise on occupational participation. Occupational therapy has a unique perspective when it comes to this process and can help individuals with interventions pertaining to job search, mental health resources, housing, finding support, mindfulness, developing healthy habits, and exploring new leisure interests. Through this project, I gained an understanding of how occupational therapy helps individuals through this life-changing process, as well as, educated those they encounter with prison walls as well. This capstone project explored both realms of advocacy and leadership. I was able to advocate for justice involving individuals of all kinds and educate all parties about the various barriers people incarcerated face inside and outside prison/jail walls. Through this project I created a "First 48" document that highlights various steps/barriers individuals must overcome and follow in order to stay out of incarceration. I also completed an OT & Reentry fact sheet that highlights occupational therapy's role within this setting, to help educate other professionals working in this field and other occupational therapists about this emerging practice area.



Whitney Rose Storey

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Gangluff, ScD, OTR/L

Go Baby Go Northwest Arkansas Program Development

Abstract:

The Go Baby Go Northwest Arkansas Program Development occupational therapy doctoral capstone project aimed to lay the foundation and set up all components required to implement the Go Baby Go program following capstone completion. This project served the Northwest Arkansas community by providing education on mobility impairments and introducing the opportunity to obtain affordable and socially appropriate mobility devices for young children with mobility challenges. The developed program features educated clinician and student volunteers, three carefully and anonymously selected clients, a partnership with UAMS Fayetteville, the means to purchase any and all supplies needed for the program, active and informational social media accounts, excited community partners, and plans to complete a “how to modify a car” training prior to the event. Guided under the model of Occupational Adaptation (OA), this capstone project successfully enables UAMS to implement the program on time with the materials provided, contributing to increased access for children with mobility impairments and ensuring occupational justice. Through this project, the student learned occupational therapy’s role in program development, advocacy, and leadership, while furthering her understanding of pediatric development, seating and positioning, and assistive technology through hands-on experiences.



Allison Nicole Teague

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Dementia Informed Care for Informal Caregivers

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone focused on providing education for informal dementia caregivers, conducting research, and increasing leadership skills necessary for hosting events. Two Occupational Adaptation workshops were provided for informal dementia caregivers and their care recipients. The workshops focused on the co-occupations of art and cooking, respectively. The research was conducted during the cooking workshop, determining the effect it had on caregivers' abilities to adapt to other occupations for enhanced care recipient engagement. Upon analysis of the Relative Mastery Scale (RMS) data, the results were not statistically significant. However, through a caregiver survey, interview, and overall improvements in RMS results, there were positive findings. All caregivers reported and indicated to have improved knowledge in the ability to adapt activities following the workshop. In addition, support groups focusing on self-care, durable medical equipment/adaptive devices, technology, and leisure were provided for the caregivers. A PDF study document was created with an accumulation of all information gained and given to participants as a resource. Based on positive evaluation survey results from caregivers and care recipients, all participants enjoyed the events.



Grant Houston Todd

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Universal Design in the Home Environment

Abstract:

The goal of this Capstone Project was to advance my clinical practice skills in regards to Universal Design and home modifications, carry out a budgeted update to the on campus Occupational Therapy House, and advocate for Universal Design in the home through participation in a Universal Design Podcast. During the project, I was able to learn the process of assessing a home in regards to Universal Design standards, and how to make modification recommendations. This was completed through completion of Universal Design courses, and in person training from Universal Design specialists. With the completion of specific courses, I was able to complete the requirements to gain my Certified Aging in Place certification (CAPS). After the knowledge advancement process, I was able to create a list of proposed updates for the OT House, gain approval from required parties, and complete all adaptations and modifications to the OT House, with money that was acquired through a UCA Foundation Grant for \$3,000. Towards the end of the project, I was able to provide guided tours of the OT House, with completed modifications, and share information that I had learned throughout the Capstone process, regarding individual products, home layout, and potential resources for patients.



Aerin Tiffany Walker

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

ROOTS: Resilience Outreach through Occupational Therapy Services

Abstract:

This capstone experience involved developing and advocating for a program designed for individuals experiencing homelessness, focusing on mental health support through an occupational therapy lens. The 11-week program featured weekly sessions that included presentations, workshops, and guided worksheets to enhance participants' occupational well-being. Topics covered included coping skills, stress management, healthy routine building, and mindfulness techniques. Each session aimed to empower participants with practical skills and strategies to improve their daily lives. Pre- and post-questionnaires were administered to tailor the program and ensure it met participants' needs. Weekly informational packets provided additional insights and guided self-practice exercises to help participants integrate the learned skills into their routines. The support group meetings offered a platform for participants to share their experiences, encourage a sense of community, and build connections with other residents in the shelter. Throughout the program, participants were encouraged to actively engage in discussions and activities, promoting a collaborative and supportive environment. By the end of the program, post-surveys indicated a positive and informative experience, with participants reporting an increased understanding of occupational therapy services and support. The feedback also highlighted improvements in their mental health and overall well-being, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in addressing the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness.



Danielle Caitlin Warhurst

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Tina Mankey, Ed.D, OTR/L

Navigating the Path to Love: Dating for Young Adults with Disabilities

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone focused on program development, education, and advocacy to improve dating and relationship skills among young adults (aged 14-25) with disabilities in Central Arkansas. The program included eight weeks of classes held twice a week, addressing crucial topics such as consent, boundaries, communication, hygiene, dating etiquette, and romantic feelings/flirting. To ensure a comprehensive approach, parents and caregivers received informational brochures highlighting the key points covered in the classes. Additionally, a speed dating event was organized to facilitate social interactions, providing a structured and supportive environment for participants to meet and connect with others, thereby breaking down social barriers and creating opportunities for meaningful connections. By acknowledging and addressing the barriers these young adults encounter, the capstone program aims to promote a world where love knows no boundaries, and every young heart can embark on the journey of dating with confidence and joy.



Colton Davis Waters

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS

Occupational Therapy Student-Run Free Clinic

Abstract:

The Occupational Therapy Student-Run Free Clinic at the University of Central Arkansas developed as part of a capstone project, aimed to provide free occupational therapy services to underserved populations while offering practical experience to students. The clinic, operated by students under the supervision of licensed occupational therapists, addressed a significant gap in healthcare access for uninsured or underinsured individuals in Conway, Arkansas, and surrounding areas. The Health Belief Model and the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model guided the project, focusing on holistic and client-centered care. The clinic provided experiential learning opportunities, particularly for third-year and level II fieldwork students, enhancing their clinical skills and readiness for professional practice. The capstone project involved extensive research, observation, and hands-on client treatment, culminating in the successful launch of clinic days. These efforts included developing clinic documentation, such as intake forms and a resource binder, and creating marketing and outreach materials to recruit volunteers and clients. The project's outcomes, which demonstrated high client satisfaction and positive volunteer experiences, underscore the value of the clinic's effectiveness in delivering quality care and supporting community health. Key lessons from the project underscored the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and adaptability in planning and executing clinic operations. Future directions for the clinic include refining processes, enhancing marketing strategies, and establishing sustainable funding through grants and university support. The project's success in integrating experiential learning with community service suggests a promising model for future student-led healthcare initiatives.



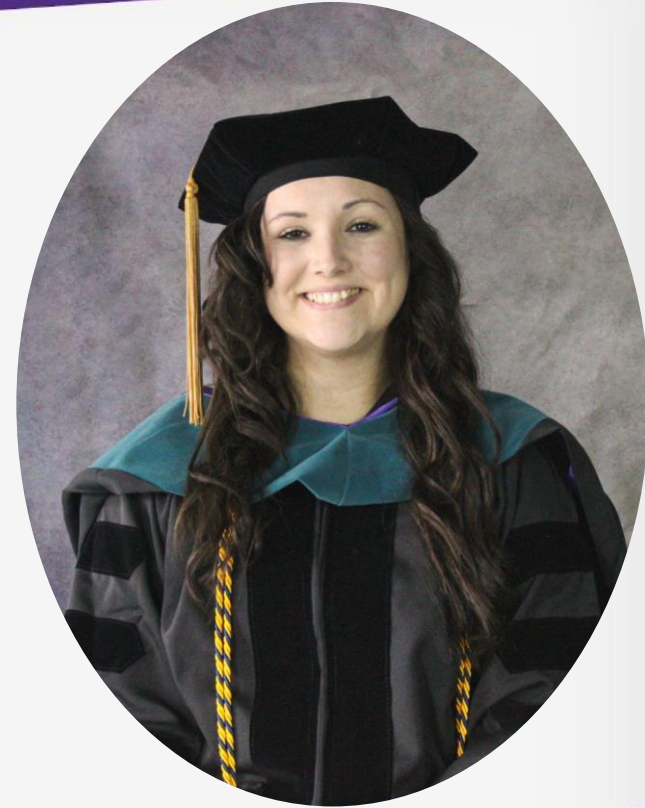
Madelynn Mae Wauters

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS

Exploring the Emerging Field of Animal Assisted Therapy in Central Arkansas

Abstract:

The primary goals of this capstone project were to gain advanced clinical practice skills in animal-assisted therapy and subsequently create and disseminate educational tools and resources to enhance animal-assisted intervention sessions and promote best practices. Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) is an umbrella term for all interventions involving therapy animals for improved health and wellness. Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is a subcategory of AAI and describes goal-oriented and documented therapeutic interventions involving therapy animals that are directed by a healthcare provider (AAAIP, n.d.). For this capstone project, nine educational courses through the Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals were completed and the Animal-Assisted Intervention Specialist Certification (C-AAIS) was obtained. Further, nineteen volunteer visits were done at various facilities including an inpatient rehabilitation facility, developmental preschool, and behavioral health facility to provide AAI to a wide variety of individuals. Over 175 people were visited and impacted through volunteering at these facilities. Moreover, several resources were created including 140 handouts describing different animal-assisted activities and their therapeutic value, handouts describing the empirical support for AAI, a resource guide for creating an AAI program manual, and a website to store and consolidate all resources. Two in-service presentations were given to facilities to educate and inform therapists on innovative ideas to incorporate therapy dogs into occupational therapy sessions and how to follow best practice guidelines when partnering with therapy dogs in professional settings..



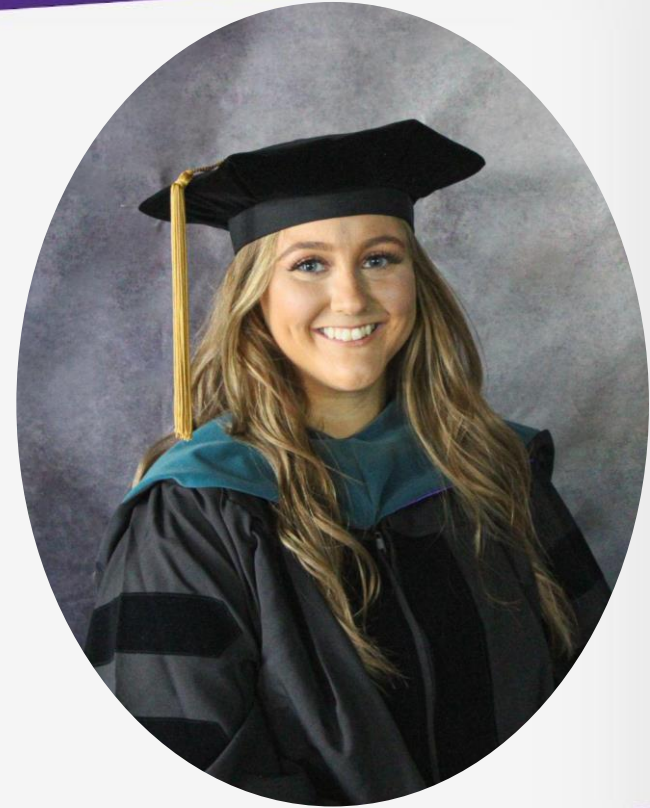
Olivia Grace Williams

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kelly Hartwick, PPOTD, OTR/L, CBIS

Mother-Directed Feeding in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to Improve Infant Health

Abstract:

The doctoral capstone project's purpose was to create educational materials related to the co-occupation of feeding for mothers of infants admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to take on a more directive role during admission. The NICU, a complex environment, has proven to impede the co-occupation of feeding, whether the preferred mode is breast or bottle; thus, the safety and satisfaction around this daily living activity are challenged before and upon discharge. Barriers to the infant-mother feeding dyad may revolve around external factors of the infant, mother, or institution. The student gained invaluable advanced clinical practice and advocacy skills through the capstone experience to support the development of educational materials. The capstone project also consisted of a poster presentation at the annual Arkansas Occupational Therapy Association Conference, the dissemination of a resource binder, an in-service presentation for current NICU occupational therapy practitioners, and the pursuit of advanced certification in lactation counseling.



Leighton Dael Wilson

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Cup of Ambition: Brewing Vocational Success for Adults with IDD's through a Simulated Work Environment

Abstract:

This doctoral capstone focused on developing and implementing a program to prepare adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) for real-world employment. Businesses and organizations serving adults with IDD's were examined to enhance the student's understanding of pre-vocational training and inform the creation of a simulated coffee shop environment. A financial feasibility plan was created after analyzing successful business models and identifying costs associated with establishing a pre-vocational training program. The program targeted adults in a developmental day treatment facility who expressed a desire for employment and were identified by their service providers as ready to develop essential-vocational skills. Participants or "baristas" engaged in weekly skill-specific lessons and hands-on training within the simulated coffee shop environment. The program addressed self-advocacy, communication, money management, food and cooking safety, and household management. This project included an education component for the staff of the day treatment facility. A video training module was designed to improve the knowledge of common diagnoses and activity implementation. Educational resources were provided to help staff better support occupational participation for adults with IDD's. This capstone highlighted the role occupational therapy plays in supporting adults with IDD's to reach their employment goals by targeting the skills essential for success in workplace settings.



Blair Elizabeth Wollard

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chris Ryan, PPOTD, OTR/L

Navigate Your Niche: Exploring the Role of Occupational Therapy in Various Practice Settings and How to Transition to Practice as a New Graduate Successfully

Abstract:

This capstone project focused on advocacy, education, and excellence by creating and sharing evidence-based resources for occupational therapists, students, and others interested in occupational therapy. The student engaged in observation and clinical practice across 10 different settings as well as conducted formal and informal interviews with clinicians and students to gain insights. The student developed a website and podcast to disseminate the gathered information and resources. Additionally, an Instagram account was created to promote occupational therapy, and the website, and to grow the podcast audience. These platforms aim to support current and future practitioners by educating them on occupational therapy's role in various practice areas and promoting evidence-based practice. By raising awareness and providing educational resources, these supports help occupational therapists identify suitable practice settings and access necessary information. The podcast features 10 episodes covering a typical day in each setting, therapy process specifics, patient demographics, pros and cons, continuing education opportunities, and qualities of successful occupational therapists. Each episode includes observations and informal interviews with experienced practitioners and peers, along with independent research by the student. The website organizes supports and resources by practice area created by the student, this offers a detailed overview for users. Outside resources were also identified and utilized on the website. The culmination of these efforts provides a centralized, organized platform to help occupational therapists thrive in their chosen settings.



Jordan Elizabeth Wylie

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lorrie George-Paschal, PhD, OTR/L, ATP

Representing Rural: Increasing Brain Injury Resources in Rural Arkansas and Leading the Conway Brain Injury Community

Abstract:

Limited rehabilitation resources in rural areas of the United States pose a significant barrier to health outcomes (Johnstone et. al, 2002). Foremost, this capstone experience focused on program development and advocacy to pilot a rural brain injury support group in El Dorado, Arkansas. Following a needs assessment with health care professionals in the area, an evident need for greater community resources following brain injury emerged. Throughout three sessions, I provided education, resources, and social participation to individuals and caregivers recovering from brain injury in a rural community in Arkansas. By partnering with South Arkansas Regional Hospital and the Brain Injury Alliance of Arkansas, this support group will remain active past my capstone experience to continue to meet a community need. Additionally, I continued program development and research to further develop the Conway Brain Injury Community (CBIC). I implemented an OT/PT interprofessional collaboration and created a program manual to allow for the replication of this program in other areas of the state. Mixed methods research was conducted on the CBIC program which indicated an overall improvement in perceived relative mastery of participants' self-identified goals. I gained advanced clinical practice through clinical experiences at Timber Ridge Neurorestorative and Sherwood Encompass Rehabilitation. The knowledge gained from these clinical experiences was applied to increase personal knowledge of neurorehabilitation, and better support participants within both the El Dorado and CBIC community programs. Lastly, I gained my Provisional Certified Brain Injury Specialist Certification (PCBIS) to further my knowledge of appropriate care for individuals with brain injury.

