

Look Who's TALKING

2012 Speech-Language Pathology

Alumni Association Newsletter University of Toronto



TRADING PLACES

Angela Fong, S-LP 0T9, and Katie Sharpe, S-LP 0T5, recently swapped jobs – and populations – at Toronto East General Hospital. Angela handed Katie her bubbles and Fisher Price farm as she left an outpatient paediatric job for Katie's honey-thick liquids and radiation dosimeters in adult acute care.

Ladies, how did this come about? Was there a "Freaky Friday" moment when Angela said "I wish I had Katie's job" at the exact same time that Katie said "I wish I had Angela's job"?

A: About a year and half ago, Katie approached me about a possible temporary job swap. I always wondered what it would be like to actually work in acute care. Once we agreed a job swap was something we were both interested in (and had our manager's approval), we started to "train" each other. I started doing acute care for one afternoon a week while Katie started seeing one child a week for therapy.

What inspired you to want to work with a different population?

K: I have enjoyed many aspects of dysphagia but I felt like I was losing those skills that I sought out by becoming a speech pathologist in the first place: the assessment and treatment of communication disorders.

A: As a student, I was very lucky to have some great placements but I never had an acute care opportunity. This was something I always wished I had. When Katie approached me, it was like she read my mind!

What have been the biggest changes since the job swap?

A: Acute care really keeps you on your toes! I've really enjoyed working in a fast-paced environment. With that said, the fast, unpredictable nature of acute care has also taken some getting used to. With pediatric outpatients, I

usually had pretty predictable days with appointments scheduled in advance. **K:** I would have to say that the most refreshing change has been getting back in touch with my creative side, developing fun and interesting lesson plans to keep the kids motivated.

What have been the biggest surprises about your new job?

A: To be frank, I was quite intimidated about being the "newbie" again. The physicians, nurses, OTs, PTs, dieticians and of course my own acute care S-LP colleagues have all made me feel like I've been on the team for years.

K: Like Angela, it has been the pleasant surprise of how supportive my colleagues have been, even outside the hospital.

In what ways has the job switch affected your personal lives?

K: Friends and family have remarked that I seem happier now. Whether that's due to working with kids or to just changing things up, I'm not totally sure. It's likely a combination of the two.

A: Working with kids certainly comes with its own set of challenges, but it is rare to have to deal with issues of death and dying with a pediatric outpatient population. In acute care, death and dying is a big part of the job. I've definitely had some emotionally challenging cases that have been difficult to "leave at work", so to speak.

By Ian Roth, 0T0

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The Alumni Association is going green! If you would prefer to receive your annual newsletter electronically, send an email with the subject 'SLP alum e-newsletter' to address.update@utoronto.ca. Help us make a difference!

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

JANICE GREENBERG

In November 2011, the 2011 Distinguished Service Award was presented to Janice Greenberg at the annual Awards Breakfast. Janice is currently Program Director at The Hanen Centre. The Alumni Association is pleased to share some inspiring highlights from Janice's acceptance speech with our readers:



I would like to start by thanking the Alumni Association for this great honour. For the students who are just beginning their careers, I would like to share some inspirational life lessons that I have picked up along the way. Here are my "Seven Sprightly Inspirational Truths on Speech Pathology."

#1: There are no limits

When communication is your focus, there are no limits to where we can make an impact. As an S-LP, I have had the opportunity to become involved not only with language intervention but also with feeding disorders, parent training, early childhood and adult education, as well as co-authoring two books.

#2: Questions are sometimes more important than answers

I have learned that S-LP isn't necessarily about answers, but more importantly about questions. Increasing emphasis on accountability and evidence based practice has required S-LPs to question practices we have always followed. When I began to accept the significance of asking questions, I also began to appreciate the importance of research.

#3: Look for the grey

I have learned that issues are rarely black or white, but mostly grey. We need to be confident about our beliefs and actions based on the best evidence available but we must also be flexible in our thinking and open to other ideas.

#4: You can do it

I am indebted to my former director, Ruth Gannon, for inspiring me to start as a trainer and facilitator. This currently results in my traveling around the world. Sometimes, uncertainty about what I can offer makes me wonder, as an S-LP from Toronto, can I really have something to offer to S-LPs in Sydney or London? The answer is unequivocally yes!

#5: I am a pioneer

Thank you to another one of my directors, Mary Walton Ball. Mary taught me to focus on the excitement of being an innovator. I remember her saying "You are a pioneer!" whenever I was in a slump.

#6: It's all about fishing

There's a saying that giving someone a fish allows them to eat for a day but teaching them to fish allows them to eat for a lifetime. If we successfully develop facilitation skills in parents, teachers and other professionals who work with our clients, we can make a significant impact.

#7: Be excited and stay excited

Always remember what a wonderful profession S-LP is as it gives us the opportunity to make a difference in people's ability to communicate – that incredible ability that marks us as human beings. To you future SLPs, I encourage you to go out and be excited and stay excited. You have a wonderful journey ahead of you. Good luck!

Distinguished Service Award: Nominate your peers!

By Pamela Rahn, OT6

In an effort to recognize University of Toronto Department of Speech-Language Pathology alumni who have made outstanding contributions to the fields of communication disorders and swallowing, the Alumni Association selects one recipient annually who excels in at least two of the following areas of achievement:

Academic

- Exceptional contribution to research, teaching, and/or student training

Clinical Services

- Viewed by colleagues as a mentor or

resource due to professional and clinical expertise
- Implementation or involvement in innovative programs for the benefit of clients

Promotion of the Profession

- Volunteer involvement with the college and/or professional associations
- Professional representation on committees and/or health-related boards
- Involvement in innovative speech-language pathology program development (e.g., in hospital, school board, preschool centre, rehabilitation centres, private practice, etc.)

- Promotion of speech-language pathology to health professional, community groups, clients, students etc.

Nominations should include a brief letter outlining evidence of excellence in two of the above areas of achievement as well as a completed nomination form. Nomination forms will be made available on the SLP alumni website at <http://www.slp.utoronto.ca/community/alumni.htm>. Please submit your nomination to the alumni executive faculty representative by September 15th, 2012

TRADING PLACES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Do you plan to continue working with these populations? Expect to go back to your former clientele? Switch to a third clientele? (You can tell us. We won't tell your manager!)

A: I'm honestly not sure yet, I'm enjoying this experience so much! I've continued to work privately with kids and I feel like I get the best of both worlds this way. I haven't even thought about the possibility of a third clientele, but this experience has certainly given me the confidence that anything is possible.

K: I won't say that I'll never return to acute care, but it would not be my first choice. Angela and I have discussed the possibility of a job share after the

year is up where we would split acute and pediatric roles (we have not broached the subject with our manager yet, so shhhhhh).

What advice do you have for other SLPs contemplating a change in population?

A: Don't be afraid to look at opportunities within the organization you currently work in. There may be a colleague working with a different population who is also looking for a change. Never be afraid or worried about learning a new skill or broadening your practice.

K: Go for it! Variety is one of the perks of our profession so take advantage. You have nothing to lose!

YEAR 1

A NEW HOME

By Amanda Indovina, 1T3

The S-LP class of 2013 has entered the building; we have made 500 University our home. But what is to come of this? Perhaps it is fitting to answer this using the PICO question:

Population: 46 bright & beautiful first-year S-LP students, consisting of 44 ladies & 2 lads aspiring to become full-fledged S-LPs, with minimal pain & maximal success.

Intervention: A 2-year M.H.Sc. program in S-LP involving class work & clinical placements, supportive faculty & administrative staff, & lots of S-LP lovin'.

Comparison: Any other degree.

Outcome: Qualified & excellent S-LPs who will make a difference in their profession.



Meeting new people: "the diversity...I love hearing why each of us chose S-LP..."

"I like our class & how we work together to learn – we're kinda awesome!"

The professors & guest lecturers: "From the very beginning, I found that they've been supportive, positive, and approachable. They really do all they can to help us succeed."

The real-life experiences with children: "It makes our learning more real – not just out of a book. It adds an element of excitement – that one day I'll actually be doing this & helping them!"

Ultimate Answer: Yes! Stay tuned for updates in next year's article...

In the meantime, here is a sampling of the class of 2013's thoughts about the highlights of the program so far:

From the savoury potlucks & Abba dance parties to the many new friendships - we've made many memories. We look forward to the months ahead at our new "home, sweet home."

Honouring J.F. Walker

With Jean's support, the Department is creating a student scholarship in her name. You may donate to this fund by going to www.slp.utoronto.ca. Click on "Donate to SLP."

The Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Association is constantly striving to improve student life at the Graduate Department of Speech-Language Pathology, University of Toronto. Your help is invaluable in helping us reach our goals. If you wish to participate in improving the student experience you can do so by completing the pledge form below. You can mail or fax the form to the address listed, or use the following link:



<https://www.donations.utoronto.ca/medicine/medicine.aspx>

Yes! I would like to support the Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Association at the University of Toronto.

<p>GIFT INFORMATION</p> <p>I have enclosed a gift of \$ _____ to be directed to:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Speech-Language Pathology Annual Fund 0560002755</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Margaret Stoicheff Bursary 0560006980</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Paula Square Travel Award 0560010817</p>	<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>TEL.: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Please reply by mail or fax to:</u> Office of Advancement, Faculty of Medicine University of Toronto Medical Sciences Building, Room 2306 1 King's College Circle Toronto ON M5S 1A8</p> <p style="text-align: right;">FAX 416-946-7722</p>
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YEAR 2 REPORT

By Lauren Sinclair and
Karolyn Withers, 1T2



In reading through previous articles in the Look Who's Talking newsletters written by graduating S-LP classes, it was interesting to read about sentiments similar to the ones we are experiencing as the graduating class of 2012. We are struck by the amount of knowledge we have gained in such a short period of time, but have realized, especially during placements, how much more we have to learn as we try our best to put theory into practice. We cannot help but feel united as a class; once a group of strangers, now meeting for one last academic unit as good friends and future colleagues. Our class of 45 students, much like your class, however many years ago you graduated, now share a common bond to each other, the department, fellow alumni and the profession that will unite us no matter where our lives and careers may take us.

Our class would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude for the excellent academic and clinical foundation we have received at U of T. We are appreciative to the faculty, staff, clinical educators, guest speakers, Alumni Association and former graduates for the guidance, time and resources they have invested in us. Thank you for helping us develop into caring future clinicians who will strive to make a difference in the lives of our clients. A special thanks goes out to the Alumni Association for all of the practical, student-centered activities they organized for us.

As we, the class of 2012, near the end of our program and spread to the four winds, we wish our fellow classmates a fulfilling career and continued life-long learning.

South Africa A Whole World within One Country *By Ruth Levin, 1T1*

South Africa has been referred to as "A Whole World within One Country." 2 S-LP students from the class of 2011 had the privilege of learning first hand just how true this is.

Born in South Africa, I have travelled back several times to visit family. For the first time, this experience offered the unique opportunity to work with the locals, become immersed in the culture, and visit with a professional focus.

We spent our Unit 9 placement in Johannesburg, South Africa, working at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH).

South Africa's health care system consists of both private and public sectors, which provide services to a range of people of varying socio-economic status (SES). CMJAH is one of the largest public hospitals, with 1088 beds. Many patients come from low SES backgrounds, and are multilingual, speaking at least one of the 11 official languages.

We had vast clinical exposure. We conducted communication, cognitive, and swallowing assess-



ments and implemented individual and group therapy for paediatric and adult patients. Patient backgrounds ranged from neonatal complications, autism, and cerebral palsy to acquired brain injury, aphasia, motor-speech disorders and HIV/AIDS.

This truly enlightening experience enabled us to apply theories learned at UofT with a creative and flexible approach in order to cross language and low resource barriers. Moreover, we had the privilege of learning about the people of South Africa. We were inspired by the vibrant culture, and moved by the devotion of so many parents, who travelled countless miles with their babies literally on their backs to receive an hour's worth of service.

In addition to the incredible clinical learning experience, our patients provided some of the most meaningful life lessons, teaching us to be grateful for what we have. Nelson Mandela captured this sentiment beautifully when he said, "It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."

Look what's *new* with your Alumni Association!

By Janice Waugh-Bennett, OT4

Your Alumni Association Executive has been growing fast over the past few years! We have grown from 15 members to 25, and have for the first time established six committees. These new committees have allowed exponential growth in areas we have only been able to dabble in previously – even we have been amazed at how much we have been able to accomplish! The former Grad Reception has become a casual but structured Awards Ceremony and Grad Reception, the J.F. Walker Lecture is moving from a one-hour lecture format to a full-day symposium event, and new Fund-raising, Alumni Recruitment, and Communications committees have been launched. New representative positions such as the Faculty of Medicine Alumni Council rep and Research Stream rep give us voices in areas we didn't have before. Our tried and true activities continue to be central to what we offer, including the April Infosocial, which provides job interview training to those approaching the end of their studies, the September Buddy Breakfast which connects Year One students to social and academic supports, and this, our annual newsletter, which keeps you in touch with your alma mater.

We are pleased to continue to serve you in increasingly new and better ways.

Thank you for your support, which allows us to do this valuable work!!



A few members of your Alumni Association

Aphasia Camp 2011: "Get the Message"

By Maia Rotin, 1T1

Last June, the tireless forces of two U of T S-LP alumni (Pam Rahn and Patty Matsuo, both of Trillium Health Centre), the Ontario March of Dimes, and the West GTA Stroke Network came together to create the first ever Aphasia Camp in Peel region. The camp, which took place over two days at the Clarkson Community Centre in Mississauga, proved to be an unforgettable experience for all involved. Each of the forty participants was an individual with aphasia or one of their family members. Activities included gardening, drum circle, painting, adapted biking, bocce ball, trivia, and caregiver coffee. Six year-two S-LP students from U of T volunteered at the event as supportive communication partners. Additionally, these students undertook an aphasia awareness project designed to inform the public about the shortage of aphasia services in Peel region. For this project, each camp participant, including staff and volunteers, created a coloured notecard depicting their feelings about aphasia and communication. These cards were amalgamated into a giant collage bearing the slogan, "Aphasia: Get the Message," as well as some statistics on aphasia prevalence and resource needs in Peel region.



Feedback from participants, staff and volunteers indicated that the camp weekend was an immensely meaningful experience for all involved and helped reduce the sense of isolation felt by many affected by aphasia. Thanks to the presence of local media at the camp's closing ceremonies, public awareness was raised about aphasia and its impact on the community.

This amazing weekend would not have been possible without financial assistance from the Royal Bank of Canada Foundation and the Harmonize For Speech organization. To learn more about Harmonize For Speech and their commitment to communication and speech-related causes, please visit <http://harmonize4speech.org/>.

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Layout by Ken Carriere

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RESEARCH

CORNER



The Alumni Association would like to extend a warm welcome to the department's newest faculty member, Elina Mainela-Arnold. Elina teaches the Unit 1 Child Language course and is currently setting up her new "Language and Cognitive Development Laboratory." We took some time recently to get to know Elina and learn a little bit about her research. Read on for more details!

By Joy Clubine, OT8

JC: Where did you grow up?

EM-A: I grew up in a small town in Southern Finland, much smaller than Toronto, but culturally not so different from Canada. Finns also love their hockey and I am observing familiar humbleness and sensibility here.

JC: When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

EM-A: I wanted to be a vet, a horse-back riding teacher or a journalist... now that I think about it my current job has elements similar to those professions: the science of helping living creatures, teaching and disseminating information.

JC: What is your primary research focus right now?

EM-A: We are investigating if procedural memory deficits explain language deficits in children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI). Procedural memory is a system responsible for acquiring skills involving sequences, both sensori-motor and cognitive. A growing body of literature suggests that various language learning phenomena may be explained by the ability to extract statistical regularities among sequences. This type of simple learning may be a guide to such things as discovering words within the continuous stream of speech and the learning of phonetic categories and grammatical structures.

JC: What kind of advances have been made so far?

EM-A: Recent investigations have established neural and genetic mechanisms that may be common to language and motor sequential learning. Advances have been made in identifying FOXP2, a gene within chromosome 7 that is known to play a role in language and speech impairments. Studies that used mice and humans have shown that FOXP2 is expressed in particular areas of the brain, including basal ganglia and the striatum, brain regions associated with procedural sequential learning. In mice, disrupting this gene impairs the sequencing actions during grooming. Recently, Broca's area, a brain region associated with language production, has been found to also be involved in sequencing nonverbal actions. So

basically we are taking these recent advances in cognitive, neural and genetic research as a basis in attempting to establish a theory that explains SLI.

JC: What are you most excited about as you begin your career here at U of T?

EM-A: I am excited about the people. The students are amazingly smart and pleasant. The faculty and staff are impeccably cordial to work with. I am thrilled about the diverse population of children and families in Toronto, whom I hope will be willing to participate in research studies. I have also had great discussions with some local clinicians in the area. These discussions have struck me as very insightful, so I look forward to building a bridge between basic science and clinical service delivery.

JC: What are your hobbies or favourite activities outside of work?

EM-A: I have two dogs, a Jack Russell terrier and a Lab mix. I used to ride horses, but while in Toronto I've switched to hot yoga, which has really been kicking my butt and keeping my mind and body in balance. I also love reading novels and watching movies.

JC: Where can alumni go to find out more about your research?

EM-A: If you are interested in the basic science we are pursuing, this article will get you up to speed: Tomblin, J.B, Mainela-Arnold, E., & Zhang, X. (2007) Procedural learning in adolescents with and without specific language impairment. *Language Learning and Development*, 3, 269-293. If you work in one of the school boards you might enjoy: Mainela-Arnold, E., Alibali, M.W., Ryan, K. & Evans, J. (2011) Knowledge of mathematical equivalence problems in children with specific language impairment: Insights from gesture and speech. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 42, 18-30.

It was a pleasure getting to know Elina and we look forward to hearing more about her work and research as she joins our growing U of T S-LP family!

