

Look Who's TALKING

2009 Speech-Language Pathology

Alumni Association Newsletter University of Toronto

We're 50 !!!!!

By Janice Waugh Bennett,
Class of 2004

On May 29th 2008, the Speech-Language Pathology Department, its Alumni and friends got together for a wonderful evening to celebrate the milestone of educating Speech-Language Pathology clinicians and researchers for 50 years. The party was held at the Metropolitan Hotel in downtown Toronto. The evening began with drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and SLPs doing 50 years' worth of catching up with each other. This created what might be the noisiest "Silent Auction" ever (we're SLPs, after all), which was organized by the Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Association and raised almost \$4000! Before long, the din of excited, chatting Speech-Language Pathologists was almost deafening, and the doors of the ballroom had to be opened to allow us to spread out!

People sat at tables with other members of their graduating classes and other familiar faces. Former Chairs, Drs. Paula Square, Margaret Stoicheff and Jean Walker were three such people who came out to celebrate with former colleagues and students.

Opening congratulatory remarks were made by Dr. Bern O'Keefe who MC'd the event without trying to convince anyone to begin their PhD, Dr. Catharine Whiteside, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, who spoke of the importance of the Speech-Language Pathology Department at the University, the current Chair of the Department, Dr. Luc De Nil, and Deryk Beal of the Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Association, among others. The keynote speaker for the evening, the Honourable Mr. Bob Rae, was unfortunately prevented from attending due to an urgent meeting over the Bernier Affair in Ottawa, but he sent a congratulatory letter that was read out instead.

After the witty meal and delicious conversation, guests were



The East York Barbershoppers Chorus of the Harmonize For Speech Society help us celebrate the Speech-Language Pathology Department's 50th Anniversary.

entertained by the multi-talented Dr. Elin Thordardottir, who sang operatic pieces accompanied by Dr. Evgueni Tchougounov on piano, and, of course, by the East York Barbershoppers Chorus of the Harmonize For Speech Society, which has been a consistent source of vital financial support to the Department of Speech-Language Pathology throughout its history. In addition, Mr. George Shields and Mr. Rick Snoultlen of the Harmonize For Speech Fund announced a \$50,000 donation to the Department for a new scholarship, which will be matched by the University.

Next, four current students in the MHSc program, Rebecca Pearson, Jessica Zawalicz-Mowinski, Mia Majorahn, and Emily

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Dykstra, presented a humorous slide show they had put together tracing the history of the Department and highlighting how much things have changed (and how much they've stayed the same!) since 1958.

The evening concluded with dancing to music from each decade from the 1950s to the present. One or two students (particularly those in the research stream!) showed the rest of us just how to watusi!

Celebration continued the following day with a full-day Research Symposium featuring presentations by three distinguished speakers. Dr. Rupal Patel, the first graduate of the PhD program in the Department and now conducting her research at Northeastern University in Boston, told an enthralled audience about her work developing naturalistic voice options for AAC devices for children. It is her intention to improve upon AAC devices that give children the voice of a 30 year old male robot...hardly an appropriate match! In addition, Dr. Patel shared some of her work on normal language development, for which she has outfitted her home with microphones and cameras to capture each minuscule development of language in her own children. The audience listened, fascinated, as Dr. Patel played an audio recording of a series of iterations of her son's development of the word "water". Check out the 'Research Corner' on page 6 for more about Dr. Patel's work.

Next, Dr. Michael Iwama of the Department of Occupational Sciences and Occupational Therapy at the University of Toronto described the Kawa model, a conceptual model he has developed that considers cultural differences in the delivery of occupational therapy services.

And Dr. Yves Joannette, scientific director of the Neurosciences and Mental Health Consortium of the Université de Montréal, spoke on the history and possibilities for the future for the field of speech-language pathology.

Over the two-day celebration of the achievements of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology, friends were reunited, money was raised, and plans were laid by the Department and its friends for another ground-breaking 50 years. Thanks to everyone who worked to organize these events, and to all those who came out and celebrated in May! See you in 2058 for the much anticipated centennial!

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Is there anything you would like to see written about, or an experience or thought you wish to share with other alumni? We welcome your input into your newsletter, alums! Contact the editor, with an article or with an idea for one, at slp_alum_association@hotmail.com

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:

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Karibu

By Joy Hanna,
Class of 2008

Tanzania!

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, there are over 6,000 registered S-LPs across Canada for a population of just over 30 million people. Now close your eyes and imagine the population booming to 34 million, and you are one of only two S-LPs for the entire country...and if you concentrate hard enough you just might find yourself in Moshi, Tanzania where, for 10 weeks beginning in July 2008, two students from our program had the privilege of doubling the S-LP population in Tanzania. Liana Levinson and I (class of '08) spent our Unit 9 placement at a multi-disciplinary rehab centre called Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation Tanzania (CCBRT). We had no idea what was waiting for us in the rural villages of Eastern Africa, but we landed with a litre of bubbles, loads of stickers, a Kiswahili phrase book and open minds, ready to take on whatever came our way.

During our time in Moshi, we were able to get involved in all aspects of the clinic. The outpatient speech clinic was opened for an extra day each week during our time there. We saw a great variety of clients, including children with apraxia of speech, disfluency, and even voice disorders. However, the most common client populations were children with cerebral palsy and hearing loss. As a result we spent a lot of time conducting hearing tests and educating families about safe feeding practices.

We also travelled out into the surrounding villages on a regular basis. The clinic is based on a community rehab model where trained professionals assess clients and give basic training to Community Rehab Workers (CRWs). The CRWs then implement

programs and activities to facilitate goal achievement. When we were not working in the outpatient clinic we could usually be found bouncing around in a truck as we travelled with the CRWs to see clients at home with their families. We were always greeted with warm smiles, open arms, and the Kiswahili welcome of "Karibu!". Although we did not speak much Kiswahili, we found that bubbles can cross language barriers, and families were always grateful for whatever help we could give.

Tanzania is a country of kindness and respect. We learned this very quickly as we were welcomed into the CCBRT family. The people that we met extended to us unceasing generosity and friendship without question, and for that we will always remember them. Of course, no trip to Africa is complete without a bit of adventure. We were lucky enough to take a weekend Safari into the national parks, as well as a few day-trips to various waterfalls in nearby villages. On clear days, the majestic Mt. Kilimanjaro served as a backdrop to the well-groomed gardens of the clinic compound, and it seemed a fitting reminder of the strength and beauty of the Tanzanian people. At the end of our ten weeks we were sad to go. Not only was it difficult to leave our new friends, but we had also become keenly aware of the growing need for S-LPs in Tanzania, where the number of people requiring service vastly outnumbers the human resources available. It is our hope that as the relationship with CCBRT is maintained, we will see the network of S-LPs connected to the clinic growing, and who knows – maybe someday you might even find yourself volunteering there!



Left: Joy with a client with CP in Kindi village.

Top right: Liana teaching a child with CP how to use a communication board.

Right: Liana and Joy with Mt. Kilimanjaro in the background.

Year 1

The class of 2010 is well on their way through the first year of the program. As tough as it may have been thus far, it was and continues to be, a journey we will not forget. We entered the program in September as a group of 46 eager students all looking forward to our future careers as Speech-Language Pathologists.

Our first few months were a time for adjustment. We were faced with new colleagues and professors, a challenging course load and, of course, the hustle and bustle of Toronto. Our amazing second year buddies eased this transition by planning an Orientation Week (O-Week) to remember. You may have seen us around the streets of Toronto last September; you couldn't miss us with our matching mint green T's! We were loud as can be at the Blue Jays game, with our faces painted and a cheer contest in the stands! We also took part in an 'O-Week Amazing Race', which required us to parade around Toronto by foot and by train solving clues and completing challenges. The ultimate O-Week prize was the Golden Larynx, which sits proudly on display on the 10th floor for all to see. For this, we would like to extend a warm thanks to the O-Week Coordinators. It was within those first two weeks that we bonded with our classmates and close friendships developed.

Now that we are settled into our roles as students in this program, we are continuously seeking a sense of balance both within and outside of the classroom. Within the classroom we are juggling the



workload (which at times can seem never-ending) and searching for physical space to complete it in given our significantly larger class size this year. Even if our classroom can seem a little cramped at times, that did not stop us from creating memories in this very space. From meditation lessons to potlucks, we used our room to its fullest and hope to see the light again soon! Our activities outside of the classroom have also played a role in achieving a work-life balance, such as our participation in bake-sales, bar nights, and other social outings.

We hope to continue to embark on these and other opportunities that come our way.

We have had the pleasure of meeting many U of T Alumni and would like to thank you for sharing your wisdom and insight with us as we begin to experience what we hope will be lifelong meaningful careers.

OUTSTANDING ALUMNA OF THE YEAR ...

Each year, the Alumni Association recognizes a member of the alumni of the Speech-Language Pathology (S-LP) Department with the Outstanding Alumna/us Award. This award is given to an individual who has made extraordinary contributions to the S-LP profession. In 2008, the Alumni Association posthumously recognized the immeasurable contributions of the late Barbara Meissner Fishbein, whom we sadly lost following a courageous battle with cancer in September 2008. The award was presented to Barbara's husband, Bernie Fishbein, at the annual departmental awards breakfast in November 2008. A poignant tribute was delivered at that time by Rosemary Martino, and was co-written by Elyse Shumway and

Sonia Reichman (whom we have also suddenly and tragically lost this year). Their tribute, entitled, "Barbara's Gifts" has been fully reprinted in the November 2008 edition of CASLPO Today and in the departmental newsletter INTERCOM (volume 6, issue 3).

On April 3, 2009, a ceremony was held to hang the plaque associated with the award on the Leadership Wall in the Rehabilitation Sciences Building at the University of Toronto. Members of Barbara's family, including her husband, father, son, and sister-in-law were in attendance among a group of clinicians, students, faculty and alumni association members to honour the occasion. After a brief introduction by the Chair of the S-LP Department, Dr.

Luc De Nil, the current president of the Alumni Association, Janice Waugh Bennett delivered a brief speech to commemorate the event. She reminded us of Barbara's remarkable accomplishments and her exceptional personal attributes. "Barbara's impressive career contributions spanned the continuum from a clinical caseload in neurological disorders in a variety of settings, to extensive work on the legislation governing the profession, and culminating in her work as Director of Professional Practice at CASLPO. Along the way, she contributed her talents to the Legislative Affairs Committee of OSLA, the Transitional Council at CASLPO, the 1999 review of the Regulated Health Professions Act, and to committee work at



Reflections from the Class of 2009

YEAR 2

By Julie Impey and Lynn Mark, Class of 2009

As the Class of 2009 reflected on our experiences as University of Toronto Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) students, and what we now know about being SLPs, here are the “Top 20 Things” we learned....

- 1 To self-reflect, self-reflect, and self-reflect some more... and when you think you've done all the reflecting you can possibly do, reflect some more!
- 2 To appreciate the balance between school (work) and having fun.
- 3 That neuroplasticity is sexy... in the research sense of course!
- 4 That “owls” are very important!
- 5 To be flexible! Adapting to unexpected/sudden changes with patients, placements, life....
- 6 As SLP students we are becoming experts in communication/swallowing, but we are already experts in potluck food provision.
- 7 A good collection of dip recipes is a valuable thing.
- 8 SLP students are some of the most “talkative” people around... I guess that's why we're in the business of speech and language! :-)
- 9 SLP jokes will never get old.
- 10 It's okay to check each other's hyolaryngeal excursion just for fun when you are out with a group of SLPs, despite the odd looks

we might receive...

- 11 That an absent gag reflex is really fascinating.
- 12 It's okay to get really excited if someone in the class has a bifid uvula!
- 13 We think we have learned where the tensor veli palatini and the levator veli palatini are.
- 14 We can hardly contain our “WHOA!!” when we see aspiration on a videofluoroscopic exam.
- 15 SLPs will cringe in horror listening to Pierce Brosnan abuse his voice in Mama Mia.
- 16 SLPs are excited to try electrolarynxes and kick themselves for not thinking sooner to try “Hi my name is Optimus Prime.” (reference: Transformers)
- 17 We aren't happy about the lack of SLP ‘shout outs’ on Grey's Anatomy!
- 18 Allied Health professionals are our friends. :-)
- 19 SLPs can burp loudly and say, “Oh, I was just practicing my esophageal speech.”
- 20 As important as the theory and information we have learned will be in our future careers, it is the support and connections we have established with each other that will be most valuable.

...BARBARA MEISSNER FISHBEIN

By Sonja Molfenter,
Class of 2007

CASLPA. She was on professional advisory boards at places such as the Aphasia Centre and the Huntington's Society. Truly, her contributions and accomplishments are too many to list, and this short list alone stands to justify her rightful place on this wall”. Janice went on to remind us about some of the personal traits that Barbara shared with us. “Barbara was well-known and highly-esteemed for her warmth, accessibility, approachability, and skill at gently guiding people through their own problem-solving process.” Janice concluded her speech with the comforting reminder that Barbara's accomplishments and gifts will “remain here over the years ahead to remind everyone who passes through the Rehabilitation Sciences



BARBARA MEISSNER FISHBEIN'S FAMILY (L-R: HUSBAND BERNIE, FATHER WILF AND SON JONATHAN) STANDING BESIDE HER OUTSTANDING ALUMNA OF THE YEAR AWARD ON THE LEADERSHIP WALL AT THE REHABILITATION SCIENCES BUILDING ON APRIL 3, 2009.

Building that the hard work and dedication of people like Barbara have created the profession as they have inherited it. It will inspire future generations of speech-language pathologists, who will pass this wall countless times during their training”.

To conclude the ceremony, Dr. De Nil announced that the University of Toronto has approved a new scholarship in Barbara's name. The Barbara Meissner Fishbein Memorial Fund will be awarded annually, through the generous contributions of her friends, family, and colleagues, at the Departmental awards breakfast each November. It is fitting of course, that through this award, Barbara will continue to foster and impact the future of our profession. To Barbara, thank you.

RESEARCH

CORNER



By Lisa McQueen, Class of 1999

The Alumni Newsletter is thrilled to profile Rupal Patel in this year's Research Corner! Rupal graduated from MHSc program at U of T in 1995 and completed her PhD in 2000. She currently lives in Boston, where she is an Associate Professor in the Department of SLP and Audiology at Northeastern University and director of the Communication Analysis and Design Laboratory (CadLab). Rupal's interdisciplinary lab consists of engineers, computer scientists and speech scientists whose work focuses on the analysis of spoken communication and the design, development, and assessment of new assistive human-machine interfaces. While all of this sounds very high tech, Rupal's innovative work has very meaningful consequences, both for the field of SLP and for those living with disordered speech. Current CadLab projects effortlessly link research, technology and functionality. Here are just a few examples:

- 1 leveraging the residual vocal control of individuals with severe dysarthria to create a unique, personalized voice for their AAC device
- 2 using computer based games to see if children with cerebral palsy can reliably and consistently control prosodic features
- 3 developing computational models of prosodic control using psychoacoustic and functional imaging techniques
- 4 developing "smart/responsive" AAC devices that can adapt to the environment by altering the mode of input (touch, voice or brainwave activity), the vocabulary choices offered, and/or the speaking style

Rupal kindly agreed to a phone interview, allowing me to learn a bit more about the woman behind the technology. What follows is an edited version of our conversation:

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

RP: Initially? A fashion designer, although most of the time an engineer...I was introduced to SLP by my brother-in-law. I feel like I've returned to what I know and love to do which is to build things.

LM: Speaking of "building", we are always aiming to bridge research and clinical practice. Can you share something from your research that a clinician could use in practice tomorrow?



RP: Yes! Don't work on prosody at the end, work on it at the beginning. It's the scaffold for intelligible communication. For instance, consider contrastive stress. Heightening of the prosodic aspects of an utterance also lead to improvement in overall intelligibility. Also, remember that the cues that someone with disordered speech may use might be different than a normal speaker's cues. If someone can't make an increase in pitch, they may elongate the word instead. Really listen for consistency in the changes the person is making, you will hear patterns.

LM: You are involved in quite a few projects, tell me which is the most exciting to you right now?

RP: The work on giving the synthesizer (AAC device) the personality of the user is very exciting! Underlying the research are two themes: what can a person with dysarthria do with the prosody of their voice and how we can build technology that can leverage this control. This project really marries both of those themes. It's also very cool to watch a young boy with CP listen to his own voice as his own voice for the first time..... it's wonderful to see that he can finally own the piece of hardware – it becomes his mouth, his voice and I think this is what we are trying to do in this area. This technology becomes a piece of them. The feeling of ownership is critical for technology adoption.

LM: Any suggestions or advice for aspiring researchers in the field of SLP?

RP: Go ahead – do it! Go learn about it from a lab, participate in the lab....Until you actually try to do research, it seems like such a nebulous thing that people do in white coats. It is so exciting when you have your OWN data set. Once you get involved in collecting the data and start analyzing, it's really thrilling!

Rupal and I ended our conversation with a discussion of work-life balance. She agreed this was challenging but stressed the importance of being able to spend quality time with family. In fact, I caught her just as she was heading off for a little family getaway! For more information on current CadLab projects, visit them online at www.cadlab.neu.edu.