

# Accolades

SUMMER 2024

UNIVERSITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE FOR HEALTH SCIENCES ALUMNI MAGAZINE



**Embracing  
wellness and  
well-being**

**PLUS:** University and Association updates | Community impact | Alumni spotlights



UNIVERSITY of ST. AUGUSTINE  
for HEALTH SCIENCES

# CONTINUING EDUCATION SEMINARS

Flexible Options to Meet Your Needs - Online, In-Person, or Blended Format!

**20% ALUMNI DISCOUNT\***

\*use code Alumni2024 - valid through 12/31/2024  
(Cannot be combined with any other offers)

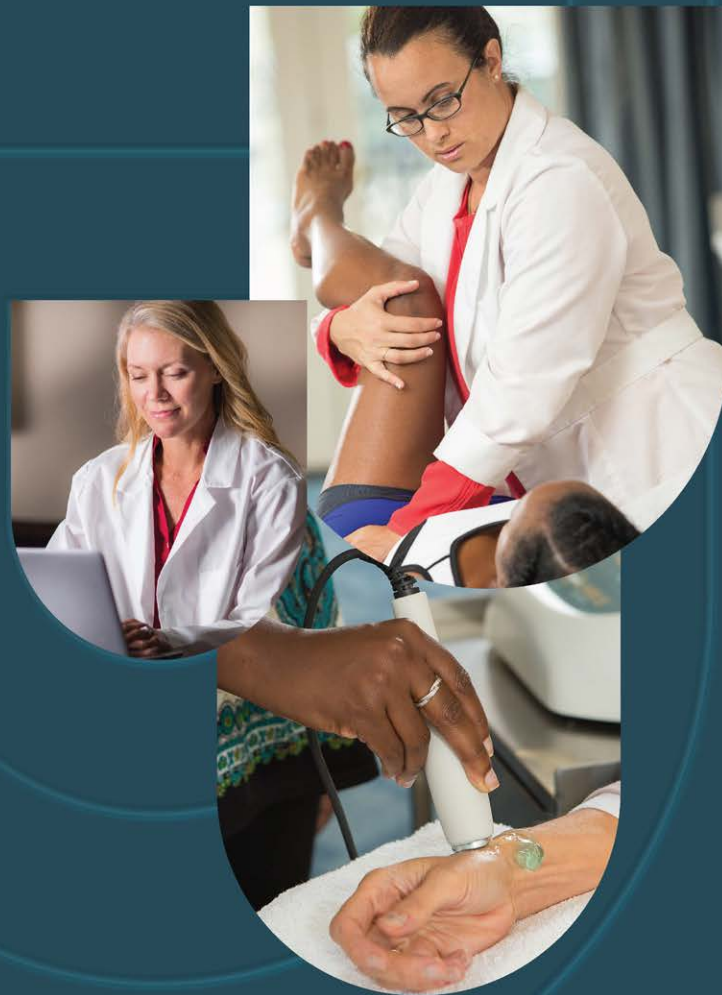


**REGISTER TODAY!**

800-241-1027 x1400 or [cpe.usa.edu](http://cpe.usa.edu)

## CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION WITH USAHS!

- Manual Therapy, Dry Needling and other Specialty Certifications
- RunTech Specialty Seminar
- Stroke Management
- Physical Agent Modalities and more...



## LOCATIONS NATIONWIDE!

Webinars available on Ergonomics, Telehealth, Interprofessional Collaboration and more.



The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences has been accredited as an Accredited Provider by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET).



The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences is accredited as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (ANCC).

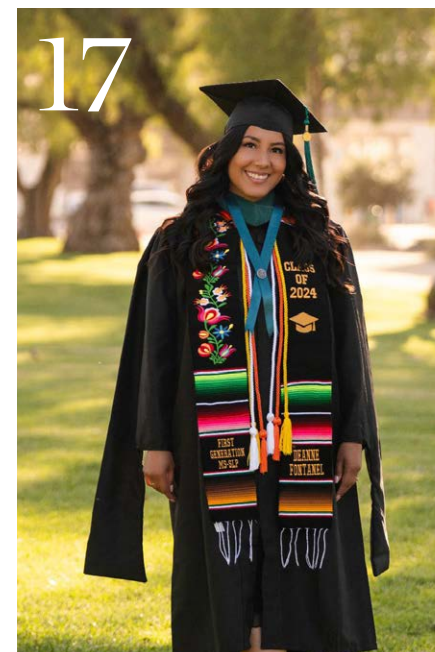


The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences is recognized by the Board of Certification, Inc. to offer continuing education for Certified Athletic Trainers.

Registration - A \$100 non-refundable deposit must accompany your registration form. A 50% non-refundable, non-transferable deposit is required for Certification. Balance is due 30 days prior to start date of the seminar. Balance can be transferred or refunded with two week written notice. Notice received after that time subject to only 50% refund. No refunds or transfers will be issued after the seminar begins. Team Discount - Two (2) or more colleagues registering for the same seminar at the same time receive a 10% discount. (Advanced notice and full payment is required; does not apply after the first day of a seminar.) Multiple Seminar Discount - Register and pay in full for two or more seminars at the same time and receive a 10% discount. (May not be combined with any other discounts or previous registrations.) Audit Seminar Discount - Register and pay for a seminar previously attended/completed and receive a 50% discount. Seminar dates, locations, and tuition are subject to change; please call before making any non-refundable reservations.

# In This Issue

SUMMER 2024



**On the cover:** The new Pro Bono Clinic "Life Is What You Bake It" targets meal preparation for adults 21 and older with developmental disabilities. During a summer session on the Miami, FL campus, occupational therapy students assisted young adults in making chocolate pudding dirt cups.

- 6** **ALUMNI SERVICES**  
From Career Services and job searches/posting to the University's mentorship programs, here's a quick look at alumni resources
- 7** **STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**  
Two USAHS students medal in the Paris Olympics; find out how they juggle their graduate studies and sports commitment
- 8** **FINANCIAL WELLNESS**  
This alumni spotlight features Dr. Teresa Gingles (DPT '11), whose nonprofit advocates for Central Texas' aging population
- 10** **BEYOND THE CLINIC**  
Dr. Jeremy Sutton (DPT '09) introduces a concierge model mobile practice that elevates wellness and community
- 12** **STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**  
Dr. Alyssa M. Garcia (OTD '23) focuses on firefighter mental health to help heroes lead quality lives
- 13** **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**  
Dr. Racine Johnson (MOT '04, DPT '05) shares her thoughts on implementing a holistic approach to rehabilitation
- 14** **TRADE TIPS**  
Executive Director, School of Nursing Dr. Sarah Cartwright discusses ways to minimize medical burnout, including the art of journaling
- 16** **FACULTY SPOTLIGHT**  
Dr. Sabrina Khan and Dr. Ashlee Loewen address mental health and vulnerable populations
- 17** **PERSONAL GROWTH**  
Recent MS-SLP graduate Deanne Fontanel completes her journey as a first-generation college student, while Joseph Heavey earns his doctorate at age 80
- 19** **UNIVERSITY / ALUMNI ASSOCIATION UPDATES**  
MS-SLP expands to California and Florida; University founder receives international PT award; Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend; Alumni Association hosts inaugural chapter events
- 22** **CLASS NOTES**  
Professional and personal updates from USAHS alumni

# Dear USAHS Alumni,



I am honored to address you as the President of the USAHS Alumni Association. As a proud graduate of the first class in 1996 (OG Blue Class) and a 2011 DPT graduate, I am a passionate advocate for our vibrant USAHS alumni community.

I continue to be inspired by the dedication and spirit of our alumni. Our association board has been working to foster connections, support professional growth and promote the well-being of our members.

I am excited to be a voice sharing the Alumni Association's recent initiatives and future plans. The work we have been doing includes networking events, a compilation of current issues by profession and mentorship programs designed to support your career growth and personal development. I encourage you to take advantage of this information and these opportunities as you stay connected with our community.

A warm shout-out goes to our new alumni chapters in Atlanta and San Diego! These chapters represent our commitment to expanding our network and providing local opportunities for engagement and professional development. We are also thrilled to announce a fall kick-off event for our Miami chapter, which promises to be an excellent opportunity for alumni to reconnect and share experiences.

We are also excited as we prepare for our second annual Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend September 27-28 on our San Marcos, CA campus. Get back together with your classmates and celebrate your achievements, reminisce about the 'Good Old Days' and earn a few CEUs. I look forward to seeing you!

The Alumni Association is committed to providing resources and support to help you maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle. I want to highlight the importance of mental well-being. As healthcare professionals, we are often focused on the well-being of others. However, it is crucial that we also prioritize our own mental health.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude for your support and involvement in the USAHS Alumni Association. Together, we can achieve remarkable things and make a positive impact on our profession and the communities we serve.

Warm regards,

**Dr. Stephen Wayne Elam, PT, DPT, EdD (MPT '96, DPT '11)**  
President, USAHS Alumni Association

Vivian A. Sanchez  
CHANCELLOR AND  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dr. Brian Goldstein  
PRESIDENT AND  
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

Dr. Melanie Storms  
VICE CHANCELLOR

Polly Crabtree  
DIRECTOR, ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

**Editorial and Design**

Suzanne Harbison  
DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY  
COMMUNICATIONS

Karoline Chapman  
MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS  
SPECIALIST

Simone Tieber  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

**Contributor**

Taylor Guda

**USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board Executive Committee**

PRESIDENT - Stephen Elam, PT, DPT, EdD (MPT '96, DPT '11)

VICE PRESIDENT - Rebekah Jarrar, OTD, MA, MOT, OTR/L (MOT '17, OTD '23)

VICE PRESIDENT - Robert Kentner, BSN, MSN, DNP (DNP '21)

VICE PRESIDENT - Christopher Long, PT, DPT (DPT '17)

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT - Steve Weyandt, PT, DPT, SCS, MTC (MPT '00, DPT '04)

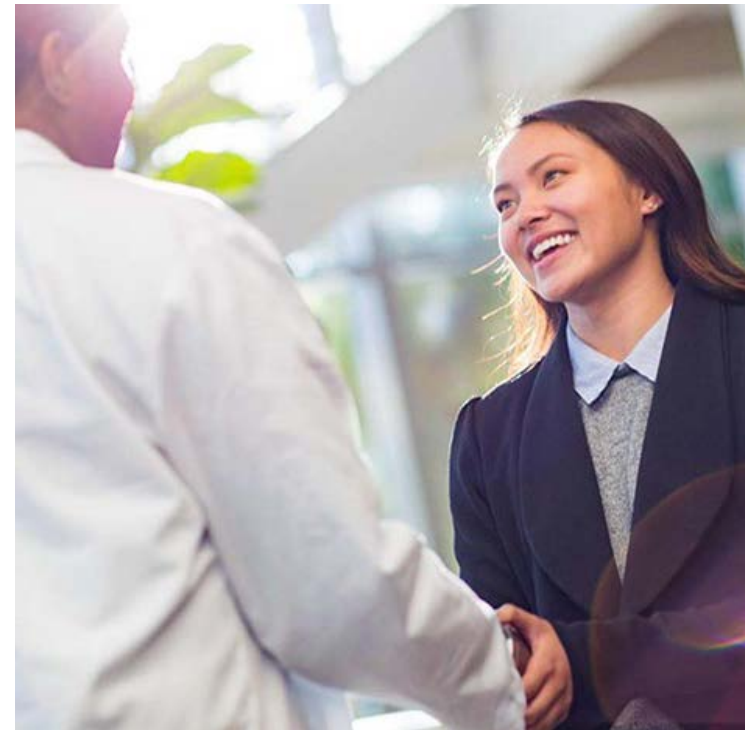
Accolades is published by the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences University Communications department. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official University policy.

**Inquiries**  
[www.usa.edu/about/alumni/](http://www.usa.edu/about/alumni/)  
[alumni@usa.edu](mailto:alumni@usa.edu)  
800-241-1027

© 2024 University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences



**Certified Corporation**  
USAHS is proud to be a Certified B Corp Institution, joining a global movement of people working as a force for good. USAHS has been a Certified B Corp since 2015.



## Hire USAHS Graduates or Post a Job

Employers can post jobs for USAHS graduates on our virtual job board by creating a [free Handshake account](#). Alumni can also post open jobs directly on the **USAHS Alumni LinkedIn page**.

USAHS alumni who are looking to make a career change or wanting to investigate job openings are encouraged to set up a free Handshake account. The University also advertises career fairs and professional networking events with clinical/community partners through Handshake.

**Develop effective job search strategies and interviewing skills.** The USAHS Career Services' mission is to provide exceptional service to students and alumni across all modalities and programs. Visit [usa.edu/about/alumni/careers](http://usa.edu/about/alumni/careers).

## Helpful Related Links

Need a transcript or update to your contact info? Want to partner with USAHS or nominate a fellow alum for the Force for Good Award? Have a question for the USAHS Alumni Association? For links that will get you help fast, visit [www.usa.edu/about/alumni/helpful-related-links/](http://www.usa.edu/about/alumni/helpful-related-links/).



## MENTOR A USAHS STUDENT

Help prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals. The University has two initiatives with alumni opportunities to mentor current students.

**Geographic Mentors:** USAHS students with clinical and fieldwork placements in unfamiliar locations can request a geographic mentor for area-related questions. Geographic mentors are matched with students on a one-to-one basis. If there are students heading to your area who are requesting a geographic mentor, you will receive an email requesting assistance.

**PT Mentors:** This pilot program targets PT students interested in making connections with established professionals. Many of these students are interested in learning how current clinicians found the path to careers in sports medicine, owning their own business or in a specific geographic area.

Students are matched with mentors using the Upnotch Mentoring Community. This platform provides tools for a good mentoring experience including a calendar setting function and video conferencing capability. To join the USAHS Community on Upnotch:

- Visit the **Upnotch website** at <https://app.upnotch.com/auth/login> or download the App from Google Play or the App Store.
- **Create an Upnotch profile.**
- **Join the USAHS community by going to Menu > Communities > USAHS > Join.**

Help us as we continue to grow these critical initiatives to assist USAHS students on their path to becoming excellent healthcare professionals. Contact [alumni@usa.edu](mailto:alumni@usa.edu) with questions.

## PASSION MEETS PERSEVERANCE

# Rugby Duo Makes Olympic History while Pursuing Academic Dreams

Doctor of Physical Therapy student **Sarah Levy** and Master of Occupational Therapy student **Stephanie Rovetti** helped team USA Rugby secure its first medal in history at the 2024 Paris Olympics, winning 14-12 in the bronze medal match against Australia. Both students, who are enrolled at the San Marcos, CA campus, discovered their passions for rugby concurrently with their acceptance to the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS).

“I found rugby when I was 26. Then, I played on the national team. I was working at a nonprofit but wasn’t fulfilled,” says Rovetti. “The parents of a boy I babysat at the time said I reminded them of their son’s occupational therapist. When they said that, a lightbulb went off! Growing up, I watched how my younger brother with Down syndrome benefited from occupational therapy, and I realized that this profession combined my desires to work with the disabled community while pursuing other passions.”

Levy discovered rugby during her undergraduate studies at Northeastern University, knowing she eventually wanted to work in healthcare. A physical therapy internship intertwined her love of sports with athletic agility, motivating her to pursue higher education.

“The day that I sent in my application to USAHS was the day I got invited to sevens camp, the Olympic training camp for rugby,” says Levy.

USAHS attracted both athletes due to its flexible format.

“My professors have been very understanding,” says Levy. “They helped me organize my schedule to get the hands-on experience I needed while pursuing rugby.”



“USAHS was the only school in the country I found that allowed me the flexibility to do that,” Rovetti agrees. “The Flex MOT program has allowed me to balance my two passions.”

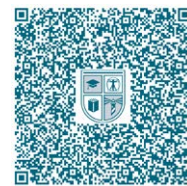
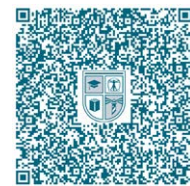
Both students state that playing rugby while in school has been challenging yet rewarding.

“A year ago, I was going into my first clinical and feeling good about physical therapy. But I wasn’t feeling so great about rugby. I thought I would be cut from the team, and I never thought I would have made it here,” says Levy. “But I decided to give it my all, knowing it wouldn’t be perfect, and I ended up

being invited back to the team. That is one of my greatest accomplishments.”

Says Rovetti, “You make your own journey. It’s going to be messy. If it’s hard and uncomfortable, you’re on the right path. Hold onto your purpose and your values.”

Read more about these student athletes’ journeys:



## EMPOWERING OLDER ADULTS

# DPT Alum Advocates for Aging Population

Experienced in acute care, home health, outpatient and hospice settings, **Teresa Gingles, PT, DPT (DPT ’11)** became board certified in geriatrics in 2021 to pursue her passion for helping older adults while working as a full-time physical therapist at an outpatient orthopedic clinic near Waco, TX.

Dr. Gingles recognized a gap in senior care while helping her adult patients improve, who said they felt the best they had in 10 years. “They would ask how to keep up with their wellness, and I didn’t have a good answer for them,” she says.

She founded Better at Last in 2023 to empower and engage older adults to live with purpose throughout their lives by better connecting them to their strength and wellness, community and future.

“Starting a nonprofit was not on my radar. But there was this need, and I thought, ‘Let’s see what happens.’ It has just been an amazing ride,” she says.

The organization offers members tailored services and resources free of charge. These include social and educational events such as strength and balance workshops, and informational sessions from local experts in all areas of aging.

Dr. Gingles has built relationships with local wellness facilities, such as the YMCA and fellow nonprofits, to create a warm handoff for her patients. “We’re challenging the idea that getting older is bad and aging is scary,” she states. “In working to change the culture of aging, my goal is to inspire seniors to know they have what they need to thrive well into older adulthood.”

“Starting a nonprofit was not on my radar. But there was this need, and I thought, ‘Let’s see what happens.’”



## Strength and Wellness in Protection

Hosted by Better at Last, Dr. Gingles recently organized the nonprofit’s inaugural Protect Yourself! conference. The event brought together elder fraud experts, local law enforcement, banks and other community members and organizations to promote safety and well-being. More than 200 central Texas older adults and their caregivers gathered to learn how they could be their own first line of defense against elder fraud and abuse.

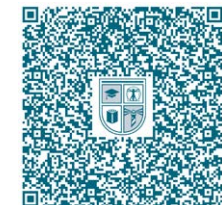
“The most important tools we have at Better at Last are education and relationships, and those were our conference goals,” says Dr. Gingles. “Elder fraud is a rapidly growing problem, with billions of dollars yearly lost to scams. Our aim is to educate, engage and empower older adults so they are better equipped to protect

themselves against fraud while also making community connections.”

Dr. Gingles says she will continue to chart new paths and address the difficulties associated with aging head-on. “I’m going to give Better at Last everything I have. I feel a sense of urgency to reach everyone I can.”

Connect with Better at Last on Facebook or email [welcome@betteratlast.org](mailto:welcome@betteratlast.org).

Find out more about Dr. Gingles in this [usa.edu](https://usa.edu/blog) blog.



# Concierge Model Elevates Wellness and Community

Dr. Sutton's innovative mobile practice transforms patient care



**J**eremy Sutton, DPT (DPT '09) has more than 15 years' experience in outpatient and home health physical therapy throughout Louisiana. His compassion for the community and its people inspired him to go beyond the typical healthcare model with a concierge, mobile physical therapy and wellness practice, Healthy SBC.

Launched in March 2024, Healthy SBC follows a cash-based business model, streamlining the best care for individual needs. Aside from providing traditional physical therapy treatment, Dr. Sutton spends time with patients learning their full health stories. His comprehensive, personalized care includes providing tailored,

educational resources and referrals that support patients physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Working with up to 26 patients a day, Dr. Sutton's experience in outpatient clinics made him want to see patients as more than just a number on a schedule. At Healthy SBC, his approach is to understand the why. "I find out what's important to the client and their family," he says. "Why do they want to get better? Is it because they want to hold their grandkids? Play pickleball? We get to dive deep into those things pushing them to be who they are."

Dr. Sutton aims to educate and influence the practice of healthy habits so that holistic health becomes an

integrated part of their lives, not just 60-90 minutes of their week.

### Fostering Community Connections

His time spent in the Northwest Louisiana region has introduced Dr. Sutton to a wide range of specialists and experts that he's connecting to his patients. His care model includes accompanying patients to various medical engagements, which simultaneously brings the community together.

For example, recently one of his patients had an orthopedic follow-up appointment. "My presence impacted her and let me interact with the orthopedic team, physician and

physician assistant. Building these relationships allows me to better serve both my patient and future patients with that doctor," he states.

To embed health consciousness in the community, he also hosts the Healthy SBC podcast, which highlights businesses and individuals in the area who share his passion for creating a healthier community. Podcast guests have included a massage therapist, financial health experts, and counseling and addiction specialists.

As Dr. Sutton's therapeutic approach and outlook on wellness broadens, his core principle of fostering deeper connections with patients remains. He attributes this belief that steers his practice to his educational foundation.

"The hands-on manual therapy focus at USAHS made me more compassionate and empathetic because I got to work with people directly," Dr. Sutton says. "It allowed me to build a rapport with people early on. As I've matured as a person and therapist, I see how important it is to get to know the person not as a patient, but as a human being."

As Healthy SBC grows, Dr. Sutton hopes to hire more therapists and

acquire space for new equipment, while staying true to mobility and community accessibility.

"There's plenty of business and people to see wherever we are. I want to partner with as many community members as possible and improve healthcare. Together, we can keep making it better!"

"The hands-on manual therapy focus at USAHS made me more compassionate and empathetic because I got to work with people directly."



## Integrating Wellness into Everyday Practice

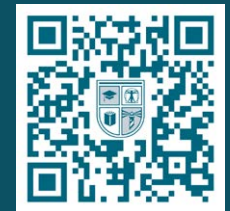
#Do1Thing is a community initiative Dr. Sutton started to inspire individuals to take a small, meaningful step each day toward a healthier and happier life. Small actions accumulate and can lead to significant improvements in overall well-being. Here are a few to get started:

- 1. Hydrate:** Start your day with a glass of water to kickstart your metabolism.
- 2. Move More:** Incorporate a short, 15-minute walk into your daily routine.
- 3. Sleep Hygiene:** Maintain a consistent sleep schedule and create a restful environment.
- 4. Be Mindful:** Practice meditation for a few minutes daily to reduce stress.
- 5. Relaxation:** Listen to your favorite music and dance for 10 minutes.
- 6. Nutrition:** Make small, healthier food choices, like adding an extra serving of vegetables to meals.

- 7. Encouragement:** Compliment someone and spread positivity.
- 8. Harmony:** Organize a cluttered space in your home.
- 9. Wellness:** Schedule a health check-up or screening.
- 10. Enlightenment:** Read a book for pleasure for at least 15 minutes.
- 11. Give Back:** Volunteer your time to help someone in need.
- 12. Purpose:** Create a vision board with your goals and aspirations.

**DO 1 THING:** *Health is Wealth*

Hydrate	Move More	Maintain Sleep Hygiene	Schedule a check-up
Be Mindful	Listen to Music	Add veggies	Volunteer
Spread positivity	Organize	Read a book	Create a vision board



For more wellness tips, visit Dr. Sutton's Blog.

# At Your Service

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

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

## CALIFORNIA



■ **Fisher House San Diego** and members of the **Student Occupational Therapy Association** took part in the annual Naval Amphibious Base Coronado Trunk-or-Treat event. The themed trunk highlighted occupational therapy best practices by hosting interactive activities to engage 500 military children and their families. Trick-or-treaters were greeted with a pumpkin corn hole game, which challenged each child's visual perception and hand-eye coordination.



■ As part of its Clinical Applications in Pediatrics course, the San Marcos, CA campus occupational therapy programs partnered with the **Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee North County Head Start, Early Start** program. Head Start, Early Start provides national school readiness programs at no cost to eligible families.

■ Associate Professor **Mohan Ganesan, PT, PhD** and Assistant Professor **Bindu Balakrishnan, MSc, PhD** organized and chaired a session on "Optimizing Movement in Individuals with Parkinson's Disease: Dopamine, Flexibility, Balance and Strength in Physical Performance—A Patient Education Symposium for Individuals with Parkinson's Disease." Four fifth-term, physical therapy students presented the session to members of the **Parkinson's Association of San Diego**.

## FLORIDA



■ During a Veterans Day fundraiser, the **Student Veterans Association** sold popsicles for 22 cents to spotlight the 22 veterans who succumb to suicide a day. Proceeds—\$425 collected—went to **Operation 22, Inc.**, a nonprofit organization with a mission to stop veteran suicide.



■ Miami's CBS news station featured students' and faculty members' efforts in the **Go Baby Go** initiative. The segment, titled "Santa's Helpers gift Miami three-year-old with health challenges a special toy Jeep," highlighted one of the children who benefit from Go Baby Go. Through this ongoing program, the University's aspiring physical and occupational therapists modify toys to meet their patients' unique and individual needs.

## FLORIDA



■ OT Methods I-Assistive Technology students utilized the University's 3-D printer to create needed items for individuals with visual impairment, sensory impairment or fine motor weakness. The donations are coordinated through the **Makers Making Change** program, which seeks to link people with disabilities with makers to receive affordable devices. In addition, the third-term occupational therapy students assembled 48 snowdrop switches for the nonprofit. The switches were paired with switch-adapted toys and then distributed during the holiday season to children with disabilities to enable independence in play.



■ Assistant Program Director and Assistant Professor **Claribell Bayona, OTD, OTR/L, CSRS** established an outpatient occupational therapy (OT) Pro Bono Clinic in collaboration with **The Brain Center—Mercy Hospital**. At the clinic, OT students in their clinical application courses can complete their Level I fieldwork experiences by providing OT services weekly to clients with neurological conditions.

■ Academic Fieldwork Coordinators and Instructors **Christina Bertran, OTD, MS, OTR/L, BCP, CAS** and **Kristina Hartsook, DrOT, OTR/L, BCP** started the Pro Bono Clinic at **Great Heights Academy**. The clinic provides complimentary occupational therapy services to students ages five to 21+ with varied diagnoses who do not have insurance or whose copayments are too high.

## TEXAS



■ Occupational therapy students helped create costumes for **Richard J. Lee Elementary School** students with special needs for their annual Halloween parade. USAHS students met with the children to learn about their requests, took measurements based on the adaptive equipment the children were using, and then helped them acquire costumes and decorations.



■ The Doctor of Physical Therapy program introduced its first **on-campus Pro Bono Clinic in Austin, TX**. The inaugural clinic sessions, led by Instructor **Matt Morretta, PT, DPT**, included 22 community participants. Students provide evaluation and treatment for adults experiencing movement difficulties, pain and any other physical therapy-related diagnoses at no cost.

■ Students across all academic programs participated in the Dallas, TX campus' **third annual geriatrics health fair**. Students assessed participants' fall risk, strength and mental health, provided pain management techniques and activity education, and administered hearing screenings.

■ Employees involved with the physical therapy and occupational therapy programs on the Austin, TX campus attended the 11th Annual Pay It Forward benefit. Event proceeds benefited the **Lone Star Paralysis Foundation**, which is dedicated to improving the lives of people with spinal cord injuries. The fundraising event raised just under \$100,000 to help Central Texas residents with physical disabilities.

■ The Dallas, TX campus established its first on-campus **Occupational Therapy Pro Bono Clinic** after previously offering only telehealth services. The clinic serves community members who are underinsured or uninsured, providing therapy services under the supervision of faculty.

# Helping Heroes Lead Quality Lives

OT Student Focuses on Firefighter Mental Health



According to the Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance, “more firefighters die from suicide each year than in the line of duty.” A student at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences’ (USAHS) Miami, FL campus responded to the call for mental health resources for firefighters in the form of occupational therapy (OT).

Inspired by her father, a South Florida firefighter for more than 30 years,

**Alyssa M. Garcia, OTD, OTR/L (OTD '23)** leveraged her capstone project to provide OT-specific mental health support to local firefighters.

“My dad’s been a firefighter longer than I’ve been alive. Many of my family members and friends are firefighters. I know them and saw their need,” says Dr. Garcia.

She identified a gap in mental health services for first responders—while they might have access to social services and

psychologists, no one was addressing the impact of their work on regular, daily life.

In collaboration with a local first responder research and training team, Dr. Garcia surveyed Davie Fire Rescue Department personnel to understand the impact of job-related stress and trauma on their daily lives and routines.

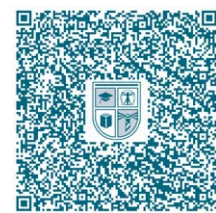
Based on her findings, Dr. Garcia developed a 30-minute functional coping mechanism workshop for first responders, offering strategies to address on-the-job stress and to prioritize different life roles. Her efforts extended to logging more than 200 hours with the Davie Fire Rescue Department, where she gained firsthand experience of their trauma and resilience.

“Working together with them helped me to get them to open up, to trust me and be receptive to what I had to say about mental health,” she states.

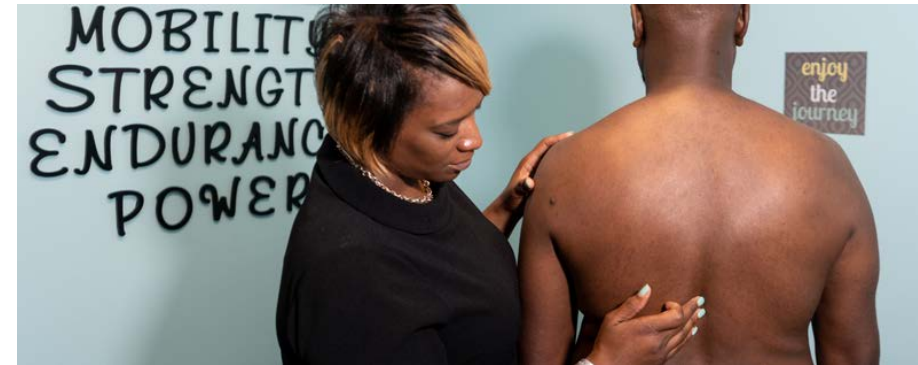
## Igniting an OT Future

Currently, Dr. Garcia is an acute care therapist at Cleveland Clinic in Weston, FL and a Faculty Lab Instructor at USAHS. She still volunteers with the Davie Fire Rescue Department as an extension of her OTD capstone to help provide mental health resources and training for the firefighters.

Dr. Garcia hopes to continue this work and inspire other OTs to get involved. She says every profession learns about holism—treatment of the whole person, taking into account mental and social factors—but this experience demonstrates the tangible impact that collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts can have on mental health. “The research and programs are applicable to first responders in any setting.”



Learn more.



# Holistic Approach to Rehabilitation

Dr. Johnson Integrates Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapies

**Racine Johnson (MOT '04, DPT '05)** established Johnson Therapy Services in 2017 with the goal to promote personal growth and community outreach.

Inspired as a teenager by a television program featuring therapists aiding patients, Dr. Johnson found her calling. With more than three decades of experience in evaluating, assessing and treating physical, cognitive and neurological impairments, she believes the duality of her occupational and physical therapy roles, combined with her desire to educate and empower others, is the cornerstone of her professional ethos.

Her journey was not without obstacles. A life-altering car accident forced her to reevaluate her path, propelling her toward higher education and dual degrees at the University’s St. Augustine, FL campus.

“Although I experienced financial constraints and self-doubt, my determination never wavered,” she says. “Dealing with chronic pain was an educational journey as well as a health and wellness journey.”

Dr. Johnson expresses that through

perseverance, she overcame barriers and emerged as a stronger advocate for holistic therapy practices that include occupational therapy, physical therapy and massage. “I motivate clients to go beyond therapy and to adopt a fitness journey,” she exclaims. “My approach extends beyond traditional methodologies, emphasizing the importance of personalized care and empowering my patients. Drawing from my own experiences, I address physical ailments while working on my patients’ mental and emotional well-being.”

Based in the Atlanta suburb of Stonecrest, GA, Dr. Johnson has expanded her skills to include life and business coaching. As a Black, female-owned business, Johnson Therapy Services also incorporates speech therapy services for children and adults.

“The future of our industry

includes more collaboration between different disciplines to connect and help individuals meet their health, emotional and fitness goals. It all works together. I have begun to incorporate some of these in my practice,” she says. “This holistic approach to rehabilitation enables us to provide comprehensive care that addresses the interconnected nature of the human body and mind, and acknowledges that all these aspects work together for optimal well-being.”

Beyond her clinical work, Dr. Johnson says she is a passionate advocate for personal growth and development. “I am committed to expanding access to quality healthcare for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances. I find immense joy and fulfillment in helping individuals regain or rediscover a quality of life they can be happy to live.”



# Minimizing Medical Burnout

Dr. Cartwright Shares Her Suggestions



An interview with Executive Director, School of Nursing **Sarah M. I. Cartwright, DNP, RN, NI-BC, CAPA, FASPAN** recently appeared in *Authority Magazine* on how hospitals and medical practices are helping to reduce physician and healthcare worker burnout. Excerpts follow:

**What are some projects you're working on now that might help people?**

As a program, we have successfully taken advanced practice nurses from students to practitioners specializing in family practice and psychiatric mental health. These practitioners help close the access gap found in primary care among various populations. They promote public health across the lifespan by serving communities throughout the country.

Our Doctor of Nursing Practice students focus on reducing health disparities driven by social factors. They have successfully led projects to improve access and outcomes in emergency rooms, urgent care centers, primary care centers and care coordination between acute and long-term care.

Impactful projects with our partners in Veteran Affairs hospitals and clinics have led to new national protocols for improving access to colorectal screening for spinal cord injury patients and for improving veterans' oral health. National policy review projects have led to briefs on autonomous practice for nurse practitioners, and we are in

international discussions to develop toolkits for implementing best practices in underserved areas. Our ultimate goal is to improve the health and wellness of our nation through the advancement of nursing practice. We are doing so across the U.S., one student at a time.

**How do you define physician and healthcare worker burnout?**

At the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, we describe physician and healthcare worker burnout, specifically nurse burnout, as “the state of mental, physical and emotional exhaustion caused by sustained work-related stressors, such as long hours, the pressure of quick decision-making and the strain of caring for patients who may have poor outcomes.” No job is stress-free, but nurses work in an environment that is exceptionally high stress by nature, which can lead to exhaustion we know as burnout.

**Share some things to reduce physician and healthcare worker burnout.**

There are many steps medical practices and hospitals can take to reduce burnout in the nursing industry. One is organizing daily operations and building schedules that optimize efficiency. They can also create support groups and work buddy systems that can serve as an outlet for staff frustrations and a forum to discuss conflicts and challenges.

It is also essential to encourage nurses to take breaks and time for themselves. For example, hospitals could introduce a mandatory vacation

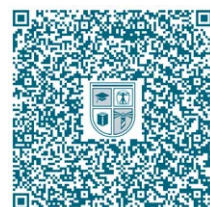
day policy with a quarterly check-in to ensure staff are taking the time they need to recover from work. They should also educate nurses on coping skills to use when they are stressed. Methods such as breathing techniques, restorative exercise, journaling and a post-work relaxation routine can make a significant difference in a person's overall well-being and their physical and mental health.

**If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good for the greatest number of people, what would that be?**

It would be to challenge each professional—in nursing and all healthcare disciplines—to find their voice and advocate for their patients and their practice.

The best way to inspire is to speak up: Share perspectives of what is happening in your community, practice and family. We all have the experience of being humans who need health care, but our individual experiences are not the same. Being heard and then making a small change that leads to a bigger change will prevent burnout and rejuvenate the passion that first led you to practice.

[Read the full interview.](#)



## SEVEN SELF-DISCOVERY QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

One of Dr. Cartwright's suggested wellness methods to reduce stress and burnout is journaling.

Regularly practicing self-reflection by writing down your observations can help you to understand the root of stressors and remind you of your strengths, personal values and goals.

As part of this routine, asking self-discovery questions can be an empowering way to challenge your beliefs, gain clarity on your life's path and apply creative solutions to your challenges.

To help spark the practice of journaling and self-reflection, here are a few self-discovery questions to ask and write about:

1. What are three of my most cherished personal values?
2. What scares me the most right now?
3. What's something I would like to do more of and why?
4. Do I feel fulfilled at work? Why or why not?
5. Who inspires me in my career?
6. What is my definition of success?
7. What makes me happiest about my family?



Gain additional self-discovery questions.



## JOURNALING FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Doctor of Occupational Therapy student **Aimun Aziz** and some of her classmates recently shared the benefits of journaling and self-exploration for older adults during the Geriatrics Health Fair on the Dallas, TX campus.

“We emphasized mindfulness and the importance of reflecting on life. It was fascinating to learn that many people do not engage in daily writing, so we offered alternative methods such as bullet point lists, arts and crafts, or prompted journaling. The experience was incredibly rewarding and highlighted the value of creativity in fostering mental well-being,” Aziz says. “We recommend setting aside 10 to 20 minutes daily for journaling, as consistency is key.”

The students created a brochure for the health fair participants to take, which provided directions for types of journaling (see examples shown at right).

- **Gratitude Journaling:** Write about what you're grateful for. This practice helps cultivate a positive outlook by focusing on the good aspects of your life.
- **Reflective Journaling:** Reflect on your day, thoughts and feelings. Use this style to gain insights into your behaviors and emotions, promoting self-awareness and growth.
- **Bullet Journaling:** Organize tasks, goals and plans. This method combines creativity with productivity, using bullet points, symbols and custom layouts to track daily activities and long-term goals.
- **Expressive Writing:** Write about emotional experiences to process them. This style allows you to explore and understand your emotions deeply, aiding in emotional regulation and healing.



# Faculty Members Address Mental Health and Vulnerable

## DR. SABINA KHAN

Assistant Professor **Sabina Khan, PhD, OTD, MS, OTR/L** specializes in women's health and pelvic floor rehabilitation, working with women from adolescence to older adulthood. Her practice addresses the distinct health challenges marginalized communities face, advocating for holistic well-being through integrated therapy and lifestyle interventions.



A recent column Dr. Khan published sheds light on the frequently disregarded impact of maternal mental illness and the importance of tackling this public health crisis.

"I have had the privilege of accompanying women as they confront a spectrum of maternal health challenges. Many of these women not only grapple with physical pain and mobility limitations post-birth but also contend with the burdens of stress, anxiety and depression, compounded by societal stigmas," she states.

The opinion piece illustrates how occupational therapy (OT) is an indispensable resource in navigating these multifaceted challenges, offering a holistic approach to maternal mental health care. "By meticulously examining the physical, psychological and social dimensions of well-being, OT practitioners discern the individual needs of each mother and craft tailored interventions to foster recovery and resilience, thereby better equipping mothers for the demanding transition into the fourth trimester.

We look at physical functionality, emotional well-being, sensory and psychological factors, gaining insight into each mother's unique challenges and strengths. We explore the social implications of maternal mental health conditions and examine how environmental factors may influence a mother's ability to engage in daily activities and fulfill her roles. With an array of tools, OT practitioners provide guidance on stress management techniques, relaxation exercises and coping strategies, empowering mothers to navigate the emotional demands of motherhood with grace.

By raising awareness, championing policy reform and embracing holistic approaches to maternal care, we can lay the foundation for a future in which every mother receives the compassionate, personalized support necessary to flourish."



Read the full blog.

## DR. ASHLEE LOEWEN

Nurse practitioners often assume roles as primary care providers, including in mental health care, as they can bridge the gap with their extensive training and patient-centered approach. Assistant Program Director, Nursing **Ashlee Loewen, DNP,**



**APRN, FNP-C** is an example of a family nurse practitioner (FNP) responding to the country's mental health crisis.

An active community advocate, Dr. Loewen manages her FNP practice at a rehabilitation hospital and volunteers at Mission House Clinic in Jacksonville Beach, FL. She also serves on the board of directors and is the Medical Advisory Committee Chair for Mission House. Mission House serves individuals affected by homelessness in Jacksonville, FL, by providing food, clothing, medical care and support services.

She participates in other nonprofits that focus on advocacy for quality healthcare, health equity and community wellness, and she is a co-chair for the Healthcare Education and Training Committee of the North Florida Poly-Drug Task Force.

"Routine health care is vital for maintaining overall wellness, and it's equally important to address mental health needs as part of this routine," she says. "By integrating mental health care into standard practice, we can ensure a holistic approach that supports the complete well-being of our patients, especially those in vulnerable populations. Healthcare professionals are well-positioned to advocate for equitable and compassionate care, empowering individuals and strengthening our communities."

# First-generation Graduate Fulfills Bilingual Services Dream

**Deanne Fontanel, MS, CF-SLP (MS-SLP '24)** recently completed her journey as a first-generation college student, earning her Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology from the Dallas, TX campus.

Fontanel credits her family's love and support for empowering her to pursue her dreams, but the path to graduate school was not without its challenges.

"Back when I was a nursing student, I came across statistics showing that only 8% of Latinas in the U.S. held a master's degree," says Fontanel. "I shared my goal at the time of getting into graduate school with a colleague, who bluntly remarked, 'It's not about when you get into grad school; it's if you do.'"

Initially, Fontanel wanted to be a nurse. "My goal was to serve and care for future patients while removing language differences as a barrier. It wasn't until I learned about speech-language pathology (SLP) during a semester abroad in Africa that my career path

changed. I worked as an SLP assistant for five years until I decided to pursue my master's due to the limited number of multilingual SLPs in the field," she shares.

The second oldest of six sisters and raised in California by her Mexican parents, Fontanel's first language was Spanish. She found a sense of belonging at the

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences when selecting a graduate program, particularly drawn to its inclusive interview process.

"Meeting bilingual professor **Dr. Ana Rivera** reassured me that this was the right program for me," says Fontanel.

Looking ahead, she aims to join a doctoral program in SLP to delve deeper into research on the impact of acquired neurogenic communication disorders on the bilingual brain.

"Being a first-generation student has allowed me to pave the path for others who will come after me and has prepared me with the tools required to fulfill my dream of providing bilingual services as an early intervention and medical SLP," says Fontanel. "I would like to encourage all first-generation students thinking about a master's program to submit that application, nail that interview and attend that program. Contrary to what others may say, it's not about if you get in, it's about when you do. You are valued!"



# Lifelong Learner Earns Doctorate at 80



At 80 years of age, **Joseph Heavey, EdD, MPA (EdD '24)** walked the stage August 23 at the St. Augustine, FL, commencement ceremony to receive his doctorate with a concentration in executive leadership. This was the first time in 33 years that he participated in person during one of his graduations, having missed the opportunity when receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees.

With 10 children, 20 grandchildren, one great-grandchild and an

accomplished career in education and hospital leadership, one might wonder why Dr. Heavey wanted to return to college.

Like many roles and decisions in his life, the choice to get another degree was driven by the desire to help others.

"The EdD was an obvious choice versus a PhD or DBA because of its applicability to real-life situations in healthcare consultancy and teaching," says Dr. Heavey. "I wanted to model being a lifelong learner for my kids and

grandkids. It's critical to our mental health to stay alert, involved and integrated throughout our lives."

His commitment to leadership and mentorship inspired his dissertation-turned-book, *21st Century Leaders and Followers: The Relationship*.

"Our degree gives us a license to mentor those we encounter," Dr. Heavey says. "As leaders, we must focus on ensuring that we are fulfilling a mentorship role, which helps us develop future leaders who will carry the torch."

Dr. Heavey's career history exemplifies his dedication to leadership. During his 25 years working for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), he held positions including chief of staff and undersecretary, in addition to working as chief operating officer for multiple VA medical centers. After initially retiring in his 50s, he worked as the chief executive officer for a large pediatric practice for 22 years, growing it from two offices to nine, and from 10 to 30 providers. He also served his community on multiple not-for-profit boards, including tenure as board vice chair of a statewide health maintenance organization.

"While pursuing my EdD, I have accomplished exactly what I wanted to," states Dr. Heavey. "I married didactic work with all of my work experiences."

A lifelong learner, Dr. Heavey has no plans to stop. He and his wife look forward to traveling and learning new languages.

"Commencement was just the beginning of the next stage," he proclaims.



## MS-SLP Expands to California and Florida

The Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) has approved the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences' **Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP) program** to launch satellite campuses in San Marcos, CA (for 2024 Fall Term) and St. Augustine, FL (for 2024 Summer Term).

The current accreditation cycle, which includes these new satellite locations, is good through June 30, 2027.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employment of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) is projected to grow 19% from 2022 to 2032\*, much faster than the average for all occupations. Shortages of speech-language pathologists are especially high in Texas, California and Florida. Per the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, California had the second lowest state ratio of SLPs in the nation, and from 2022-2032, California is expected to see a 28% increase\* in demand for SLPs.

"We are here to develop healthcare professionals who change lives, with an institution strategic priority of diversifying from strength. This expansion will help to meet shortages of speech-language pathologists in critical states, capture continued demand for our program and enhance interprofessional education at our institution," says Senior Program Director **Meghan Savage, PhD, CCC-SLP**.

**Alumni interested in giving back to the profession and their alma mater** should contact the Clinical Education Placement Team at [cept@usa.edu](mailto:cept@usa.edu) about becoming a clinical educator for our students' externship experience!

The mission of the Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology program at USAHS is to graduate clinicians who can identify and manage a full range of communication conditions across the life span. Through the development of critical thinking, cultural competency, ethical standards and compassionate patient care principles, the graduates will be poised to promote the quality of life for the clients whom they serve. They will be prepared to guide, lead and influence their profession.

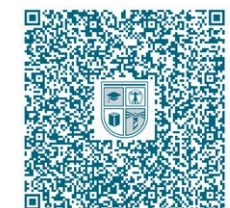
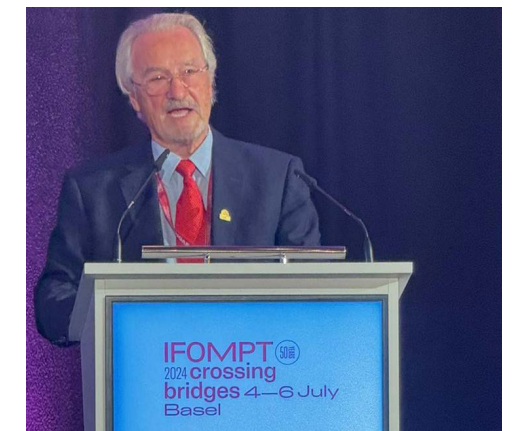
\*Sources: [www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm#tab-1](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm#tab-1) and <https://projectionscentral.org/longterm>

## UNIVERSITY FOUNDER RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL PT AWARD

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) Founder **Stanley Paris, PT, PhD, FAPT** was recently honored with the Geoffrey Maitland Award at the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists Incorporated international conference.

Formally known as the Geoffrey Maitland Award for Advancement of Clinical Practice in Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapy, the accolade acknowledges an individual who has made a lasting contribution to the clinical practice of orthopaedic manipulative physical therapy.

Dr. Paris founded USAHS in 1979, initially known as the Institute of Physical Therapy. With the authority granted by the state of Georgia, the Institute offered a clinically based, post-professional Master of Science in Physical Therapy, making it one of the first independent, proprietary schools in physical therapy to confer a graduate degree. He retired as USAHS' first president in 2006, and his legacy of advancing the future of healthcare continues to drive the University's growth.



Read more.

## ALUMNI REUNION AND FAMILY WEEKEND IS READY FOR YOU

Taking place September 27–28 at our sunny San Marcos, CA campus, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences’ second annual **Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend** will bring together USAHS alumni and their families, plus faculty, staff, clinical/community partners and current and prospective students.

View the full weekend’s schedule and find out more on the Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend website at [usa.edu/about/usahs-alumni/](http://usa.edu/about/usahs-alumni/). Registration closes soon; be sure to take advantage of one of the registration promo codes to save.

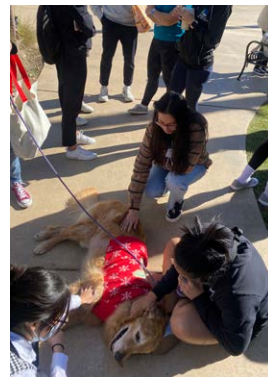
During the reunion, alumni will have a full calendar of exciting events to attend, including a Friday night family barbecue, continuing education sessions, a campus fair and community impact activity, and a festive, off-site Saturday evening reception.

Don’t miss this annual celebration and opportunity to catch up with friends and faculty and to make new connections!



## DOG DAYS = WELLNESS TIME

Each term on the San Marcos, CA campus, the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) holds its popular Therapy Dog Days. The student organization typically hosts the activity before mid-terms or finals for all students to enjoy a study break outdoors with canine companions. The event is popular with employees as well!



## USAHS Alumni Association Hosts Inaugural Chapter Events

From golf to baseball, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) Alumni Association kicked off its new chapters with some fun, sports-themed events!

The Atlanta chapter hosted its inaugural event January 25 at Top Golf Atlanta. Hosted by alum **Sam Chukwuma (DPT '18)**, the event included complimentary golf, food and drinks.

The newly formed San Diego chapter held its first event May 24 with baseball, food/drinks and camaraderie. Alumni, prospective students, faculty and staff all mingled with tasty food and an amazing view of Petco Park.

“The networking and connections that are starting to take form during these inaugural chapter events are a fantastic reminder of the collaboration that USAHS brings to our community,” says Director, Alumni Engagement **Polly Crabtree**.

With active chapters in Atlanta, GA and San Diego, CA, the USAHS Alumni Association’s next chapter to launch will be in Miami, FL, with its first event planned for November 7. Interested in learning more about these chapters? Want to take on a chapter leadership role? Please contact [alumni@usa.edu](mailto:alumni@usa.edu).



## LIFE IS WHAT YOU BAKE IT!

Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and Assistant Professor **Christina Bertran, OTD, MS, OTR/L, BCP, CAS** and Instructor **Arlenys Loffredo, OTD, MS, OTR/L** are leading a new pro bono, instrumental activities of daily living group on the Miami, FL campus. Titled “Life is what you bake it,” the group targets meal preparation and life skills for adults 21+ with developmental disabilities.

Each session is themed, where adult participants are actively involved in all aspects of meal preparation, from set up, mixing, cooking/baking to clean-up. They get the opportunity to learn measurements and steps in recipes, and to work together to finish their baked goods. Occupational therapy students are given the opportunity to work with the adults on the underlying skills needed to prepare varied recipes. Participants also work on activities of daily living such as bilateral coordination and safety with equipment.

“Our community participants have felt a great sense of accomplishment by working on these important life skills,” says Dr. Bertran. “Our OT students thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to gain hands-on experience while working with this underserved population to practice these life skills in a real-world environment while promoting social interaction. I love how we all come together to empower young adults through the joy of baking!”

“Life is what you bake it” takes place at least twice each term at the Miami campus. It is one of several Pro Bono Clinics that serve the community and help students enhance their experiences with different patient populations.



## STUDENTS EXPERIENCE POVERTY’S IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE IN NEW SIM

Senior Program Director **Beth Ennis, PT, EdD, PCS** facilitated a new, interprofessional poverty simulation with occupational therapy and physical therapy students earlier this year on the St. Augustine, FL campus. The simulation is now being expanded to the University’s other campuses.

Adapted from the Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) initially developed by ThinkTank in collaboration with families living in poverty to inspire awareness and change, the health care edition of the simulation allows students to explore the social determinants of health and healthcare disparities.

Students experience one month in the life of a family in poverty throughout the simulation. Each week of the month is represented by 15 minutes, and participants are given roles in families with a wide variety of situations, all based on real family experiences.

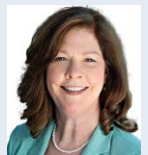
“The goal of the simulation is to navigate each week, managing bills, work, healthcare needs and family needs, with the limited resources and situations provided. The experience can be scaled from 40–120 participants,” says Dr. Ennis.

“The goal of the simulation is to navigate each week, managing bills, work, healthcare needs and family needs, with the limited resources and situations provided.”



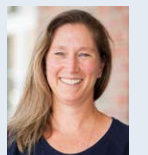
The American Physical Therapy Association Board of Directors presented **Kenneth Olson, PT, DHS** (MPT '94, DHS '03) with

the Henry O. and Florence P. Kendall Practice Award. The award recognizes a physical therapist who has positively and substantially affected the shape, scope and quality of physical therapist practice. Dr. Olson has 35+ years of clinical experience and has authored 20+ professional publications. He is a past-president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists and the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists.



**Elaine Lonnemann, PT, DPT, MTC** (MPT '96, DPT '05) was the senior author of "Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy: A

Modern Definition and Description," published in *PTJ: Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Journal*.



**Julia C. Gorman MPT, MTC** (MPT '97) was selected to be support staff for USA Swimming at the 2024 Paris Olympics. In her role,

she acted as the team physical therapist for open water swimmers. *Photo courtesy: Edelman Spine and Orthopaedic Physical Therapy*



**Dohn Allocco Jr., MPT** (MPT '99) is serving as Hernando County Commissioner for District 3 in Florida and as a trustee for

Pasco Hernando State College. He is also a member of the CareerSource Pasco-Hernando Executive Board, the National Association of Realtors, the Florida Association of Realtors and the Greater Hernando County Chamber of Commerce. *Photo courtesy: WUFT*

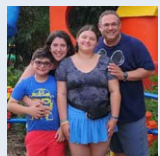
**David Lomaglio, MPT, CSCS, TPI CGFI** (MPT '99) and **Melanie Lomaglio, PT, DPT, MSC, NCS** (DPT '17) opened their clinic, STARS Rehab, in 2009. Since then, STARS Rehab has grown to include five outpatient clinics servicing a range of specialty areas including orthopedics, women's health, lymphedema, sports rehab and neurology. Physical, occupational and speech therapy are offered. Melanie also founded the Rebloom Center, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people with Parkinson's live their best life through free group exercise, voice training, education and social support wellness services.



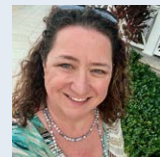
**Jon Edenfield, OTD, OTR/L** (MOT '00, OTD '15), executive director of Great Strides Rehabilitation Inc. in St. Augustine, FL, was featured as the cover story in *St. Augustine Social* magazine in February 2024.

Great Strides Pediatric Rehabilitation has 20 nationwide locations. *Photo courtesy: St. Augustine Social*

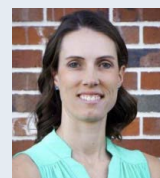
**E.J. Kuiper, DPT** (DPT '04) is the new president and chief executive officer of Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System in Baton Rouge, LA. He is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and was recognized as one of 101 Academic Medical Center CEOs to watch in 2023 by *Becker's Hospital Review*.



**Nikki Pollack, OTD, MOT, OTR/L** (MOT '04) authored and published *Dysautonomia From Enduring to Thriving: A Family's Guide to Successful Management of Dysautonomia*, along with a companion journal. In collaboration with her son, she also wrote *Dys-What????: That's a Funny Name (Dysautonomia)*, which offers a unique perspective on dysautonomia from both a mother and child.



**Kristin Haas, OTD, OTR/L** (OTD '05) started a new job as a professor and founding program director of the hybrid entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy program at Quincy University.



**Katie Hohman, DPT** (DPT '10) attended Hill Day in Washington, D.C. in April to advocate for the physical therapy profession alongside members of the American Physical Therapy

Association. Since October 2023, she has been working with the U.S. Small Business Administration, scheduling multiple roundtable discussions with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to discuss industry issues.



**Erwin Benedict Valencia, DPT** (DPT '11) made history as the first Filipino-American physical therapist in the

National Basketball Association, serving as the team PT and wellness lead for the New York Knicks. With nearly two decades of experience in sports, he spent eight years in baseball and nine years in basketball. Beyond his work in sports, Dr. Valencia is an author, international speaker and high-performance coach.



**Megan Jewell, OTR/L** (MOT '12) owns Kids on the POINT OT, a mobile occupational therapy practice in San Diego County. Focused on nervous system regulation for children, the practice provides therapy and empowers parents with tools to support their child's optimal development. Outside her clinical endeavors, Jewell leads a networking group for pediatric occupational therapists.



**Andrew Lantz, PT, DPT, CSCS, CMTPT** (DPT '13) published his debut book, *The Purposeful Present: The Gift of Living Mindfully and Finding Purpose, Clarity*

and *Achievement*, under the pen name Dr. LM Andrews. Designed to aid readers at various levels of mindfulness understanding, the book provides practical tools and techniques to live joyfully in the present moment. It combines insights and strategies proven effective in his personal life and professional practice, Restorative Therapy Co., which he co-owns in Virginia Beach, VA. *Photo courtesy: Restorative Therapy Co.*



**Brian Peers, DPT, MBA** (DPT '17) is serving as MedRisk's vice president of clinical services and provider management. He recently authored an

article published in *WorkCompWire* titled "The Overlooked (and incredibly effective) Soft Tissue Recovery Strategy" that addresses the importance of early physical therapy intervention in recovery from injuries that can prevent individuals from returning to the workforce. *Photo courtesy: WorkCompWire*



**Taylor Pinson, MOT** (MOT '18) received the "40 Under 40" recognition for her occupational therapy work from *Tribune & Georgian* magazine, which published an in-depth article on her education, career and community involvement accomplishments. *Photo courtesy: Tribune & Georgian*



**Andy Fata-Chan, PT, DPT** (DPT '19), founder of Moment Physical Therapy and Performance, was interviewed by the online magazine *Fit & Well* in the article "Can't Balance on One Leg? A Physical Therapist

Says You Need to Do this Strength-boosting Exercise."

*Photo courtesy: momentppt.com*



**Kim Manlangit, PT, DPT** (DPT '19) was covered by *BNN Breaking News*, highlighting how she is a beacon of hope to her local community. She is the varsity basketball coach at her

high school alma mater and owner of her own practice, Lakás Physical Therapy in Sacramento, CA. *Photo courtesy: Lakás Physical Therapy*

**Kali Danile, MOT** (MOT '20) was featured in *The Focus* magazine about the correct way to hold a pencil after a TikTok video by Danile on the same topic garnered more than 100,000 views.



**Nick Fulco, PT, DPT** (DPT '20) worked as a physical therapist in privately owned or hospital-based outpatient care facilities dealing with Level I trauma, orthopedic post-operative and sport-

related injury patients, including Olympic athletes. Today, he is the co-owner and CEO of Fulco & Hall Performance & Therapy. *Photo courtesy: Fulco & Hall Performance & Therapy*



**Daniel Hague, DPT** (DPT '20) contributed to an article published by *USA Lacrosse* magazine titled "Don't Ignore

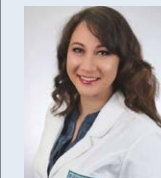
*Low Back Pain in Young Athletes.*"

He was recruited to contribute to the article based on his expertise as a board-certified orthopedic specialist and his current Sports Physical Therapy Residency with MedStar Health. *Photo courtesy: USA Lacrosse discuss industry issues.*



**Erin Morton, PT, DPT** (DPT '21) won the 2023 National Women's Soccer League championship. Dr. Morton joined NJ/ NY Gotham FC in 2022 and is the team's

physical therapist and head of medical. Her experience includes completing a clinical rotation at the UFC Performance Institute, where she rehabbed Ultimate Fighting Championship fighters, Women's National Basketball Association players and Olympians. *Photo credit: gothamfc*



**Briona Daugherty, MS, CCC-SLP** (MS-SLP '22) is a speech-language pathologist and prolific children's book author passionate about cultivating speech

development early in life. Her latest book, *Montessori Speech at Home: A Child-led Approach that Makes Teaching Toddlers to Talk Simple and Fun*, aims to help parents foster child-led speech skills and integrate Montessori techniques with speech development. Her approaches emphasize play and promote independence in learning.

REGISTER TODAY!



ALUMNI REUNION & FAMILY WEEKEND

September 27-28 San Marcos Campus

SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER:



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





UNIVERSITY of  
ST. AUGUSTINE *for*  
HEALTH SCIENCES

700 Windy Point Drive San Marcos, CA 92069

Presorted  
Standard  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Jacksonville, FL  
Permit No. 4390



UNIVERSITY of ST. AUGUSTINE  
*for* HEALTH SCIENCES

Follow Us!

@uofstaug

