



# Centro de Rehabilitación, Educación, Capacitación Estudios y Recursos, Inc.



## Letter from the director

The end of the year is a great time to reflect on the year that is coming to a close and to express gratefulness for all the wonderful experiences I have had this year. First, I would like to thank the students at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) who are producing this edition of the newsletter. It is with great anticipation that I await the first look at what they create. I would like to thank the faculty and students from the colleges and universities who have traveled to Ecuador this year to help CRECER. The groups provide services to many clients in Ibarra. In addition to the supplies the groups have brought with them to Ecuador, CRECER has also received donations of goods, services and money from members of the Board of Directors and other individuals. We received a used computer from Allegany College of Maryland and a new computer from first year

Chatham student Florentina Gonzales and her husband. The donations have helped the programs this year and lay the groundwork for next year.

When we founded CRECER, Susy Albuja and I chose the acronym because it means “to grow.” We had a rough idea of what we wanted to do which is contained in all the words that make up the acronym, but not a clear plan. Not having a structured plan has been a good thing. I really couldn’t have imagined the ways the organization has grown in the past year and a half. We started with the idea of bringing OTA students from Allegany College of Maryland to Ecuador to complete their Level II Fieldwork. (Readers who are outside of the occupational therapy profession would call it an internship.) They complete eight weeks of work under the supervision of an experienced therapist. In



2013, the emphasis shifted because no ACM students chose to go to Ecuador. We were able to build on the success of the group trip by Chatham University students in July of 2012 by adding Lenoir-Rhyne University in March of 2013. Chatham University had its second trip in August 2013, and Grand Valley State University students made their first trip in November. You’ll be reading more about the GVSU trip in this issue of the newsletter.

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A new addition this year was the involvement of students while they were in classes at their universities. Molly Pittsley from GVSU gathered information about CRECER to write a grant to obtain a computer. While the grant was not needed due the donated computers, her time was well spent because the information she gathered will be put to use in the future for other grants. As part of her Principles of Leadership and Administration class at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Katie Henriques developed a plan for initiating tele-rehabilitation at the CRECER outpatient clinic next year. A group of students from Chatham University were able to use CRECER as their site for a Community Based Occupational Therapy class during the fall semester. During their group trip in August they observed what needed to be developed and used the fall semester to work on tasks such as the September newsletter, documentation forms for the clinic, a patient education manual and a "What is OT?" brochure in Spanish.



In October I was honored to have the opportunity to present a short video about the work of CRECER at the Latin American Occupational Therapy conference in Caracas, Venezuela. It was interesting to see that occupational therapists all share the same history and provide very similar treatment. I was able to meet with the vice president of

the World Occupational Therapy Association and share thoughts with her about occupational therapy in Latin America and specifically in Ecuador.

Looking ahead to 2014, CRECER will be building on past successes by having both group trips and Level II Fieldwork. We are expanding the number of academic partners and will be including non-occupational therapy students for the first time. In addition to the institutions already

mentioned, our partners now include the Community College of Baltimore County and Ithaca College.

With the generous help of the volunteers, professors, students, members of the Board of Directors, and other supporters, CRECER will continue TO **GROW in 2014**.

## Grand Valley State University Occupational Therapy Program Serving in Ecuador

During November 2013, Grand Valley State University's Master's Occupational Therapy Traditional and Hybrid programs united to travel to Ecuador. The students and professors took a trip to Ibarra, Ecuador to work together at the CRECER clinic, FUNHI Day Center, Asilo Leon Ruales, and Hogar Manuela Perez. The eight students and two professors come from a variety of backgrounds, and what made this trip special were the two programs coming together for the first time to work side-by-side for a good cause.

The two programs, traditional and hybrid have equivalent education but the educational courses are provided in different sequences. The traditional program is a six-semester sequence and has in-seat classes throughout the week. The hybrid program is a nine-semester sequence, works primarily through the Internet, and meets once a month for in-seat classes. Both programs prepare the students for leadership roles for the OT profession. Each program has the same goal of



## GVSU Occupational Therapy Program at Hogar Manuela Perez

graduating together in 2014. The trip to Ecuador brought the two programs together to collaborate, work collectively, and to experience once in a life-time opportunity. It was a great experience for the students of both programs to get to know one another, work together, and to be able to offer services to the people of Ecuador. Not only working together made the trip special but meeting the people of Ecuador made life-long memories.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE



“The people I worked with in Ecuador were such an inspiration to me. Crecer is making an impact in its community, and it was amazing to be a small part of it. I will never forget my experience in Ibarra, and I am always excited to share what I’ve learned—the stories never get old to me.” Claire Dolislager

# FUNHI

The group of occupational therapy students and professors from GVSU had the pleasure of working with the participants and staff at FUNHI. Throughout our week there, the FUNHI participants made flowers, enjoyed singing and dancing with the students, and played a life-size version of Candy Land, among many other activities. Inspired in part by Prótesis Para la Vida, a



few of the OT students also created adapted positioning and writing equipment for two of the clients, primarily using cardboard and duct tape. From fun and games to skilled services, FUNHI continues to be a lively center that fosters participation and growth.

## Mothers Support Group

The mothers support group at CECER is a time for mothers with children with disabilities to come together to share their experiences and to help one another. At the meeting in November there were returning mothers as well as some new mothers who joined the group. During this meeting mothers were asked to share one good thing and one sad or upsetting thing that has happened in their life since the last meeting. One of the new mothers was hesitant to share her experiences, but the other mothers comforted and reassured her that it was a safe environment for her to share. She then proceeded to share about how her child had started to have seizures and that it was overwhelming for her and she didn’t know how to help him. Then one of the other mothers said that her son also has seizures and the two mothers shared their experiences and comforted one another.

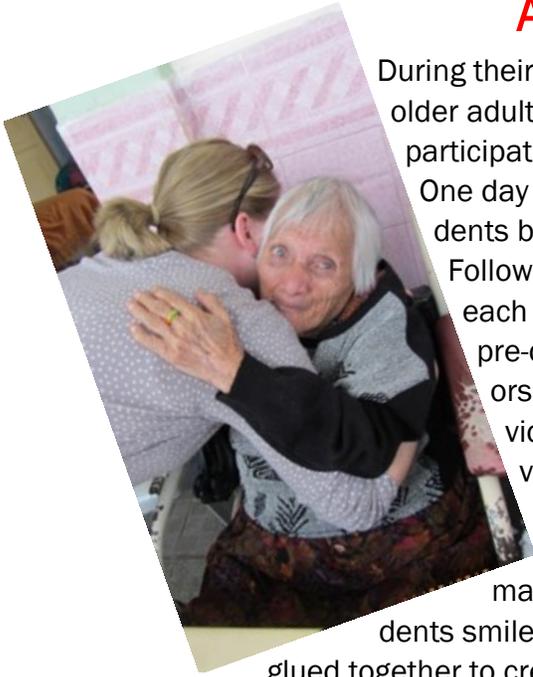
The group is a great way for the mothers to come together and support one another through the good and the bad. The children range in age, so the mothers of the older children are able to give advice to mothers with younger children. The mothers are also able to share the societal struggles they have experienced. Overall, the support group is a time when the mothers come together to remember that they are not alone, there are other people going through the same experiences, and this provides encouragement and hope.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE



“I’m so thankful for each day, each person and each experience I had during my trip in Ecuador. I will greatly miss the people and hope to return again soon.” Corinne Viscogliosi

## Asilo Leon Ruales



During their time in Ecuador, GVSU's group had the privilege of working with older adults at a nursing home in Ibarra. The older adults were excited to participate in OT activities and often smiled and hugged group members. One day at the nursing home, our group initiated dancing with the residents by playing a traditional Ecuadorian song. Following the warm-up activity, we provided each resident with a paper rectangle with a pre-drawn grid. The residents chose the colors of felt they wished to use for their individual quilt square. This task incorporated visual motor, fine motor, and sequencing objectives, while allowing the residents to participate in a social activity that may have been familiar to them. The residents smiled as they viewed each individual square glued together to create a large quilt to be displayed at the nursing home!



## Hogar Manuela Perez

GVSU students visited the Hogar Manuela Perez orphanage to work with several of the children. Students conducted a variety of different activities that allowed the girls to display their creativity as well as move around. There were over 20 girls with ages ranging from 4-15 as well as varying levels of abilities. The students adapted each activity for the individual's abilities, so everyone could participate, based on their assessments viewed during the groups.

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE**



“Ecuador is a beautiful country filled with beautiful people. I am thankful for the laughter, joy, and hospitality of the Ecuadorian people I had the privilege to meet. Through Crecer, I was blessed with the opportunity to practice occupational therapy skills in a meaningful way that could impact new friends in another country! “

Katie Oosting

Activities conducted by the students were a gross motor line dancing activity, finger knitting, decorating felt dolls, a mani/pedi spa day, and decorating picture frames for a group picture of them that was taken earlier in the week.

Students learned how to adapt plans, work effectively and organized with a large group of individuals. These groups allowed the girls to work on communication, social skills, attention to task, fine motor control and gross motor movements.



# ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT

## Case Study—Kimberly

During our first visit to FUNHI, we noticed that Kimmy’s positioning in her chair was affecting her body mechanics and her engagement in social activities. We created a piece of adaptive equipment that addresses these occupational performance needs. The adaptive equipment accomplishes this through increasing her visual field, decreasing her frequency of drooling, and providing proper body positioning during activities. The piece of adaptive equipment that was created by two OT students from Grand Valley State University achieves these objectives through providing bilateral support and physical cues for midline positioning of her head. The adaptive equipment was designed to slip on to the back of her chair for easy removal for cleaning. It was created with the following resources; cardboard, felt fabric, pipe insulation, dycem, glue, and black duct tape. The use of black duct tape provides a discreet design to match her chair and material that is easy to clean. The felt fabric provides padding to the back and sides for comfort. It was great to see Kimmy fully engaged in the activities she enjoys, socializing with her peers and staff at FUNHI and craft activities.



Kimmy Before

## Kimmy After



### STUDENT EXPERIENCE



“The experience of making the adaptive equipment for Kimmy and Mario taught us about how to use the resources we have to create a piece of adaptive equipment that assists the person in engaging in meaningful activities and increasing their quality of life. It was really exciting for us to see the application of our knowledge of adaptive equipment and creativity skills come to life and increase the individuals occupational performance.”  
Katie Nottelmann



Mario using his new wedge

## Case Study—Mario Antonio

Since Mario has decreased vision he has difficulty reading his communication book. GVSU students created a reading aide for Mario to assist with being able to see the words in his communication book. The adaptive equipment is a wedge that is made out of cardboard and duct tape and secured to the table on his chair with ribbon. The wedge has a lip at the base to secure the book in place. Two students measured the appropriate height for Mario so that he can effectively see the communication book. Mario was so excited to receive the wedge and was beaming the whole day.



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### *What does our logo represent?*

*The underlying yin-yang sign represents two different forces coming together. These forces can be seen as the people from the US and Ecuador who are working together to build this project. They are represented not as one force greater than the other but as equals and complementary to each other. The hands represent the human element of people reaching out to each other. The colors include the red, white and blue of the US flag and the yellow, blue and red of the Ecuadorian flag. The flag of the city of Ibarra is also red and white. CRECER, the acronym for Centro de Rehabilitación, Educación, Capacitación, Estudios y Recursos, is in the center of the design. The word "crecer" means "to grow" in Spanish.*

## Prótesis Para la Vida

Prótesis Para la Vida, whose offices and workshop are on the grounds of the Rotary Club in Ibarra, is an organization that provides adaptive positioning equipment and offers prosthetic services to the residents of Ecuador. The organization provides all services at no cost their clients. During GVSU's visit they were able to observe a prosthetic being made for a small child who had a birth defect on her right foot. To observe the process was very rewarding and the long term impact these services will have on the child reminds us how important these services are to those who have disabilities. The students also spent time in the positioning workshop. Although there was no one currently working on projects during the visit, the students were able to see the many projects the clients were creating. This organization encourages the clients, specifically the mothers of children with disabilities, to build the adaptive equipment in hopes, that if and when the product breaks and/or the child grows, the mother will be able to independently remake the equipment. Prótesis Para la Vida is a great example to occupational therapists of how to be creative in the use of inexpensive materials in order to assist clients. Visiting Prótesis Para la Vida was an amazing experience for everyone from GVSU and they appreciate the staff who were ready and willing to show what they do and answer all questions. As future occupational therapists, the students now have an added tool for their ever expanding OT tool box and increased knowledge of the role they can play as practitioners in both the art and science of occupational therapy.



GVSU students with Susy and some of the Prótesis Para la Vida staff