

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

Letter from the director

Elaine Keane OTD, OTR/L

2019 was another great year for CRECER. Our outpatient center provided over 1400 individual client visits and approximately 130 group sessions. The individuals ranged in age from infants to senior citizens. The most popular groups were the cooking group and the ceramics group for adults with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities. Other groups included a painting group, which was later changed to basic art, meditation and independent ceram-

ics for clients who showed interest and capability to work on more advanced projects. For children and adolescents, we had a School Readiness group and a Teen group which both focused on socialization and other functional skills.

We had seven faculty lead groups of approximately 10 days who continued outreach into the community in addition to working at our outpatient center. We continued serving the Asilo Santa Luisa de Marilac (nursing home) and La Esperanza adult day care center. We added the community center in Angochagua about mid year. We

continued to host long term students completing their clinical practice hours. Approximately 81 students from 15 different universities (including students from Belgium and Australia) participated in CRECER programs this year.

I represented CRECER at the AOTA Conference in New Orleans. I presented a poster, *Perceptions of International Service Learning Site Stakeholders: Using Students To Increase Occupational Therapy Services in Underserved Areas*, which I completed with Siobhaun Manion MSOT, OTR/L; Tanisha Monte MSOT, OTR/L

Hannah Austin continued as a part time volunteer and we added Sofy Chito an Ecuadorian occupational therapist to the CRECER team. This is just one of the ways that we continue TO GROW.



Inside this issue:

Introduction	2
Café CRECER	3
CRECER outpatient center	4-6
Distintos Somos Todos	7
Asilo Santa Luisa de Marilac	7
Angochagua	8
International Day of People with Disabilities	9



Introduction

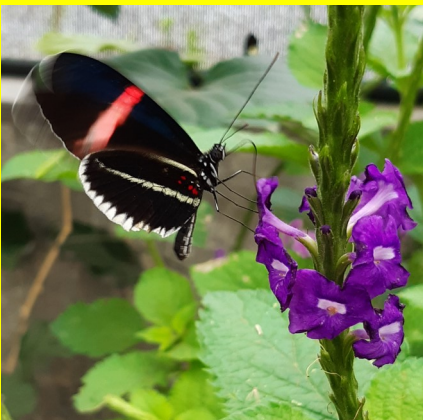
Nine graduate occupational therapy (OT) students from Grand Valley State University travelled to Ecuador as a part of a Level I Fieldwork. We stayed in Quito for one day and explored the downtown area and multiple churches. We immediately experienced the culture by talking with native Ecuadorians, eating traditional meals, and learning about their main religion of Catholicism. We then explored the cloud forest and the city of Mindo for two days. There, we engaged in eco-tourism adventure activities such as zip-lining and tubing in the river. Additionally, we learned about the importance and the value of nature in this area of Ecuador. Mindo is known for its many bird species, butterflies, waterfalls, mountains, orchids, and incredible chocolate. Following Mindo, we spent the remainder of our time in the city of Ibarra working in various settings with multiple populations. Occupational therapy interventions were implemented in the CRECER outpatient rehabilitation center, a nursing home, a day center for individuals with developmental disabilities, and a day program for older adults living in the community of Angochagua. The culture, the people, and the whole experience has impacted us all in a tremendous way. It was truly a life changing experience. We are thankful for the experience and know that this trip has made us all better practitioners.

Kendall Grzywa



Café CRECER

During 2019 members of the CRECER cooking group have worked hard to learn new recipes, cooking techniques, as well as café skills such as serving and plating. Each week, during sessions which ranged from four to ten weeks, the group joined together to learn a new recipe and skills in preparation for the final week of cooking group, which was celebrated by opening the CRECER Café to invited guests for the night. The CRECER Café allowed the cooking group members to showcase their skills as they prepared a three-course meal and put their newly acquired serving skills into action. The final café of the year ended with a speech from a group member about his experiences in the group, a heartfelt song from another member, and certificates for all the members to signify their hard work and completion of the group.



At CRECER's outpatient center, I had the opportunity to do an initial evaluation on a three-year-old child diagnosed with Down syndrome. When the child came into the clinic, the Level II fieldwork student and I had the child play for a few minutes to establish rapport with the client. I then grabbed crayons, paper, blocks, Legos, a Jack-in-the-Box and a ball; these materials helped us to better understand where the client was functioning developmentally. For instance, I was able to witness the client's cognition, fine motor abilities, gross motor functioning, and their ability to participate in play. This experience was significantly valuable in my development as a future occupational therapist. The hands on experience which I received was more applicable to what practicing might look like in my future. In class, we learned many formal assessments that we can use to assess children; however, at times you may not have all of the necessary tools available and, yet, still be required to perform. Being able to adapt in whatever environment you are given is imperative to success. This experience was an opportunity to explore my own adaptability and apply my knowledge to real-life circumstances; these two core skills are invaluable to my future career. *Makayla Rieke*

Fabio 2013



We always love to work with babies at CRECER. We help them move through their developmental milestones and celebrate new skills with their families. Fabio was the first baby we worked with and now he is in school and loves coming to CRECER and giving the students a bit of "sass". This year the word got out to mothers of babies. When they told us they had little information about Down Syndrome, we developed a series of educational meetings for them. Fabio's mother came in and was able to give lots of great first person stories about the joys and challenges of living with a child with Down Syndrome.



Fabio 2019



Going into this experience we knew some information about CRECER and what this organization has done to benefit the community. Therefore, we were all excited to continue to learn about CRECER and receive hands-on experiences during treatment sessions with the Level II fieldwork students who were currently providing services. One morning at CRECER, I was able to assist with a treatment session for an elderly woman with Parkinson's Disease (PD) and help gather comprehensive information about her health history, interests and personal goals. Furthermore, I assisted with a session with two infants who were both diagnosed with Down syndrome. It was a unique experience where the Level II students and I were able to assess certain skills and abilities of the infants while working with them together. During the session, both of their mothers were in the room sitting together while we were working with their infants. After the session was over, I found out that the current level II students are creating a support group through CRECER for parents whose children are receiving services. I thought this was a great idea and was something new that I learned about CRECER. A support group would give a chance for parents to feel connected and share advice and support. Additionally, a support group is a good way to allow parents within the community to come together and bond over similar experiences they may be facing. After the morning was over I was able to reflect on the experience and better understand how much CRECER does for the individuals that go there and for the community as a whole. We felt honored to have been able to assist with various treatments throughout the week and we learned so much through our time at CRECER.

Natalie Wallace

I had the opportunity to assist an OT in the treatment of a young boy with cerebral palsy (CP) at the CRECER outpatient clinic. It was a very beneficial and educational experience to provide hands-on treatment and learn more about the high tone, in the muscles of his arms, legs, and back. This high tone makes it more difficult for him to move and have control over his movements. A method the OT taught me was to sit directly behind the boy, to limit the tone in his back and then place one of my legs over his leg with more tone to help position him more appropriately for activities. We sat like this while he chose between different games and was able to communicate through facial expressions and some noises with the OT sitting in front of him. This experience was eye-opening and helped push me out of my comfort zone. I don't have a lot of experience working with children, but I truly enjoyed this session and the happiness the boy expressed throughout his treatment.

Colleen Klein



I had the opportunity to work closely with Level II students at the CRECER outpatient center using evidence-based practice techniques. Two clients, both children under 6 months of age with a diagnosis of Down syndrome, were struggling to make gains in core stability to progress in developmental goals. The Level II student shared a research article with me about kinesio-taping to facilitate abdominal muscle contraction, and we used this article to inform our treatment session. Within the session, we saw improvements in facilitation and endurance in the functional tasks being addressed. Another client, an adult woman with complications post surgery for breast cancer, was being seen to address her lymphedema. The Level II student had done a lot of research about occupational therapy's unique perspective on lymphedema, and had specific techniques to try to address the needs of the client. Also, unique to Ecuadorian experience, the student had to have the knowledge of the culture to know that the medical procedure for removing lymph nodes in Ecuador is different than in the U.S., and this impacted her treatment approach. Both of these experiences were unique learning opportunities, and gave me insight into how evidence-based practice can inform client-centered care. It also helped me understand the process of how clients are treated at the center, and how students are encouraged to take ownership of their treatment approaches to learn and treat clients in an innovative and relevant way.

Kara Lurvey



While at CRECER's outpatient center, I had the opportunity to work with Sofy, an Ecuadorian occupational therapist, and a 15-year old male client. We went to Amazonas, an open-air market, to work on community integration and socialization skills. First, the client had to hail a taxi and pay the driver. While at the market, the client had a checklist of fruit. He had to locate the fruit and ask the vendor how much it costs. He had to buy several pieces of fruit and do the math to figure out how much to pay and how much change he should have left. Sofy also taught him to barter and encouraged him to ask for a lower price. Throughout the session the occupational therapist and I spoke with the client and asked him questions about his life. Sofy encouraged him to ask me questions

as well. The skills we worked on with the client are important for him to fully participate in his roles as member of the family. Many of the skills we worked on can also be used in other aspects of his life including school and work. Having the ability to work on these skills out in the community rather than at the clinic will have a larger impact on the client and his development. There were many aspects of this session that were different due to the Ecuadorian culture than if we were to perform this intervention where I live. In Michigan, we would have driven or taken a bus to the grocery store, used signs to find items and prices rather than asking for help, had a much smaller fruit selection, and paid the asking price to a cashier after gathering all of the items. It was a great experience to work on these universal skills in the context of a different culture with a different language.

Heather Veverica

Distintos Somos Todos



I had the opportunity to work with a young woman who had Cerebral Palsy at a day center for individuals with disabilities. The individuals at the center are served a morning snack each day. The individual that I worked with had high flexor tone in her wrist and fingers. I worked with my fieldwork educator to create a custom fabricated universal cuff out of pipe cleaners and used cylindrical foam to surround her utensils for an easier grip. The client preferred to use the cylindrical foam over the universal cuff. To make the fabrication we poked a hole through the foam and angled the fork through. The client was able to feed herself with moderate assistance and direction. The client demonstrated multiple sounds of joy each time she successfully brought the food to her mouth.

Britlyn Long



Asilo Santa Luisa de Marilac

While in Ecuador we provided therapeutic services to the older adult population in a local nursing home. This very eager group of older adults performed functional activities in both fine and gross motor movement of the upper extremities that we designed. We participated in a paper weaving activity, painting of intricate pictures, making musical instruments, and tissue paper art. These activities required the clients to sit at a table while using finger manipulation to grab, pinch, grip, move and organize their materials to complete their projects. I learned that something really simple can make a big difference in the overall care and wellbeing of the people at Asilo. For gross motor activities we wanted to get our clients moving

with something that they liked to do so we used dancing and musical instruments along with balloon tossing to stimulate both seated and standing movements. They truly enjoyed our time together and it was one of the greatest experiences that I have had. I think that the clients at Asilo appreciated that we took the time to design activities that were part of their culture. Understanding and implementing activities that were meaningful to their temporal, cultural, and environmental context was a major reason that the therapeutic process was successful.

Tisha Franklin



Angochagua



We participated in the first day of an 8-week Fall Prevention program at Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Parroquial Rural De Angochagua. This event was not only meaningful to the older adults in the local community, but also for our educational growth. We learned and observed balance assessments such as the *Timed Up and Go (TUG)*, *The 4-stage Balance Test*, and the *30-second Chair Stand*.

We implemented therapeutic balance-based activities to engage the participants and further assess their personal skills, strength, endurance, and functional mobility in relation to balance and fall prevention. It was beneficial to evaluate the components of balance and plan fun, engaging activities accordingly. We created an obstacle course, an adapted bean-bag toss game, balloon toss game, and a ball-bonanza activity. The participants enjoyed the activities and had fun engaging in the creative games while socializing with others. We discussed cultural components related to falls

within the local community, which was a great way to gain knowledge and perspective. Older adults are often walking on uneven surfaces, walking and climbing in the mountains, and performing arduous labor tasks. As a therapist in this setting, these are important aspects to consider while planning interventions and treatment. We are thankful for this opportunity and to have been a part of this experience.

Lauren Brown



Many of the clients in Angochagua speak the indigenous language of Quechua. Dayana Gonzales, PT helped translate during the intake process and explaining activities.





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

Phone USA 301-722-5420
Phone Ibarra, Ecuador 062-605-831
Internet phone 301-202-8357
CRECER.Ecuador@gmail.com

<http://crecerecuador.wix.com/crecer>

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.



International Day of People with Disabilities is a time to celebrate the achievements and contributions as well as increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability. CRECER joined this international event by setting up a tent on a local plaza and offering items for sale that were made during our ceramics group. Darwin participated by selling friendship bracelets which he made.