



Centro de Rehabilitación, Educación, Capacitación, Estudios y Recursos



From the Director: Elaine Keane, OTD, OTR/L

2017 has been another wonderful year for CRECER. We started seeing clients in our new space in

January. It is a larger space and we are sharing it with a group of workers from the Municipal government office for services for people with disabilities. We have two psychology/counselors, a social worker and a few part-time physical therapists. The physical therapists work full time; they are in other locations the other parts of the week. It has been wonderful to have local resources to learn from as we try to provide services to the local community.

Those who have been to our Center know that we have a tree that is made up of the handprints of our students and volunteers. We already have close to one hundred hand prints on the tree that was started in January. We have had students and volunteers from 18 different universities as well as some volunteers who are not affiliated with a university. In addition to the United States, we had volunteers from Great Britain, Canada and Australia. Sixty-three of the hand prints come from students and their professors who participated in a ten-day trip. Fourteen of the hand prints are from students who completed a two month or more Fieldwork experience.

In addition to our ongoing work at the outpatient center and FUNHI, we worked in the communities of La Esperanza and Urcuqui providing direct services to older adults and training to family members and staff. We worked with the Municipal workers to provide a summer outing to the pools of Chachimbiru. The occupational therapy students coordinated activities to promote active engagement in the pool environment.

Along with current and past students, we conducted three research projects. Michael Falcon of Pacific University completed an investigation into the benefits of a structured ceramics group on the social skill development of the participants. In the post intervention questionnaire, the parents of all three participants reports seeing increased social skills carrying over into other environments. Tanisha Monte and Siobaun Manion of Thomas Jefferson University conducted a study of "Stakeholders' Perceptions of International Service Learning Programs." The results overwhelmingly support the CRECER model for providing services to an underserved area. Lastly Crystal Barchacky, from WSSU designed a study that was accepted for a poster presentation at both AOTA and WFOT next year. "Comparison of childhood occupations of children with disabilities in Ecuador, Germany and the United States" will be presented in April in Salt Lake City and in May in Cape Town, South Africa. Data is being analyzed as this newsletter is being drafted.

Our work in the community has not gone un-noticed. In late November, CRECER was given an award by the psychology department of the Universidad Technica del Norte. CRECER was recognized for our interagency collaboration. We are very proud of the connections we have made in the community. A student from Ohio State University arrived recently and as part of her doctoral project she will be visiting some of the outlying centers to see what additional services CRECER can provide as we continue **to grow**.

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About CRECER

By: Mikala Parker

The Centro de Rehabilitación, Educación, Capacitación, Estudios y Recursos, Inc. (CRECER) provides services to the community around Ibarra, Ecuador. One of the services CRECER provides to the community is an outpatient rehabilitation center that primarily serves children but adults with rehabilitation needs are also welcome. The word *crecer* itself means “to grow” in Spanish, which is quite fitting as there have been some exciting changes taking place! The outpatient center recently relocated. When CRECER moved to the new building, they began work on a sensory room. This sensory room will help children develop and engage their sensory systems; improve learning and play skills; and develop visual, fine, and gross motor abilities. Grand Valley State University (GVSU) occupational therapy (OT) students travelled to work in the clinic in mid-October, providing skilled OT services to clients with a wide variety of diagnoses. Some diagnoses the students saw included cerebral palsy; Autism Spectrum Disorder; down syndrome; sensory processing disorder; visual, fine, and gross motor deficits; brachial plexus injuries; and developmental delays. The GVSU OT students, accompanied by OT students from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), implemented treatment plans that addressed the children’s physical, cognitive, social, and/or emotional deficits. For example, a young child with cerebral palsy did weight-bearing and upper extremity activities while engaged in play to promote engagement of her left side. Students from GVSU made a number of donations

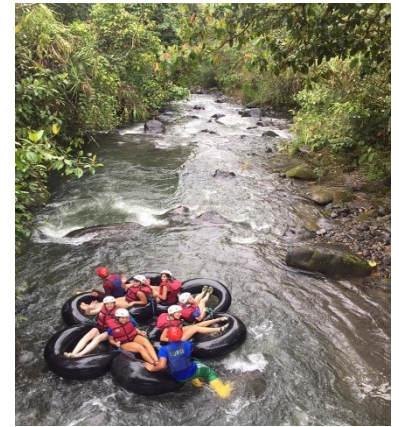


to the clinic including a swing, craft items (i.e. beads, rubber bands, etc), hot glue guns, and grass rugs to improve the clinic’s ability to continue providing occupational therapy services in the future.

Occupational Balance

By: Katia Hughes

One of the highlights of our fieldwork experience in Ecuador was the occupational balance that was incorporated throughout our time there. Not only were we able to have the unique experience of working hands-on with the Ecuadorian people, but we were also able to explore some of the beauty, history, and excitement that Ecuador has to offer. In Quito, the group toured a basilica and several other churches, as well as two equator monuments. In Mindo, the students had a fun-filled day of zip lining through a cloud forest, touring butterfly and orchid gardens, tubing down a river, learning how chocolate is made, and dancing. Supplemental excursions during the week included: visiting hot springs, wood-working, and artesian galleries; touring monuments; exploring Laguna de Cuicocha (a crater lake and active volcano) and Cascada de Peguche (waterfall); and shopping. This once in a lifetime experience really gave students the opportunity to explore the wonders of Ecuador as well as give back to the people within the community.





Senior Olympics

By: Jenna Kruis

During the GVSU student's time in Ibarra, Ecuador, we had the chance to plan and lead Senior Olympics for a senior day center. When we arrived at the center, we were greeted by about 50 seniors with a handshake and a kiss on our cheek, a typical greeting in Ecuador. It was evident as we greeted each individual that some had visual, physical, and cognitive deficits, and we learned that their ages ranged from 70-87. This was also the first time we were able to interact with some of the indigenous people living in Ecuador. We were unsure how capable these people would be at performing the different events that we had planned, which included hurdles, a race, a disc throw, soccer, and a ball toss. Almost everyone engaged in the



events, and they all seemed to really enjoy it. When we finished, we passed out awards to the top 3 men and women in each event. The people were ecstatic with their awards and felt very proud of what they had accomplished. We finished the day by teaching each other songs and dances from the Ecu-

dorian and American cultures. This was one of the favorite days of our trip because of the different interactions we shared with the people and because of the enthusiasm and joy they brought to the event.

Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac

By: Sarah Kawsy

The Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac is home to many older adults in Ibarra, Ecuador. GVSU students had the opportunity to spend time with the residents of this nursing home several days throughout their trip. When planning activities for this group, students had to consider some of the physical limitations of the participants in order to plan activities that would be enjoyable for the whole group. Residents of this nursing home experienced visual and hearing impairments, orthopedic conditions, memory conditions, chronic pain, generalized weakness, and decreased endurance. One activity that the residents really enjoyed was dancing. The students facilitated range of motion and strength through dance moves, while learning about popular Spanish music! Another activity that the residents really enjoyed was Bingo. Although it took some time to get the hang of the rules of this game, residents were eventually able to fully participate and compete! Group activities were a great way to build relationships with the residents, since both groups had difficulty communicating with each other due to the language barrier. Students and residents were able to learn from each other and have fun together!



FUNHI

By: Lindsay Gutting

Fundacion Unidos para Nuestros Hijos (FUNHI) is an adult day center for adults with developmental disabilities. Currently, there are four participants at FUNHI with cerebral palsy.



These individuals attend FUNHI about four hours per day. GVSU students recently attended FUNHI to provide organized activities for the participants. Activities included individual and group gross motor, fine motor, sensory, and play-based interventions. For example, students implemented parachute games, bean bag toss, sensory water bottles, writing and drawing, and arts and crafts. GVSU students also organized a birthday party for Kimmy, a participant with severe cerebral palsy. Both the participants and students had a great time!



"I am so thankful for my time in Ecuador, the warm-hearted people I was able to meet, and the rich experiences of Ecuadorian culture. Working at CRECER opened my eyes to the cultural importance of occupational therapy and will continue to influence my practice as an occupational therapist. I feel as though we all left Ecuador with a renewed motivation to spread the reach of OT to vast populations and settings."



Cultural Immersion

By: Kliricia Loc

While we were in Ecuador, we were exposed to many different cultural experiences. The immersion differed from food, locations, and people. Every experience provided us with new insight about Ecuador.

We learned about traditional food, local food, and street food. We even had the chance to try guinea pig! During our time in Ecuador, we stayed at three different hostels in three different locations. Each hostel had its different quirks. All of the locations provided us with a different cultural experience, ranging from meeting indigenous people, to experiencing the tourism of the different cities, and to the adaptations of altitude changes. One of the most important takeaways from Ecuador was the appropriate way to greet someone. We learned that everyone says hello and goodbye by acknowledging each person in the room. Acknowledgment can be done through handshake, a kiss on the cheek, or a simple hello. Although the culture was different from the United States, I think each individual was able to reflect and enjoy the diverse environment we were in.

