



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



Letter from the director

Elaine Keane OTD, OTR/L

Each year seems to be bigger and better. This year CRECER students and volunteers have provided over 1600 individual treatment sessions at the outpatient center. FENEDIF clients came to the outpatient center to participate in 18 group sessions. Students provided direct and consultation services to the local government on developing new programs for people with disabilities (Distintos Somos Todos). Students provided 45 group sessions at the government sponsored center for young adults with developmental disabilities. Students provided 50 group sessions at the Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac which we have been working with over five years. The Senior Olympic program continued at the Urcuqui Senior Center, involving approximately 40 clients. Hannah Austin's continued presence at CRECER has allowed us to do more outreach into the community (see page 6). Hannah came last November planning to stay a few months and is still here. CRECER is attracting students at all levels of occupational therapy. In addition to pre-occupational therapy students completing their volunteer hours, we have had students completing their clinical experiences at the occupational therapy assistant level, masters in occupational therapy and doctorate in occupational therapy. We had nine groups ranging in size from four to fourteen participants. We had eleven volunteers, new grads, and therapists with years of experience. Between the students and volunteers, we have expanded our international focus, with participants from the US, England, Belgium, and Australia this year. Sharing how occupational therapy looks in other parts of the world has added to the cultural awareness of the students and volunteers. Additionally, I traveled to the World Federation of Oc-



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Everyone left their mark on the "Hand Print Tree" at the CRECER outpatient center by leaving their handprint and name. This connected the Grand Valley State University students with other students that have spent time in the CRECER clinic as well! The GVSU students were among the last group to put their handprints at this location.

Letter from the Director

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cupational Therapists conference in Cape Town South Africa in May where I was able to see how occupational therapy looks in another developing country.

The end of the year, came with another move. We were sad to see FUNHI close last year, but with that change brought an opportunity. We worked with the founding members of FUNHI to reopen services at that center. FUNHI is an acronym that translated means Foundation United for Our Children. We are meeting their mission to serve local families with children with disabilities. CRECER outpatient services were moved to the FUNHI location following some renovations (see photos on pages 11-12). With the new space we are able to organize our space to better serve our expanding adult programs without interrupting the services in place for children. The ceramics groups for building work and social skills have continued to be very popular with our adult clients and demonstrate to our students the importance of this modality that is an important part of occupational therapy history. This year CRECER continues to help our students and clients TO GROW.

A mother using a gait belt to transfer her son safely out of his wheelchair after receiving training. The gait belt that was donated was given to the family to take home to ensure they were safe during transfers.



Thanks to the students and staff from Grand Valley State University Occupational Therapy program for the majority of the commentary and photos in this newsletter.

Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac

During our Level 1 fieldwork experience, my GVSU peers and I had the opportunity to engage with individuals living at Asilo. Prior to our trip to Ecuador, in small groups we created group activities to engage the population; cognizant of the various physical limitations, cultural components, and language barriers that would be present during our morning with the residents. While our activities and crafts that we brought were appreciated; we utilized our flexibility, a staple of being an OT, to modify our activities to meet the needs and wants of the participants. The participants have a strong, rich culture that they highly value and creates a sense of connection and unity amongst the residents. Part of their deep-rooted culture includes connecting through song and dance. It was incredible to see the participants eyes widen, smiles emerge, and laughter and singing when their favorite music was played. Residents who were seated since we arrived were dancing, helping their friends up out of their seats to dance, and teaching my peers and I their dance moves. No longer were there language or cultural barriers; instead we were all together engaging in the meaningful occupation of dance with one another. As occupational therapists, we recognize the importance of holistic care. Dancing was something that increased physical performance, including ROM, mobility, coordination, and balance; while also promoting socialization, establishing rituals, and eliciting feelings of happiness and connectedness. This experience allowed us to remark on the importance of client-centered care, and the importance of engagement in meaningful occupations to elicit attainment of goals. We learned the importance of being flexible in our intervention plans, in order to enhance the experience of the participants, and enable rehabilitation and growth within any occupation.



By: Bri Dines

There is beauty and strength in tradition

Positioning clinic at Prótesis Imbabura

By: Lyndsey Lehman

GVSU students had the opportunity to attend an adaptive design workshop at Prótesis Imbabura, a clinic that provides prosthetics, orthotics, and adaptive equipment to individuals in Ecuador. Alicia is a technician who was trained by a Kit Frank, an occupational therapist from the US. Alicia graciously taught us how to make adaptive positioning systems

from layers of corrugated cardboard, and we even got to make a positioning system for a five-year-old girl with cerebral palsy. Prótesis Imbabura also makes trays, standing tables, easels, and

wheelchair adaptations using cardboard carpentry. Depending on the size or weight of the client, more layers of cardboard are required to make it stronger. The equipment can be customized to the client's preferences, whether it be hand-painted Disney characters or splatter paint art. The adaptive positioning systems can come with a tray that attaches to the chair, lateral head supports, straps, and footrests that can be removed when the client grows taller. It was so intriguing to learn how something that we commonly dispose of in the United States can be used to make essential equipment that benefits so many individuals in Ecuador. We are all so grateful to have had the opportunity for Alicia to share her knowledge and expertise with us!



Picture: Alicia, Lyndsey, Bri, Eric, Drew

Creating a chair out of cardboard for a 5-year old girl with cerebral palsy.



Steps for putting together the chair

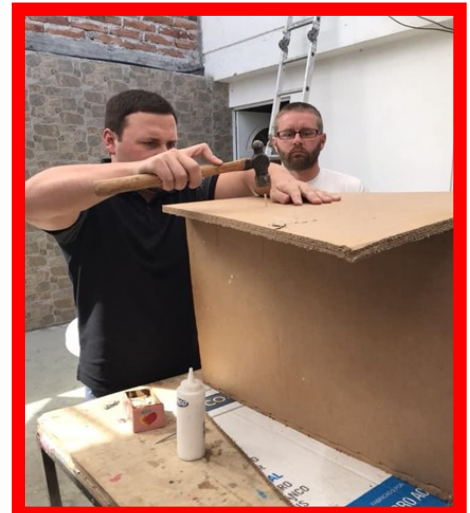
Bri using a power saw to cut the cardboard after measuring the correct length



Drew making holes for the glue and wooden skewers that would hold the pieces of cardboard together

Lyndsey putting glue in each hole

Eric hammering in the wooden skewers to connect the sides of the chair



Distintos Somos Todos

By: Drew Smiley



Brooke engaging in a sensory integration experience with shaving cream with one of the participants! It was a hit!

Nestled within the heart of the city lies a place far removed from the buzz of the busy Ibarra cityscape. Located in the distant corner of a dead-end street, positioned just out of direct eye sight, is a place where the needs of a community and the gentle touch of a few caring adults provides a haven for some of the city's most vulnerable. The exterior façade and peeling paint give no clues about the energetic young adults who call this place home during the day, nor does it speak about the hope and love that is clearly visible between the staff and residents here. Distintos Somos Todos is an adult day center that provides care to around 20 young adults diagnosed with a range of cognitive and physical impairments. From the second I walked through the door I felt as if I had been here before, or perhaps it is a lot like a place I could see myself working someday. The residents were initially hesitant or maybe even a little curious towards the strangers that were interrupting their morning routine, but their initial apprehension quickly gave way as they opened to us and let their personalities truly shine. The morning was spent engaging the residents in individual and group based sensory play, fine motor crafting activities, and gross motor games. The GVSU students felt blessed to have had the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of people. The energy between the students and residents was synergistic and palpable, and despite the language barrier, it became obvious that togetherness is the universal language.



Drew, Rachel, Brooke, and Leana with the participants at Distintos Somos Todos

Distintos Somos Todos



Leana connecting with a participant through dance. Dancing was another non-verbal way to communicate and interact.



Poleth making music on the drums they just made at Distintos Somos Todos. Even if there was a language barrier, they connected through music and laughter.

La Esperanza Center for Older Adults

Hannah Austin worked with the Social Worker at the Center for Older Adults in La Esperanza to evaluate barriers to bathing in that population. The major barrier was lack of access to showers/bathtubs. Clients who live independently are no longer able to heat water over a wood stove or walk to the river for their baths. A program was developed to encourage the participants to use the showers at the facility. Participants increased independent bathing and have continued to be independent as occupational therapy support has decreased. Hannah also supervised students who did a variety of group and individual treatment sessions. Student groups have provided 30 group sessions to the clients at this center.



Rush University student Sarah Epstein adapting a coloring task for a participant with low vision.



Senior Olympics at Urcuqui Center for Older Adults

By: Eric Johnson

During the time GVSU students were in Ibarra, Ecuador, we had the opportunity to plan and facilitate recreational tasks we call “Senior Olympics.” The day started with setting up the stations in an outdoor arena, then we headed to the senior center to greet approximately 50 seniors in a traditional Ecuadorian way, hug and kiss on the cheek, or a handshake. Many of the seniors in this senior center participated in cultivating their own garden, dance parties, and most had little limitation physically, or cognitively. Most of the participants were ages 69 to 88, but there was one 93-years-old woman who completed the entire event. The events used visual, gross motor, balance, speed, strength, and endurance. Some activities included low height hurdles, javelin, disk throw, bean bag toss, dribbling a soccer ball, and shuttle runs. The participation and enjoyment were contagious for both the participants and students. After the completion of the Senior Olympics we returned to the senior center and awards were given to the top 3 participants in Men’s and Women’s events, and the awards were worn with pride. Everyone had a deep appreciation for the multi-cultural friendship exchange, and we were brought together by some friendly competition.



Brooke directing and cheering on a participant



Lyndsey cheering on a participant

Donations

By: Bri Dines

In preparation for our Level 1 Fieldwork experience in Ecuador, as a group we reached out to companies, family members, and friends asking for donations to increase our impact with the individuals we would be serving in Ecuador. Due to limited resources and funding, the adaptive equipment, durable medical equipment, and medical supplies we commonly recommend as healthcare professionals in the United States are not available to recommend in Ecuador. We were incredibly grateful of the generous donations received to further our impact during this experience. Performance Health kindly donated 4 sheets of splinting material that could be used to make orthoses. Permobil and Rehab and Mobility Systems generously donated wheelchair cushions which were fitted to wheelchairs used by individuals at the Asilo who were uncomfortable and limited in their engagement as a result of ill-fitting wheelchairs. The More Cowbelts Team (continued pg 7)



GVSU students and faculty enjoying a traditional meal prepared by the individuals in the indigenous community in Peguche

(donations, continued from page 6)

donated gait belts that were donated to families after they were provided with transfer education to promote safety of the client and their family members. The OT/PT Department at Lakeland Health Care in Watervliet, Michigan donated AFOs, wheelchair armrests, and post-op socks. Families and friends of the participants, in addition to the participants on the fieldwork experience, donated Band-aids, alcohol swabs, and a knee brace to further supply the CRECER clinic and meet the diverse needs of the individuals they treat. It was humbling how willing companies and individuals were to donate to individuals that they have never met and have no connection with. The incredible support amongst healthcare facilities and businesses supporting our efforts exhibits how important the promotion of health and wellness is. We would like to thank all of those who donated and supported our efforts to continue to support CRECER, a selfless, incredible organization that has changed the lives of so many individuals who otherwise would not be able to access and benefit from occupational therapy services.

Cultural Comparison Experience Immersion

By: Rachel Bendewald

During our time in Ecuador, we had the opportunity to immerse into the culture through various excursions including trips to an indigenous weaving hut, a historical waterfall, a butterfly house, a chocolate-making tour, a ziplining adventure, and tubing down a river. Throughout these experiences, we learned some of the differences between Ecuadorian and American culture. Ecuador is a collectivist society, which means they value the needs of groups and their families over their own needs. In the United States, we live in a more individualistic culture that focuses on being independent and meeting our own needs and goals before focusing on the needs of the greater group. Another cultural difference was the pace of the culture; Ecuadorians live their lives at a slower, more relaxed pace which includes closing businesses and schools every weekday from 1-3pm for an afternoon siesta. During this time, Ecuadorians gather for lunch with their family and friends to take a break from their responsibilities and enjoy some company. Ecuador also has a strong religious presence as it is about 95% Roman Catholic. During our trip, we had the opportunity to see inside many different Cathedrals and were impressed by the incredible level of detail the builders used hundreds of years ago during construction. Throughout the trip, our group enjoyed discussing the cultural differences between the US and Ecuador and learning more about Ecuadorian culture and geography.



GVSU group ziplining in Mindo, Ecuador

In Picture (from left to right)

Back row: Brooke, Kimberley, Elaine

Middle Row: Leana, Eric, Rachel, Kristin

Front Row: Drew, Rachael, Bri



In the picture (from left to right):

Top Row: Eric, Drew, and Lyndsey

Bottom Row: Kimberley, Rachael, Brooke, Rachel, Bri

Occupational Balance

By: Rachael Fox

Finding occupational balance while studying internationally proved to be quite achievable during our stay in Ecuador. The group was immersed in the culture of the Ecuadorian people through language, food, and music, as well as in the natural splendor of the Andes Mountains and cloud forest. In Quito, excursions included climbing a tower in a basilica, touring the beautiful architecture of many historic cathedrals, and discovering the phenomenon of the Equator. In the cloud forest in Mindo, students experienced tubing, zip lining, feeding butterflies, and tasting local chocolate. Once the group arrived in Ibarra, clinical work with clients began. The workdays were filled with valuable opportunities for hands-on learning with many different populations and in many different practice settings. At the end of each day, students were able to rest, recover, and reflect on their experiences. Throughout the workweek, additional cultural excursions included a boat tour on a volcanic crater lake, visiting local specialty shops, a tour of an ancient wood-working studio, a traditional Ecuadorian meal, and hiking a sacred waterfall. While the time spent in Ecuador was jam-packed with educational and cultural experiences, the trip was well-planned to provide a balance between educational demands, cultural activities, and time for independent self-reflection and rest.



Pennants from some of the schools whose students came to CRECER

Reflection of experience doing a level 1 fieldwork in Ecuador

By Kimberly Hutchinson

Though we spent several months preparing for our trip to Ecuador, I don't think anything could have fully prepared me for the experience. From the scenery to our clinical experiences: everyday was a new adventure. I think this was expected in some ways, such as the food or our cultural excursions, but surprisingly it carried over into everything we did. Each clinical experience was varied and diverse, so you had to almost change your approach every day even if you were leading the same activity. This may be one of the biggest differences when comparing international fieldwork with domestic fieldwork. We had different clients in different settings each day and due to our short time in Ecuador we only saw each client once. This was challenging due to the aforementioned reason of everyday being different, but also because it took an emotional toll on us. Due to the nature of occupational therapy, and our language barriers, I think our international fieldwork was highly educational in therapeutic use of self: meaning each of us strove to connect with our clients no matter how short of time we spent with them. These connections made leaving each location even more difficult especially since we knew we would not see these individuals again and was a stark contrast to our domestic fieldwork where we would see each client once a week for several weeks. On a more positive note, international fieldwork was definitely more hands on than our domestic level I fieldwork. Each day we were the ones who were leading the treatments, and this helped us to further develop our clinical judgement. I definitely feel more prepared for my level II fieldwork experiences after this experience. One of the largest differences when comparing our fieldwork experiences in the U.S. to our experience in Ecuador were the things we learned outside of the clinical experiences. These things were numerous, but respect for another culture and that everyone is different was paramount. Growing up in the mainstream culture of America, one of the most valuable experiences I will take away from my international fieldwork is the feeling of being a minority and not being able to speak the predominant language. The feelings of powerlessness and frustration that I felt at not being able to communicate were things I had not experienced before and are definitely lessons that I will take forward in my



Izzy (OT student from UK) and Lyndsey working with a client in the clinic, utilizing non-verbal communication strategies to facilitate treatment



practice and my life. The other lessons that I will take away are ones of curiosity and a desire to learn about our differences rather than be afraid of them. Many of the best moments of our international fieldwork were those when we embraced the differences and tried something new. This taught me that more can be accomplished together than apart. Many people have asked me since returning home if I would go back to Ecuador or volunteer in another country after I have completed my education. Despite the difficult moments my answer is always "yes" without hesitation, because it is only once we step out of our comfort zone that we are able to grow.



Entrance with new ramp in place

CRECER

Outpatient Center

@ FUNHI



Above - Multipurpose room

The mural was moved from the previous center to make the wall for the waiting room.

The doors to the admin office were the main door at the previous center.

Shadecloth was installed to pull closed when the sun is beating down through the glass skylights.

Ceramics cleaning station and drying shelves next to office, kilns in back right corner.

Out of picture far right corner—kitchen.



Above Left—Reception area looking into waiting room

Left—Reception area looking into "Craft room" showing new door to pediatric area

Right—Looking toward sensory room entrance. Student desk area behind shelves.

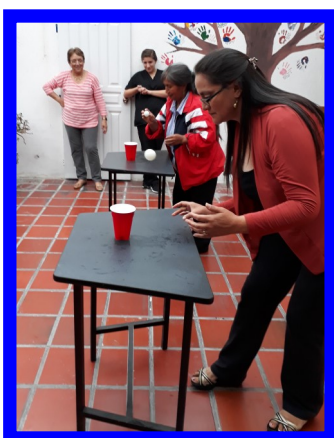
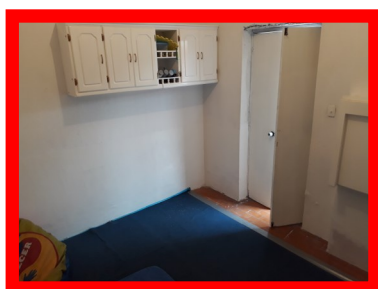


CRECER

Outpatient Center @ FUNHI



**Pictures
Clockwise
from top left**



Sensory Room with mats, pull down desk and out of reach storage.

Fine motor/cognitive area, with pull down mat table for use as needed.

The pediatric gross motor area

Parents' Christmas Party (For the first time we had two fathers in the group.) Group picture.

Bubble relay - Blow a bubble through the hoop

Cookie Relay - Move the cookie from your forehead to your mouth without using your hands

Ping pong ball relay - Bounce the ball into the cup





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CRECER and Grand Valley State University Occupational Therapy

By: Eric Johnson

Centro de Rehabilitación, Educación, Capacitación, Estudios y Recursos, Inc. (CRECER) is a non-profit, therapy based, organization that provides services to Ibarra, Ecuador and surrounding communities.

CRECER is the central hub that provides services to individuals with many diagnoses and ability levels across the lifespan. Some of the locations include Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac, a positioning clinic at Prótesis Imbabura, Distintos Somos Todos, La Esperanza and Urcuqui Senior Centers, and the outpatient clinic.

CRECER has a variety of partnerships throughout the community, but their primary outlet is the outpatient clinic, which serves primarily pediatric patients. CRECER functions on donations and volunteer service such as Grand Valley State University (GVSU) occupational therapy (OT) students. Thanks to generous donations, the outpatient clinic has a variety of therapeutic tools and supplies to facilitate therapy, establishment of new skills, or adapting equipment or the way a task is completed. The most popular room for many of the children was the gross motor room. Children could engage with the therapist, other children, and/or sensory stimulation activities to promote exploration for improved play, sensory regulation, and visual, fine, and gross motor abilities. GVSU OT students and staff traveled to Ecuador in mid-September with the privilege of immersing themselves in the culture, and treated a diverse array of diagnoses at several therapy settings. Some of the diagnoses included autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, sensory processing disorder, visual, fine, and gross motor deficits, brachial plexus injuries, developmental delay, and progressive cognitive disorders. GVSU OT students were fortunate to treat with other OT students, including one from Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU), a pre-OT student from Florida, and an OT student from the United Kingdom. With help from CRECER, volunteers, and partnerships between other facilities, GVSU students were able to smoothly transition into the patients' current treatment. GVSU students were able to incorporate many therapeutic items into treatment, including some of which they donated to CRECER to allow their resources *to grow*.

