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Joint Connections

Summer 2023

Summer highlights from UNMC's Physical Therapy Program



UNMC PT alumni greet each other on Saturday, April 28, at the program's 50th reunion

Celebrating 50 Years of Physical Therapy Education at UNMC

On Saturday, April 28, 177 alumni and current and former faculty and staff members gathered to celebrate 50 years of graduates from the UNMC Physical Therapy Program.

The event began at 12:45 p.m. with a continuing education course, *From Research to Rehab: Research Highlights from Today's PT*.

Campus tours followed, with both walking and stationary tours available.

An all-class party and reception in the Truhlsen Events Center concluded the day's festivities. Program director Betsy Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, CLT-LANA; College of Allied Health Professions Dean Kyle P. Meyer, PhD, MS, PT, FASAHP; former program director (and current faculty member) Patricia A. Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA and UNMC Alumni Association associate director Kat Hamilton, MSM, were all on hand to deliver remarks.

This event was co-hosted by the Physical Therapy Program and the College of Allied Health Professions Alumni Council.



Members of the UNMC Physical Therapy Program's Class of 2023 on Friday, May 5, 2023.

2023 Convocation

Celebratory graduation events for the Class of 2023 began with the Physical Therapy Program's Convocation on Friday morning, May 5, in the Truhlsen Events Center at UNMC. Here, members of the Class of 2023 and their guests were warmly welcomed by Program Director Dr. Betsy Becker. Program awards were presented at this event.

Each graduate received a gold cord in recognition of being a member of the 50th

graduating class. The graduating students also participated in the College of Allied Health Professions Convocation ceremony on Friday afternoon at the Liberty First Credit Union Arena and the UNMC Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 6, at the Baxter Arena.

See more from the day's festivities on Flickr here: [PT Convocation](#) and [CAHP Convocation](#).

Congratulations to the UNMC DPT Class of 2023!

Joseph Blecha
Kelly Brester
Amanda Carlson
Claudia Cortes Reyes
Catherine Eby
Kaitlyn Forsythe
Brandon Gannon
Romano Gastali
Krista Gipson
Alexis Gress
Matthew Grimm
Austin Haufle
Natalie Hayes
Erica Henderson
Andrew Jacobsen
Mary Janovich

Kaylee Jensen
Traci Johnson
Alyx Jorgensen
Andrew Joseph
Travis Kennedy
Alexandria Kingsley
Jonathan Latshaw
Tara Ledbetter
Tangdi Lin
Joseph Lydiatt
Joshua Masur
Wyatt Mazour
Monique McMullen
Cole Meadows
Shane Meltz
Athena Meneses

Tristen Metzger
Kasey Mueller
Caroline Norrie
Connor Paxton
McKenzie Petricko
Emma Pink
Hayley Porter
Scarlett Prorok
Brock Rathman
Muchen Ren
Luis Reyes Mendieta
Madison Robinson
Macy Scheffler
Joel Schroeder
Carlos Silva
Colby Spence

Yuxiao Sun
Hannah Thrumer
Jacob VanLaningham
Aaron Vinkenberg
Dakota Waddell
Kirsten Wagner
Megan Wardyn
Christa Wentworth
Brite Woodruff
Haoyu Xie
Zixuan Yao
Kyle Young
Dongqi Zhu

Class of 2023 Awards *(Listed in alphabetical order.)*

Alpha Eta Society

The National Allied Health Honor Society

Kelly Brester
Austin Haufler
Tara Ledbetter
Kasey Mueller
Yixiao Sun
Haoyu Xie
Zixuan Yao

Delta Phi Tau

The National Student Honor Society in Physical Therapy

Kelly Brester
Austin Haufler
Tara Ledbetter
Tangdi Lin
Tristen Metzger
Joel Schroeder
Yuxiao Sun
Zixuan Yao

Excellence in Leadership Award

Claudia Cortés Reyes
Krista Gipson
Cole Meadows
Luis Reyes Mendieta

Excellence in Professionalism Award

Kelly Brester
Romano Gastali
Matt Grimm
Tara Ledbetter

Excellence in Professionalism Award *continued*

Joey Lydiatt
Macy Scheffler
Kyle Young

Joseph F. Norman Excellence in Service Award

Alyx Jorgensen
Alexandria Kingsley
Joel Schroeder
Jacob VanLaningham
Kirsten Wagner

LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disorders)

Through the Munroe Meyer Institute, these individuals completed 600 hours of interdisciplinary training activities designed to emphasize core leadership competencies
Kaitlyn Forsythe
Mary Janovich

Nebraska Area Health Education Center Scholars

These individuals completed over 80 hours of training in underserved areas.

Kelly Brester
Matthew Grimm
Alyx Jorgensen
Joshua Masur
Conner Paxton
Scarlett Prorok
Macy Scheffler
Rachel Schmidt
Aaron Vinkenber

PAWS and Relax



A Love on a Leash therapy dog greets Ellie Dougherty, SPT

This spring, PT students were invited to take a study break to “Paws and Relax.” Therapy dogs from the Love on a Leash organization, including program director Dr. Betsy Becker’s dog, Ollie, were available for students to visit.

Therapy dogs are specially trained to provide comfort, affection and promote well-being. Therapy dogs volunteer with their owners to improve the lives of others.

There were 3 optional “Paws and Relax” events in Omaha. A pet therapy event was also held for physical therapy students on the Kearney campus.



Back row (l-r): Kaden Zwiener, Decker Mattimoe, Koeby Bonner, Andrew Poppe, Bryson Krull, Khalid Cray, Justin Larson, Kyle Carey and Benjamin Gillming (Numotion) | Front row (l-r): Assistant Professor Kellie Gossman, PT, DPT, CLT, PCS, Lexi Preissler, Madison Cockerill, Allie Welniak, Andrea Zulauf, Brittany Ohnoutka, Abby Aplaca and Felicia Sheil

GoBabyGo! Event in Kearney, Nebraska

On Saturday morning, April 22, 13 physical therapy students and 2 occupational therapy students gathered at the Health Science Education Complex in Kearney, Nebraska, to participate in a GoBabyGo! build. NuMotion was also a partner in this event.

GoBabyGo! is a national program that provides modified ride-on cars for kids with developmental disabilities to promote early independent mobility. The cars are provided at no cost to the recipients' families.

The students modified children's electric cars for 3 children ranging in age from 9 months to 3 years old. The children and their families are from Elgin, Kearney and Spalding, Nebraska.



Pictured (l-r): Justin Larson, Koeby Bonner, Khalid Cray, Kyle Carey and Felicia Sheil



Sandra L. Willett, PhD, PT, PCS

Sandra L. Willett, PhD, PT, PCS to relocate

Sandra L. Willett, PhD, PT, PCS, a faculty member in the UNMC Physical Therapy program since 1994, is relocating this summer to a new academic appointment at Colorado Mesa University.

Dr. Willett, a 1986 alumnus of the UNMC Physical Therapy Program, earned a Master of Science from the UNMC Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy in 1993 and a PhD from the UNMC Clinical Translation Research Mentored Scholars Program/Medical Sciences Interdepartmental Area in 2019.

Dr. Willett has served as a faculty member at UNMC since 1994. She began as an Instructor in the Physical Therapy Program and was promoted to Assistant Professor in 2003. In 2009, she was appointed an Assistant Professor at UNMC's Munroe Meyer Institute for Genetics and Rehabilitation (MMI). In 2021, she was promoted to Associate Professor. She has been a Board Certified Clinical Specialist in Pediatric Physical Therapy of the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties from 2000 to the present.

In addition to teaching the pediatric physical therapy course in the Physical Therapy Program's curriculum for many years, she has

invested in our students in a variety of other ways. She served as the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) faculty member from 2013 to 2022. In 2016, she founded GoBabyGo! Nebraska, MMI, a service project in which UNMC physical therapy students continue to participate.

At UNMC's Munroe Meyer Institute, Dr. Willett served as the director of the pediatric physical therapy residency program from 2013 to 2022. She also served as the director of physical therapy from March 2017 to the present, and as the interim director for nearly two years prior to that. Dr. Willett will continue as an adjunct associate professor at MMI.

Assistant Professor Kellie Gossman, PT, DPT, CLT, PCS states, "It has been a pleasure to work with and learn from Sandy over the past six years in my role as course liaison on the Kearney campus for the pediatric physical therapy course. In addition to her being a great mentor, I am also grateful for her partnership along with GoBabyGo! Nebraska and the Munroe-Meyer Guild to help expand the GoBabyGo! builds to Kearney in 2018. She has been such an asset to our program. We wish her the very best in her new position!"



Pictured (l-r): MacKenzie DeHoff, Samantha Granec and Caitlyn Bartholemew

PT Students Receive Outstanding Student Poster Award

As participants in the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute’s LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disorders) training program, Class of 2024 students Caitlyn Bartholemew, MacKenzie DeHoff and Samantha Granec recently participated in the Munroe-Meyer Institute’s April Poster Session.

This poster session showcases doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows from different

disciplines (psychology, nutrition, PT, OT, SLP) who have conducted research in their training programs within the last year.

Bartholemew, DeHoff and Granec received the Outstanding Student Poster award for their poster titled, “Aquatic vs. Land Based Physical Therapy Effects on GMFM in Children with Cerebral Palsy: A review of literature.” Well done, students!

Faculty

Dr. Joseph Siu receives CAHP Research Award



Kim Michael, MA, RT(R), RDMS, RVT, FSDMS presents the Significance in Research Distinguished Researcher Award to Joseph Siu, PhD

Physical Therapy Associate Professor and Global Health Opportunity Program Director Joseph Siu, PhD, received the College of Allied Health Professions Significance in Research Distinguished Researcher Award. The recipient of the award is recognized for having made significant research contributions and adding to the knowledge of the clinical, scientific, and/or educational community.



Back row (l-r): Mike Wellsandt, PT, DPT, OCS, Dave Werner, Sara Bills, PT, DPT, GCS, Caleb Nabower, PT, DPT, Sydney Slossen, Kyla Kasuke, Yanfei Li, Joesph Sui, PhD | Front row (l-r): Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS, Chloe Williams, Patricia A. Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA, Grace C. Johnson, PT, DPT, MS, OCS, MacKenzie DeHoff, Jamie Troesten, Yugi Pu, Alyx Jorgensen

APTA Combined Sections Meeting, February 2023

The UNMC Physical Therapy Program was well-represented at the American Physical Therapy Association's Combined Sections Meeting in February.

POSTERS

Muscle Performance and Movement Patterns after Passing Clinic-Based Return-to-Sport Testing after ACL Reconstruction

David Werner, PT, DPT, Matthew Tao, MD, Ashley Conlin, Paul Edward Murray, PT, Wendi Sanny, Carly Jo Thomsen, PT, DPT, Michael Wellsandt, PT, DPT and Elizabeth Ann Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD

The Use of Mobile Application in Patients with Parkinson's Disease in Nebraska: A Case Series

Zixuan Yao, SPT, Kelly Gonzales, Christine Toh, Melissa Leon and Ka-Chun Siu, PT, BSPT, PhD

Bridge the Know-Do Gap By Building Effective E-Modules

Kellie Shae Gossman, PT, DPT, Stacie Mae Larreau Christensen, PT, DPT, MacKenzie DeHoff, SPT, MS and Elizabeth Ann Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD

Intralimb Compensations during Squatting Change in the 6 Months Following Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction

Yuqi Pu, SPT, Chloe Williams, SPT, David Werner, PT, DPT, Matthew McManigal, Alyx Jorgensen, SPT, Matthew Tao, MD and Elizabeth Ann Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD

Knee Loading Asymmetry Is Greatest during Ascent Phase of Squatting after Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction

Alyx Jorgensen, SPT, David Werner, PT, DPT, Matthew Tao, MD and Elizabeth Ann Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD

Can Compensatory Strategies during Bilateral Squats Predict Asymmetrical Knee Loading Patterns after ACL Reconstruction?

Yanfei Li, SPT, Sam Hayden, SPT, Matthew McManigal, David Werner, PT, DPT, Alyx Jorgensen, SPT, Matthew Tao, MD and Elizabeth Ann Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD

Association between Kinesiophobia and Physical Activity Early after Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injury and Reconstruction

Tatum Hemmingsen, Garrett Sacco, David Werner, PT, DPT, Austin Post, Brittany Weaver, MD, Matthew Tao, MD and Elizabeth Ann Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD

PRESENTATION

Is it Burnout or is it Moral Injury? Explorations around Well-Being and Moral Resilience

Rhea Cohn PT, DPT, Lisa Donegan Shoaf PT, DPT, PhD, Gail M. Jensen, PT, PhD, FAPTA, Debra Gorman-Bader, PT, MA, Rebecca Edgeworth Ditwiler, PT, DPT, Nicole Sleddens, PT, ABD

In Remembrance: Rita Parks Agnew



Rita Parks Agnew

Rita Parks Agnew passed away on Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023, after a well-fought battle with cancer.

For 37 years (1974-2011), Rita Parks Agnew was considered a cornerstone of the physical therapy program, in part due to

her unwavering dedication to coordinating program operations. During her tenure, Rita assisted more than 30 faculty members and 6

program directors. Rita was known as the “go-to person” for 1,012 physical therapy graduates, representing 36 classes!

Dr. Pat Hageman said, “Rita’s sincere dedication to the program was motivated by her love of the students.” Rita was often known to say, “Without the students, there would not be a program.”

Rita was preceded in death by her husband, Tom Agnew. She is survived by her sons, Corey Parks and Chad (Jamie) Agnew, and 3 grandchildren, Colin, Ellie and Atlas, all whom she dearly loved.

Giving Day Results



To those who donated on UNMC Giving Day – thank you! Over 35 donors contributed to help unlock special giving challenges. A total of \$3,277 was raised for the Physical Therapy Program Fund for Excellence. These contributions will be put toward the program’s mission to: Advance health for all by optimizing movement through education, research and service.

For those who missed the UNMC Giving Day, but still wish to donate, click here: <https://go.unmc.edu/ptdevfund>

Newsletter Contributors:

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