



**ST. AUGUSTINE HEALTH CAMPUS**  
*Continuing the Healing Ministry of Christ*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### ***Your Recovery is a Partnership!***

By Laura J. Blackburn, OTR/L

The term “Occupational Therapy” can be misleading to people who have not heard it before. Occupational Therapists, who commonly work with an older population, may often hear “No honey, I don’t need that. I’m retired”.

But in fact, occupational therapists, or OTs, are concerned with the rehabilitation or restoration of an individual’s functions including self-care, work, and leisure activities. Although they commonly work with people who are of retirement age, they also provide services for people of any age who are recovering from an illness, injury, or disability which prevents them from performing activities that are necessary or meaningful to that person. This can include the ability to bathe and dress oneself, perform housework such as cooking, perform job duties, succeed in school, or to participate in one’s religion and community.

OTs are found in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities, schools, work rehabilitation centers, and mental health centers. They tailor the services they give to each individual setting. Work in a school involves young children, and promoting the ability for them to participate in their studies. Work in a mental health center may require teaching skills that encompass social interaction or emotional processing.

There is an ever greater push for people to remain in their homes rather than in a hospital or nursing facility while recovering from an illness or injury. If a person returns home after a stay in the hospital, it is often necessary to teach skills to be safe at home. This can involve training in the use of equipment such as an elevated toilet seat, a bench for the tub, or making recommendations for grab bars. It may also be necessary to teach a safe way to get around the kitchen and prepare a meal for someone who needs to temporarily use a walker or crutches.

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OTs also address the body's ability to function. In the case where a person has lost the ability to perform an activity due to a specific injury or condition in their hands or arms, OTs can fabricate splints, prescribe an exercise program, and perform a variety of hands-on treatments to improve function, reduce pain and increase independence.

Beginning this year, 2007, occupational therapists will be required to have a masters degree in order to practice. Occupational therapy assistants are required to have an associates degree. Occupational therapy education requires a curriculum that is heavy in science, especially biology and psychology, and it requires fieldwork experiences in many different settings where OTs work. Currently the schooling programs are competitive to get into but the job market for graduates is very open. The prediction is that as people live longer and seek greater health care services, the job opportunities will continue to grow. It is truly a rewarding and important career.

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Laura Blackburn works as an Occupational Therapist at St. Augustine Health Campus, 7801 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44102. St. Augustine Health Campus helps people recovering from surgery, strokes and injuries regain everyday skills that can help them lead independent, purposeful lives. Since 1969, St. Augustine has served people from 18 to 102. In addition to the elderly, St. Augustine provides specialized care for those with traumatic brain injury, MS, and stroke rehabilitation. It also houses a Child Enrichment Center which services infants from 6 weeks of age through preschool. For more information on occupational therapy or to have a therapist speak to your group, contact Marc Schaffer, President of the Ohio Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., at 216.939.7647.