A Personal Challenge
Becomes a Therapeutic Asset in the Public Schools

Focus on Alumni:
Laurie (Gilfeather) Cour, CCC-SLP
By Leslie Power and her daughter, Kelly Morton

Despite her busy schedule, Laurie (Gilfeather) Cour (‘99 M.A.) set aside a few minutes to speak to us about her career. Laurie works in Renton School District at Kennydale Elementary School and at Hillcrest Early Childhood Center. She works with special programs, including a preschool program serving children with a range of disabilities, many with autism. Laurie also works with an extended-day elementary program for children with autism.

Reflecting back on her education at WSU, Laurie noted that she felt quite prepared to enter the field following graduation, due to both the course work and the varied clinical experiences of her master’s program. She specifically mentioned the benefits she reaped from her capstone internship working with children from preschool to middle school level. Laurie also recalled the veteran speech-language pathologist (SLP), at the first school she worked during her clinical fellowship, who gave her a lot of tips and advice to help her grow professionally.

A strong proponent for working in the schools, Laurie encourages others to consider careers in the schools. Yes, there is paperwork—not unlike the paperwork one encounters in any setting—be it clinical or school. But Laurie cautions that it is not overwhelming. She commented that “it’s not that bad, it’s systematic.” Laurie enjoys the staff she works with and she describes working in the schools as a partnership. She praises the team approach so prevalent in the schools, as well as the chance to interact with and learn from related professionals, including occupational and physical therapists. Laurie points out that this team approach allows for a whole-child, collaborative approach. Another advantage of the public school setting is that the SLP gets the chance to work with children from diverse backgrounds with a variety of communication disorders.

Laurie also shared some of the challenges she faced in reaching her goal to become an SLP. In high school, she was diagnosed with an autonomic recessive genetic disorder that she describes as being similar to a juvenile form of macular degeneration. Despite this challenge, which followed her through graduate school, Laurie remained focused and committed to earning her master’s degree and entering the profession of speech-language pathology. We are delighted to report that Laurie’s vision stabilized! Nonetheless, all those years of challenge brought with them a silver lining. Laurie commented that her disability has been both a challenge and an advantage. It has helped her bring a different approach to her teaching. She describes how her visual disability has enabled the children with...
Message from the Chair

Our faculty continued to earn recognition for their exceptional contributions to professional education, clinical practice, and research. Through their dedicated efforts we are able to remain highly responsive to workforce needs, preparing qualified speech-language pathologists to serve the citizens of Washington and the Pacific Northwest. With hands-on experience obtained through clinical practica, internships, community service, and research, faculty engage students in innovative learning opportunities that integrate science and practice. I am pleased to report that in spring 2008, we were able to add another outstanding learning opportunity to our already impressive and diverse slate of curricular options. Assistant Professor Amy Meredith, Undergraduate Audiology Coordinator Susan Forbes, and Clinical Associate Professor Carla Jones escorted a small group of our undergraduate students to China, marking the department’s first faculty-led trip abroad. This 10-day trip integrated science and practice, while positively impacting society—in this case, half way across the globe.

Our clinical programs for children with hearing impairment and their families (i.e., HOPE School in Spokane and OLE! in Pullman) continued to grow and earn kudos for innovative and effective programming. One outgrowth of the OLE! program was the highly successful, two-day professional development symposium held in Pullman last October.

As I mentioned in my last chair’s message, we will launch a cooperative EWU/WSU (UPCD) undergraduate program next fall in Spokane. In preparation for this launch, the UPCD faculty spent much of the past year aligning and redesigning the SHS and EWU ComD undergraduate curricula. We will continue to offer our seniors in Pullman the outstanding clinical practice opportunities that distinguish our program from most others across the country, while our Spokane-based undergraduates will be able to take advantage of a new neurogenic communication disorders course as well as a rotating special topics elective.

As we close another academic year, I would like to thank the members of our UPCD Advisory Council—a group of active and dedicated members of the professional community—whose invaluable input helps us achieve our goals to provide an outstanding teaching and learning environment for our students, excellence in clinical outreach to our community, and cutting-edge research to advance the discipline.

As you read through this issue of Wavelength, you may notice that our Honor Roll of Donors is missing. To ensure accuracy and a comprehensive listing, the WSU Foundation has decided to publish one system-wide, complete donor roll in its annual report, published in October.

As always, I close my message by expressing my appreciation to alumni and other friends who play such a major role in the future of our department. Your ongoing support and your generous investment in our students and our programs are vital to our continued excellence.

Thank you as well for your overwhelmingly positive response to Wavelength. We would like to include your news in our next issue, so please give me a call at 509-335-4526 or e-mail me at chermak@wsu.edu. As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Gail D. Chermak
A Day in the Life of Me, the New SLP

By Noelle Phillips

It’s dark. It’s snowing again, and there’s a moose in the playground of Kalifornsky Beach Elementary, just outside Soldotna, Alaska, one of the schools I serve as an itinerant speech-language pathologist (SLP). The kids have to stay inside for recess. No recess means several of the kids on my caseload, who have autism, begin to have breakdowns because their routines were unexpectedly changed. Three of the special education aides who work with those kids are out for training, leaving some dumbfounded, nervous substitutes in the room, so I make myself available for a couple hours of de-escalation, which involves bubbles, a stretchy fish tunnel, and yes, a play-dough moose whose script we write out. I leave work with a migraine, but my most involved client successfully finished out his day, and I was part of that success! Whew! Thus begins week five of my first job! It would have been great except for that moose...

After Christmas break I had an epiphany: I love my job! I feel so lucky to have ended up where I wanted, working with the population I wanted, earning (sort of) the salary I wanted. Wowza! All that hard work in graduate school actually paid off! I had three other epiphanies in quick succession: 1) I hate IEP paperwork, 2) some parents are absolutely nutzy, and 3) surely something can be done about this system...

There are bad days. Days with vomit, melt-downs, and arguments over the phone with the pediatrician about the need for a new swallow study. Days when parents tear up in meetings and reach out a hand to help, suggest, or pat on the back, and then you all go out for a beer and laugh and laugh and laugh. Days when you thank your lucky stars you ended up doing what you’re doing, and could never imagine doing anything else! Days when, after three years of speech therapy, little Johnny actually says /r/! You want to lift him on your shoulders and parade him down the hall! Days when, after that call to the OCS, you know you’ve done the right thing, and a moment later you can breathe again, easier. You just helped make the world a better place. That counts for a lot!

The first year after graduate school is a joy and a nightmare. No tests, no exams, and a much lower stress level—until the first parent calls to chew you out and you wait impatiently for that aide as your caseload grows too large. The joy fades into nightmare as you miss the deadline for your discretionary funding, and you can’t order the screener you want and you have to call OCS again. You almost want to quit. But then you meet objective one, and then objective two, and then one of your clients can transition to the gym without a breakdown for the first time. Then you get a paycheck! Then one of your clients says your name for the first time. Then another of your clients says THEIR name for the first time! Then you know, in spite of the phone calls, the vomit, and yes, even the moose, you’ll show up again in the morning…and you’ll love every minute of it! Well, almost every minute...

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whom she works to assume more responsibility for their therapy. Based on her own experience with disability, she has come to realize that most kids are like she was years ago—they do not tend to analyze themselves or their skill level. Laurie explains that “kids may not notice that they have a problem and may not know how to compensate for it.” She strives to help her children understand their difficulties (and assets!) at a cognitive level. All told, Laurie considers her work environment as a very positive place. “I love working with kids; they get a kick out of my visual aids, such as my talking watch.”

Laurie has two children of her own: Keaton, four years old, and Calum, 21 months. She loves working full time and is thankful for a supportive extended family—her mother watches her kids while Laurie is at work. As the school year is beginning to wind down, Laurie is looking forward to a family trip to the ocean this summer.
Dear WSU APD Clinic Coordinators:

“The WSU APD Clinic is a unique, collaborative program for the evaluation of patients with APD. How did this clinic come about and how does it work?”

Great question! Thanks for asking. In a nutshell, the Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) Clinic is designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of a patient’s ability to process specifically designed auditory stimuli under strictly controlled conditions, as well as process language-based auditory information on a functional level in the real world. We feel that the best way to accomplish this is for audiologists and speech-language pathologists to work together in evaluating, diagnosing, and treating patients with APD.

Historically, children and adults with APD have been evaluated and diagnosed by audiologists, who use appropriate diagnostic tools and effective sound attenuating test environments to identify the presence or absence of APD. Then, in the large majority of cases, the patient is referred to other specialists for treatment. The problem with this model is that there is little or no communication, much less collaboration, among the professionals involved. We feel that our model, involving audiologists and speech-language pathologists working together in evaluating and diagnosing patients with APD, leads to more realistic and more effective treatment plans.

The WSU APD Clinic is conducted one day per week. While patients range in age from 6 to 60, the average patient is 12 years old. Patients are evaluated by audiology (AUD) in the morning and by speech-language pathology (SLP) in the afternoon. AUD testing involves administration of a standard peripheral sensitivity evaluation, followed by an APD test battery consisting of dichotic speech tasks, monaural low-redundancy speech tasks, temporal processing tests, and binaural integration tasks. SLP testing uses standardized test instruments and subjective observations to assess nine areas of auditory and auditory-language processing, including auditory attention, localization, discrimination, identification, figure-ground, memory, sequencing, closure, and synthesizing. Graduate students provide the testing under faculty supervision. Following the evaluations, students and supervisors meet to discuss the results, after which they meet with the patients and their parents to share results and recommendations. In our experience, the collaborative approach provides the best functional outcome for patients, clinicians, and students in training.
In the Spotlight

Speech and Hearing Sciences students and alumni earned numerous awards and were recognized for outstanding scholarship, leadership, and service in 2007–2008. Tara Garland was named the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Outstanding Senior in Speech and Hearing Sciences. Seniors Mallorie Olson and Krista Burton were honored with the Lynn Larrigan Clinical Excellence Award in audiology and speech-language pathology, respectively. Senior Alasia Fate received the Frank and Irene Potter Memorial Scholarship. Senior Selena Galaviz and junior Ainsley Nix were named Distinguished Regents Scholars. Ainsley Nix was also awarded the Maynard Lee Daggy Scholarship and the Evelyn W. Hacker Scholarship. Junior Jessica Armijo was awarded the CLA Burgess Brothers Memorial Scholarship. Junior Elisa Turner was awarded the CLA Howard and Shirley Strobel Scholarship. Galaviz, Nix, and junior Samantha Holden are enrolled in the WSU Honors College, reflecting their outstanding academic achievement in addition to extracurricular and community involvement. Twelve of 28 (43%) seniors graduated with academic honors (i.e., summa cum laude, magna cum laude, or cum laude) in 2007–2008.

Graduate students also were recognized. Ashley Pozzolo received the Outstanding Speech and Hearing Sciences Graduate Student Commencement Award. Carly Maddox, Sara Schaaf, and Krista Jones were each awarded a Blankinship Fellowship in Childhood Language Disorders from the Scottish Rite Foundation of Washington.

We are proud of our alumni’s accomplishments as well. Stephanie Travis (’99 M.A.) and Cynthia Weber (’01 M.A.) are current co-chairs of the Native American Caucus of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Trudy Marcellay (’88 B.A.) is the chair of the Centralia Community College Board of Trustees. Marty Laronal (’01 M.A.) serves on the board of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation.

Notes from the NSSLHA Officers

The Washington State University National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) officers for the 2007–2008 school year were Danielle Srsen (president), Krista Burton (vice president), Mallorie Olson (secretary), Mallory Johnson (treasurer), Stephanie Olsen (public relations), and Kayla Kilpatrick (junior liaison). Our goal for the school year was to bring comaraderie to our students through social activities and community service, and to showcase the many contributions of the Pullman Speech and Hearing Clinic to the local communities and the WSU campus. It has been a very busy and fulfilling year.

Publicity/Recruitment

NSSLHA members represented the department at Future Cougar Day. During this event, current students were able to interact with prospective majors. It was an excellent time to raise awareness of the professions of speech-language-pathology and audiology and the WSU undergraduate program.

Community Service

In October 2007, NSSLHA organized the second annual Fall Harvest Festival. Members dressed up in fun costumes and transformed the clinic into a magical world of games and activities. Children and families receiving services from the clinic, families in the community, and children of our faculty and staff were all invited to participate.

A winter food and coat drive was held, with the collected food and clothing donated to the Pullman Community Action Center for families in need.

During WSU Dad’s Weekend and Mom’s Weekend, NSSLHA members held hearing screenings for visiting fathers and mothers and members of the community.

Clinic Clean-up is an annual event held in conjunction with WSU Cougar Pride Days. This year, members of NSSLHA spent the morning cleaning and organizing the student computer lab and workrooms, as well as therapy and material rooms.

Education

Faculty member Dr. Amy Meredith offered tips on selecting and applying to graduate programs during a special NSSLHA meeting for seniors and juniors.

The annual spring conference, organized in collaboration with the Eastern Washington University NSSLHA chapter, was held in April on the WSU Spokane Riverpoint Campus.

Social

The NSSLHA officers organized several social events. These fun events included an afternoon of ice cream sundaes and board games, a “date-dash” event, and various other “de-stressor” nights. Faculty, staff, and NSSLHA also hosted a holiday “Tamale Feast” to celebrate the end of fall semester.
In the Forefront

The Speech and Hearing Sciences faculty’s teaching, research, clinical innovations, and outreach improve the health and well-being of society and advance our professions. In 2007–2008, faculty coauthored one book and published six refereed and four invited articles. The president of the National Indian Education Association recommended Michael Pavel’s (College of Education) and Ella Inglebret’s new book—American Indian and Alaska Native Student’s Guide to College Success—as “an invaluable tool.” Inglebret was awarded the College of Liberal Arts William F. Mullen Excellence in Teaching Award. Inglebret also was awarded the Certificate of Recognition for Special Contribution in Multicultural Affairs from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Carla Jones was one of four faculty to receive the Graduate and Professional Student Association Advisor of the Year Award. Nancy Potter was awarded a second year of funding through the NIH Pediatric Research Loan Repayment Program. Jeanne Johnson completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Louisville. Chuck Madison was named to the Fulbright Senior Specialists Roster.

Faculty presented 16 refereed papers and six invited papers, seminars, and workshops at national and state professional and scientific conferences and institutes. Faculty and graduate students presented many of these papers and seminars at the annual ASHA convention in Boston, November 15–17, 2007. Amy Meredith and Ella Inglebret presented a poster on the recruitment of Native Americans into speech-language pathology and audiology. Inglebret, Meredith, and graduate student Lindsey Baker presented on the consideration of indigenous language use as part of evidence-based practice. Inglebret, Meredith, Baker, and former undergraduate Jasmine Schneidmiller presented a poster on culturally responsive intervention for American Indian children. Nancy Potter and graduate student Dana Algeo presented on the effects of environmental props on communication in aphasia group treatment. Jeanne Johnson and graduate student Katie Gray presented a poster on the core vocabulary used by fifth and eighth graders. Johnson and graduate student Maurita Birkland presented a poster on the effect of the DIR/Floortime model on communication in children with Asperger’s/Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Johnson also presented with alumnus Meng-Ju Tsai (’05 M.A.) on the facilitating effects of graphic communication for the development of communicative acts and communicative functions. Gail Chermak gave an instructional course on auditory training for (central) auditory processing disorder ((CC)APD). Also active at other professional conferences, Jon Hasbrouck and Jeff Nye presented a poster on the WSU Spokane multidisciplinary APD clinic at the annual convention of the American Academy of Audiology. Chermak delivered the opening plenary address for the ASHA annual online audiology conference. Leslie Power presented a comparison of outcomes of early childhood phonology programs at the annual ASHA Schools Conference. Reflecting her interest in international collaboration, Amy Meredith presented two papers at the First China International Conference on Speech Therapy, held in Beijing, China, in April 2007. Also active internationally, Chermak presented a seminar in Copenhagen, Denmark, sponsored by the Phonak Group.

Research and clinical faculty continued to serve as international, national, and regional practice consultants in the areas of maxillo-facial anomalies, motor speech disorders in children and adults, augmentative communication, pediatric and adult swallowing disorders, (C)APD, hearing loss, assessment and intervention with multicultural populations, and disability issues and studies. Sandy Bassett served as a consultant to the Moses Lake Birth-to-Three Program and to the pediatric programs at Sacred Heart Medical Center and Deaconess Medical Center in Spokane. Bassett also represented Spokane County at the Feeding Team Workshop, sponsored by the University of Washington’s Center for Human Development and Disability. Bassett, Chuck Madison, and Jeff Nye worked with the Eastern Washington Maxillo-Facial Defects Program. Madison also served as a consultant for the Idaho Maxillo-Facial Defects Program for Coeur d’Alene and Lewiston. Jon Hasbrouck and Nye coordinated a hearing health program for residents of the Spokane Veterans Home. Ella Inglebret organized two professional development workshops—one for the Spokane Tribe of Indians and the other held at the Muckleshoot Child Development Center in Auburn, Washington. Inglebret served as a consultant to speech-language pathologists across the region and the nation regarding cultural issues in service delivery and multicultural issues impacting special education service delivery to Native Americans. Jeanne Johnson continued to serve on the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services’ Child and Family Outcomes Measurement Task Force, Infant-Toddler Early Intervention Project. Sally Johnston continued to provide direct speech-language pathology services to patients in the Moscow-Pullman area. Carla Jones continued to serve on the Southeastern Washington Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Diagnostic Team. Amy Meredith served on the professional advisory board of the Children with Apraxia Association of North America. Marshall Mitchell was appointed to a three-year term on the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment. Nancy Potter consulted with educators in school districts across the United States, as well as in Mexico and India, on appropriate programming for students with the rare metabolic disorder galactosemia. Leslie Power presented an in-service for physical therapy assistants on working with SLPs and audiologists.
Possibilities for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

A Professional Development Symposium

In October 2007, the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences organized a professional development symposium to share best practices and explore issues relevant to meeting the needs of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The symposium grew out of the Pullman Speech and Hearing Clinic’s Oral Language Enrichment (OLE!) program, which provides an educational environment with auditory and oral language learning for young children with hearing loss. As many of the children moved on to local elementary schools, a need was observed to build regional capacity to serve these children in our public schools. Presenters focused on the spectrum of communication options available, including American Sign Language, total communication, and auditory/oral options.

Speakers included Carol Flexer, Ph.D., distinguished professor of audiology at the University of Akron, representatives of the Washington Partnership Program, the Idaho State Outreach Team, and panel discussions by parents and students. The audience, primarily comprised of multidisciplinary teams of teachers, special educators, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, teachers of the Deaf, parents, paraprofessionals, and administrators, gave rave reviews and asked that we offer another symposium again this year. The symposium committee members, Ella Inglebret, Sally Johnston, Susan Forbes, Susan Pavel, and Michael Pavel, along with undergraduate students Megan Shildmeyer and Danielle Davis and academic coordinator Lauri Sue Torkelson, are taking the lead in the planning and fund-raising process. Please save the date for the next symposium to be held in Pullman, October 2–3, 2008.

Thank you to those who made the 2007 symposium possible through their financial support, including Michael and Susan Pavel, the Wilkinson family, and Pullman Child Welfare.
Helping Children with Communication Problems in Orphanages and Community Projects in China

Assistant Professor Amy Meredith and colleagues Clinical Associate Professor Carla Jones and Pullman Audiology Coordinator Susan Forbes led nine undergraduate students (Krista Burton, Tara Garland, Andrea Gates, Kayla Kilpatrick, Mallorie Olson, Jessica Pope, Matthew Sandoval, Julana Veliz, and Erin Wims) to China over the 2008 spring break. They traveled to Shanghai and Hangzhou to learn about current practices in rehabilitative medicine for children with disabilities and to discuss various topics that were of interest to the rehabilitation and orphanage workers (e.g., feeding, autism, augmentative and alternative communication [AAC]).

During the first few days in Shanghai, they toured a center for children with cerebral palsy, a children’s hospital, and an orphanage. These visits consisted of observation and consultation, and discussion of current practices in speech therapy and audiology in China and the United States. At the children’s hospital, parents brought their children with multiple disabilities to consult with WSU faculty for treatment suggestions. The majority of the children seen had severe dysarthria and cognitive delays. WSU faculty touched on techniques for improving articulation, but stressed the importance of communication by any means and demonstrated the use of basic AAC with the children. Some quick tips on saliva management were also given.

The second half of the week was spent at the Hangzhou’s Welfare Institute (an orphanage) where six interactive, hands-on workshops were given on the topics of hearing screening, hearing loss, AAC, language stimulation, autism, and feeding. Materials related to these topics, including toys for language stimulation and otoscopes and an audiometer for hearing screening, were donated to the orphanage. When students and faculty were not presenting, they interacted with the children and modeled various language facilitation techniques to the orphanage staff. Staff reported they would be visiting orphanages in more rural areas to share their new knowledge and technology. They also plan to implement a regular hearing screening protocol for their own children.

Amy Meredith, who coordinated this first SHS faculty-led trip, plans to continue visiting China with students and colleagues every other year. If you’d like to support this endeavor, please e-mail her at mereditha@wsu.edu.