Lifetime Friendship and Service Build Endowment to Support PT Faculty

As Ohio State classmates in the late 1950's, Neva Faribo Greenwald and Nancy Greenwald Pfeifer resembled many women of their era, encouraged to pursue a career in either teaching or nursing. It was a coincidental meeting in one of her classes, according to Greenwald, where she met Gretchen (Griener) McReynolds, a student pursuing a degree in physical therapy. Her enthusiasm and knowledge persuaded Greenwald, Pfeifer and two other friends to enroll in the University's emerging PT program, one that is now ranked in the top 20 in the nation.

Greenwald chose OSU because it was the largest university in the state, while Pfeifer commuted from her home in Columbus to a main campus. They met in a history class at University Hall and soon their friendship grew to become family when Neva married Pepper's brother. For these women in the class of 1960, their PT classes were held in University Hospital under the watchful eyes of Gladys Woods, James Mitchell, John Starks and Thomas Pogue.

"When I began my career in physical therapy more than 60 years ago, I never imagined the wonderful opportunities and experiences that awaited me as a physical therapist," Greenwald recalls. With plans to retire this year as associate professor and department chair of the Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Health Related Professions at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, she felt the time was right to acknowledge the program that had started it all, and Pfeifer had plans to do likewise. In 2010, Greenwald and Pfeifer traveled back to campus to share a 50th reunion lunch with some of their PT classmates. The experience brought back memories and gratitude for the women who pioneered moving beyond the traditional career pathways offered to them. Much on campus had changed, Greenwald recalls, and later returned to Cleveland for a position at Metro Hospital. After her marriage to Jim Pfeifer, she lived and worked in Alaska, Missouri, Minnesota and Arizona, raised a son and daughter and is now a grandmother of three. She continues to travel widely with her husband, always returning to Columbus for Buckeye football and marching band skull sessions at St. John Arena.

After several years as a PT for United Cerebral Palsy and Grant Hospital in Columbus, Greenwald moved to Duke University Medical Center to become senior therapist in orthopedics and assistant director of the PT Department. She completed a master's in Community Health Education at the University of Mississippi-Columbia where she became interested in the sociology of health care and health education. She later moved to the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where she became associate professor and chair of the Department of Physical Therapy in 1979. During her tenure at Mississippi, the PT program grew from a baccalaureate to a DPT degree program, averaging an enrollment of more than 150 students. Greenwald also became active in state, regional, international and national professional boards and associations, providing guidance and leadership in the education and practice arenas. Through APTA, she served on the Sections on Geriatrics and Education and received the Lucy Blair Service Award and the Joan M. Mills Award. She has participated in the World Confederation for Physical Therapy and the American Society on Aging and has mentored hundreds of students and colleagues as they developed their careers.

"All of my employment and volunteer experiences have offered me the opportunity to learn from and interact with many wonderful people from all over the world," she says. It has been a career that exceeded any early ideas she formed about being a therapist, she adds. Because they were able to make a difference in the lives of patients, students and colleagues, Greenwald and Pfeifer are grateful that their friendship and legacy of service can continue to inspire faculty and students at Ohio State. "The only way to really try to improve health care is through education," Greenwald notes.

Faculty Experience Shapes Endowment for Research and Education in Physical Therapy

From the time she was 12 years old, Donna Redman-Bentley, PT, PhD, aspired to become a pediatric physical therapist. While completing her undergraduate degree at Penn State, where she competed on the varsity women's tennis team, a visit to Columbus led to a chance meeting with Gladys Woods, director of Ohio State's PT program. "Woody was very encouraging and after graduating from Penn State, I moved to Columbus and applied to the PT program," Dr. Redman-Bentley recalls. "I didn't realize at the time that OSU's program was one of the best in the area."

Now, 35 years after beginning her PT career, Dr. Redman-Bentley has created an endowment to support research and education at Ohio State. "I always wanted to give back to the program that prepared me for my career," she notes. "I have been involved in physical therapy education for over 30 years and am acutely aware of the resources required to offer an outstanding program as well as the need for student financial assistance." Currently the associate dean for research for the College of Allied Health Professions at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, California, Dr. Redman-Bentley now mentors faculty and students on developing research projects. After completing her graduate work at Ohio State, she obtained a PhD in Education from the University of Southern California and has been a professor and program administrator at three institutions in the Los Angeles area.

"In the past few years my career path led me to conducting clinical and educational research," she says. "It seemed natural that establishing an endowment to provide funds for program development, student scholarships and research would be an appropriate way to give back to my alma mater," she adds. "It is an endowment that can help keep Ohio State's PT program an outstanding program and help future students, I'm glad to be a part of it."