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Doris J. Shriver

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Sponsor Profile:

Doris J. Shriver



The *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT) is pleased to recognize Doris J. Shriver as the sponsor of the Spring 2018 issue. Ms. Shriver is an occupational therapist and the owner and President of O.T. Resources, Inc., based in Denver, CO. She has extensive experience in rehabilitation and comprehensive vocational assessment, including functional capacity evaluation and personal injury analysis. With over 30 years of experience, Ms. Shriver has provided individualized occupational therapy services and advocacy to thousands of clients across the lifespan.

A native of Colorado, Ms. Shriver was born and raised in a town where her high school graduating class had just 42 students. She was introduced to the field of occupational therapy at the age of 16, after she fell ill and was admitted to the hospital. One morning, she woke up to find an occupational therapist in the next bed. “I asked her a million questions, and she answered every one of them!” she said. When she returned to school, Ms. Shriver shared the encounter with her high school counselor. “I was encouraged to visit the State Home where children with severe multiple impairments lived,” she said. “It was very interesting. I wanted to help.” During her senior year, Ms. Shriver applied to the Occupational Therapy Program at

Colorado State University (CSU). She also gained hands-on experience as an occupational therapy aid in the pediatric unit at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in Downey, CA. After learning she was accepted into the occupational therapy program at CSU, a local doctor awarded Ms. Shriver a college scholarship. “Everything just fell into place,” she said.

At CSU, Ms. Shriver learned about a variety of conditions and settings, including mental health, neuro-sensory development, and physical disabilities. She had the opportunity to train in sensory integration under Dr. Jean Ayres. After completing her degree, Ms. Shriver began working at a private school where she provided occupational therapy services to children with learning disabilities. Without a designated treatment room, Ms. Shriver found quiet spaces to work with her students. “We even worked on the floor behind the curtains of the school stage,” she said. Ms. Shriver’s treatments caught the attention of a local pediatrician who eventually convinced her to start her own pediatric practice.

As Ms. Shriver’s clients transitioned into young adulthood, some returned to her for assistance finding employment. To ensure they had the necessary skills, she developed a vocational training program. “I also made friends with the human resources departments at several local companies.” When one of her clients was hurt on the job, Ms. Shriver offered to appear in court to advocate for her disability award. After they won the case, she was approached by several attorneys seeking advice on disability payments for their clients. Through word of mouth, the Colorado State Workers’ Compensation Fund reached out for assistance in developing a return-to-work program for their permanently and totally disabled workers. Ninety percent went back to work. Ms. Shriver became known as an advocate and expert in the field.

As the owner of a private practice, Ms. Shriver realized the profession of occupational therapy needed advocacy for reimbursement of services. While attending a professional

conference, Ms. Shriver met Dr. Fred Sammons, an occupational therapist and entrepreneur. “Fred came to the conference to sell his wares. He had bushel baskets full of splints and button hooks and sold them out of his station wagon,” Ms. Shriver said. In due course, Dr. Sammons would outgrow his bushel baskets to found the rehabilitation supply empire formerly known as Sammons Preston. “I will always respect Fred as ‘the inventor,’” she said. When Dr. Sammons learned about the profession’s challenges with reimbursement, he wanted to help. “Fred offered to cover my expenses, so I could dedicate my time to research and advocacy.”

In 1976, Ms. Shriver founded O.T. Resources, Inc. Dr. Sammons joined her as the chairman of the board. “He has mentored me from day one,” she said. Later that year, Ms. Shriver and fellow occupational therapist Mary Helen Marina were invited to speak at the National Association of Insurance Commissioner’s annual convention. Their presentation, “What is occupational therapy?” shared case studies of children who had benefitted from occupational therapy services while in the hospital. They also developed a handbook filled with patient testimonials. “The AOTA had rules for how to treat patients, but they never really explained what occupational therapy did,” she said. The handbook also listed the names of all universities with occupational therapy programs. “That was Fred’s idea. The insurance commissioners loved it,” said Ms. Shriver. After the presentation, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners passed the resolution to include occupational therapy in every major medical insurance plan. “They passed it right there in front of us.” In recognition of their work, the American Occupational Therapy Association awarded Ms. Shriver and Ms. Marina a service commendation for “Expanding Recognition and Reimbursement for Occupational Therapy.”

Ms. Shriver’s unique role requires her to have several qualifications in place. The Social security administration approved Ms. Shriver as a Vocational Expert (VE) where she serves at

the requests of judges at least one-thousand times each year in disability hearings. She has heard the testimony of hundreds of wounded warriors with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). “You have to be vetted,” she said. “This required obtaining security clearance from the Department of Defense just to work with the private data.” She has also been accepted as an expert in occupational therapy, vocational evaluation, and life care planning in district, state, and federal courts in several states. A Life Care Planner requires training in spinal cord injury, brain injury, amputations, multiple disabilities, the psychological aspects of disability across the life span, and forensic reporting. After training with the University of Florida, she was certified by the International Commission on Health Care Certification. This certification enables her to tease out different aspects of the client’s life. “For example, if the client has a brain injury, I can research and cost out the type of care and accommodations they will need for the rest of their life,” she said.

After more than 30 years in practice, Ms. Shriver remains enthusiastic about her work. “It’s all still very exciting to me,” she said. Throughout her career, Ms. Shriver has produced an impressive list of publications in professional journals and textbooks. She has also received recognition from her peers, including awards from the Colorado Occupational Therapy Association, the Colorado Professionals in Workers’ Compensation (past president), and the American Occupational Therapy Association (past treasurer). In 1991, she joined the American Occupational Therapy Association’s Roster of Fellows. Ms. Shriver’s work has touched thousands of lives. As a result of her good work, O.T. Resources, Inc., continues to flourish.

When Ms. Shriver is not working in her clinic, you may find her at the “Shriver Ranch,” in an adobe home high in the Sangre de’ Christo mountains in Southern Colorado. Ms. Shriver designed and built the home herself (see Figure 1). This required an extensive amount of time

and research. “I got my PhD in adobe,” she said. Whether she is working from her clinic or her mountain home, Ms. Shriver continues to serve others as a practitioner, advocate, and expert. “When people ask me when are you going to retire? I say, why would I? Occupational therapy is the best profession ever.”



Figure 1. Shriver Ranch.

To learn more about O.T. Resources, Inc., visit:

<http://otresourcesinc.com/>

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