



January 2020

Quilting and Sharing: Promoting Lifelong Learning and Service to Others

Jennifer Fortuna

Grand Valley State University - USA, jennifer.fortuna@wmich.edu

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Recommended Citation

Fortuna, J. (2020). Quilting and Sharing: Promoting Lifelong Learning and Service to Others. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 8(1), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.15453/2168-6408.1712>

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Quilting and Sharing: Promoting Lifelong Learning and Service to Others

Abstract

Lynne Hall, an occupational therapist, educator, and quilter based in Kalamazoo, MI, provided the cover art for the Winter 2020 issue of *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT). "Four Patch Posy" is a 45" x 55" quilt made from cotton. In her 50th year of occupational therapy practice, Lynne's philosophy is rooted in lifelong learning and service to others. The quilt aesthetic provides Lynne a creative medium to serve in her community. With her person-centered approach, Lynne facilitates human potential in the clients, students, and community members she serves. Success in both occupational therapy practice and quilting require a holistic understanding that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Keywords

occupational therapist, occupational therapy, art, quilting, teaching, lifelong learning, service, community

Credentials Display

Jennifer Fortuna, MS, OTR/L

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DOI: 10.15453/2168-6408.1712

In general, creating a patchwork quilt involves stitching scraps of colorful fabric together in thoughtful juxtapositions to tell a story. In nineteenth-century America, quilts were considered to be important historical documents for transmitting information that may have otherwise been overlooked (Witzling, 2009). For many, quilting offers more than a creative means to reconstruct the past. King (2001) identifies several reasons why people make quilts, including leisure, socialization, self-expression, and stress reduction. The ultimate meaning behind quilt making hinges on the maker. In some ways, the process of creating a quilt is similar to the occupational therapy process.

The quilt aesthetic, in which something whole and beautiful is pieced from discarded fragments, provides an alternative model of artistic creativity, one that can take place within the flow of daily life, one in which a work of art need not be created following linear structure. (Witzling, 2009, p. 620)

The *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process* describes the occupational therapy process as fluid and dynamic (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2014). For example, occupational analysis requires understanding of the complex interaction among various systems, or parts. “Occupational therapy practitioners attend to each aspect and gauge the influence of each on the others, individually, and collectively” (AOTA, 2014, p. S11). Both processes involve disjunction and uniformity; art and science. Occupational therapy is a powerful tapestry of human potential that unfolds when the art and science of clinical practice are therapeutically applied (Wood, 1995).

Lynne Hall, an occupational therapist, educator, and quilter based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, provided the cover art for the Winter 2020 issue of *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT). “Four Patch Posy” (see Figure 1) is a 45” x 55” quilt made from cotton. In her 50th year of occupational therapy practice, Lynne’s philosophy is rooted in lifelong learning and service to others. The quilt aesthetic provides Lynne a creative medium to serve others in her community. With her person-centered approach, Lynne facilitates human potential in the clients, students, and community members she serves. Success in both occupational therapy practice and quilting requires a holistic understanding that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Lynne was raised in Ypsilanti, Michigan. In high school, she was introduced to her future profession of occupational therapy by a neighbor, who was an occupational therapist. Lynne enrolled at Western Michigan University (WMU) because the university had a highly rated occupational therapy program. “I did not know anyone at WMU,” she said. “It was scary at first, but I

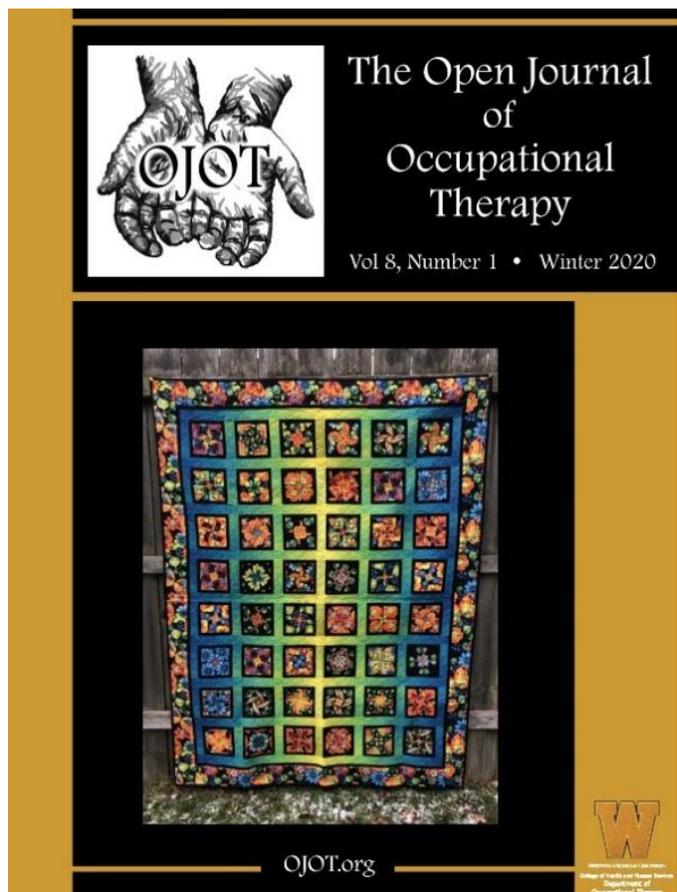


Figure 1. Cover art for OJOT, Vol 8, No 1, Winter, 2020.

pledged at a sorority and found several like-minded women.” While enrolled in the program, Lynne took an elective course on Braille. “At the time, I was teaching knitting to students who were blind. I needed to learn Braille to help my students read the patterns,” she said. Over the course of the semester, Lynne developed a friendship with classmate Bob Hall. In time, their friendship bloomed. In 1968, Lynne and Bob were married. “The inside of his wedding band says ‘with love’ in reversed Braille,” said Lynne. Today, the couple has been married for over 50 years. They have two children, Amy and Michael.

During her final semester in the occupational therapy program, Lynne was assigned a fieldwork rotation at Los Angeles County General Hospital, one of the largest public hospitals in the country. She worked in the pediatric physical disabilities unit. “It was fast-paced, but I learned so much,” she said. In this setting, Lynne had the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Jean Ayres, a renowned occupational therapist and theorist. Dr. Ayres is also known for developing and standardizing the Southern California Sensory Integration Tests (SCSIT), which is used to evaluate sensory integration in children. In 1969, Lynne graduated from WMU with a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy and a double minor in biology and art. Bob earned two master’s degrees from WMU, one in orientation and mobility and the other in rehabilitation teaching for the blind. After graduation, Lynne accepted a full-time position as a pediatric staff therapist at Los Angeles County General Hospital.

In 1970, Bob accepted a job at the Michigan Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, a residential training center. Lynne and Bob returned to Kalamazoo, Michigan. Bob was the Center’s first orientation and mobility instructor. He later developed the Mini Adjustment Program, a mobile classroom that could take his services directly to participants throughout Michigan. Bob and his staff taught people who are new to blindness alternative ways of doing things. Nearly 50 years later, the program continues to offer four sessions per year. Lynne was also hired at the Center to establish an occupational therapy program. “We were the first teachers employed at the Center,” she said. Each week in the beginning years, Lynne supervised seven fieldwork students from WMU’s occupational therapy program.

In 1972, Lynne and Bob welcomed their first child, a daughter named Amy. Lynne resigned at the Center and began teaching for the Department of Occupational Therapy at WMU. “Students from the program came to our home to care for Amy so I could teach,” she said. Lynne worked as a full-time instructor for 5 years. She taught a variety of courses on developmental assessment, physical disabilities, and arts and crafts for teachers of the blind. “There were no textbooks at the time,” said Lynne. “Each semester, we handed out 185 mimeograph sheets on techniques to address physical disabilities.” During her time as a professor, Lynne also served as a clinician at the Marion R. Spear Occupational Therapy Clinic at WMU’s Unified Clinics. In 1982, she earned a master’s degree in audiovisual media. The course work provided Lynne opportunities to explore her interests in photography and technology.

Throughout her career, Lynne often had several jobs at the same time. “There was never a dull moment,” she said. On occasion, Lynne received recognition for her dedication and hard work. In 1973, she organized a Medicaid Screening Clinic for the Kalamazoo County Health Department with several other occupational therapists. The program earned recognition as the county’s Outstanding Volunteer Program by the Department of Social Services. In 1974, the Michigan Occupational Therapy Association (MiOTA) awarded Lynne the Outstanding Occupational Therapist Award. In 1977, she started a private practice treating children with learning disabilities and sensory processing disorders. She developed treatment activities for intervention that are both fun and functional. Lynne’s client-centered approach aimed to incorporate her clients’ interests while teaching lifelong skills. “You have to honor children,” she said. “You have to get into their world and respect them. As occupational

therapists, we do that for all of our patients.” Lynne continued her private practice for 27 years. This year marks her 50th year of occupational therapy practice. “It’s a wonderful profession,” she said.

Lynne has been teaching courses in several departments at WMU for 47 years. In 1986, she taught elementary school teachers practical computer skills under the Instructional Development and Continuing Education Department. Lynne has also taught courses on technology for older adults through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Lynne currently teaches a course on growth and development to undergraduate students in the College of Health and Human Services. “My passion is teaching. That is what I will always do,” she said.

Lynne’s teaching philosophy is rooted in lifelong learning. “I want to learn something new every day,” she said. When Amy and Michael started elementary school full time, Lynne set out to learn a new skill. “I wanted to learn either weaving or quilting,” she said. A friend helped Lynne get started in quilting. “It is a wonderful hobby,” she said. “I always have quilts in progress.” Lynne’s designs are inspired by the people and things that bring meaning to her life. “Flowers on Silk” (see Figure 2) is a 45” x 45” quilt made from cotton and silk. The quilt also incorporates Lynne’s love of photography. “Bob has the most beautiful flowers in the summer and I love to photograph them,” she said. To create the quilt, Lynne transferred pictures of Bob’s flowers to silk fabric. “A few years ago, this quilt hung in an exhibit at the Paducah Kentucky quilt museum,” said Lynne. “It was a true honor.”

Japanese culture is another source of Lynne’s inspiration. “Bob was president of the Kalamazoo - Numazu Sister City Committee for 10 years,” said Lynne. In the 1980’s, Bob and Lynne hosted an exchange student from Japan. Yuki was 16 years old when she arrived. Every Christmas, Yuki sends Lynne a quilting magazine from Japan. “Japanese Stars” (see Figure 3) is a 50” x 60” quilt created with Japanese and American fabrics. “The flowers stitched into the corners of the quilt represent



Figure 2. “Flowers on Silk,” by Lynne Hall.



Figure 3. “Japanese Stars,” by Lynne Hall.

Japanese folded flowers,” said Lynne. When Bob was diagnosed with cancer, Yuki came to the United States to visit him. She gifted him 1,000 origami cranes that she had folded along with family and friends. According to Japanese legend, the person who folds the cranes will be granted one wish. Yuki’s wish for Bob to beat his cancer was granted. Bob and Lynne see Yuki approximately every 2 years. “She is like our daughter,” said Lynne.

Lynne is a member of the Kalamazoo Log Cabin Quilter’s guild, which currently has over 200 active members. The guild has provided her new opportunities to serve others in the community. In recent years, the guild has donated hundreds of handmade quilts to local service projects. “There are so many needs. So many things you can do,” said Lynne. In 2012 and 2017, more than 100 quilts were donated to WMU’s Seita Scholar Program. Recipients of the quilts were incoming students who recently aged out of the foster care system. In 2018, the guild donated 95 wall hangings and 100 quilts to the West Michigan Cancer Center. The wall hangings were displayed at the Art in Healing Quilt Exhibition for over a year. Each quilt was made in honor of someone who had cancer. “Every one of us has been touched by cancer,” said Lynne. In 2019, the guild donated 469 quilt-wrapped stuffed animals, known as “lovies,” to organizations serving children who have been removed from their homes. Joining the guild has empowered Lynne to expand her outreach. “You take your passion and you share it. We love to do that,” she said.

The quilting guilds of today are equivalent to the quilting bees of the past where women would gather together for socialization and community building (Howell & Pierce, 2000). Every year, quilting enthusiasts gather for QuiltCon, the largest modern quilt show and conference in the world. QuiltCon participants are eager to learn the latest trends in quilting. Last year, modern quilts took center stage. “Modern quilts have so much meaning,” said Lynne. She remembers one particular quilt with the word “poverty” stitched across the front in very large letters. “You could not see what it said up close, you had to back away,” she said. “It was as if the quilt was saying poverty is right in front of your face, but you do not see it.” Lynne believes the Internet has created several exciting networking opportunities for the quilting community. In 2019, she created the quilt “40 Trinket Blocks” (see Figure 4) during a worldwide online sew-along on Instagram. Social media platforms have made it easier for quilters to learn new skills and connect with others who share the same interests.



Figure 4. “40 Trinket Blocks,” by Lynne Hall.

Lynne Hall is passionate about teaching, learning, and service to others. Quilting has provided her with a creative medium to learn new skills and to help people in the local community. Lynne finds design inspiration in the people and things that bring meaning to her life. Using a person-centered

approach, she promotes human potential in the clients, students, and community members she serves. After 50 years of clinical practice, Lynne plans to continue teaching and learning, serving others, and making quilts to give away. “I see myself making quilts for charity as long as I can,” she said. Lynne’s career reflects a life dedicated to serving others. “When you retire, you have to find ways to give back. So, what do you do?” asks Lynne. “You keep giving. It is part of you.”

View more of Lynne Hall’s quilts in the OJOT Gallery:

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/ojot_occupationandartist/29/

Other Resources

Learn more about the Kalamazoo Log Cabin Quilters Guild:

https://klcq.org/?fbclid=IwAR33z292Yu8Qr4wosALeD_M5AcqAQ5LX52HpLMc2vdmwParGh2tLrvI_9zs

Follow the Kalamazoo Log Cabin Quilters Guild on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Kalamazoologcabinquilters/>

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