Interview with MaryBeth Creighton by Reese Miller, OTS

For the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA), MaryBeth Creighton was interviewed about her career in occupational therapy (OT) on October 15, 2018. Mrs. Creighton graduated from Towson University’s Occupational Therapy program in 1987. She currently resides in Harford County with her husband, shih tzus, and has three sons. She specializes in lymphedema therapy and has been an adjunct professor for the Towson University OT department for the past 10 years.

In high school, Mrs. Creighton was teaching Sunday school and one of the students in her class had cerebral palsy, so she “had to offer lots of accommodations” (M. Creighton, personal communication, October 15, 2018). That student’s mom was an occupational therapist and recommended Mrs. Creighton to purse OT. Mrs. Creighton also volunteered for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Camp Maria, which allowed participants with disabilities to have a normal camp experience—even if they needed accommodations. After participating in this camp, she “recognized that the mission of this camp was congruent with what OT is, which started me on my OT path” (M. Creighton, personal communication, October 15, 2018).

Mrs. Creighton has worked in many different settings throughout her career such as outpatient physical disability, acute psychiatric unit, hand therapy clinics, and home health. She has had a managerial position in subacute rehabilitation at a skilled nursing facility. Mrs. Creighton has also been the director of rehabilitation at Upper Chesapeake Health, and an adjunct professor at Towson University.

Currently she specializes in lymphedema treatment and working with cancer patients. Mary Kate Bailey at Sheppard Pratt “set the tone for what I aspired to be. She was so calm and collected, but at the same time guided me and let me stumble and figure out what worked, what didn’t work; she protected me.” Bailey was so well-respected and inspired me.

Paula Williams at Fort Howard set the tone again; encouragement while still letting me grow.

Patty Kines at first job, Sue Henry at Kernan, and Lainy Skittle-Watson at Fallston were all role models. Rachel Piggot mentored me back into the clinic after being in management for a while.

Throughout these various settings, Mrs. Creighton met Rachel Piggot, who is a hand therapy specialist. Mrs. Piggot stood out in Mrs. Creighton’s career because she “mentored my clinical skills when I went transitioned from my managerial position back to patient care” and “she introduced me to lymphedema and OT” (M. Creighton, personal communication, October 15, 2018).

When asked what factors, like political and social climates and OT history and philosophy, influenced her practice the most, Mrs. Creighton noted that “I identified with Gail Fidler and liked her philosophy of doing, that she recognized that we’re not idle beings, that she knew we need to do things to shape our identities, that she was involved in activity analysis, and she supported “use of activities prescriptively.” Fidler resonated with me as well as Mary Reilly. MOHO was around and built on Reilly’s beliefs that we need to look at our client’s motivations, beliefs, and values and we need to look at the environment.

Currently I have identified the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E). When she was attending OT school, she did not have all the theories that are developed today, but because of the proposal of various theories during her career, Mrs. Creighton has grown to base her practice on the CMOP-E. She likes how the CMOP-E “sees spirituality as the center of the person, focuses the core concern of OT on occupation, goes beyond occupational performance to include engagement, and stresses the importance of competence as occupational therapists” (M. Creighton, personal communication, October 15, 2018).

As a member of MOTA, Mrs. Creighton finds membership in this organization important to being involved in the culture of occupational therapy. It helps a person be aware of and involved in current social and political issues regarding OT. When asked if her career has been as fulfilling as she thought it would be, Mrs. Creighton thought it absolutely has been. “The most rewarding has been seeing a patient progress and knowing that you have made a difference, someone’s quality of life has improved, and that we were able to advocate for their needs” (M. Creighton, personal communication, October 15, 2018).

Mrs. Creighton’s top recommendation for an OT student was “never stop learning” (M. Creighton, personal communication, October 15, 2018). As she recommended, continuous OT learning will not only help a person in their career but also help them to be passionate and excited about occupational therapy.