



# OTA Corner

## I Feel Lucky

*by Mary Laurence (OTA)*



Hello! I am an OTA/L working at Occupational Therapy Training Program (OTTP)/Special Service for Groups (SSG). It is based in Los Angeles and is the largest nonprofit mental health agency servicing at-risk youth ages five to 21 years. I have been practicing as an OTA/L for almost five years and have worked with OTTP full-time for 4 and 1/2 years.

While walking through a school garden in Long Beach a few years ago, I became inspired to start one for the OTTP clients. I made a phone call to the City of Torrance Parks and Recreation and was handed a key for a community garden plot the very next day. The city has donated the plot for the past two years.

I, along with Nancy Haggerty (another OTA/L at OTTP), created a structured 12-week horticulture group open to clients of all ages and backgrounds. In those 12 weeks, clients learn basic gardening tasks and participate in teamwork activities such as scavenger hunts. The beautiful setting near Palos Verdes energizes the clients and brightens their moods. Clients also participate in outings to different community gardens (Veteran's garden), farmer's markets and other botanic gardens.

As an OTA/L in my setting, I have the freedom to assist with a variety of sites, which provides me the opportunity to work with many different therapists and clients. OTTP is a unique children's mental health setting, where OTs work alongside social workers (MSW) and family therapists (MFT). This aspect of my job is one of the most rewarding. I have learned so much from my colleagues and am always challenged and encouraged to think outside the box when helping a client achieve his or her goals.



Marge Piercy wrote a poem, "To Be of Use," and said in it, "I want to be with people who submerge in the task, who go into the fields to harvest." When I submerge myself in the task of helping a client, I love my work. It is most rewarding when I see a client immersed and wholly occupied in a meaningful activity.

I feel lucky to work in a unique, supportive environment with several creative, caring therapists. I am happy to work for supervisors who allow me to think, work and play outside the box. OTAC