

2012

Impact

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS CHANGING LIVES



Feeding Bode Miller

and Lindsey Vonn, Billy Demong, Gretchen Bleiler...

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Photo by Kaiman Zabarsky



Dear Alumni and Friends,

It's no secret that the health care field continues to face new and complex challenges with each passing day—making it more important than ever to prepare future professionals to thrive in this dynamic arena. At Sargent, we have always emphasized a multifaceted, interdisciplinary approach by encouraging collaboration between our programs and complementing students' academic pursuits with research and community outreach opportunities.

I'm pleased to say the results of our efforts continue to be gratifying, as illustrated by the rise of our graduate programs in the latest *U.S. News & World Report* ratings. Specifically, our physical therapy program moved up eight places to number 16 out of 201 programs, while speech, language & hearing sciences climbed four places to stand at 21 out of 250 programs. We also remained in the highest echelon of occupational therapy programs, ranking second out of 156 on this year's list. **We are the only university in New England to have three nationally ranked health programs all place in the top 25.**

Rankings aren't everything, of course, but they say a lot about our reputation among our peers—and potential students and employers. New faculty appointments (you can see some of the latest impressive additions on page 3) and a rise in research funding, which has nearly doubled to \$9.3 million since 2007, have played significant roles in raising our national profile. We've also established BU's Center for Enhancing Activity & Participation among Persons with Arthritis (ENACT) thanks to a \$4 million grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

Just as important is our outreach work in the community. From student-led diabetes awareness efforts in Belize to a multidisciplinary intensive stroke rehabilitation initiative in Boston, we're constantly translating our research and expertise into practical programs that make an impact on people's everyday lives. The clinical advances made by our faculty could improve your health, too: If you take supplements or support a family member with worsening vision, you'll want to check out our expert advice articles on pages 9 and 12.

When I meet with you at events here and across the country, I also learn about the many diverse—and creative—paths our alums have taken to make a difference in the world. In this issue, you'll read about some of the fascinating ways former Sargent students are using their education to help others, from a nutritionist fueling Olympic skiers to a physical therapist helping animals recover from surgery.

There's a lot to feel good about at Sargent and this issue of *Impact* captures some of this year's highlights. I hope you'll take the opportunity to experience the excitement for yourself at one of our many upcoming events (turn to page 13 for some dates for your calendar) and at Alumni Weekend 2012 on September 21–23.

I look forward to seeing you there, and hearing about the impact your Sargent years have had on you.

With warm regards,

Gloria Waters

Gloria Waters
Dean and Professor

Impact 2012

Boston University College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences: Sargent College

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SARGENT SNAPSHOTS

Accelerated Development

By Patrick L. Kennedy

SARGENT'S NOVEL RESIDENCY PROGRAM IS TURNING NEW PHYSICAL THERAPY CLINICIANS INTO SEASONED EXPERTS.

In today's typically busy clinic, physical therapists don't have much time to mentor the newbies, says Clinical Associate Professor Terry Ellis (MED'05). "New clinicians are left to fend for themselves, seeking mentoring on their own, and just getting it piecemeal."

Ellis is changing that situation with a neuro-residency program that matches newly licensed clinicians with designated mentors for a year of practice, guidance, and continuing education. The aim is to accelerate the rookies' development into board-certified specialists and even leaders in the profession.

Similar to the model widely used in medicine, Sargent's Neurological Physical Therapy Residency Program, which Ellis directs, is one of the first of its kind, and the only such program in New England.

Residents work 30 hours a week—for one six-month rotation at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and for another at Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital.

At Beth Israel, an acute care hospital in Boston, they gain experience in critical care, neuromedicine, neurosurgery, and trauma service; at Braintree, an acute rehab setting 15 miles south of the city, they work with longer-term patients who have had strokes or who have experienced traumatic brain injuries.

"I get an appreciable amount of time with different patient populations, so I gain a sense of how examining and treating them differs," says Jennifer Boudreau ('09,'11), a resident who did her first rotation at Braintree, meeting regularly with mentor Alexis Roche ('04).

"It's great to have the freedom to work independently, now that I'm licensed," Boudreau says,



Photo by Cydney Scott



Jennifer Boudreau is one of the first physical therapists in New England to take on a medical-style residency.

→ continued from page 1

“but I also have someone available to talk to, to get feedback from when I ask, ‘How can I get my patients even better, faster? How can I improve?’”

In addition to the clinical work, residents attend weekly distance learning webinars through Sargent’s participation in the Neurologic Physical Therapy Professional Education Consortium, based at the University of Southern California (USC). In every session, prominent therapists and researchers lecture on topics such as differential diagnosis, neuroplasticity, and the principles of motor learning. Residents also travel to USC twice a year for four days of in-person seminars.

“It’s been really nice to hear that information from the experts,” says Boudreau, “and then to be able to discuss it with Alexis on site in the clinic where I’m working.”

Beside learning new principles, the residents are also teaching familiar ones. Once a week, they help Ellis with the lab portion of the Sargent course, Examination and Treatment of Neurological Systems. Additionally, residents keep a hand in research, assisting Ellis at the Center for Neurorehabilitation at Boston University.

“This leads to an understanding of what goes into evidence-based practice,” says Ellis, who also places residents in community service projects. “By participating in the research, they’re contributing to the knowledge base that guides clinical practice. We’re moving physical therapy (PT) forward in terms of the science, the underpinning of the profession.”

The initiative puts Sargent on the leading edge of PT training. Ellis says the field is under pressure to advance its practice to “meet the demands of society, which needs more clinical specialists as the baby boomers get older, and advances in medical management keep people living longer.”

Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that employment of physical therapists will grow by 30 percent by the end of this decade. “People are living with conditions like Parkinson’s longer, so the demand on rehab increases,” Ellis says. “There’s a need for experts.”

Join the Program

You can learn more about the physical therapy residency program—and find out how to apply—at www.bu.edu/ptresidency.

Innocent Indulgence

When Sargent gets in the kitchen, even chocolate fondue can be guilt-free. For one night each semester, the College’s food and education program, Sargent Choice, takes over BU’s dining halls to showcase delicious new recipes and teach students about healthy eating.

Sargent Choice Nutrition Center experts are on hand during the one-night event to offer advice and promote its services, including one-credit classes and nutrition counseling. At least one Sargent Choice entrée and several à la carte options are available every day at BU, so the event also helps expand year-round offerings.

“I think alumni would be really surprised how much dining on campus has changed over the years,” says Sarah Butler (’06, ’08; GSM’13), a registered dietitian at the Center. “Sargent Choice makes it easy for students to go into a dining hall and find the healthiest option and create a balanced meal.”



Photos by Cydney Scott

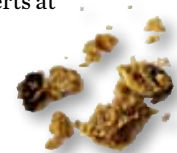


A Healthy and Tasty Cookie?



It is possible. Check out the recipe for Sargent Choice’s Whole Grain Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies—and other yummy, wholesome treats and meals—at www.bu.edu/sargentchoice. Alums can also register for nutrition counseling with Sargent’s experts at www.bu.edu/scnutrition.

Photo by Kalman Zabarsky



New AT SARGENT

THEY’VE MAPPED THE BRAIN, TREATED SCHIZOPHRENIA, AND ADVISED THE GOVERNMENT. AND NOW THEY’RE ALL FACULTY AT SARGENT.



Photo by Melody Komyerov

In 2011, 15 BU students crossed the dusty back roads of rural Belize to the hilltop hamlet of San Pedro Columbia. They were part of a Sargent College pilot program to educate villagers about the country’s number-one killer: diabetes. See the difference they made at www.bu.edu/bostonia/fall11/belize.

Jennifer Gottlieb, research assistant professor at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, has published widely on the care of people with schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses. She previously held positions at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

Susan McGurk, associate professor of occupational therapy, is a leading neuropsychologist. She specializes in the study of schizophrenia and the development of supportive employment for those with severe mental illnesses. McGurk joins Sargent from Dartmouth Medical School.

Kim Mueser, executive director, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, and professor of occupational therapy, is recognized as a world leader in the field of mental health. He is the U.S. editor of the *Journal of Mental Health* and is a frequent National Institute of Mental Health review committee member.

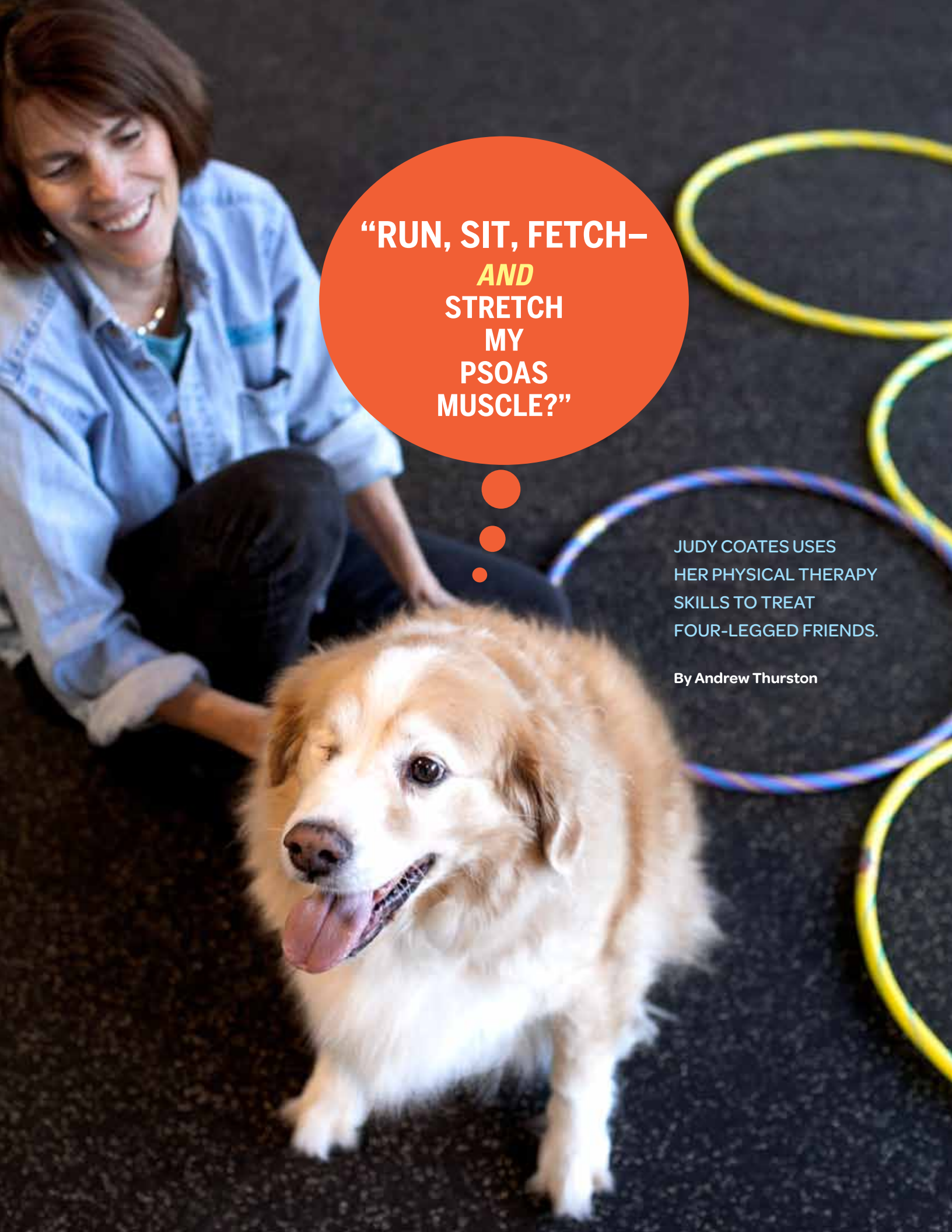
Jason Tourville, research assistant professor of speech, language & hearing sciences, is a cognitive and computational neuroscientist. In his research, Tourville (GRS’08) maps the areas of the brain involved in speech to help uncover new treatments for speech disorders.

And Introducing...

Sargent College has appointed a new assistant dean for development & alumni relations. **Cynthia J. Wachs** brings private-sector and nonprofit experience to the role, having served as the director of the New England Capital Campaign for Brown University and chief operations officer at the Donald Saunders Companies and Boston Park Plaza Hotel. She sits on numerous boards nationally and internationally, and was the director of the annual fund and alumni relations programs for the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard Partners Program. You can contact Wachs at cjwachs@bu.edu and 617-353-2286.

1931

The average SAT score for current Sargent undergraduates is 1931, putting them in the 90th percentile for the nation’s college-bound students. Sources: Sargent College and the College Board



**“RUN, SIT, FETCH—
AND
STRETCH
MY
PSOAS
MUSCLE?”**

JUDY COATES USES
HER PHYSICAL THERAPY
SKILLS TO TREAT
FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS.

By Andrew Thurston

Omo walks like John Wayne.

The honey-colored dog’s right hind leg kicks out to the side as he shuffles a loop of the animal clinic reception, sniffing strangers. Every couple of steps, the leg gives way and he unexpectedly sinks onto his rear, his bushy tail leaving hairs strewn across the floor.

“You must be here to see Judy,” says a passing veterinarian to the border collie and golden retriever mix.

Judy Coates (SED’74,’81; SAR’86) is a certified canine rehabilitation therapist—for legal reasons, she can’t call herself a physical therapist for dogs, but it sums up her work. She helps dachshunds overcome back injuries, Labradors cope with arthritis, and English setters get through knee surgery. Today, she’s treating Omo, a nine-year-old with a misbehaving back leg.

NOT-SO-RUFF TREATMENT

His sniffing session over, Omo’s first visit to the Small Animal Veterinary Emergency Services clinic in suburban Lebanon, New Hampshire, begins with an evaluation. While reassuring Omo—“It’s OK, Sweetie Pie”—Coates quizzes his owner about the dog’s medical history, recent problems, and home life; the latter brings up an early recommendation—cheap scatter rugs to add some grip to wooden floors. But she needs to see him in action, too, so Omo’s owner eases her family pet into a big warehouse-style exercise room scattered with jumps, hoops, and balls.

After a couple of laps, Coates is honing in on a problem. Omo has limited proprioception—he doesn’t quite know where his joints and limbs are in relation to each other. She ends the laps and grips Omo in a hug to check out his muscles: his hamstrings are flabby, his quads are good. A gourmet sweet-potato-and-duck treat is held behind him to “see if he can take his head towards his back,” says Coates. “I want to see range of motion in his back, in his spine.” A second treat, chicken this time, is held high in front of his nose to force him on to his hind legs.

Coates, who trained and then taught at Sargent for much of the 1990s

as a physical therapist for humans (she still sees some two-legged patients), first started treating dogs in 2004.

Although she’d always loved animals, the American Physical Therapy Association had been on the fence for years about therapy for dogs; when that changed, she took a certification course in canine rehab and jumped in. While she’s had to “become very savvy in canine behavior” to work with patients who can’t talk back, Coates says many of the treatments she uses for pets are the same as those she learned at Sargent for helping people: “The soft tissues of the canine species are identical to those of the human species. We use all of the same techniques in terms of trigger point work, friction massage, and soft tissue and joint mobilization.”

The major difference is the speed of recovery. Dogs can quickly bounce back from injuries humans may take years to return from. Coates has even had medical doctors bring in their pets and tell her that if the dog were human, they wouldn’t expect any progress—no matter how much time they had. That’s because dogs don’t “have a left and right brain in the same way that people have,” according to Coates, “so they have a lot more to pull from in terms of nerve regeneration and neurological recovery.”

THE DIAGNOSIS

That’s good news for Omo.


Coates has moved her evaluation into a smaller examination room now. Again, she’s on the floor, this time working Omo’s muscles as he sits on a blue pulsed electric magnetic field mat, which uses pain-free magnets to stimulate the oxygen in tissues. Having spotted proprioceptive loss, Coates is looking for the root cause of the problem; when she pulls the psoas muscle in his back, Omo twitches and Coates has her answer. Omo is likely suffering from a neurological issue in the spine. He’d been seen by a veterinarian for arthritis before his back leg went rogue (Coates won’t treat any animal without a referral), but Coates thinks an MRI and a trip to a neurologist would be beneficial to confirm her diagnosis.

In the meantime, she outlines some exercises for the owner to begin treatment at home: “I spend a large part of every visit teaching owners a home exercise program and have them practice it with me,” says Coates. For Omo, the program includes tail pulls “for general traction against the spine,” tummy tickles to improve core stability, joint compressions, and “brushing and tapping against the grain of the hair” on his leg and back to “stimulate the nervous system.” Omo is also put on the pumpkin diet—swapping one-third of his kibble allowance for canned pumpkin—to help him get trim.

“The soft tissues of the canine species are identical to those of the human species. We use all of the same techniques in terms of trigger point work, friction massage, and soft tissue and joint mobilization.” —JUDY COATES

As veterinary care improves, Coates says she’s seeing more dogs like Omo who are nudging past their middle years and battling arthritis and other age-related conditions. This afternoon, she’ll be working with two dogs due at the clinic for orthopedic surgeries—one for a hip problem, the other for a knee issue. The only hitch she anticipates is their speedy recovery; while it “almost feels miraculous at times,” she quips that it “isn’t always good for my business.”

Omo, now full of duck and chicken treats, will be back, however. After an hour-and-a-half appointment, he’s not dropping to the floor as often, but the John Wayne swagger is still there. Before the afternoon’s patients arrive, he has time for a quick good-bye: a big, sappy, wet lick for Coates. “Oh, thank you!” she says as her happy patient hops back to his owner. Whether he’ll be such a big fan when he finds out about the pumpkin diet is another matter. ■

 **Explore a Canine Rehab Session**
Watch Judy Coates help family dog Griffin recover from neck surgery at www.bu.edu/today/2012/physical-therapy.



CARVING TURNS, SHREDDING PIPE, GRABBING AIR—AND WINNING GOLD—WITH HELP FROM DIETITIAN ADAM KORZUN.

Adam Korzun has a simple philosophy: “Nutrition is not going to win you a gold medal, but it can definitely keep you from getting one.”

The sports dietitian for the United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA), Korzun ('05) made sure nutrition wasn't a barrier for U.S. skiers and snowboarders competing in the 2010 Olympic Games, where Team USA won 37 medals—the largest medal haul for any nation in Winter Olympics history. With those Vancouver victories behind

Springs. With his previous experience as a chef, his dietetic credentials, and his Sargent training in exercise physiology, Korzun was a perfect fit for the role.

In Colorado, he helped prepare weight lifters, kayakers, wrestlers, and pentathletes to compete in the 2008 Summer Olympics. When the USOC shifted its focus to winter sports, Korzun began spending considerable time in Park City, Utah, consulting with the men's alpine ski team. He assisted the trainers there with a yearlong study:

Korzun attributes part of the team's success in Vancouver to a decision to house athletes outside the official Olympic Village. During the games, U.S. skiers and snowboarders stayed in condominiums, where all their meals were prepared by private chefs according to Korzun's nutritional guidelines. The controlled environment minimized exposure to the Olympic Village's international supply of germs, discouraged partying, encouraged team bonding, and—most

How to Eat Your Way to Olympic Gold



Dietitian Adam Korzun (left) prepares the meals—including pancakes for dinner (center)—that fuel America's star winter athletes, such as Bode Miller (far left).



By Corinne Steinbrenner

them, Korzun now has his sights, and his finely tuned nutrition plans, focused on the 2014 games in Sochi, Russia.

BREAKING TRAINING RECORDS
Fueling Olympic athletes has been Korzun's job since 2007 when he joined with the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) as a sport dietitian. A culinary-school graduate with experience at Boston's Four Seasons Hotel, Korzun completed Sargent College's Master of Science in Nutrition program and was working in Boston-area hospitals when Clinical Associate Professor Joan Salge Blake (SAR'84) sent out an email advertising a position at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado

“We were checking and monitoring blood glucose levels, hydration, hematocrit, hemoglobin, etc., when the athletes were cooking on their own, when they were eating a meal plan, and when they were using private catering.” For the final phase of the study, Korzun traveled with the alpine team to a training camp in New Zealand where he planned and prepared all their meals himself. “It was the highest training level they'd ever achieved at camp. All of the blood parameters were perfect,” he says. Convinced of the benefits of concentrating on nutrition, USSA's high performance director invited Korzun to help strategize for the 2010 Vancouver games.

important for Korzun—ensured that athletes were properly fueled for their competitions.

During the games, Korzun accepted a full-time position with USSA, making it the only U.S. national governing body with a dedicated dietitian on staff. Korzun now works at USSA's five-acre Center of Excellence in Park City with a team of strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers, physical therapists, and other specialists, all charged with developing and maintaining the health and performance of 146 World Cup-level athletes.



Left: Photo by Tom Kelly. Above left and right: Sarah Ely. U.S. Ski Team/USSA



Stacey Zawacki

Should I Take Vitamin Supplements?

A SARGENT DIETITIAN OFFERS ADVICE.

By Corinne Steinbrenner



News reports are filled with conflicting studies on the benefits and risks of taking vitamin and mineral supplements. The mixed messages can leave consumers wondering if buying a bottle of vitamins is a worthy health investment or money wasted. According to Stacey Zawacki ('98), Sargent Choice Nutrition Center director and clinical assistant professor—who provides private nutrition counseling and teaches the class, Food, Supplements, and Consumer Health—there's good reason for the consumer confusion. The answer to "Should I take vitamins?" is never a simple yes or no.

"Everyone is unique," she says, so her recommendations depend on an individual's nutritional needs, health goals, food preferences, and other factors. Does Zawacki take supplements herself? "No, I don't," she says. "But that really is irrelevant," she's quick to add, "because it's a personal decision based on what I know about my needs, my life stage, and my diet."

If you're wondering whether vitamin supplements are right for you, Zawacki recommends a consultation with a registered dietitian. An hour-long counseling session can cost less than what many people spend for a year's worth of tablets and capsules, and your

health insurance may cover counseling costs if you have hypertension, diabetes, or another diet-driven disease.

"What I do as a first step," Zawacki says, "is ask 'What are you currently eating?'" She'll then analyze your diet, looking for possible deficiencies. If it appears you're not getting, for example, the amount of vitamin E that the

Adding just a few "super foods" to your regular diet can be an efficient way to fill many common nutrient gaps.

Institute of Medicine recommends for a healthy person of your age and gender, Zawacki won't automatically send you to the drugstore for vitamin E capsules. Instead, she'll recommend you add almonds, sunflower seeds, spinach, or other foods rich in vitamin E to your diet. Unlike pills, these foods also provide fiber, protein, and a host of other nutrients. "There's no pill that contains all that," Zawacki says.

And some foods contain a remarkable number of vitamins and nutrients. Sweet potatoes, for example, are an excellent source of vitamins A, B, and C, potassium, and fiber. Spinach is included on the list of recommended food sources for iron, magnesium, potassium, and vitamins A, C, E, and K. Adding just a few of these "super foods" to your regular diet can be an efficient way to fill many common nutrient gaps.

If your lifestyle, food preferences, or allergies make it unlikely that you'll be able to meet your nutritional needs with food alone, then Zawacki might recommend a vitamin supplement. If she does, she'll help you determine the best form of that particular vitamin to buy and the best time of day to take it to maximize absorption and avoid interactions with medications.

What if you eat a well-balanced diet but want to take a multivitamin just in case? "There are scientists out there who disagree on whether it's going to be helpful, harmful, or have no benefit," Zawacki says. "I would give you all the information I can, and then it would be your choice." If you decide to take a multivitamin, she says, choose a reputable brand (look for a seal of approval from ConsumerLab, NSF, or United States Pharmacopeia) that doesn't include more than 100 percent of the nutrients recommended for your gender and life stage. But keep in mind, she says, "if you're getting the nutrients you need from your diet, there's no strong evidence that extra nutrients are going to help you."

 **Healthy Eating with Sargent**

The Sargent Choice Nutrition Center has a list of resources at www.bu.edu/scnutrition; alumni can also register for nutrition counseling with Sargent's experts.



Understanding athletes' energy use and training thresholds, including those of skier Lindsey Vonn (right), helps Adam Korzun match his nutrition advice to individual needs.



OPTIMAL FUELING

As he develops his nutrition plans, Korzun must keep in mind the specific demands of each USSA sport. Giant slalom and mogul competitors, for example, ski multiple runs in quick succession. Mogul skiers may only be on the hill for 20 seconds, "but they've got a second run coming up," Korzun says, "so how do we optimize fueling between those runs?" Cross-country skiers have similar needs to those of

runners, "but then you have to factor in the cold component, so you're looking at the electrolyte balance from the fluid changes that occur at negative 20 degrees in cloudy Norway." The trickiest sport from Korzun's perspective is Nordic combined, which pairs ski jumping with a 10-kilometer cross-country ski race. "Their coaches push them to be as light as possible for the jump, but they still need to be strong and fast enough to ski," he says.

Korzun's plans also factor in athletes' individual needs: "At this level, it's all personal." One nutrient added at a certain time before a certain race, he says, can make a world of difference. Creating individualized nutrition plans begins in the spring and summer—months before the season's first snowfall—with exercise and physiological testing. Strength and conditioning coaches use the test results to develop an athlete's training regimens, while Korzun uses them to fine-tune the athlete's diet. A lactate threshold test (which indicates at what heart rate an athlete's body switches from aerobic to anaerobic energy production), for example, helps the coach determine the athletes' training zones and allows Korzun to provide proper fuel sources. "When I've got a cross-country skier going out for an interval session," Korzun explains, "and we know his heart rate is going to be in the 180s, we can look back at his lactate threshold data and see that he crosses the threshold at 160. That tells me this activity is going to be all anaerobic, which is all carbohydrate dominant; therefore, we need to work on a bit more carbohydrate recovery or carbohydrate timing for that particular session."

PANCAKES FOR DINNER

Once the summer testing is done, Korzun spends most of the rest of the year—up to 200 days of it—traveling to training camps and competitions. While he fills his luggage with protein bars and ergogenic supplement powders, Korzun relies on real food as much as possible. "Food is just so much more delicious," he says—and it can provide valuable mood boosts. "When you spend four months in Europe, you don't get Mexican food, so if I bring someone a quesadilla in the middle of Austria, I'm a superhero."

Another treat the athletes love: breakfast for dinner. "I'm all for cooking bacon," Korzun says. "You won't hear many nutritionists say that, but it all has its place." Skiers and snowboarders who get up at 6 a.m. for training and competition never start a day with pancakes and eggs, but Korzun occasionally prepares these morning favorites for evening meals. "I do it at the end of a big block—maybe after a third straight day of intense, high-volume training," he says. "I'm filling them full of carbohydrates with the pancakes or the French toast; they're getting good sodium from the bacon; and they're going to be drinking a good amount of fluid."

Korzun's unpredictable travel schedule and the gold-medal stakes make for a stressful job, but the athletes' appreciation makes the sacrifices worthwhile, he says. Five-time Olympic medalist Bode Miller "has all the money in the world to go out and do whatever he wants," says Korzun, "but comes to every meal because of how it fuels him." And if Miller earns yet more gold in Sochi, Korzun will have the satisfaction of knowing he contributed to the triumph. ■



Above left: Photo by Sarah Ely/U.S. Ski Team. Above right: © Erich Spiess/Red Bull Content Pool

Taking Healthy Eating to the Masses

Olympic skiers can rely on Adam Korzun for sound food advice; the rest of us are often stuck with what we see on TV or read in magazines. But when it comes to healthy eating, says Roberta Durschlag, director of the academic nutrition programs at Sargent, there are a lot of people in the public eye who aren't knowledgeable. Sargent plans to help redress the imbalance. It's launched a new program that mixes dietetics education with communications or public health classes to train those who want, says Durschlag, "to provide nutrition information to large groups of healthy people to prevent disease, rather than to treat it after it has occurred." The program complements Sargent's existing nutrition offerings, which predominantly train students to offer advice and care in one-on-one clinical settings.

Undergraduates pursuing the new nutrition and health track have the option of taking classes at Sargent and either BU's College of Communication—for those who want to discuss nutrition on TV, for instance—or School of Public Health, if they'd prefer to work in a school or government setting. "We feel an obligation to the American public to get people out there who really know what they're talking about," says Durschlag.—Andrew Thurston

Pronouncin' Yah “Ah’s”

Speech-language pathologist Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker helps Bostonians speak *sans* accent when needed.

By Patrick L. Kennedy



“I don’t know how to bake a seven-layer wedding cake with marzipan decorations.”

“It’s really not that hard.”

“Do you think I could run a half marathon?”

“It’s really not that hard.”

Reading from a list of short dialogue exercises, Sean and Julian are enunciating clearly, trying not to give away their Eastern Massachusetts roots.

“That was an awesome serve,” continues Sean, a stoutish, bespectacled redhead in his late 40s.

“It’s really not that hard,” replies Julian, a muscular, well-groomed twenty-something in a tight designer T-shirt. →

“How do you get that hair to look so perfect every day?” Sean reads aloud, with genuine curiosity creeping into his voice.

Julian, whose thick, dark locks are indeed stylishly coiffed, finally goes off script. “I’ll tell ya, it takes a lawdda eff’t!”

Welcome to Accent Modification class. Hosted by Boston Casting, Inc., the four-week course is taught by Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker (’83). The students are local actors seeking roles other than “Townie Barmaid” and “Traffic Cop No. 1.”

The Bay State has experienced a boom in film production over the past several years, creating opportunities for homegrown talent—the Boston chapter of the Screen Actors Guild grew by 30 percent between 2006 and 2009. But only so

Many of Feinstein-Whittaker’s nonnative-English-speaking clients are British-educated medical professionals who want to learn American idioms and rhythms in an effort to be better understood—which can be crucial in a fast-paced hospital.

many of those feature films are the gritty gangster flicks in which a native’s accent is an asset. Plenty of movies are simply shot, not set, in the area; their roles require neutral speech patterns.

That’s where Feinstein-Whittaker comes in. A speech and communication specialist who largely works with non-native English speakers, she also gives lessons to New Englanders who want to tone down their regional color for professional purposes.

A New Jersey native, Feinstein-Whittaker is no snooty Professor Henry Higgins trying to turn a flower peddler into a fair lady. “There is absolutely nothing wrong with an accent,” she

says. “Accents are great. . . . They’re part of who we are.” The former hospital speech-language pathologist with experience treating head trauma victims also stresses that her Boston- and foreign-bred clients *are* “clients—not patients. An accent is not a disorder!”

Locals who come to her don’t really want to *lose* their Boston accent. They want to be able to *adopt* a “standard” American accent at will, whether they’re film and television actors tired of being typecast, broadcasters and voiceover artists working on commercials run nationally, or business and other professionals who feel their accent conveys the wrong impression.

In the Boston Casting course and individual appointments, Feinstein-Whittaker teaches students to avoid tensing their lip, tongue, and jaw muscles, and she leads them in speaking exercises designed to instill standard pronunciation.

Quirks of the local accent, she says, include non-rhoticity, meaning the /r/ sound is often replaced by neutral vowels, so “Kenmore Square” becomes “Kenmaw Squayeh.” Furthermore, Bostonians deviate from standard American English in vowel pronunciation: Apparently, in the rest of the country, words such as “bother” and “hot” have the same vowel pronunciation as “father” and “spa.”

Feinstein-Whittaker compiles all these rules and exercises in her workbook *Boston Rules* (part of her series, *ESL Rules*). There’s no “rain in Spain,” but users do have to correctly read aloud sentences such as “Courtney Porter is a forty-four-year-old mortgage broker.” There’s even a Boston-themed *Jeopardy!* trivia game, where the answers might be Quincy Market or Charlestown—but not “Quincy Mahket” or “Chahlestown.”

Of course, communication is often serious business. Many of Feinstein-Whittaker’s nonnative-English-speaking clients are British-educated medical professionals who want to learn American

→ A Wicked Boston Words Quiz

Can you correctly match the Boston terms with definitions from other American dialects?

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. wicked | a. traffic circle |
| 2. wiffle | b. directionals |
| 3. tonic | c. very, extreme |
| 4. jimmies | d. convenience store |
| 5. rotary | e. crew cut |
| 6. spa | f. soda |
| 7. bubbler | g. liquor store |
| 8. “pissah” | h. sprinkles |
| 9. grinder | i. water cooler |
| 10. blinkers | j. great |
| 11. pocketbook | k. purse |
| 12. packie | l. submarine sandwich |

Quiz reprinted with permission from *Boston Rules* by Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker and Lynda Katz Wilner (Successfully Speaking, 2011)



Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker
Photo by Vernon Doucette

idioms and rhythms in an effort to be better understood—which can be crucial in a fast-paced hospital.

You don’t have to be a trained speech pathologist to do accent training, but it sure helps, says Feinstein-Whittaker, who also writes articles and gives presentations for audiences of therapists and language experts. “Having a very thorough understanding of communication in general, learning styles, and reinforcement techniques really was very helpful in developing this niche,” explains the Sargent alumna.

Does she ever work with actors from out of town, to make them more convincing when portraying locals? “I haven’t,” Feinstein-Whittaker says, “because I’m not a native, so I’m not the right person for that. But if you took my *Boston Rules* book and did everything backwards—say those words *without* the R’s, leave *off* the NG’s—that would probably do it.” ■



Sue Berger

How to Live with Low Vision

By Andrew Thurston

So much for the road trip to the Grand Canyon. For seniors with dwindling vision, the chances of following a long-held retirement dream can seem as dim as their darkening world. Sue Berger, clinical associate professor of occupational therapy, doesn't think it has to be that way—and she intends to prove it.

Berger is studying the effect of occupational therapy (OT) on the quality of life and general health of older adults with worsening vision, whether caused by macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts, or another condition. She and other therapists will be visiting 50 seniors to help them make the most of their existing vision—or learn to work around it. After Sargent graduate students assist in implementing adaptations, Berger will then track the seniors' ability to perform daily activities such as reading the newspaper, going to the store, or maintaining a medication regimen. The study is being run in conjunction with BU Geriatrics at Boston Medical Center and the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

For those facing vision problems of their own—or caring for aging relatives—here are some highlights from Berger's strategies for getting the most out of life.

Better—Not More—Light

More light isn't always good light. "Exposed light provides glare," says Berger. In a home, she starts by improving the positioning of lights and switches: "A lot of people think, 'I just need more watts,' but it's better to have a gooseneck lamp close to the reading surface than a high, bright light that's more dispersed." Even a simple use of contrast can be more powerful than a barrage of bulbs: Berger suggests dark towels in a white bathroom, a strip of dark-colored tape on the tub edge, and black measuring cups for sugar and flour.



A World of Contrasts

When it comes to shopping and socializing, Berger guides people in adapting to their environment. A baseball cap and yellow wrap-around shields, for instance, will cut glare and improve contrast in sharply lit supermarkets, while a pocket telescope can help with public transportation: "You're not going to watch a movie with it, but you can spot a bus number." Berger isn't just handing out advice, however. "Part of our role is to help build self-efficacy," she says. "Our clients are not going to have OT for life; they're going to deal with new problems in the future, and we want them to be able to solve them."



Touch and Sound

When black towels and magnifiers don't help, Berger turns to touch and sound. Sometimes that involves a ready-made device: sticky bump dots—put one at 350°F on the stove dial or the number 5 on a phone to keep cooking and calling—or a beeping gadget that hooks on the inside of a coffee cup to warn of overflow when pouring (a finger works well for cold drinks). Just as often, it's helping people figure out little tricks that will work for them: a favorite is folding bills (fives in half, tens into long strips) to help with money management.



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Whether you live on the East or the West Coast, you can reconnect with old friends from BU at our many alumni events.

July 3, 5:30 p.m. Bay Area Alumni Night at the Ballpark

Picnic, baseball, and fireworks as the Red Sox take on the A's in Oakland, California. Tickets at www.bu.edu/alumni/events.



July 20–22 Baseball: An Interdisciplinary Summer Institute

Experts discuss the history of the Red Sox, plus a guided tour of the former Braves (now Nickerson) Field. Register at www.bu.edu/alumni/events.

August 11 Alumni Day at Tanglewood

The 36th annual alumni day will include an open rehearsal with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a scrumptious luncheon, and a performance by the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. Event schedule at www.bu.edu/alumni/involved/alumni-events/tanglewood.

September 27, 6 p.m. EST BU Global Toast

Raise a glass to new graduates, and other BU alumni new to your area, at the second annual BU Global Toast. Find toast parties in your city at www.bu.edu/globaltoast.

To find out more about events in your area, visit www.bu.edu/sargent/alumni.

Save the date!

September 21–23



We're so excited about this year's Alumni Weekend that we've moved it up a month, to September. Here's just a taste of why you don't want to miss it:

- An extraordinary celebration of BU on Saturday night
 - School and college events
 - Hot topic panel discussions
 - Celebrity alumni appearances
- bu.edu/alumniweekend

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