



FLOAT RIDER BIOS





Meet the OTAC 2017 OT Centennial Float Riders

**1. Heather J. Kitching, OTD, OTR/L –
OTAC president and educator**

Heather J. Kitching, OTD, OTR/L, the voice of the Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC), will be honored as a rider on the 2017 Occupational Therapy Centennial Float: *Celebrating a Century of Occupational Therapy*. The Annual Tournament of Roses Parade® is an important venue to launch the centennial celebration of the occupational therapy profession, with over 75 million viewers around the globe seeing occupational therapy front and center. In addition to serving as OTAC president, Kitching serves as clinical faculty at California State Dominguez Hills and will decorate the float with 50 of her students during the midnight shift on New Year's Eve. We thank Kitching for her dedication to professional service on behalf of the profession and look forward to "history in the making."



**2. Lela Llorens, PhD, OTR/ret, FAOTA –
occupational therapy pioneer and educator**

Lela Llorens, PhD, OTR/L, has enjoyed a career in occupational therapy that has spanned 55+ years. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy from Western Michigan University and went on to earn Master of Arts and PhD degrees. She is Emeritus Professor and former Chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy at San Jose State University. Llorens served the profession as a clinician, researcher, teacher, and leader. She published extensively on the topic of occupational adaptation and has worked clinically with people of all ages. As an African American woman who pioneered in leadership positions in the profession, Llorens served as a bridge, mentor, and role model for young African American occupational therapy professionals. She was named to the Roster of Fellows of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) in 1973 as a charter member. Llorens was the first and only African American woman to receive the Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lectureship award, the most prestigious honor of the profession.



3. Brandon Dodson – U.S. Marine seriously injured by an IED in the line of duty

United States Marine Brandon Dodson was a Staff Sergeant conducting the operation of Sha Pusta in Afghanistan in August 2014, when he stepped on an IED with 5 lbs. of homemade explosive. This explosion severed both legs at the knee. He participated in occupational therapy at Walter Reed National Medical Center, where occupational therapy practitioners helped Dobson regain independence in his self-care and typical activities of daily living, as well as to learn to use adaptive controls for driving independently. Dodson is a husband and father to a 4 year old son. He has received the Purple Heart, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and the Combat Action Ribbon with one gold star.



4. Kaitlyn Dobrow – a 22 year old who lost all four limbs and is now a social media star and makeup artist inspiring millions

Kaitlyn Dobrow is a 22 year old woman who lost all four limbs to bacterial meningitis three years ago. Following 22 surgeries and a six-month intensive care stay, Dobrow received occupational therapy at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey, CA. With the support of occupational therapy practitioners, she learned gross motor dexterity in order to move her prosthetic limbs and hold makeup brushes and mascara. Dobrow is now a social media star and makeup artist inspiring millions.



5. Lisa Deshaies, OTR/L, CHT – Kaitlyn Dobrow's occupational therapy practitioner

Lisa Deshaies, OTR/L, CHT, is Kaitlyn Dobrow's occupational therapy practitioner from Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center and will ride alongside Dobrow. Deshaies is a 1986 graduate of the occupational therapy program at the University of New Hampshire and has been practicing in physical disabilities for nearly 30 years. She has also been a Certified Hand Therapist since 1995 and is Adjunct Clinical Faculty at the USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.





6. Ada Boone Hoerl, COTA/L – educator and catalyst of the profession

Ada Boone Hoerl, COTA/L, (certified/licensed occupational therapy assistant) has dedicated her career to educating a community of students to pursue their potential as occupational therapy assistants, where they may flourish as innovators, entrepreneurs, and contributors to the profession. Hoerl continues to serve the profession in her as a program director at Sacramento City College. Through exemplary involvement in professional association activities at both the state level on behalf of OTAC and the national level on behalf of AOTA, her leadership has served as a catalyst for innovation and change across the profession.



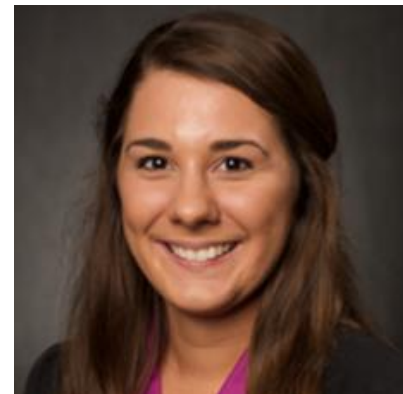
7. Harrison Phelps - occupational therapy student at the University of St. Augustine in California

Harrison Phelps is an occupational therapy student at the University of St. Augustine in San Marcos, CA. The University of St. Augustine Student Occupational Therapy Association raised the most funds of any student group in the country during the “Students Ride the Float” competition and therefore earned their seat on this historic ride. A thank you and congratulations goes to Harrison Phelps for coordinating a tri-campus fundraising campaign and to his fellow students at the University of St. Augustine who worked so hard to support the 2017 OT Centennial Float. His inspiration to pursue occupational therapy came from observing occupational therapy practitioners working with wounded warriors to recover from their psychological, emotional, and physical challenges through the occupation of surfing.



8. Stephanie Conway – occupational therapy student at the University of South Dakota

Stephanie Conway was nominated to ride the float by faculty of University of South Dakota. She served as co-chair of the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) fundraising and helped her SOTA in achieving their \$1,000 fundraising goal by coordinating a 5K Glow Run. All SOTA groups that raised a minimum of \$1,000 were eligible to be included in a raffle to fill the second student rider seat on the float. The University of South Dakota SOTA won this raffle. Conway’s desire to pursue an occupational therapy degree came from working at a nonprofit organization that serves children and young adults with special needs. Her desire strengthened after seeing the compassionate care her then fiancé, James, received after brain surgery. She was inspired to provide the same compassionate care that she observed as he made a full recovery.





9. Florence Clark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA – occupational therapy pioneer and educator

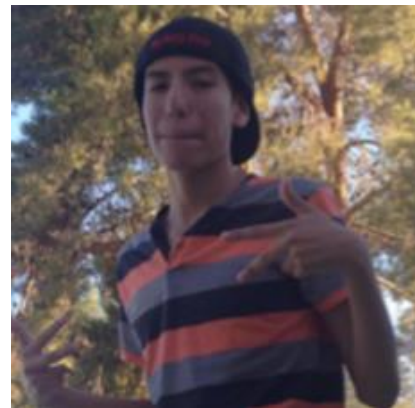
Florence Clark, PhD, OTR/L, is Associate Dean, Chair, and the Mrs. T.H. Chan Professor at USC's Mrs. T. H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. She has served in this role since 1989 and has been on the University of Southern California (USC) occupational therapy faculty for 40 years. Clark was the recipient of the USC Presidential Medallion, the ultimate honor for those who have brought esteem and distinction upon the University.



She is recognized for her work in raising public awareness of occupational therapy, in establishing occupational science as an academic discipline, and for her role as lead investigator of the USC Well Elderly Study, which was the first occupational therapy study to be published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Clark served as President of the American Occupational Therapy Association from 2010 to 2013.

10. Juan Carlos Medrano – Special Olympics athlete diagnosed with autism at the age of three

Juan Carlos Medrano was diagnosed with autism at the age of three and his occupational therapy practitioner and parents encouraged him to engage in as many activities as possible. Despite experiencing many challenges in various activities, swimming came to be his favorite occupation. Now age 16, Medrano has participated in Special Olympic events in the state of Nevada and has won several gold and silver medals, which he will wear on the float.





11. Jack Onufer – straight A high school student overcoming sensory integration dysfunction

Jack Onufer started working with an occupational therapy practitioner when he was around four years old. He had been diagnosed with sensory integration dysfunction, which impacted his ability to function at home, in the community, and at school. He was a smart and athletic boy, but because of the difficulties he had processing sensory information, he had difficulty participating in many of his daily activities. Onufer avoided most self-care activities because these experiences were so unpleasant for him. He would tighten his shoes to the point that his shoelaces would snap. Sensory challenges led to frustration and meltdowns, which impacted the family dynamic. Occupational therapy sessions focused on providing the "just right challenge" with sensory experiences to enable Onufer to better integrate the sensory information. Nine years later, he is a freshman at a local high school, a straight A student, a lacrosse player, and a surfer.



12. Jesus David Vidana – U.S. Marine Reservist who suffered a severe brain injury in the line of duty

Jesus David Vidana is a 2001 graduate of the Mrs. T.H. Chan department of Occupational Science and Therapy at University of Southern California. Following the events of September 11, 2001, Vidana served with Regimental Combat Team 1 of the United States Marine Corps 1st division and was subsequently injured via a penetrating gunshot wound to the head while on patrol with his unit in the Al-Amin district of Baghdad. As a result of his injury, Vidana received an unplanned emergency craniotomy with the use of a household power drill at a Naval Regimental Aid Station (RAS) on the outskirts of Baghdad where he found himself in the care of CNN's chief medical correspondent, Sanjay Gupta, MD. Doctor Gupta was the only available neurosurgeon at the aid station at the time of Vidana's injury. Upon his return to the United States, Vidana received, amongst other therapies, occupational therapy services. As a recent graduate at the time of his injury, Vidana was asked to help guide his treatment planning in occupational and physical therapy services. In 2005, after years of therapy, Vidana sat for and passed the National Board Certification in Occupational Therapy. Vidana has practiced in neurological and orthopedic settings at area hospitals. He is currently pursuing his master's in public health at UCLA.

