

University of Oregon Announces Retirement Two Esteemed Long-Time Faculty

Lezlie Pearce-Hopper

University of Oregon Speech and Language graduate students know Lezlie Pearce-Hopper even if she is not their clinic supervisor. She is the one who hands out earplugs during midterms and finals week, candy to keep you going, and always takes the time to check in on how things are going. Those who are fortunate to have her as a supervisor learn many things, but the greatest lesson is the role of advocacy; advocate for your client and teach your client or their families to advocate for themselves. This theme of advocacy has been a part of Lezlie's career since her graduate school days at Portland State University. For her Master's Thesis, she evaluated children at a Blackfoot Reservation in Montana, and Native American and typical developing Caucasian children in the Great Falls, MT school district, the results of which did not paint the school district in a favorable light. This presented an opportunity to update the study six years later and provide additional training to the teachers and staff. After graduating from PSU in 1978 and getting married, Lezlie started the first OSHA Newsletter with a fellow member of her cohort. They maintained the newsletter for several years until they both moved out of State. Throughout her 36-year career, Lezlie has participated in the political side of the ASHA and OSHA, because it allowed her the opportunity to make and see a difference in the field, and to enlighten those outside of the field regarding the role of an SLP. Below, Lezlie shares her thoughts and highlights on her spectacular career.

What are your favorite memories from your career at UO? I think all the social events at our home over the years, with the students and faculty, with the Halloween parties and annual summer BBQs. I have really enjoyed working with the graduate students. It enabled me to still connect with children and their families. And, hopefully (laughs), provided some insight and clinical experience you might not have had because of my varied background. It has been very rewarding for me to watch you all figure it out and watch our clients benefit from your passion and energy as clinicians.

What is the highlight of your entire career working as an SLP? During my time as President for OSHA, we increased the membership by reaching out to SLPs all over Oregon and including people from all over the state as officers. We get together each year at OSHA, the past presidents, at a Presidents Breakfast and it's nice that all are still so involved in OSHA. Oh! And as president, and president-elect (the year before you become president), you are a member of CSAP the Council of State Association Presidents, and I got to go to DC quite a bit and meet with our senators and representatives to lobby for our services; twice I was even able to take my daughter with me! It helped her to identify how to make a difference in the lives of many. ASHA helped set that up, so it was nice to be able to do that with her. I also have a box full of all the drawings and thank you notes I've received over the years, which continue to give me a boost when needed.

What do you, personally, feel is your greatest achievement? I'm most proud of two accomplishments while I was on the Board of Examiners, setting up the SLPA licensure program and the continuing education requirement for licensure renewal. We had this requirement on the state level, before ASHA added it to its licensure requirements. Part of the SLPA program was setting up training programs at community colleges and the rules and regulations for licensure. I'm also very proud of including graduate students at the OSHA conferences by having them volunteer and by having a reduced membership fee, to encourage them to get active in OSHA.

Do you foresee any big changes in the field of speech-language pathology? I like to keep informed of what other states are doing in our profession. The increased focus on productivity

and paperwork is going to continue. And electronics and devices are changing the field, but that isn't necessarily a good thing. Not everyone works best that way, not all clients or SLPs. Some people need a pen and paper to function optimally. I do know we will always have a shortage in this field, because we aren't running out of clients. I don't know if this makes me sound old but (laughs), I do know that the skills and training I received in 1976 - 78 still serve me well today. As long as you read and seek out information and stay current you may be able to work as long as your body will let you.

Is there anything you wish you could have done in your career that you have not had the chance to do? Any setting or population you didn't get a chance to work with? Not really. I've worked with many populations. I've done research, and worked with CDRC (Child Development and Rehabilitation Center), worked in the schools and hospitals. I may have an opportunity to work with Veterans in an outdoor therapy program. That goes into my retirement plan.

What are your recommendations for future SLPs? Remember your code of ethics. You are providing a service to consumers. Remain the person that provides support to the family and advocates for the clients. Remember, if you are not passionate about the job you currently have, find a new one. There are plenty of opportunities out there.

What post-retirement plans do you have? We are moving back to Montana. We decided on Helena, because I said it had to be a place with a Costco (laughs). I'll be closer to my parents but not too close. I plan to spend more time outdoors. Probably get a couple dogs, a couple horses and cows. I plan to do more fly fishing, and get back into oil painting. Oh, and take trips to warm places in the winter! We'll spend time with the kids. My daughter is Executive Director of the Central Oregon Health Council located in Bend, OR and my son is an attorney for the state of Missouri working with an insurance regulation group.

Do you plan on remaining involved in the profession in some way? Oh yes, I think I will always want to do something for or with children. In Montana, I'll work privately and with the local school district part-time. That opportunity to work with vets I mentioned earlier. I would like to provide an outdoor therapy for clients and their families. We are looking at buying property outside of Helena, and setting it up so we provide outdoor recreation, a fishing pond, and guest cabins. It's been a dream of mine for some time now.

Do you have any sage advice to SLPs who are nearing retirement? Any recommendations when to start planning for retirement? Find a hobby or something to do now, before you retire! Think about how to fill your hours. Because some of us have gone gangbusters for all these years, we won't know what to do when it gets quiet and less chaotic. Do not wait until you retire to travel and please come visit us in Montana.

Interview by Betty Campbell-Ross