

APTA Federal Advocacy Forum 2009: Student Perspective

APTAnj sponsored 3 members of the NJ Student Assembly –Dana Edwards from UMDNJ-Newark, along with Kevin O’Connor and Lee Colaianni from The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey– to attend the APTA Federal Advocacy Forum from May 17 – 19, 2009.

Each student was nominated by one of their professors and agreed to write an essay about their experience. Lee and Kevin’s essays were published in the Summer 2009 issue of the Jersey Jargon, and here is Dana’s essay...

On the drive from New Jersey to the American Physical Therapy Association Federal Advocacy Forum in Virginia I was trying to figure out what the next few days would be like. Who was I going to meet? What kind of knowledge was I about to gain? What impact would this experience have on my future as a physical therapist? When I arrived, I immediately felt the importance of this event and gained a sense of responsibility for my profession. I was first introduced to all of the representatives attending the event who were from New Jersey, as well as many other physical therapists from around the country. Every time I met a new physical therapist their response was the same “thank you for coming”. As a student, I was continually reminded that being at the Federal Advocacy Forum was such a wonderful opportunity to get involved in my profession and make a difference.

Before our visits to Capitol Hill in Washington, DC we were briefed on the current issues, especially health care reform, to gain some background knowledge and to better understand the mindset of the members of Congress. This was a lot of information to be digested in a short amount of time and the resounding message was that we couldn’t have been hitting “the Hill” at a better time.

Meeting with the members of Congress was by far my favorite part of the Federal Advocacy Forum and was extremely motivating. During my visits, those I met with took me seriously and it made me feel like I could really make a difference even though I was still a student. I gained a new interest in the legislative process and the APTA. I couldn’t wait to tell everyone about my trip.

I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent in Washington DC - not only with the two students from Stockton University, Kevin and Lee, but also with the students on the National APTA Student Assembly—Kate, Meg, Allie, and Nate. This was a great opportunity to begin networking with other highly motivated students and I know that we will continue to work hard for our profession. I would like to thank the APTA of New Jersey for giving me this opportunity and I cannot wait to attend next year!

Dana Edwards
UMDNJ-Newark, Class of 2009



Kevin, Lee and Dana joined New Jersey physical therapists Keri Bratcher, Lisa Chamberlain MaryAnn Riopel, Matt Mesibov and Kathy Mairella.