

## Editorial ► OEP, a Family Reunion You Want to Attend!

Marc B. Taub, OD, MS, Southern College of Optometry, Memphis, Tennessee

Coming home to family is how I describe the Optometric Extension Program Foundation. It is a very diverse family obviously, since it has associates world-wide and was founded over 88 years ago, having been formed in 1928. Family is special; from the strange uncle to the grandchildren who make a mess, everyone is welcome in a family. The same is true for the OEP family.

My first interaction with OEP came in the form of a curriculum course taught by Bob Hohendorf while completing a residency at Nova Southeastern University in 2003. I challenged him at every turn and pretty much thought that that mild-mannered man would turn into the Hulk and rip me to shreds. But, obviously, he did no such thing. He simply presented an alternative thought process to the one I was taught in optometry school. To be honest, I fought the battle over how I practiced for many years and now am confident that I am on the right path. From the curriculum courses to the regional clinical seminars to the congresses, I love coming home to my OEP family.

I became a member of OEP not long after that first course, and I was sent a package of goodies. This included so many books on a variety of topics that I was like a kid in candy store. The next month, I got my first issue of the Journal of Behavioral Optometry, and I learned the benefits of research in the field of vision therapy. I also learned new vision therapy techniques and about topics like syntonics and colored filters. Every two months, I was back in school thanks to OEP.

Amazingly, the books kept coming. Four times a year, I would get a present in the mail from OEP. I learned from the giants like Suchoff, Macdonald, Manes, and Forrest. Where were you all my life??? My bookshelf is

full of amazing optometric pieces of literature thanks to OEP.

Last year, I was given the opportunity to become a part of the OEP family of writers along with Pam Schnell. We published the first of two volumes titled Vision Therapy: Success Stories from Around the World to critical acclaim. Wow, it was fun to work with the amazing authors to bring the readers 20 vision therapy success stories and 40 vision therapy techniques! If you have not read it, you must. I think it is amazing, but I might be biased. This book would not have been written and published without the backing and support of my OEP family. The next volume is coming, I promise.

I also have the privilege of editing the best optometric journal on the planet. Yes, others might be bigger and flashier, but I think ours is better. Again, there may be some bias involved. Every two months, I get to introduce the world to amazing research and intriguing cases and hopefully cause a debate to break out! I get to work with the most amazing editorial staff and authors from around the globe. My family has grown significantly from this experience, and I hope to add more tables to the family gathering in the future!

I can go on and on about my experiences with the OEP family, but I wanted to share the opportunity with a few others:

*Being an OEP student member has made me a more passionate individual about behavioral optometry and vision therapy. As the OEP National Student Liaison, I have been able to build special and long-lasting relationships with our members, which I know will carry on after my graduation. This Foundation/Family means a great deal to me because not only am I able to share my interest with those as passionate as*

*I, but I am also able to receive education that I cannot get inside the classroom.*

*–Nicholai Perez, 4th year student,  
InterAmerican University of Puerto  
Rico, School of Optometry*

*OEP has helped expand my knowledge, and comfort, in dealing with more difficult patients. While optometry school gave me the knowledge to practice optometry, OEP has given me the support and tools to broaden my knowledge about vision therapy and VISION. I am a member because of the camaraderie that OEP provides and the ongoing education courses as well.*

*–Eric Weigel, OD*

*There are so many parts of Optometry I so enjoy, but I feel unequivocally that OEP, in the education from the curriculum courses, the Regional Clinical Seminars, and the congresses, has made qualitative impacts in the way I practice and in the enjoyment I feel in helping me help patients. I credit the team of ODs that teaches the curriculum courses, and those doctors who have practiced behaviorally on whose shoulders we stand. The relationships I have developed with other like-minded ODs at OEP events, their willingness to share, and their supportive nature has made practice fun and not work at all. The staff at the OEP office has been welcoming and accommodating and understand the mission of OEP.*

*–Moshe Roth, OD*

*OEP introduced me to behavioral optometry. It has been amazing to meet people all over the world who practice in this incredible profession. OEP has let me travel and see other countries. OEP opened my country to a new world of education. I couldn't be more grateful to OEP and its associates.*

*–Berenice Velázquez Sánchez, MRV, MCB, LO*

*The education, guidance, and support I've received from OEP has changed the way I "see" vision. It has given me the drive to challenge other optometrists to look beyond what they have learned in school about the visual process. It has allowed me the opportunity to give my patients alternatives to care that they may not have otherwise been made aware of. OEP is helping me to become a better optometrist and a better version of myself.*

*–Virginia Donati, OD, COVT&R Vice President*

*OEP has been my lifeline professionally. When I went to solo from a 2 doctor practice, I found myself in limbo. There were no OEP Clinical Associates in my community, and most of my local colleagues were much more interested in the transition to medical care. I was able to connect with my OEP friends at continuing education meetings to keep my direction. Joint Conference, which I attended for nearly 20 years, gave me the opportunity to meet and get to know so many of my special friends from around the world.*

*OEP Clinical Associates care about each other. We are one very large family willing to help each other without professional jealousy. We want to see everyone grow. I had the honor to serve on the Board of Directors, to make friends around the world. That was a learning experience I will never regret. I hold dear to my heart so many of the people I met during that time. Education, professional support, friendship. I have now been involved with OEP 50 years.*

*–Alona King, OD*