Congratulations to the 2015 recipient of the PTRS Alumnus of the Year, Dr. Cheryl Resnik, PT, DPT, FNAP. This award recognizes and rewards a PTRS graduate who has had outstanding achievements in the physical therapy profession. The award is based on contributions/achievements in the areas of academics, administration, clinical practice, research, community service, professional associations, and involvement at PTRS since graduation.

While in college, Dr. Cheryl Resnik wanted to work closely with people. She learned about the physical therapy profession from two women in her dormitory at Ohio State University. Before making a commitment to the field, though, she volunteered at a local hospital to be sure the profession would be a good fit. Luckily for the PT field, she decided it was.

Today, Cheryl is the Associate Chair, Associate Professor of Clinical Physical Therapy, and Director of Community Outreach in the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy at the Ostrow School of Dentistry, University of Southern California (USC). Although she’s been teaching for over 20 years, Cheryl didn’t begin as an educator.

“Early in my career, I decided that rehabilitation was my niche, with a concentration on working with patients post amputation,” recalls Cheryl. After marrying, she moved from Ohio, where she was born and raised, to California, where she began working at what is now the Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center.

During her 14 years there, Cheryl moved from working with the Amputee Service to working with neurologic diagnoses, including stroke and spinal cord injury. Due to an injury, though, her career changed. “Unfortunately, I ruptured a disc in my lumbar spine, which prevented me from continuing in direct patient care,” says Cheryl. “One never knows how her life’s path will change.”

Cheryl moved into a management position in the PT Department and earned a Master’s in Health Care Management from California State University, Los Angeles. In 1994, Dr. Helen Hislop, Chair of USC’s Department of Physical Therapy, recruited Cheryl to manage the faculty practice at USC University Hospital. Dr. Hislop created a post-professional doctoral degree, which Cheryl earned while working. “We spent Saturday mornings in lecture and the anatomy lab with Dr. Jacquelin Perry,” Cheryl says. “It was a great experience—one I’ll never forget.”

After five years, Cheryl assumed a full-time teaching position. When her current Chair, Dr. James Gordon, nominated her for PTRS’ Alumnus of the Year, he wrote, “Dr. Resnik is an outstanding teacher in USC’s DPT program. She has been integral to the creation and implementation of a four-course sequence in evidence-based practice and professionalism…Dr. Resnik has a long history of involvement in community service. In 2005, she created USC PT Fit Families, which provides low cost/pro bono preventative, wellness, and rehabilitative physical therapy services to underserved children and adults in the local community, who are at high risk for diabetes and conditions associated with physical inactivity.”

Over the years, Cheryl has been quite active in the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), and is currently the Chair of APTA’s Ethics and Judicial Committee. She also served as the President of the California Physical Therapy Association.

As for being chosen Alumnus of the Year, Cheryl says, “I was really thrilled by the news…It is a great honor to be recognized by one’s peers, and this award is one of the most meaningful I have been accorded.”