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In vision therapy, Debbie Luk has a clear view of the future

When we spoke to Debbie Luk for the 2004 *Chronicle* 10 years ago, she was spearheading a local chapter of World University Services of Canada (WUSC). This organization creates opportunities for refugees to come to Canada and benefit from a university education. It also directs overseas mission trips to build schools and playgrounds. Debbie's experiences through WUSC have since evolved into a passion to improve people's quality of life in unusual ways. She credits the Girl Shine program at Havergal for pushing her to discover her true passion and to find a way to incorporate it into a successful career.

Three years ago, she moved to Calgary and opened her clinic – Vision Therapy Calgary; she now runs two clinics, providing continuing vision therapy to hundreds of patients. The success of her clinics is based on years of education and training. Debbie graduated from the University of Waterloo with a doctor of optometry (honours) degree, and was presented with the American Optometric Foundation Carl Zeiss Vision Fellowship and the College of Optometrists in Vision Development Award for Clinical Excellence in Vision Therapy. Her specialties include treating patients with visual disorders that interfere with reading – things such as double vision, eye strain, inability to focus and problems with eye-hand co-ordination. She also helps patients who cannot organize, decipher and accurately remember visual information.

Although most of her patients are children, she also treats adults who suffer from brain injuries. "I love vision therapy because it helps patients read and learn to their full potential," says Debbie. "Many of these children who come to me were mislabelled as lazy or as having AD(H)D when, in fact, they have a correctable vision problem. It gives me great joy to see dramatic changes in patients' confidence, self-esteem and in their ability at school or work. It makes a

huge impact on the patient and on their family!"

Showing no signs of slowing down, Debbie is in the final stages of setting up a residency program to train Canadian doctors of optometry to become board-certified developmental optometrists. She is the only such provider in Alberta. She also serves as an adjunct clinical professor for the University of Waterloo.

Reflecting on her life to this point, Debbie believes that her accomplishments stem from the self-directed motivation to help an underserved population. Recognizing the lack of doctors who provide vision therapy, Debbie undertook a residency and fellowship program in New York in order to bring her skills back to Canada. Her passion was fuelled by the realization that vision therapy is a unique skill set, fundamental to helping children overcome visual impairments to learning.

Debbie now wishes to share her skills to expand the scope of practice of optometrists in Alberta and to make vision therapy readily accessible to patients beyond her own clinics. She was recently featured on the national news for providing vision therapy via Skype to patients who would otherwise have to travel 10 hours per week to visit her clinic.

Debbie credits Havergal for providing her with the building blocks to find unconventional ways of providing care to her patients. "Havergal gave girls many opportunities for personal development in academics, arts, music, sports and leadership. This environment helped me and other girls grow into well-rounded individuals."

On top of her busy and fulfilling career, her newest passion is her two-year-old daughter. She feels blessed to be able to balance her career and family. She loves what she does and – in her own clear view – currently has the best of both worlds.

Photo: Der Photography



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patients read and learn to
their full potential.