



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Angela Mart, the new Occupational Therapist at Wallowa Memorial Hospital tests a patient's grip.

Wallowa memorial hospital adds occupational therapist

Wallowa County Chieftain

When Angela Mart walks out to meet you, you instantly get the feeling that everything is going to be all right. It's something in her smile, her confidence and the fact that you can tell right off the bat that she's a small town girl and proud of it. She's one of "us."

Mart is the new occupational therapist at Wallowa Memorial Hospital. She works with the other physical therapists, but occupational therapy is a little different.

A physical therapist focuses on increasing mobility and reducing pain after surgery or injury, an occupational therapist focuses on helping patients improve the way they function in all their environments: home, work, school, community.

That might include doing an evaluation of a stroke patient's home to help make daily tasks

easier and safer, or providing guidance and education for caregivers of older patients experiencing cognitive and physical declines.

Mart graduated from Pacific University in Forest Grove in 2006 and then spent six years at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend, then moved to a skilled nursing facility for the past three years. At 45 she's experienced, mature and knows what she wants out of life.

"After almost 10 years in Bend, I was ready for a change and a smaller community," Mart said. "I started doing some research on small towns with hospitals and Wallowa Memorial came up. I had visited the area before and knew it was beyond amazing."

Noticing the hospital had a physical therapy department but no occupational therapy program, Mart took a chance and decided to email the human resources department to see if they had plans to

implement one someday. The response was "yes" and Mart moved just after Christmas, bringing her dog Kotter with her.

Her first day on the job was Jan. 4.

Wallowa County has turned out to be exactly the right place for the life Mart (and Kotter) wanted to live. They spend a lot of their free time outdoors. Mart is an endurance mountain bike racer, a mountain bike rider, a hiker, runner and camper.

"I love to explore new places," Mart said. "And Wallowa County people ... I volunteered at dinner for the sled dog races and saw what a cool community it was. I have loved every minute I've been here, and I am excited to have the opportunity to bring occupational therapy services to Wallowa County. I am grateful I get to do this in such a welcoming and friendly community."

The services Mart offers in-

clude:

- Evaluation of home environment for older adults to enhance safety and reduce the risk of falls
- Education for caregivers to help them better assist loved ones in daily activities
- Help and education for those with multiple sclerosis, Guillan-Barre, Parkinson's Disease or other neurological issues
- Strategies for improving attention and memory to enhance cognitive function
- Education and strategies for increasing movement and activity to improve function and mobility

Like physical therapy, patients need a referral from their primary physician to schedule an appointment. The frequency and duration of visits are determined at that time. Coverage for occupational therapy is similar to physical therapy, and most insurances allow for it.