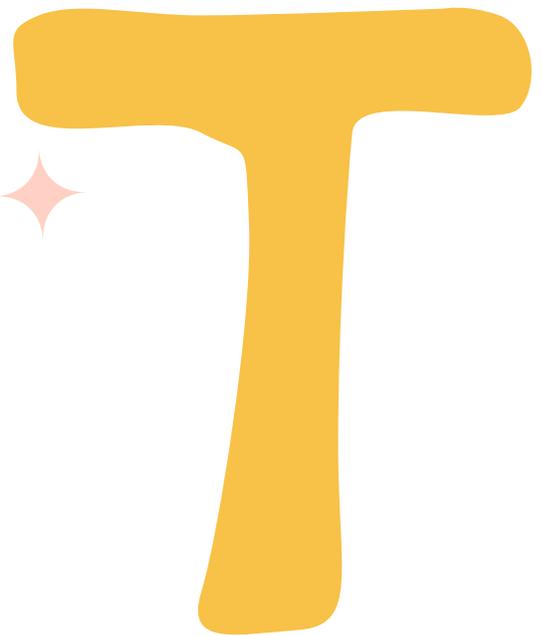


REVISTA OT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

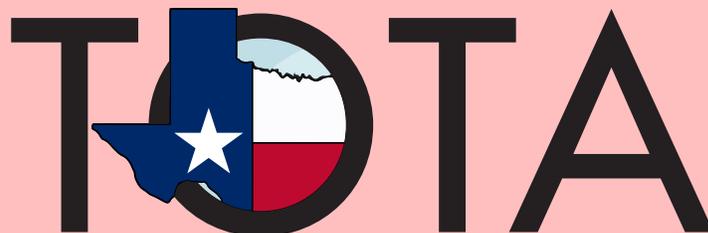
VOL 37 NO. 2 / Spring 2024 EDITION

Happy



Month

From the Only Professional Organization that
advocates for occupational therapy practice in Texas



TOTA 2024 Annual Conference

Frisco, Texas | November 15-16, 2024

Embassy Suites by Hilton
Dallas Frisco Hotel &
Convention Center



Call for Proposals DEADLINE May 31, 2024

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO:

<https://www.tota.org/call-for-proposals-2024>

We're
Hiring



Specialized

ASSESSMENT & CONSULTING

#31 ON FORTUNE-
BEST WORKPLACES
IN TEXAS 2023

Great
Place
To
Work.
Certified
FEB 2024-FEB 2025
USA



We know special education because that's WHAT we do.

Now Hiring OTs for PRN & Part-Time Positions

Apply Now! Send resumes to recruiting@specializedtx.com

WWW.SPECIALIZEDASSESSMENT.COM



SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES | ASSESSMENT & THERAPY | SINCE 2005



(512) 436-0820
www.braunability.com/unitedaccess

The Neurologic Upper Extremity

Steve Page, OT/L, PhD, MS, MOT
I: Preparations & Impairment
II: A Multi-Level Approach to Compensation

Courses #7210 ad #7211
Self-Study Course - Videos
6 CEUs for \$105.

motivationsceu.com

AOTA Approved Provider #4002



TOTA THANKS
OUR CORPORATE
AND ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP
SPONSORS

Turn Center
Children's Therapy

OTBE

TOTF

TSHT

TSHT
TEXAS SOCIETY
FOR HAND THERAPY

**2024 ANNUAL EDUCATION
CONFERENCE**

**WORK HARD
PLAY HARD**

FROM INJURY TO ACTIVITY

TSHT 29TH ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Pre-Course Offerings

- Upper Quarter Dissection
- Orthosis Fabrication Lab

April 26th-28th
FORT WORTH, TX

**REGISTER
TODAY!**
WWW.TSHT.ORG

*\$75 MEMBER
DISCOUNT!*

Contents

- 5 | Letter from the President
- 6 | Call for Nominations
- 7 | From the Executive Director
- 8 | Officers & Chairs
- 8 | TOTA Conference Committee
- 9 | Why?
- 10 | This OT Fought Cancer Alongside Therapy Team at KISD
- 11 | TOTAPAC Update
- 12 | Education Chair
- 13 | TOTA OTAs
- 13 | TOTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
- 14 | TOTF
- 14 | January Board Retreat
- 15 | Call for State and District BOD Nominations
- 16 | Celebrating OT Month by Building Cohesive Cohorts
- 18 | TOTA Endowed Scholarship Recipients
- 19 | What We Learned About OT by Becoming the State Student Representatives
- 20 | District Beat
- 21 | TOTA Honorary Life Members



Revista OT is posted online three times a year by the Texas Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., 2323 Clear Lake City Blvd. Suite 180-197 Houston, TX 77062.

Office Number:
832-915-9238
email: judith.joseph@tota.org
Web: www.tota.org

REVISTA OT: Spring Edition 2024

2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE EXHIBITOR REGISTRATION IS LIVE!

Exhibitor and Advertising Information

Live Exhibit Dates: November 15-16

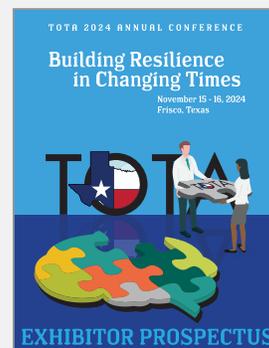
Embassy Suites by Hilton Dallas Frisco
Hotel & Convention Center
Frisco, Texas

The TOTA Annual Conference provides the ideal place and time to promote your products/services to the OT community. The event is being held in person in Frisco, Texas..

Review the prospectus for exhibitor and advertising options (Virtual-Only option for those who cannot join us in person). Once you have read the details and decided on the booth and sponsorship you would like, click on the [Exhibitor/Advertising Registration Form](#) to begin your online registration process.

<https://www.tota.org/2024-exhibitor-and-advertising-opportunities>

**CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO AND
TO ACCESS THE 2024 PROSPECTUS**



What is your Why, and Why Does it Matter?

Jason Stark, OT, MHA – TOTA President



Jason Stark, OT, MHA
TOTA President

Why do you do what you do?

Why do you get out of bed in the morning?

And why should anyone care?

It is one of life's greatest joys to wake up in the morning.

Every morning

With a clear sense of why the day matters

Why everyday matters.

This is what it means to find your Why.

It is the start of an inspiring journey.

Your inspiring journey.

In Simon Sinek's groundbreaking Ted Talk, **Start with the Why**, he articulates what he calls the Golden Circle.



This Golden Circle corresponds with the brain. The What and How corresponds with the neo-cortex, the "newest" part of our brain, which is responsible for rational, analytical thought and language.

The Why corresponds to the limbic brain, which is responsible for our feelings such as trust and loyalty. This part of the brain drives all human behavior and decision making but has no capacity for language. This is why it is so hard for you to articulate why you do things such as why you love someone, why you believe in something, or why you volunteer for something.

People do not respond to what you do as an organization, they respond to why you do it. Having less than 5% of occupational therapy practitioners in the state of Texas as members means that OTPs are not responding to why TOTA does what we do. We must be able to articulate this.

Your state board started off 2024 with a board retreat focused on understanding and being able to articulate TOTA's Why. There is a very specific exercise that involves storytelling, emotions, and reflection to allow an organization to get to the draft Why statement that articulates the contribution of the organization as well as the impact. The statement is a draft statement because it will be further defined and developed. We have tasked a committee to do this following the work of the retreat.

I would like to share this draft Why statement. I hope it resonates with you and reminds you why you are a part of this organization. I also hope it engages people who may not be a part of the organization to join. TOTA's draft Why statement:

"To inspire, empower, educate, and connect our members so that they achieve their goals and serve the community."

Sinek, S. (2017). *Find your why / Simon Sinek with David Mead and Peter Decker*. Penguin Random House.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2024 Awards Committee

Judy Skarbek - Chair | Angela Duell | Eugenia Gonzelez
Purnananda Kar | Kathy Lawson | Helen Wan

The Annual Awards Ceremony is that special time when we can recognize our colleagues for their contributions to our profession. Recognitions are an important part of professional duty and are worth the time and effort that it takes to honor each other.

< [CLICK TO VIEW AWARD CATEGORIES](#) >

**Nominations for 2024 TOTA Awards
will close on April 30, 2024**

Award Ceremony - Friday November 16, 10:30 - 11:15 AM

Submit a
Nomination >

[CLICK HERE](#)

Judith Joseph, Executive Director



Judith Joseph, OTR,
MA, CDRS, TOTA
Executive Director

The Occupational Therapy Community

The general definition of a community is a feeling of fellowship with others, because of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. The Centre for Public Impact describes a community as “a group of people who share an identity-forming narrative”. Although we have occupational therapy as our common interest many of us through OT have developed friendships, found mentors, cultivated professional relationships, and in some cases found a family. Many of us have found support for our celebrations and some of our most challenging times. The Texas Occupational Therapy community is strong and special.

I mentioned this at the TOTA 2021 Annual Conference, but

it's worth repeating during this OT month. This personal reflection demonstrates the OT community at work. I am eternally grateful to the OT community for the outpouring of support I received during the illness and death of my mother in 2021. Judy Skarbek was able to check in on my mother during her hospital stay at Houston Methodist. My mother was experiencing some confusion, and she was afraid because visitors were not allowed due to COVID-19. Outside of her room, she heard a familiar voice (Judy Skarbek), and she told the nurse, “that Judy knows my Judi go and get her”.

Jackie Low sent flowers to my mother that brightened her day. Seneca Wilson helped me organize her apartment and prepared breakfast for her. Christine Salinas spent a day with her watching TV, eating snacks, and napping. My UTMB clan, Diane Collins, Amber Armstead, Riqiea Kitchens, and April Cowan checked on me and sent a wonderful basket of goodies. Sally Harris King brought me breakfast when I stayed overnight at the Hospice facility because the cafeteria was closed, also due to COVID-19 and I was afraid to leave. I can list many names within the OT community who provided support such as Margarette Shelton, Lauro Munoz, Dahlia Castillo, Suzanne Peloquin, Len Sobel, Helen Cohen, Jason Stark, and Kitty Reed and I will still leave out someone.

I can't talk about the OT community without mentioning the incredible legacy that was left by our Sophie Rydin. How many times did she open her home and heart to practitioners and students for almost anything we needed? Who can forget her famous “Sophie Snacks” that she made for students during exam time? Sophie Rydin was a huge factor in TOTA becoming the community we are today.

To sum it up “...TOTA is a great opportunity to find a family and community that you can be a part of that will be here to support you.” (Brittney Burton 2021)

Please enjoy my OT Community Photo Collage

Happy OT Month #TOTAOTMonth

Best
Judi



TOTA Conference Committee

Evie Harness, OTR



Evie Harness, OTR

Officers

President:	Jason Stark
President Elect:	John Luma
Vice President:	Keegan McKay
Secretary:	Laurie Stelter
Treasurer:	Shari Felton

District Chairpersons

Alamo South:	Monica Starkovich Clark
Capital Centex:	Lacey Spark
Great Plains West:	Chris Lasek
Gulf Coast East:	Chanae' Jones
Rio Grande:	Kaleigh Stevens
Trinity North:	Angela Duell

Committee Chairs

Conference:	Evie Harness
Development:	Giuli Krug
Education:	Megan Taylor
Membership Services:	Patricia Bowyer
Standards & Practice:	Michelle Atanu
Parliamentarian:	Lynda Jennings
AOTA Representatives	Lynda Jennings William Sit
OTA Representative	Layman Miller
Student Representatives	Natalie Pravinkumar (OT) Maygen Smith (OTA)
Newsletter	
Editor:	Rachelle Elliot
Design and Production:	Justine Boyer
Executive Director	Judith Joseph
Vendor Services	Kami Lusson
Continuing Education Services	Kami Lusson
Legislative Advisors	Denise Rose Kate Goodrich LaRessa Quintana
Legal Advisor	Richard Cheng

We have barely eased past Valentine's Day, but the Conference Committee has already been working on the behind-the-scenes processes to provide you with a great conference. Don't forget to **save the conference dates of November 15th-16th** on your calendars so you can join us in Frisco at The Embassy Suites by Hilton Dallas/ Frisco Hotel and Convention Center. This is not a new location for us although it has been a while. We were last there in 2011. It is a great location with a good meeting space, a roomy exhibit hall, and amenities including complimentary breakfasts in the morning and happy hours in the evening.

The **Call for Proposals** just went out so please consider sending in a submission. We look forward to having many submissions to help us develop a conference program that will provide conference attendees with a diverse selection of content to meet everyone's needs. We are continuing the option of the 60-minute sessions as that appeared to be popular with submitters this past year. This year the Program Committee will be utilizing a new platform that we hope will facilitate the process and result in easier communication between submitters and reviewers. Do not forget the **deadline for submissions is May 31st** to allow the reviewers adequate time to carefully comb through the submissions. We're allowing a little more time to get those proposals in, so again, please consider submitting a proposal.

Updates this year include the return of the Keynote address back to Saturday. There will be a Welcome Rally and Awards from 10:15-11:00 a.m. followed by Keynote from 11:00 to 12:00. We will continue the longer lunches as we received positive feedback from both attendees and exhibitors at this past conference. Practice Forums will move to Saturday from 8:00-9:00 a.m. Work is also underway to develop a Student Bowl this year. We will keep you posted on the details for that fun event.

Please make sure to **nominate someone you know who exemplifies the qualifications for one of the award categories**. We know there are many deserving candidates out there delivering remarkable services in their practice or educational settings. Don't be intimidated by the nomination process. If you have any questions, the Awards Committee is happy to help you.

Another couple of reminders: Early Bird Registration opens September 6th and ends October 29th. The hotel room booking deadline is October 23rd. Do not procrastinate and miss out on staying at this great hotel.

Finally, a **huge shout out to the Conference Committee and the Awards Committee** who will tirelessly be working these next few months to pull the details together for the conference and award selections. We are committed to making this year's conference a great success for the attendees.

Policy impacts practice. The Texas Occupational Therapy Association is committed to being proactive relative to legislative issues that impact you, the practitioner, and the clients we serve.

TOTA in search of it's next Legislative Chair. If you have a passion for serving and making a difference on the state level, apply today!

[APPLY HERE](#)

Why?

Rachelle Elliott, OTR, MOT
Revista OT Editor



Rachelle Elliott,
OTR, MOT

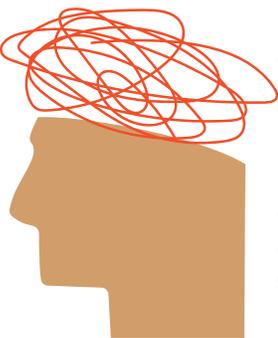
As an occupational therapy practitioner, I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with thousands upon thousands of people. I have met patients from other countries, I have interacted with local “celebrities”



I have worked with people as young as a few days old to 101 years of age. I have had experiences where I walk away engaged and excited and moments when I leave, and I am beyond sad, simply because of someone else’s circumstances. There are days at work when everything seems routine, and days when I am fighting mad. All of these experiences define not only my world, but I am certain many of your world’s as well. I have had several friends and colleagues who have been plagued by burn out, I know I have teetered on the edge many times. When I face these moments, I must return to my “why.”

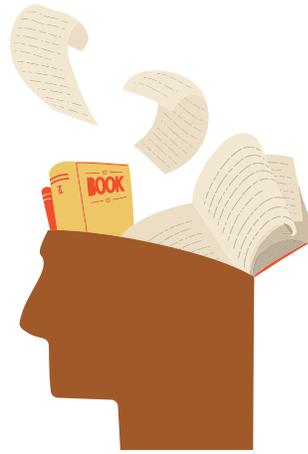
Why did I choose this profession? Why did I choose this employer? Why have I chosen this support group/ peer group?

Sometimes we are in a place in life where we can step back and evaluate these answers on our own. Sometimes it is not as easy. Sometimes it is the rest of life that is interrupting our “big picture” or that word we envisioned 5, 10, 15 years ago when we set our life goals and dreams. We may be experiencing “imposter syndrome,” a global pandemic or maybe a new anxiety has developed.

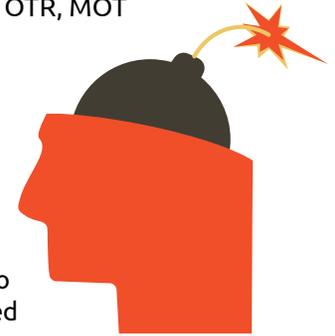


True story- during the height of covid hospitalizations I was working in the ICU. I saw people still on the vent, I saw people with new trachs, I saw people who did not make it. I wore an N-95 mask for up to 4 weeks at a time with a paper mask over the top. During all these new stressors and all of the unknown, I somehow developed a weird anxiety when I would brush my

teeth—anytime I would brush my back teeth or my tongue I would start to gag. I was a 30-something year old adult who developed an oral aversion. I knew that what I was living every day was not normal, it was not what I had “signed up for” but it is the world I was in. I had to work through

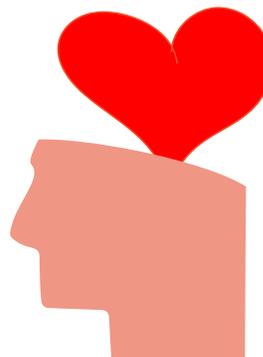


my fears and learn how to return to a fully functioning adult. I talked with my doctor and started taking an anti-depressant. Once my world was not crashing down, I was able to refocus and figure out what I needed to do to reengage. I relied heavily on my friends, my peers, and my family during this time. I can complete proper oral care now; I was able to find a different work setting and I have returned to some realm of normal.



That season of life did modify my “why.” Prior to this time, I would say “I like to help people;” now I know that I am able to help people with areas of their life that really do matter. I like to sit down and actually talk to people, learn their names. I like to build a connection and find out what is important to that person. Sure, I need to assess how someone gets up from the bed, or see how well their arms work, these are important areas, but is it more important than knowing if this person is home alone from 7:30-5:30 everyday when their daughter is at work? Is assessing bed mobility more important than letting someone clean their dentures that have been in their mouth for 3 days without being cleaned? Is that manual muscle test more important than helping someone comb through their hair after they were in an accident, and they have blood and mats in their hair?

If you are in a season of life where you are feeling lost, it is ok to ask for help, it is ok to reexamine your “whys” and it is ok to redefine who you want to be.



“This OT Fought Cancer Alongside Therapy Team at KISD”

Stephanie Belz, OTR, MOT
Klein ISD Occupational Therapist
Texas Woman’s University, Class of 2017

I am a wife, mom, and current Occupational Therapist at Klein ISD, who recently battled aggressive stage 3A breast cancer.

It all started when I was exploring Yellowstone National Park, in the summer of 2022 with my family. We stayed at the Wildfin Lodge, which my brother and sister-in-law own; and it was a chance for some family bonding and summer adventures. As I was getting into the backseat of a car, I moved my arm close to my chest to squeeze into the smaller space-- I froze, as I suddenly felt a lump on my left chest. A foreboding feeling came over me as I thought that this was out of the norm. My husband, who is a physician, told me that it was probably nothing as he tried to assure me that most lumps are usually not cancerous. We decided that I would get it checked out as soon as we got back home to Houston.

I got the call from my OB/GYN doctor when I was at work that the biopsy results indicated that I had invasive ductal carcinoma of the breast. I was the only one in the office at the time, as I had gotten there early that morning. I remember that the room started to spin so I sat down and started sobbing out loud. Just then, some of my team walked in and I remember telling them the news and they started crying with me and hugging me.

Once I had my rounds of doctor appointments, I was told that I had an aggressive cancer which was staged at 3A. I started my rounds of strong chemotherapy and more invasive procedures soon followed. But, the situation started to take a turn for the worse. I had a PET scan to see if there was any more cancer in my body. My gallbladder lit up with a high SUV. (Gallbladder cancer has a poor prognosis, and with it comes a shortened lifespan).

My healthcare team at the Woodlands site decided that I needed to see a specialist surgeon in the Medical Center. I had an operation to take out my gallbladder, cysts from my liver and a liver resection. I got the results back that it was not gallbladder cancer. I had been given another chance at life--I only had to fight one cancer!

I started pouring into myself the will to fight. I had unconsciously used the Occupational Adaptation Framework, where in a nutshell, I used my challenges to cause me to adapt and meet these challenges head on. I started chemotherapy again, and I would do 1 hour long weightlifting classes on the same day. I started to eat really healthy and complete workouts outside regularly. After I finished five and a half months of chemotherapy, I ran a 5K



race with 17 obstacles. My surgery was scheduled on May 5, 2023. The surgery was a success, and I then started 30 rounds of radiation soon after.

Through it all, I had the support of my amazing Occupational and Physical therapy team at Klein ISD. They came to my appointments, and surgeries with me. They called to check up on me. They brought me dinners on chemotherapy days. They gave me a sunshine gift basket, full of goodies to help me each step of my road to recovery. They anticipated my needs before I knew I would need something. They were my biggest cheerleaders when I became cancer free in May of 2023. I would not have been able to hold my job through it all without their steadfast and team approach of my support. As therapists, we know how to read people and we have a sixth sense for what they need at the times they need it. I am here to tell you and my team that our jobs make a difference and our therapeutic use of self- **is our superpower.**



TOTAPAC Updates

Eva Anger, OTR, OTD
TOTAPAC Chair, Executive Committee
totapac@tota.org



Eva Anger, OTR, OTD

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association Political Action Committee (TOTAPAC) provides a voice for occupational therapy practitioners in the State of Texas political arena and is dedicated to ensuring a proactive and timely response to legislative or regulatory activity which may impact the practice of occupational therapy (<https://www.tota.org/totapac>). In addition to voting in elections and writing their legislators, active TOTA members may participate in the legislative process by volunteering their time on the PAC and/or making a monetary donation to the PAC.

Volunteering with the PAC can take many forms, including attending meetings, staffing the PAC table at Conference, and holding office on the Executive Committee. The PAC Executive Committee consists of the Chair, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Secretary and meets regularly throughout the year via a video platform to establish and execute a plan for fundraising. **TOTAPAC is currently looking for a Treasurer.**

Monetary donations can be made to the PAC in a variety of ways such as adding a donation when renewing TOTA membership, scanning a QR code at conference or in Revista Magazine and donating that way, or sending in a check directly to the TOTAPAC offices (2323 Clear Lake Blvd., Suites 180-197, Houston, Texas, 77062). So, if you

have not donated this year, make your donation now! What does the PAC do with the money donated by active TOTA members? The PAC makes monetary donations to legislators in both the Texas House and Texas Senate who support occupational therapy initiatives. The PAC's Executive Committee, TOTA's Executive Director, TOTA's Chair of the Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs, and TOTA's President & President-elect (when in office) collaborate to utilize the monetary donations made to the PAC in the most efficient and accurate way. TOTA is currently looking for a Chair of the Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs.

Occupational therapy practitioners advocate for their clients every day by completing accurate and timely documentation for their services. This makes a difference in the lives of our clients on an individual and family level. Donating money to the TOTAPAC on a monthly or yearly basis will make a difference on a societal level. It is vital that our Texas legislators hear from us. **Please consider donating your time and/or money today.**

Scan or click on this QR code the first of every month to support your profession and the PAC.



Education Chair Report

Megan Taylor, OTR, OTD
TOTA Education Chair
Megan.r.taylor@ttuhsc.edu



2024 has rolled in and we are gearing up for the 2024 Annual Conference in Frisco! Here are a few things to know:

Call for Proposals is OPEN!

When I walked away from conference last year, and as I continue to engage with practitioners and students, I noticed common questions are related to OT interventions: “What can I do to help the client? What does the evidence say? What is best practice?” Of course, there are other great questions too such as how to be more efficient and effective with documentation, how to help ensure approvals and reimbursement, and how to critically reason through ethical situations. Addressing these questions are great ideas for conference proposals!

Conference presentations are a great way to share your knowledge and experience or a great way to force yourself to dig into the evidence for questions you have, so grab a friend, peer, or student, and submit a proposal before the May 31st deadline!

Reviewers are NEEDED!

We are seeking more reviewers. If you have at least 5 years of clinical experience, hold an active or retired license with TBOTE in good standing, and are a current or retired TOTA member, go to the TOTA website and submit an application to be a reviewer for proposals in your area of practice!

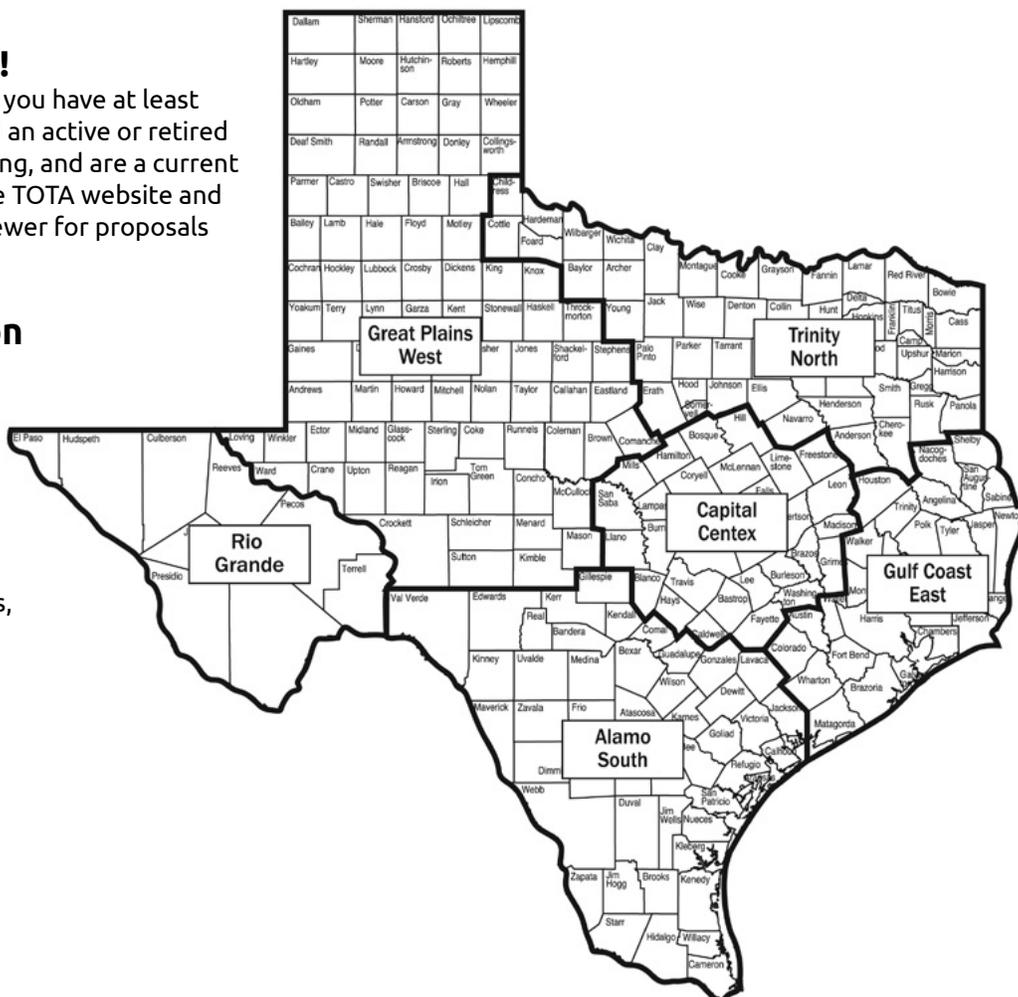
Conference Registration is COMING SOON!

Conference is a great place to network and grow as a practitioner. Early Bird Registration opens in September. Visit the TOTA website for information about registration rates, group discounts, and the venue.

Megan Taylor,
OTR, OTD

Education in the TOTA Districts

Throughout the year, the TOTA website houses online educational opportunities and announcements about educational events occurring in your TOTA District. Visit the TOTA website and “Upcoming Events” calendar to find topics of interest and what’s happening in your area!



TOTA OTAs

Layman Darnell Miller, COTA

Springtime is here and planning for the November 15-16 conference in Denton is in full go mode.

The OTA Forum planning committee, as well as OTA District Representatives from throughout the state, recently met to discuss topics for the upcoming conference and events for the year. We are still working out the details, but what we all agree on is OTA growth. How do we grow OTA membership in TOTA, how do we grow in the knowledge of our role as OTAs, and how do we grow in our individual skill set? These are the challenges before us that we are excited to engage in. We will be looking at the TBOTE Rules, as well as the AOTA Documents on Guidelines for Supervision and the Standards of Practice to increase the knowledge of the roles of the OTA. The creation of Micro-Credentialing study groups will create a network of OTAs with similar interests-- if anyone is interested in the AOTA Lifestyle Modification Badge, let me know.

Another project is helping members create individual professional development plans (PD Plan). In the old days, one interview question that was always asked was, "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" I haven't thought about this in years, until I had to create a professional development



Layman Darnell Miller, COTA

plan for the ACOTE re-accreditation process. I asked around and discovered that few, outside of academia, create a PD plan. Then how do we know where we want to be in the future? As OTAs we go to work and do our jobs, and often our careers advance based on our performance. However, having a plan in place will help practitioners realize their professional goals and dreams.

Yes, the aim is lofty, but it can be achieved!

I would love to hear your comments. And, if you are interested in creating your own professional development plan, just reach out.

Layman Darnell Miller, COTA MBA, MEd.
ldmiller@southtexascollege.edu or ldmstc@gmail.com

TOTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Dahlia Castillo, OTR, OTD

In the article entitled "Promoting justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion through caring communities: Why it matters to occupational therapy" published in the November/December issue of AJOT, Saurez-Balcazar, Arias, and Munoz discuss the global challenges we face because of inequities that impact us and our clients. Authors suggest action at individual, academic, community and systemic levels by creating caring communities and promoting a sense of belonging which apply to all types of practice settings. While the article focused on individual occupational therapy practitioner students, the information is relevant to all areas of clinical practice. Some recommendations include to intentionally practice cultural humility by being an active listener and being open to new ways of thinking, believing, celebrating, and doing. At the community level suggestions include becoming more engaged through volunteerism,



Dahlia Castillo, OTR, OTD

looking for opportunities to participate in advocacy, and being involved with state-level organizations to be a voice for JEDI. Finally, "Vote, and make your voice heard by supporting candidates that share your values."

If you would like to volunteer for the TOTA DEI committee, contact Dahlia Castillo at dahliacastillo3@gmail.com.

The Texas Occupational Therapy Foundation (TOTF)

Sandra Whisner, PhD, OTR, TOTF President
sandravisner@gmail.com



Sandra Whisner, PhD, OTR

The Texas Occupational Therapy Foundation (TOTF) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization which was incorporated in 1996. The primary purpose of TOTF is to promote scholarship and research in occupational therapy in Texas. For the past several years, the foundation has hosted an annual competition for small grants to Texas occupational therapy practitioners and has awarded multiple grants. The most recent grant recipient, Michelle Scheffler, MOT, OTR, received the 2023 TOTF grant for her project entitled *Effectiveness and Feasibility of Strategic Memory Advanced Reasoning Training on Executive Function in Young Women Post Stroke: A Pilot Study*.

Additionally, TOTF promotes scholarship through the research forum at the state conference each year. This most recent research forum at the 2023 TOTA conference was a great success with nine presentations of scholarly works completed by Texas occupational therapy practitioners and students.

To date, TOTF has hosted three webinars to promote research and scholarship. TOTF is grateful to the distinguished presenters who dedicated their time to present quality, evidence-based presentations. Webinar presentations by Dr. Asha Vas, Ph.D. focused the development and implementation of top-down executive training programs for adults with traumatic injuries, and Dr. Lisa Griggs-Stapleton, Ph.D., OTR and Dr. Hope Carroll, OTD, MOT, OTR, BCP presented on evidence-based treatments for neurodiverse populations.

TOTF is committed to facilitating opportunities to increase scholarly inquiry in occupational therapy through the provision of grants, hosting events to disseminate scholarship, and promoting evidence-based practice.

January Board Retreat

www.tota.org



TOTA 2024 Call for State and District Board of Directors Nominations

2024 TOTA Elections

State Board:

Treasurer

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

District Positions:

Alamo South	Capital Centex	Great Plains West	Gulf Coast East	Rio Grande	Trinity North
Chair	Vice-Chair	Chair	Vice-Chair	Chair	Vice-Chair
	Secretary		Secretary		Secretary

TOTA invites all members to submit nominations for the 2024-2025 leadership positions to be elected. Occupational therapy assistants are encouraged to run for elected office and are eligible to be nominated for all positions. Self-Nominations are allowed. Refer to the [website](#) for eligibility requirements.

Note: President will not appear on the 2024 Ballot. The President-Elect will take office following the 2024 Annual Business meeting on October, 23, 2024. The Nomination form will consist of offices for which we are seeking candidates.

TOTA 2024 Call For Proposals - DEADLINE MAY 31, 2024.

All topic areas with relevance to occupational therapy will be considered. Proposals from occupational therapists, assistants and students are welcome, as are proposals from related professions. Occupational therapy continuing education is defined as professional development activities that are directly relevant to the profession of occupational therapy. We encourage you to incorporate the conference theme into your proposal and presentation.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

Join or Renew Now!

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

Membership is available to occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, students, and organizations. Currently over 1800 practitioners and students support their profession through membership in TOTA! The partnership with our members is vital to supporting our collective efforts.

Benefits of TOTA Membership Include:

- Networking opportunities
- Access to the online TOTA membership database
- Leadership and volunteer positions
- Discounts on CE events, including the annual conference
- Free monthly district CE events
- Educational scholarships
- Share research surveys on our site
- Access to Revista OT newsletter and archives
- We monitor legislation and give testimony
- We monitor state agency rules
- Ongoing public relations and marketing campaign
- Much more!!!

Upcoming Events

The 3rd Annual Big Country Autism Walk – Abilene
Saturday, April 6
9:00 - 11:00 AM CDT

Great Plains West Understanding the Impact of Childhood Trauma for Healthcare Providers
Tuesday, April 9
6:30 - 7:30 PM CDT

TSHT 2024 Annual Educational Conference
Friday, April 26 - 28
5:00 PM CDT

Great Plains West Manual Therapy for the Wrist and Fingers
Tuesday, May 14
6:00 - 7:15 PM CDT

TOTA State Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, June 27
8:30 AM - 12:00 Pm CDT

November 15-16, 2024
TOTA Annual Conference

For up-to-date calendar of events, please visit the TOTA website at: www.tota.org

Thank you to our members for helping make TOTA great!

Celebrating OT Month by Building Cohesive Cohorts

Natalie Pravinkumar, BS, OTS
 napravinkuma@miners.utep.edu



Natalie Pravinkumar,
 BS, OTS

Happy occupational therapy month! Even as students, we can find ways to celebrate this month and give occupational therapy the justice it deserves. One, sometimes undervalued, way to promote OT outside of our field is to ensure that we develop the core OT values within our cohorts. In this way, we have opportunities to build strong bonds with other like-minded students in a way that embodies everything that makes occupational therapy so special.



Shrek Themed Group Halloween Costume - our cohort chose various characters from the Shrek Movies and spent the school day in character.

Research shows that cohort-based education fosters the development of social networks, aiding students in overcoming the stressors and difficulties of graduate-level programs in a safe environment (Mauldin, et. al., 2022). But whose responsibility is it to build these cohorts that have strong connections and a sense of safety? Some experts say that the educators of a program should lead the cohort to oneness, while others say that it depends on the willingness of the students to embrace one another. Perhaps it is more of a collaboration among people passionate about current and future occupational therapy professionals.

So how can we build cohesivity? Observations of cohesive cohorts show that students who put aside their competitive natures to help one another, who share their vulnerabilities, invest in group experiences, and value each other's strengths are able to build strong social networks (Cody, 2019). In our time together, my class has found ways to care for one another and share our difficulties, encouraging one another to continue in spite of academic and personal challenges. We organized game nights, group Halloween costumes, Valentine's day letter

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

exchanges, and have been blessed to have professors willing to host end-of-the-semester pool parties. I am sure that cohorts across the state have realized that participating in meaningful occupations with one another builds meaningful and interconnected lives. How incredible that so many cohorts of OT students have one of the greatest learning opportunities - understanding and applying the meaning of our wonderful profession in a way that strengthens the future of occupational therapy.

This OT month, I hope to encourage current and future students to find ways to build and strengthen their cohorts. Not only will it make surviving school much

easier, but it will also allow us as students to practice the values that make OT such a special field. All it takes is a willingness to open up and the initiative to create safe spaces. I can attest that the most unexpected yet meaningful part of school has been the strong relationships my cohort created with one another. Of course, building cohesive cohorts takes effort and time, but doesn't everything of value?

Cody, C. (2019). *Creating a cohesive cohort*. American Occupational Therapy Association. <https://www.aota.org/publications/student-articles/school-tips/cohesive-cohort>

Mauldin, R., Barros-Lane, L., Tarbet, Z., Fujimoto, K., Narendorf, S. (2022). Cohort-based education and other factors related to student peer relationships: A mixed methods social network analysis. *Educ. Sci.*, 12(3), 205. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030205>.



Summer Brunch - at the end of the summer semester, we went to a local restaurant to enjoy each other's company outside of school.



Valentine's Day - we all decorated bags and brought each other valentines with handwritten notes specifically for each person



Team Building- our cohort participated in a three-hour team building session. This is us after completing one of the activities called "zoom"

Surprise Party - when I was chosen as the TOTA state OT student representative, my classmates planned a surprise party complete with balloons, flowers, snacks, and a card signed by all of them.



Gym Day - a group of us even went to the gym together one semester (we would quiz each other in between the exercises)

"This OT month, I hope to encourage current and future students to find ways to build and strengthen their cohorts."

Texas Occupational Therapy Association Endowed Scholarship Recipients

www.tota.org

Two scholarships are awarded each year, one to an entry-level occupational therapy student (MOT, MSOT, OTD) and one to an entry-level occupational therapy assistant student currently enrolled in an accredited program in the state of Texas. Eligible applicants reside in Texas and are members of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association.



Gabriella Johnson
University of Texas Medical Branch

TOTA Involvement:
Student Member

Where are you currently in your academic process (fieldwork, capstone)?

Second-year OT student starting Level II Fieldwork in the fall

Anticipated Graduation Date:
August 2025

Interests/Professional Goals:

Interests/Professional Goals: I am interested in working in pediatrics, especially Early Childhood Intervention and feeding, or with neurological populations. My passion is working with underserved populations and would love to one day open a clinic providing services to them. Also, I hope to use my background in computer science to develop assistive technology that can bridge the gap in access to occupational therapy services for underserved communities.



Sazla Hoang
Texas Woman's University – Houston

TOTA Involvement:

Student General Member and Gulf Coast East Student Representative

Where are you currently in your academic process (fieldwork, capstone)?

I am currently in the Spring Fieldwork IIA rotation at a community-based mental health setting in San Francisco. So far, this rotation has been a great experience and I am learning more every day about how occupational therapy can influence clients' health and well-being, especially in a community setting/group sessions. In the Summer, I will be preparing for my Capstone, and in the Fall, I will be doing my Fieldwork IIB rotation. My last semester will be my Capstone Project, so be on the lookout when that comes!

Anticipated Graduation Date:
May 2025

Interests/Professional Goals:

My interests in Occupational Therapy are geared towards Mental Health, Women's Health, Adaptive Equipment, and Trauma-Informed Care. I enjoy how adaptable OT can be, and I am willing to explore more options on how I can support clients and how to get their needs met. For my professional goals, I hope to be an inclusive and benevolent OT who can be a better provider and the best advocate for clients and their rights. Staying informed and keeping up with evidence-based practices as well as government/insurance policies is an ongoing process and I hope to be in a continual state of learning and growth. My goal is to contribute to creating a brighter future, and I would aim to encourage policies and initiatives that promote stability; such as accessibility regulations/standards and more sustainable options for all.



Leslie Rognstad Defenderfer
Houston Community College

TOTA Involvement:
Member

Where are you currently in your academic process (fieldwork, capstone)?

I am currently in my first fieldwork 2 placement in IRF at Methodist Hospital. I am getting experience with a wide variety of diagnoses and deficits, and implementing interventions. The rehab team is a great example of a cohesive interdisciplinary collaboration, and I am getting a holistic view of patient care. My next placement is at TIRR IRF, and I am really excited to see the differences and similarities between the two facilities, and broaden my experience.

Anticipated Graduation Date:
May 2024

Interests/Professional Goals:

As a future COTA, my professional interests lie at the intersection of neuroscience, physical dysfunction, and aquatic therapy. My passion for understanding the intricacies of the nervous system and its impact on physical well-being drives me to continually explore innovative therapeutic approaches. I am particularly drawn to the rehabilitative potential of aquatics, recognizing the unique benefits it offers in enhancing mobility and function. My aspiration is to further develop my skills within an acute Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility, where I can actively contribute to the recovery journey of patients. Looking ahead, I envision bridging to OT to deepen my impact and scope of practice. My ultimate goal is to integrate my love for swimming and water with occupational therapy, creating a holistic approach to rehabilitation. I am eager to be part of a practice that harnesses the therapeutic power of aquatic environments, leveraging the soothing properties of water while seamlessly incorporating activities of daily living into treatment sessions.

What We Learned About Occupational Therapy by Becoming the State Student Representatives

Natalie Pravinkumar, TOTA State OT Student Representative

Maygen Smith, TOTA State OTA Student Representative



Natalie Pravinkumar,
BS, OTS



Maygen Smith, OTAS

As students, it is all too easy to get buried under the day-to-day academic workload that takes up so much of our time - reading textbooks, writing essays, and developing interventions. However, the reality is that in a few short semesters, students leave the academic setting and are set free into the wild to work as capable practitioners. At least that's the goal, right?

There is danger in assuming that simply participating in academic tasks will create the kinds of competent practitioners our profession requires. Many occupational therapy (OT) programs provide students with ample opportunities to engage in the community, practice skills alongside other professionals, and learn from guest speakers. However, as much as programs work to develop students' learning, OT and OTA students themselves must remain self-motivated to make the most of their time in school.

Many schools offer student organizations and honor societies for students to engage in their communities and take on leadership roles. However, Maygen and I took our personal development one step further by applying for and becoming the TOTA State Student Representatives. Before accepting this position, I knew nothing about the key role that TOTA plays in progressing policies relevant to OT practitioners across the state. I also had no idea that TOTA is run and led by a community of committed OT practitioners who realize that advancing the field means taking the personal initiative to volunteer. These committees of hard-working professionals pour their free time into making TOTA better, and in turn make our profession better. Yet, their work is often unnoticed and unrecognized by the vast practitioner and student community.

As State Student Representatives, Maygen and I attended the state's annual OT conference where we learned from presentations, explored the exhibit hall, and left full of new ideas and inspiration. We planned a mingling event

and practiced our public-speaking skills. We have written articles, made outreach documents, and attended board meetings. In this past year, we have discovered through observation and a little experience how much personal passion and leadership it takes to affect change.

To my fellow students, we are at a unique point of our academic journey where we no longer have to compete for class rankings, participate in clubs for the resume boost, or take leadership roles to impress interviewers. It is determinantal to think "How can participating in this organization benefit me," so instead we must shift to a mindset of "How can my participation benefit the organization." We should look into our futures as OT practitioners and consider the future of the profession itself. What role can each of us play in furthering this practice? How can we make such an impact that people immediately know what OT is when we tell them our profession?

I would encourage OT and OTA students to involve themselves in their school's student organizations and honor societies. Find out how to get involved in your local district's TOTA events and maybe take on a leadership role. Apply for the TOTA State Student Representative position and take the opportunity to see what goes on behind the scenes. Recognize the pure passion of so many practitioners who volunteer on top of their work duties because they desire to further this profession. At the end of the day, as cheesy as it sounds, we are the future of occupational therapy, and we have a responsibility to continue growing the profession.

Greetings from Great Plains West

Chris Lasek, OTR
GPW District Chair



The Great Plains West District (GPWD) is relaunching our Bubba Klostermann presentations this spring. We are hosting a 1 CEU presentation each month starting in March. GPWD will also be celebrating OT Month in April by participating in an Autism Walk and having a social outing (i.e. playing mini golf). Be on the lookout for these events! As always, if you are interested in getting more involved, please let me know, we can always use more help. Great Plains West Student Occupational Therapy Associations have been busy serving the community and promoting OT. Here are some of the things they have been up to.

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center's (TTUHSC) SOTA members have given back to the Lubbock community through service hours and donation drives, members have enjoyed volunteering at: Tim Tebow's Night to Shine event, High Point Village afternoon enrichment classes, Milestones Developmental Play Park, Silver Star, and more. They hosted a Valentine's Day flower bouquet social event for their members and sold Valentine's grams to raise money for their SOTA chapter. They have five students excited to attend the AOTA conference this year! Update provided by Kristen Blasko, TTUHSC TOTA student rep.

Abilene Christian University's (ACU) SOTA serves to create meaningful and exciting events/fundraisers for their cohort to participate in. They value a great and interactive experience while working towards obtaining their degree. So far this year they have planned fellowship activities, participated in the Night to Shine event (Tim Tebow foundation), and the interprofessional education texture day event where they collaborated with ACU's speech, nursing, and nutrition students. The ACU SOTA group is preparing for their trip to the AOTA convention in Orlando this March and they are excited about being involved in the various TOTA events that are offered throughout this year and collaborating with other OT students that share their same passion. Update provided by Brandon Hagood, ACU TOTA student rep.



DISTRICT BEAT

TOTA HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

- Esther Bell, OTR, FAOTA (1998)
*Robert K. Bing, EdD, OTR, FAOTA [b. 1929-d. 2003]
O. Jayne Bowman, PhD, OT (2020)
*Lenore Brannon, OTR [b. 1898-d. 1986]
Cindy Brosig (2021)
Reggie Michael Campbell, OTR, MS, FAOTA (2016)
*F. Catherine Currie, OTR [b. 1915-d. 1998]
Donald Davidson, OTR (2001)
Harriett Davidson, MA, OTR (2015)
*Dorothy Jocelia Denn, OTR [b. 1912-d. 1999]
Ruth Dodds OTR (2020)
*Virginia Chandler Dykes, OTR (1989)[b. 1930-d.2022]
Grace Gilkeson, PhD, OTR, FAOTA (1995)
*Nancy Griffin, EdD, OTR [b. 1936-d. 2014] (2000)
Mary Leary Hennigan, OTR (2022)
Gayle Hersch, PhD, OTR (2017)
*Margaret Hope Keeney, OTR [b. 1913-d. 2003]
*Lucile Land Lacy, OTR [b. 1901-d. 1994]
Jaclyn F. Low, OTR, PhD, FAOTA (2014)
*Cruz Antonia Mattei, OTR [b. 1924-d. 2011]
*Eileen S. McKee, OTR [b. 1923-d. 2010]
*Lillian Hoyle Parent, MA, OTR, FAOTA [b. 1921-d. 2016]
Suzanne Peloquin, OTR, PhD, FAOTA (2012)
*Ruth Whipple Pershing, OTR [b. 1923-d. 1998]
Jean Polichino, OTR, MS, FAOTA (2020)
Terri Powers, OTR (2022)
*Sophie Lin Rydin, PhD, OTR [b. 1950-d.1970]
Caroline Ann Smalley Polliard, OTR (2000)
*Patricia Ann Truchon Ramm, OTR [b. 1928-d. 2007]
(1990) Kathlyn L. Reed, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, MLIS (2010)
*Irene Greer Robertson, OTR [b. 1921-d. 1996]
*Sophie Rydin, PhD, OT [b.1950-d.2020] (2020 Awarded posthumously)
Gretchen M. Schmaltz, OTR (2002)
*Jane Foliart Sims, OTR [b. 1900-d. 1990]
*Geraldine Ann Skinner, OTR [b. 1924-d. 1991
(1989) Leonard Sobel, OTR, MOT (2020)
*Pearl Jones Tennyson, OTR [b. 1904-d. 1993]
*Lynn C. Tupper, OTR, MPH, MOT [b. 1947-d. 2015](2013)
*Luanna S. Vana, OTR [b. 1918-d. 2008]
*Fannie Vanderkooi, OTR [b. 1894-d. 1990]
*Cary Starke Westhause [b. 1932-d. 2001] (1994)
*Virginia White, PhD, OTR, FAOTA [b. 1921-d. 2018] (2008)
*Rena Worthington, OTR [b. 1909-d. 2002]

*Deceased

Updated: 12/10/2018, 3/13/2020, 11/15/2020, 3/16/2021, 2/22/22, 3/17/23