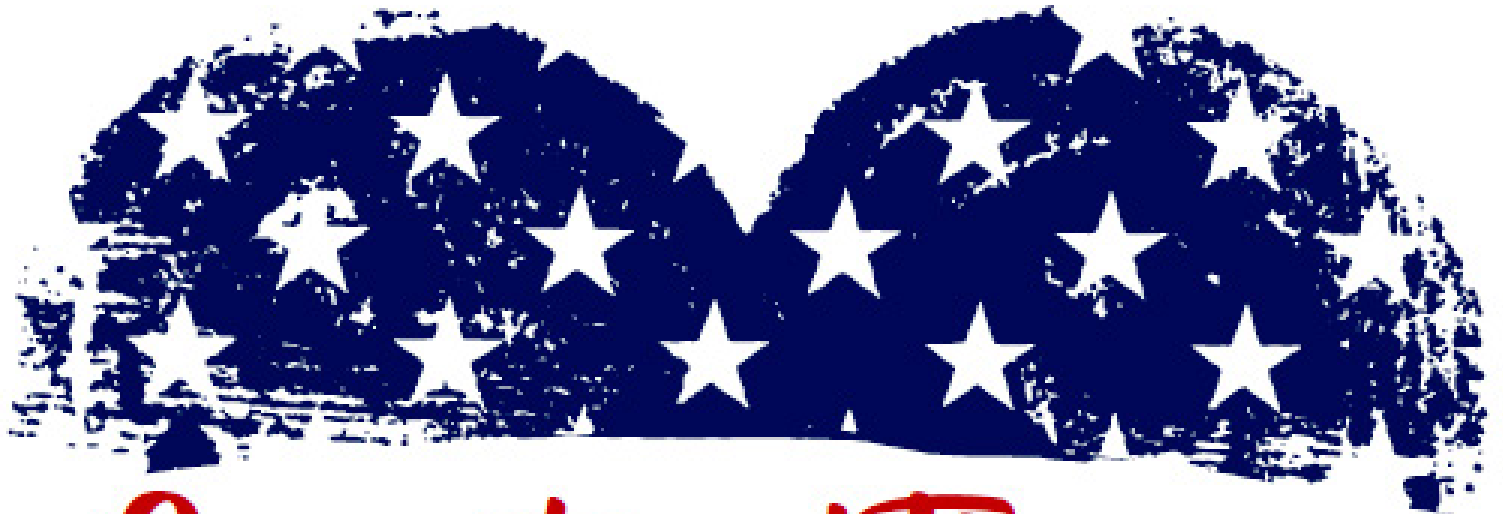


REVISTA OT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

VOL 37 NO. 3 / Summer 2024 EDITION



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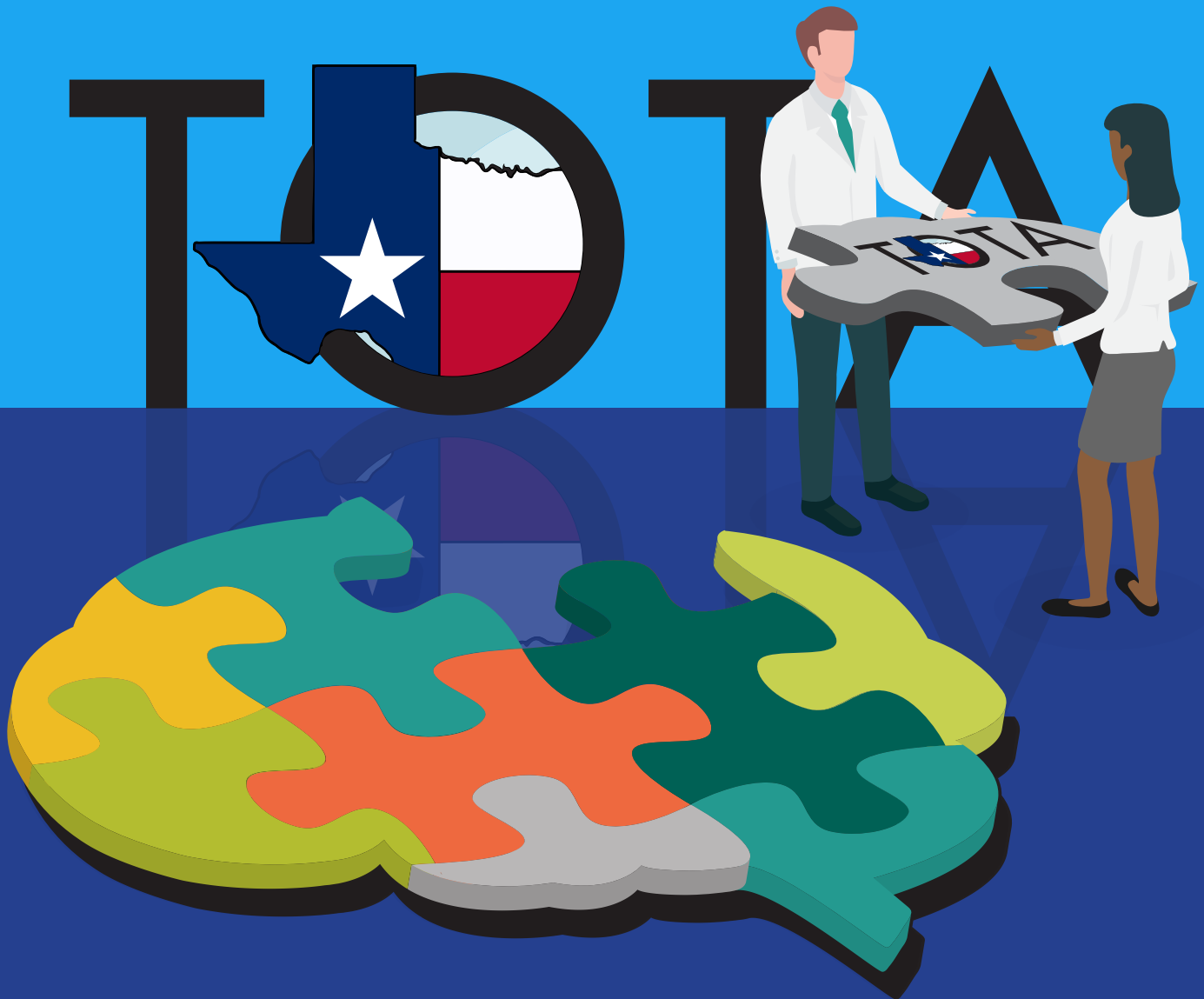
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TOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



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Letter from the President

Jason Stark, OT, MHA – Outgoing President, Texas Occupational Therapy Association



Jason Stark, OT, MHA

Dear Esteemed Colleagues and Friends,

I will have the pleasure of serving as your President through the October 2024 business meeting. However, this will be my last Revista article, and I wanted to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and reflect on our journey.

As my tenure as President of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association draws to a close, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and pride for the journey we have undertaken together. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this incredible community of dedicated professionals and students who are committed to transforming lives and advancing our field.

Over the past few years, we have faced numerous challenges and celebrated many triumphs. Reflecting on our shared achievements, I am inspired by the resilience, creativity, and unwavering dedication each of you brings to our profession.

Through persistent advocacy, we have influenced policies that improve access to our services and ensure that occupational therapy is recognized as an essential component of healthcare. We have remained dedicated to prioritizing the professional growth of our members, offering a multitude of opportunities for learning, networking, and skill enhancement.

My goals as I began to serve you all as President were to serve each one of you, bring value to you, as well as continue to strengthen and grow our organization. I wanted to increase the engagement of our districts and connect local district board positions to statewide initiatives. I also wanted to address the current issues of the time, which were pending rate reductions, Medicaid expansion, managed care oversight, COVID 19, Telehealth, an OT multi-state compact, and social injustice and systemic racism. I do believe that while there is still much work to do, together we have made progress.

As I step down from my role, I am confident in the future of our association and our profession. We have built a

strong foundation, and the incoming leadership is poised to continue driving progress and innovation. TOTA exists to inspire, inform, and connect our members to make a greater impact on the occupational therapy profession. I am confident this will continue and leave you all in good hands.

We as an organization still have work to do. I encourage you all to stay engaged, support one another, and remain committed to the principles and values that define occupational therapy. I encourage you to remember why you entered this profession.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Judi Joseph, Executive Director, the board members, committee chairs, volunteers, and every member of our association. It has been a true honor to lead such an inspiring and dynamic group of professionals.

To my successor, I offer my full support and best wishes. I am confident that under your leadership, the Texas Occupational Therapy Association will continue to thrive and achieve new heights.

Thank you for the trust you placed in me, for your collaboration, and for your unwavering commitment to advancing occupational therapy. Together, we have made a difference, and together, we will continue to do so.

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jason Stark".

Jason Stark
Outgoing President, Texas Occupational Therapy Association

Judith Joseph, Executive Director

What's Next?



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

The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus is credited with saying, "The only thing constant is change". It appears many of us are going through a transitional phase of life. If you are a student or recent graduate you might be contemplating the next steps of your career. Where will you live? What practice area is best for me? There are many things to consider.

In May I had the opportunity to attend the retirement reception for my friend and colleague, Francie Baxter (M. Francie Baxter, OT, PhD, FAOTA). Francie is retiring as Professor, Associate Director of Texas Woman's University, Houston. Although she is a skilled quilter, she states that she has some woodworking equipment and needs some new bluebird nesting boxes. Cynthia Evetts (Cynthia Evetts, OTR, PhD, FAOTA), TWU Professor and Director has also retired at the end of May. Cynthia has plans to be involved in the Denton community mental health through the Art Room "The Art Room provides a safe, supportive studio environment for adults with mental health issues to explore artistic expression and the development of artistic skills."

Another example of a life in transition is my Michigan transplant friend, Diane Collins (Diane M. Collins, PhD, OT Associate Professor). Diane is leaving the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB) and relocating back to our home state of Michigan. Diane has purchased a Ukulele and I believe has already begun taking lessons. Claudette Fette (Claudette Fette, OTR, PhD Clinical Professor), of TWU-Denton is leaving the city and heading to a farm she and her husband have spent several years building. She is also in the process of completing a book she has authored. Helen Cohen (Helen Cohen, OTR, EdD, FAOTA), is retiring from Baylor College of Medicine Center for Balance Disorders. Helen will be doing a little traveling and then deciding on how to best occupy her time. My work bestie, Kami Lussion (TOTA CE and Vendor Services Coordinator), is also leaving the complicated city of Austin to take up residence on her family's ranch with her husband and two dogs. She is not allowed to leave her TOTA job at this point. I absolutely forbid it.

With so many of my friends and colleagues making transitions, I am reminded of my conversation with the past TOTA Executive Director, Mary Hennigan who said, you should be thinking about what you are retiring to and not what you are retiring from. This brings to mind a few other "retirees". Jackie Low (Jaclyn Low, PhD, FAOTA) and her husband Bill are active in the Galveston Art League and is a regular contributor to the Galveston County Daily News. Suzanne Peloquin (Suzanne Peloquin, OTR, PhD, FAOTA) stays involved with the ADA House, an Alcohol Drug Abuse Women's Center. Kitty Reed (Kathlyn Reed, OTR, PhD, MLIS, FAOTA) has been busy organizing the AOTA library, reviewing manuscripts, authoring another textbook, and traveling. Esther Bell (Esther Bell, OTR, MOT, FAOTA) is involved in her church and continues to provide occupational therapy evaluations at a SNF in Gonzales.

I along with many of my peers are straddling the fence between work and retirement. Trying to determine what's next. Our bodies and or our minds might be major contributors to the decision-making process.

As TOTA prepares to transition to new TOTA leadership, we must think about what is next for the organization and what is next for the profession. What is your next move? Whatever it is, I hope you stay engaged in healthy occupations, and as someone said, "Stay well, and stay well occupied".

Happy Trails to Francie, Cynthia, Helen, and Diane.
#OTBoomers

Best,

Judi

TOTA Education Chair Report

Megan Taylor, OTR, OTD
Megan.r.taylor@ttuhsc.edu



Megan Taylor,
OTR, OTD
TOTA Education Chair

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	Kate Goodrich
	LaRessa Quintana
Legal Advisor	Richard Cheng

Thank You District Education Chairs

I want to extend my gratitude to the District Education Committee chairs who serve on the Committee on Education in each of TOTA's districts. Each of these volunteers are committed to improving educational initiatives in your district and across the state. Thank you for all that you do!

- Alamo South District: **Isaac Montes**
- Capital Centex District: **OPEN**
- Great Plains West District: **Cindi Tiongco**
- Gulf Coast East District: **Elisa Avila**
- Rio Grande District: **OPEN**
- Trinity North District: **Melissa Morgan**

We still need volunteers for the Capital Centex and Rio Grande districts. The role of the District Committee on Education officer is to assist with arranging and promoting continuing education opportunities in your district. No experience is required, and you are supported by the district officers and the entire Committee on Education! Please contact me or your District Chair if you are willing to serve in this position or have any questions!

Updates from TBOTE

- Good news! In May the Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners (TBOTE) reviewed TOTA's Continuing Education Approval Program and determined the activities approved or offered by TOTA for continuing education will continue to be recognized as pre-approved continuing education for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistance in Texas.
- More good news! Effective June 1, 2024, TBOTE adopted rule changes to clarify the requirements for categories of education in §367.2. The new language states, activities that "directly concern the maintenance or enhancement of knowledge and proficiencies relevant to occupational therapy practice or the pedagogy, education, ethics, or theory development of occupational therapy" are acceptable continuing education activities.
- As always, all occupational therapy practitioners should be knowledgeable of the TBOTE Rules <https://ptot.texas.gov/ot-acts-and-rules/> and refer to them often.

Save the Date

Plan to attend our 2024 TOTA Annual Conference November 15-16 in Frisco for more outstanding CE events and the engaging of great minds as we continue "Building Resilience in Changing Times"!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LOOK WHAT'S NEW

Texas Occupational Therapy Association Speaker Bureau

www.tota.org/speaker-bureau

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) is currently seeking volunteers to serve as speakers for the TOTA Speaker Bureau. The bureau is a resource for agencies, organizations, academic programs, and stakeholders to find qualified speakers on a variety of topics for conferences and professional development programs. All speakers must be licensed by the Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners (TBOTE) and have no TBOTE disciplinary actions. Speakers must also be members of TOTA in good standing.

TOTA Speaker Roster

tota.memberclicks.net/speaker-roster

The TOTA Speakers Bureau is an occupational therapy practice speaker's bureau. We represent experienced speakers who are eager to share their knowledge and information with students, practitioners, and local community organizations. Our speakers are a valuable resource for agencies, organizations, academic programs, and stakeholders who need qualified speakers on a variety of topics for conferences, workshops, community initiatives, and professional development programs.

TOTA Mental Health Resource Center

[TOTA Mental Health Resource Center | Texas Occupational Therapy \(teachable.com\)](#)

The TOTA Mental Health Resource Center provides a wealth of information for OT practitioners in mental health. It includes assessments, interventions, and links to additional appropriate resources for inpatient, outpatient, community, and school settings. The Resource Center also contains videos, downloadable PDFs, and other information for OTPs working with adults, children, and adolescents.

To access the TOTA Mental Health Resource Center, you must create a username and password for TOTA's Learning Management System (LMS) Teachable. This username and password will be separate from your TOTA account.

TOTA in the Community

www.communityconnectionstexas.com/donate

Community Connections is the organization we will be promoting this year during our annual conference.

*From Erica Luke, Executive Director, Community Connections
"Community Connections is a non-profit in North Texas dedicated to providing free, quality, extra-curricular activities for individuals with special needs. We also give parents and family members of children with disabilities a safe environment for education and support to maximize their quality of life. Please consider becoming a Friend of Community Connections and help us continue our work and grow by donating at the link above."*

Meet Your TOTA Lobbyists

LaRessa Quintana



LaRessa Quintana

As a powerful team of three, your Jackson Walker lobbyists represent the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA), and its members and priorities at the Texas Capitol. Whether they are guiding a bill through the long and complicated legislative process, registering TOTA's positions on other bills, introducing you to Senators, Representatives, legislative and agency staff, or helping you draft testimony for a committee hearing, your lobbyists are here for all your legislative concerns and questions. You can rest assured while you are providing for your patients, all your interests at the Capitol are taken care of.



Denise Rose



Kate Goodrich



LaRessa Quintana

Denise Rose has been working in and around the Texas Capitol for nearly two decades, and her strength is a deep knowledge of the legislative process and the people involved. She has cultivated relationships throughout the Texas Capitol and in state agencies. Denise provides effective strategic counsel to clients on a wide variety of issues, including but not limited to Medicaid and hospital finance, special utility districts, occupational licensing, health care quality, and agency rulemaking processes and requests for proposals.

Kate Goodrich started her career as a federally registered lobbyist in Washington, D.C. and grew to become a senior advisor to legislators at the Texas Capitol. As the former General Counsel and Deputy Committee Director of the Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee, Kate assisted in the development of numerous complex pieces of legislation and monitored the financial appropriations processes for large state agencies. She has also worked as a policy advisor in the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. Kate is a respected member of the governmental affairs community and has forged deep relationships at the Capitol and beyond.

LaRessa Quintana worked at an Austin lobbying firm serving businesses, nonprofits, and associations at the municipal and state level. She also gained hands-on experience at the Texas Capitol as a fellow of the 2019

Moreno/Rangel Legislative Leadership Program sponsored by the Mexican American Legislative Leadership Foundation. Through the program, she worked as a legislative assistant to state Rep. Mary Ann Perez (D-Houston) during the 86th Legislative Session. She also has a rich background in political campaign management having led successful campaigns at the local level, including the Austin Housing for All affordable housing initiative and Councilwoman Vanessa Fuentes's Austin City Council District 2 campaign.

In our time representing TOTA, we have tracked thousands of bills through multiple regular and special legislative sessions. Some of the key issues we have worked on TOTA's behalf over the years include:

- Medicaid therapy reimbursement issues;
- Medicaid managed care prior authorization requirements;
- Early childhood intervention funding;
- The Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact;
- Ensuring clarity around ABA practitioners' scope;
- Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners sunset legislation;
- Elevating state leadership awareness of OT/OTA roles and contributions to behavioral health.

It is an honor to get to represent you at the Texas Capitol. Your expertise guides us as we work to ensure that you can practice to the top of your license and do the important work of caring for your patients.

Share the Buzz

Reggie Michael Campbell, OT, MS, FAOTA
President of OTBE



Reggie Michael
Campbell
OT, MS, FAOTA



The saying “Texas is bigger and better” takes on new meaning in the headlines of natural disasters. To date, Texas is leading the nation in major weather events with 1,332, including 706 hailstorms, 530 strong winds, and 96 tornadoes. Early 2024 Atlantic outlook predictions suggest the World Meteorological Organization could potentially be called upon to name 17-25 hurricanes, with 4-7 of those hurricanes potentially major. Hurricane Harvey in 2017, raised the awareness of the importance of establishing a means by which to connect OT practitioners looking to serve colleagues whose ability to deliver occupational therapy services was impacted by natural disasters. Under the leadership of TOTA President Robin Clearman, the 2017 TOTA Board quickly appointed a Hurricane Harvey Ad Hoc committee with representatives from across the 5 districts, to make recommendations as to how to serve Texas OTs impacted by natural disasters and support the delivery of occupational therapy services. In accepting the recommendations of the Hurricane Harvey Ad-Hoc Committee, the TOTA Board acknowledged TOTA’s nonprofit status requirements would not permit the acceptance of donations to support OT colleagues impacted by natural disasters. TOTA Board recommended establishing a separate nonprofit organization. President Clearman shared his nonprofit organization knowledge and experience to facilitate and lead the establishment of the **Texas Occupational Therapy Benevolence Endowment Foundation (OTBE)** until OTBE officers were identified and a separate Board could be established. OTBE achieved nonprofit status in 2018.

Call to Action: Share the OTBE Buzz

As Texas prepares to face an increase in natural disasters in 2024, OTs are being called to advocate for and share the OTBE mission to support benevolence following a natural disaster or other significant life crisis. Texas OTs are encouraged to:

- visit the Occupational Therapy Benevolence Endowment (OTBE) webpage to learn about OTBE and the OTBE Grant program
 - review and share OTBE Grant parameters with colleagues known to be impacted by a natural disaster or significant life crisis
- OTBE Grant Parameters*
- *OTBE grant parameters are focused on the OTBE mission to support the delivery of occupational therapy services*
 - *OTBE Grants have been awarded to OT practitioners who need support (up to \$500) to cover the cost of renewing TX OT license, CEUs to meet TX OT License requirements, and/or TOTA membership to obtain cost-efficient CEUs*
 - *OTBE Grants are reviewed quarterly*
 - *Grant parameters do not permit payment to individuals directly or persons or organizations that are not related to supporting the delivery of occupational therapy services*
 - *Visit www.otbe.org for an OTBE Grant Application (Note OTBE is not currently administratively or fiscally positioned to award OTBE Grants to OT students).*
 - Send questions on OTBE Grants to txotbe@gmail.com
 - Donate to OTBE’s mission and encourage others to do the same. Many small donations can have a large impact.

Help rewrite the 2024 headlines in times of natural disaster and significant life crisis to read:

“Texas is Bigger and Better in the Delivery of Benevolence for OT Colleagues Impacted by Natural Disasters & Significant Life Crisis.”



“Be There for Your Occupational Therapy Colleagues”

OTA Representative

Layman Darnell Miller, COTA MBA, MED., TOTA OTA Rep



Layman Darnell Miller
COTA MBA, MED.

Greeting fellow OTAs,

Hope you are staying cool and hydrated during this hot Texas summer.

The OTA Forum planning committee has been hard at work developing topics and activities

for this year's conference. The focus will be on helping each other create individual blueprints to

plan and guide our professional careers. For many of us, advancement is based on job performance: someone else is making career decisions for you. Your reasons for choosing OT can get lost in the day-to-day work demands. We plan to work together to help revisit that initial spark that led you to the OT profession or to help explore new passions or interest areas. Interacting with others from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds can help create the roadmap to help each of us achieve our goals.

Since OTs are, by nature, social beings and conferences are social events, it would be great to get together, hang out, and get to know each other (socialize!!). I really don't want to use the word networking, however Elizabeth Perry ACC, Coach Community Manager at BetterUp,

offers five reasons why networking is important to your career development:

1. Networking contributes to your social well-being
2. Networking leads to the exchange of ideas
3. Networking helps you meet people at all professional levels
4. Networking boosts your professional confidence
5. Networking expands your visibility

Scheduling a meetup for one of the evenings is in the planning stages -- it will be a great

opportunity to create new relationships and maybe make a new friend.

Can't wait to see you in November.

Culturally Effective Care

Dahlia Castell, OTR, OTD,
Chair, TOTA DEI Committee



Dahlia Castillo,
OTR, OTD

For a self-reflection exercise on culturally effective care, consider the following terms:

- Cultural responsiveness means being open to the process of building mutuality with another, and that the knowledge one has about a group may or may not apply to the individual.
- Cultural humility encompasses striving to address issues of power differences between oneself and others to value and respect one another by being a continuously self-reflective practitioner.
- Cultural intelligence is the ability to interact effectively with culturally different people.
- Cultural dexterity refers to skills that facilitate effective collaboration and communication with people among multiple dimensions of diversity by understanding and adapting to their needs.
- Cultural safety refers to the idea about unconscious and unspoken assumptions of power held over those that have been historically marginalized.

For more information:

Centro, P.A., Meaulle, D.E., and Castillo, D. (2023). Culture, Equality, Inclusion, Diversity, and Culturally Effective Care. In Gillen, G. & Brown, C. (Eds), Willard and Spackman's occupational therapy (14th ed., pp.209-223). Wolters Kluwer.



Don't Be a Freeloader

Jacklyn Low, OT, PhD



Jacklyn Low, OT, PhD

When I graduated from the University of Texas Medical Branch in 1973, I felt fortunate to get a job there. My final fieldwork assignment was at TIRR in Houston where I encountered people of all ages with life-changing injuries often acquired in the most seemingly innocuous activities. Thus, I was acutely aware that everyone needs good insurance because, well, you never know. Imagine my dismay when I learned that my state-provided employee insurance did not cover occupational therapy. If the profession was sufficiently important to be offered at state educational facilities, why was it not considered important to the recovery and rehabilitation of employees and their families in the event of illness or injury? Physical therapy was a covered service. I also discovered that physical therapy providers received higher salaries than occupational therapy providers. Why were they more valued? Perhaps the answer might lie in the fact that physical therapy became a licensed profession in Texas in 1971. Thus, they had a legal definition for their scope of practice that occupational therapy lacked. It was not until 1983 that the Texas Legislature passed a bill that gave occupational therapy a legal definition and set up procedures for licensing.

How did this happen? Did some enlightened legislator suddenly wake up and shout, "Occupational therapy is an important profession, and we must make sure that only people with specific qualifications can provide such a vital service!" No. What did happen is that members of TOTA went to work and contacted legislators and legislative staff, educating them in what occupational therapy offers patients and families. They involved patients and families in giving testimony. Most important, efforts were organized and coordinated under the guidance of an experienced lobbyist employed by TOTA. It took time, money, energy and effort. Without this legislation, anyone in Texas could set up a practice labeled occupational therapy. Facilities could employ people with no background or training to provide what they could call "occupational therapy." Why hire someone with a degree when an eager volunteer is sure he or she can help long-term care patients with arts and crafts activities, never mind any involvement in regaining self-care activities.

In many ways, the efforts and support of our professional organizations are responsible for job opportunities for many practitioners. Those of you who work with Medicare funded patients need to thank AOTA. Those of you who provide services in public schools might not be there but for the efforts of both AOTA and TOTA. Those of you who fabricate orthotics for your patients need to thank TOTA because a few years ago the professional organization

representing prosthetists and orthotists tried to expand their legal scope of practice and gain exclusive control of this service. Although we count physical therapists as friends and valued colleagues, there have been attempts to expand the PT scope of practice to include activities of daily living and encroach on other areas of OT practice. TOTA continues to employ lobbyists to keep track of the numerous bills filed each legislative session and identify those that will affect our practice. We can't do this ourselves. I doubt that, at the end of your workday, you are willing to read through the murky language of multiple pieces of proposed laws.

Now this is where things are going to get ugly. If you are not a TOTA member and are sensitive to having your feelings hurt, you need to stop reading now because I am shaking a finger in your face and shouting, "You Are a Freeloader! You are taking advantage of the financial support and time provided by your colleagues who are TOTA members. At the very least, you should recognize them and thank them for making sure you have a job. Better yet, join them. Your membership in TOTA is vital to the continuation of occupational therapy in Texas as a recognized and important component of health care and education. Although I can't know the circumstances of each individual's financial situation, I do know that salaries for OT practitioners are above the poverty level. And I also know that you are required to have a certain amount of continuing education to maintain your license (different from your TOTA membership) and that you will find the most economical continuing education events are provided by TOTA and local districts. Do yourself a favor. Start investing in the organizations that affect your professional future. Don't be like that good-for-nothing brother-in-law (every family has one) who couch surfs among friends and relatives so as to avoid the inconvenience of self-supporting employment. Don't be a freeloader. Quit sleeping on your colleagues' couches, join TOTA, and contribute to the future of your profession.

Five Things Every Aspiring Occupational Therapy Entrepreneur Should Consider When Starting Their Businesses.

Michelle Atanu, OTR, MOT
Standards and Practice Chair



Michelle Atanu, OTR,
MOT

I have interacted with hundreds of occupational therapy professionals over the past 12 years. As the Standards and Practice Chair for the Texas Occupational Therapy Association, I constantly think about how our association can help our members engage in the practice of occupational therapy in effective, meaningful, ethical and creative ways. In our profession, we have a large community of occupational therapy creators, entrepreneurs, business owners and innovators. It is important that we create a space for them to learn, thrive and succeed so that the service they provide can continue to help the community at large. Here are my 5 biggest pieces of advice for new and aspiring occupational therapy private practice owners.

1. Know your why

- I am often asked by new business owners, or prospective business owners "how much money can/will I make doing this?" My usual response is, if you are great at something, passionate about it and you are filling a need, the money will come. Money should not be the why because when things get challenging (they will) it is so much easier to quit when money is the sole motive. If the purpose of your business is grounded in your core and foundational values, you keep going no matter what and with that perseverance you will work towards excellence. When you achieve excellence, the money, the joy, the people, and the recognition will find you.

2. Be a person of service

"Happiness does not result from what we get, but from what we give." Unknown

- With a new and growing business, it's important to know that you most likely will be giving a lot away (advice, products, time, help, etc.) for free throughout the duration of your business. This is not to be discouraging but is meant to be an exciting motivator! There is a misguided correlation that monetary success equals happiness. I could write a whole new article, that overwhelmingly shows that some of the most monetarily successful people also have a higher likelihood of depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns. In no way am I saying that monetary success is a bad thing. What I am saying is that monetary success can bring a lot more pleasure in life if a business owner is happy too. Back to my original point of being a person of service, giving and service to others is one of the most powerful tools in cultivating happiness. Happy people tend to be more successful overall.

3. Strive for Progress

- One of my favorite quotes about progress came from a friend who said, "You can't boil the ocean in one day." Wouldn't it be great if we had an idea and/or product that was an instant viral success, which generated millions of dollars as soon as we put it on the market? Oh yes, it would be great but that scenario is not very realistic. I encourage all business owners, myself included, to set goals and strive to make progress on those goals even if everything is not perfect. The journey, the steps, the progress will eventually get you to your desired goals. The journey (although it may be long at times) will make you an even better person and more prepared to take you to the next level you may be looking for. High-five yourself for even the tiniest milestones along the way. Please remember this, it's the climb.

4. Understand your finances

- Occupational therapy professionals are great at a lot of things, but sometimes managing business accounting and finances may not be our strongest attribute (rumor has it that we just marry someone who is good at. Ha!). Jokes aside, we must understand our business finances inside and out and seek out professional help when needed. Knowing your finances can help you to understand how to generate business revenue, how to make sure you can pay your bills, understand your taxes, manage staff payroll and to better project the ability for your company to grow and scale. If accounting is not your thing, hiring a trusted and licensed professional may be a wise investment.

5. Use automation to make life easier

- Automation, automation, automation. As a new business owner, you will wear many hats, if not all hats. Anything that can be done efficiently by technology, use it! Therapy documentation, electronic billing software, automated patient appointment text reminders, personal calendars, automated bill payments, electronic invoice generators, mile tracker apps, etc. I could go on. Anything that can help you to delegate a "hat" to an automation system will help you focus on the other needs of the business comes highly recommended.

I am rooting for you!

Michelle

Occupational Therapy's Role in Arthritis Care and Treatment

Sue Ram, OTR, OTD



Sue Ram, OTR, OTD

New research has found that by 2050, [1 billion adults](#) across the globe will have some form of arthritis. Arthritis is a leading cause of activity limitations, disability, and chronic pain affecting children, teenagers, and adults. Forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA) or osteoarthritis (OA) are also linked to higher rates of mental health conditions, including [anxiety and depression](#). It is critical to promote and prioritize physical and mental wellness in individuals who experience arthritis. Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) are healthcare providers with unique roles in addressing physical and mental barriers to daily participation due to arthritis symptoms. Frequently, physical conditions are addressed separately from mental health conditions and vice versa.

As an occupational therapist who lives with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), I have gained a deeper understanding of how a chronic condition can impact the mental well-being of both my clients and myself. Chronic fatigue and joint pain often interfere with my ability to complete daily tasks, from brushing my hair to keeping up with social engagements due to achy joints and chronic fatigue. I have utilized tools I share with clients, such as pacing strategies, deep breathing, stretching, and energy conservation techniques to make it through each day. Often, my pain amplifies during a stressful day in my work or personal life. Older adults with arthritis face challenges regarding optimal participation in work settings or being mobile in their communities. Skilled intervention delivered by OTPs alone or as part of a team can effectively reduce readmissions in some patient populations, [including those admitted for surgery or management of acute medical conditions](#). If we know that there are proven ways to reduce the healthcare burden on individuals and the medical system, we must continue to advocate for services such as occupational therapy. Recent research found that chronic pain secondary to conditions such as arthritis can be a [risk factor for suicide](#). The study found suicidal ideation ranging from 18% to 50% among patients with chronic pain. Daily pain can be physically and emotionally stressful, which can change the levels of brain and nervous system chemicals. Living with chronic stress can lead to feelings of depression, which can result in a decreased ability to deal with pain. When discussing a physical condition such as arthritis, healthcare providers may sometimes overlook the individual's mental wellness to address pain with medical and physical management.

OTPs have unique skills and training that allow them to assess the whole person and how their daily activities are impacted. Occupational practitioners ask clients about what roles are most valued and needed in their daily lives. Additionally, OTPs assess barriers and supports in the environment, values, and beliefs. The OTP uses this to create individualistic, functional, and realistic goals. OTPs provide skilled intervention for fatigue and pain management, coping and stress management, pacing skills, and environmental adaptations to make tasks easier.

The link between chronic pain and its link to mental health challenges is clear. We must address the whole person and their needs. People across the lifespan are faced with chronic pain that can lead to withdrawal from meaningful activities. We must bring awareness to healthcare providers that we strive to listen to the unique needs of our family, friends, and loved ones. If we know that over 1 billion adults by 2025 will be diagnosed with some form of arthritis, we must take action to care for those who are in need by looking at the whole person. To do this, we must support healthcare policy highlighting the distinct value of occupational therapy and continue sharing stories about how OTPs have helped others regain their independence and joy in their day-to-day lives. May was recognized as the national month to bring awareness to arthritis and mental health.

It is essential to speak with your healthcare provider if you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of depression. For immediate assistance with mental health support, please call or text 9-8-8, the national hotline for suicide awareness.



The American Occupational Therapy Foundation Summer Letter

Lawrence Liff, MA, Chief Development Officer

The vision of a vibrant science that supports occupational therapy practice is blossoming at the American Occupational Therapy Foundation. As the nation's only charitable, scientific, and educational organization dedicated to building evidence for occupational therapy, investing in the future OT workforce and disseminating new knowledge to our profession, the work of AOTF is vital to meeting the needs of occupational therapists, their clients, and caregivers.

Moving the science of occupational therapy forward is an exciting venture that excels when we have greater engagement from our community. It is our focus on our community, on OTs and OTAs like you, that has been the inspiration for our initiatives that address the challenges in our profession. On October 10 and 11, 2024, in Alexandria, VA, AOTF will host the first ever Engage Summit, a special 2-day event in which community partners, occupational therapy researchers and practitioners, will showcase their high-quality, community engaged research studies, discuss best practices for building multidisciplinary, community-based teams and feature keynote speakers sharing their stories on the impact of community-based practice. If you are interested in attending this special event, please visit <https://www.aotf.org/Research-Resources/Engage-Summit>. Registration will close on September 18, 2024.

Investing in our profession is critical to strengthening our profession. Over the last 12 months AOTF funded 20 research grants, awarded 50 scholarships, including the TOTA scholarship, 2 doctoral student scholarships, 2 post-doctoral research fellowships and funded 5 OT graduate students from underrepresented groups to support their participation in mentored research experiences through the AOTF STRIDE Research Fund. At both the Kansas City and Orlando AOTA Conferences we hosted 30 students at the AOTF/AOTA Future Scientists Institute, further expanding opportunities for future researchers to learn and discuss career pathways with academic mentors. Included in these, and past Institutes, have been students from Texas Woman's University and University of Texas El Paso.

This investment in OT research, researchers, and students, over \$1,000,000 per year, is a wonderful example of the power of philanthropy. We have recently announced our 2024 grant, scholarship, and award winners which can be viewed at our website, www.aotf.org.

In Texas, Gabriella Johnson at the University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston was the winner of the OccupationalTherapy.com scholarship, Leslie Rognstad at Houston Community College was the winner of the NBCOT scholarship, Maygen Smith at San Jacinto College was the winner of the Carlotta Wells Scholarship, and the

TOTA Scholarship was awarded to 3 OT students, Gabriella Johnson at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, Sazla Hoang at Texas Woman's University and Leslie Rognstad at Houston Community College.

As you read this letter, applications for the 2025 grants, scholarships and awards will be open or opening soon, so we encourage all Texans to apply or nominate an outstanding occupational therapist or student for the 2025 opportunities.

Support from our community of occupational therapy practitioners is the life blood of AOTF. As donors, volunteers, and event participants, the success of AOTF is only made possible because of the generosity of people who care about occupational therapy. AOTF is grateful to TOTA and its members for being a dedicated partner with us and we are excited to continue this important relationship.

To learn more about the work of AOTF, how we are supporting OT research and the future of practice, upcoming events, free resources, our research journal OTJR: Occupational Therapy Journal of Research, or to become a volunteer yourself, please visit us at www.aotf.org or contact Lawrence Liff at lliff@aotf.org.

Lastly, the fall will be here before we know it and that means AOTF and students across the country will be kicking off the 2025 St. Catherine Challenge. This annual student-led fundraising event supports the AOTF Intervention Research Grant (IRG) and has been vital to the success of this program. The IRG is one of the only opportunities for OT researchers to obtain early-stage funding and the Challenge has fully funded one grant each year since 2018!

In Texas, Baylor University, Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, Texas Woman's University, University of Texas El Paso, University of Texas Medical Branch, and University of Texas San Antonio Health Science Center have all been past participants. If one of these schools is your alma mater, please consider a philanthropic gift to support your school and OT research in the 2025 Challenge. More information will be available at <https://www.aotf.org/stcatherinechallenge>.

Dr. Ricky Joseph of TOTA Alamo South District Receives the American Occupational Therapy Association Roster of Fellows Award

Bridgett Piernik-Yoder, OTR, PhD, FAOTA



Bridgett Piernik-Yoder,
OTR, PhD, FAOTA



Dr. Ricky Joseph, faculty at UT Health San Antonio Department of Occupational Therapy and former TOTA Alamo South District Chair was recognized at the 2024 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) INSPIRE Conference with the AOTA Roster of Fellows Award. He received this prestigious professional honor for his sustained impact in occupational therapy and interprofessional education, leadership, and mentoring.

Dr. Joseph's career is notable for its distinction of ongoing leadership and service. As part of his 23-year career in the United States Army, Dr. Joseph served in many leadership positions directing the development and delivery of occupational therapy services and occupational therapy education. Since his retirement from the US Army, Dr. Joseph has held various leadership roles at several academic programs, always recognized for his outstanding leadership and the quality of his teaching and mentorship.

As part of his contributions to the profession, Dr. Joseph has provided outstanding service to our profession through his leadership in TOTA. He served as an executive board member and Chair of the TOTA Alamo South District for several years, always leading the district to the highest level of activities and continuing education programs. Dr. Joseph also serves as a member of the Executive Board of TOTA and as part of a special panel regarding state legislative and practice issues of Occupational Therapy in Mental Health. Dr. Joseph is a compelling role model and mentor for students through his extensive leadership roles with TOTA. He actively recruits and mentors occupational therapy students to achieve positions on the TOTA board.

Dr. Joseph's expertise in interprofessional education (IPE) is highly regarded and very powerful for the visibility of occupational therapy. Occupational therapists are highly capable leaders in interprofessional education and practice, and Dr. Joseph promotes this through his multiple IPE activities. Dr. Joseph has also been an integral member of



the Interprofessional Education and Communication task force which is a working group comprised of academic leaders from across the state to focus on collaborative IPE initiatives. These initiatives have taken tremendous commitment and leadership on Dr. Joseph's part, and his contributions as an occupational therapist in these arenas are highly influential.

Dr. Joseph participates in national occupational therapy service activities as he annually serves as a proposal reviewer for the AOTA annual conference. In August 2018, he was selected as a member of the Roster of Accreditation Evaluators (RAE) for the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) for a four-year term beginning in 2019. National service commitments such as this provide evidence of Dr. Joseph's prominence in our profession, recognition of his level of professional excellence, as well as the value of his contributions.

Dr. Joseph is a recognized expert in mental health occupational therapy practice and education, interprofessional education, and leadership and management. Dr. Joseph is a frequently invited speaker and presenter at regional and national meetings and conferences on topics related to occupational therapy and interprofessional education. He has delivered nearly 70 presentations over the past 20 years, which demonstrates the long-term impact he has had on our profession. His professional leadership and service is impactful, and it was wonderful to have him recognized through a 2024 American Occupational Therapy Association Roster of Fellows Award.

Congratulations to all the graduates!

Getting to Know Your TOTA Student Reps

Our new student reps are ready to dig their heels into representing our students in TOTA. Check out these fun facts about them!



Kim Garcia
OTA Student Rep

Where do you attend school?

San Jacinto Community College- Houston

What is your favorite thing about OT?

My favorite thing about OT is allowing people to know that what they want and what they feel matters.

What do you hope to achieve as an OT practitioner?

As an OT practitioner I want to be a light to those who may be in darkness due to fear, depression, disability, loneliness etc.

Describe yourself in one word

LOYAL

Favorite movie quote?

"There's no place like home." – Wizard of Oz

Favorite sport, pastime, or hobby

Sport- Astros games
Pastime- Floating the river with my family
Hobby-exercise- (Because I love pizza)

What Disney character are you?

Woody from Toy Story- You've always got a friend in me!

Marvel or DC

Wonder Woman- my hero growing up!

Starbucks or Local coffee house

Local- especially when I travel.

Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter

Instagram- all I have.

Spotify or Pandora

Spotify

Do you have a pet?

Sadly, no :(

If you could redesign the food pyramid without health consequences, how would it look?

Redesigning food pyramid I would add pizza to each level. I believe pizza can be made healthy by having cauliflower crust, adding more vegetables, and fruit for those who like pineapple as a topping. That's my story and I'm sticking with it.



Annabeth Doris
OT Student Rep

Where do you attend school?

The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

What is your favorite thing about OT?

My favorite thing about OT is the flexibility! There are so many settings to work in and populations to work with, you'll never run out of new opportunities as an OT.

What do you hope to achieve as an OT practitioner?

I hope to progress the setting of equine-based occupational therapy through advocacy and research.

Describe yourself in one word

Driven

Favorite movie quote?

"Now, if you two don't mind, I'm going to bed before either of you come up with another clever idea to get us killed or worse... expelled."
— Hermione Granger in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Favorite sport, pastime, or hobby

My favorite pastime is reading.

What Disney character are you?

Pascal the Chameleon from Tangled.

Marvel or DC

Marvel

Starbucks or Local coffee house

Local coffee house

Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter

LinkedIn

Spotify or Pandora

Spotify

Do you have a pet?

Yes! I have a 9-year-old German Shepherd named Luna.

If you could redesign the food pyramid without health consequences, how would it look?

Every meal would have pasta and pesto in it!

TOTA Capstone Students

www.tota.org



Heather Howard
Occupational Therapy
Doctoral Student,
Class of 2024
University of Texas
Medical Branch

Heather R. Howard, OTDS, holds double bachelor's degrees in cinema/television and English with a minor in psychology. After a career as a certified nutritionist and yoga instructor, Heather returned to school to pursue occupational therapy, inspired by a constant drive to help others. As a Doctor of Occupational Therapy (August 2024), Heather is excited to deliver high-quality patient care when she lands her first professional OT role.

Capstone Project:

In Texas, over 3 million adults have a mental health (MH) condition, and more than half of these people did not receive any MH treatment in the last year. The Texas OT Practice Act states that OT practitioners can treat persons with mental health conditions. Therefore, my capstone project entailed the creation of The TOTA Mental Health Resource Center. This multi-media resource center provides assessments, interventions, and links to additional resources for OT practitioners in mental health that are appropriate for use in the inpatient, outpatient, community, and school settings.



Khalyn Williams
Occupational Therapy
Doctoral Student,
Class of 2024
University of Texas
Medical Branch

Khalyn Williams is a doctoral student at UTMB graduating this August. She has a background in Family Studies with a minor in Sociology as she has always been intrigued with psychology, human nature, the family life cycle, and how people interact with the world around them. Khalyn shares a love for the youth and is already impacting the community by mentoring high school and collegiate students as a professional speaker and an author. Her experience with public speaking was a unique fit to help create and launch TOTA's speaker bureau with the guidance of the executive director to complete her capstone project. Overall, Khalyn has had a heart for the pediatric population since she was a little girl and plans to launch projects for this population along her OT journey.



TOTA congratulates our capstone students and wish them success as they enter a new chapter in their careers!

Trinity North

Angela Duell, OTR, OTD
Trinity North District Chair

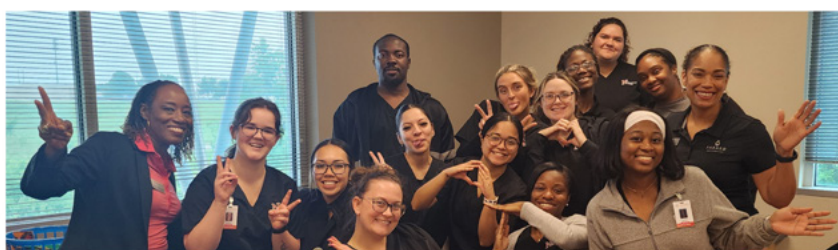


Hi All,

It is with immense gratitude that I serve in the role of Trinity North District Chair for the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA). This opportunity to serve and lead our vibrant and dedicated community is a profound honor and a significant responsibility. I am committed to advancing our profession, supporting our members, and fostering an environment where occupational therapy continues to thrive and innovate. Occupational therapy is more than a profession; it is a calling to enhance the quality of life for individuals across the lifespan. Our work is rooted in compassion, creativity, and collaboration.

One of my primary goals is to strengthen the sense of community within our district. By fostering open communication, encouraging active participation, and supporting professional development, we can create a network where every voice is heard, and every member feels valued. I aim to facilitate regular in-person and hybrid meetings, workshops, showcases, and networking events that will enhance our professional skills and build lasting connections among our members. In

the spirit of reconnecting, an initiative that the Trinity North District membership chair and I completed was OT month visits, providing OT swag and treats to OT and OTA programs in the district. We had the opportunity



to meet and speak with the students and faculty about the importance of TOTA membership and maintaining membership as clinicians. Please keep an eye out for upcoming events!

Thank you for your trust and support. Let us move forward with enthusiasm, determination, and a collaborative spirit, knowing that our collective efforts will shape the future of occupational therapy in Texas and beyond.

Best,
Angela Duell, OTR, OTD

DISTRICT BEAT

Alamo South

Monica S. Clark,
OTR, OTD, MOT



UIW Welcomes US Department of Education Deputy Assistant Secretary, Ruth Ryder

On March 14th, The University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) OTD program had the honor of hosting Ruth Ryder, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Education for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). She traveled from Washington DC to meet with students and learn more about occupational therapy's role regarding mental health in the school system.

Students presented projects they completed as part of the US Department of Education Mental Health grant and highlighted their knowledge of mental health occupational therapy.

For more information, visit: [Deputy Assistant Secretary from the Department of Education tours grant winning OTD program | AOTA](#)



Great Plains West

Chris Lasek, OTR
Great Plains West District Chair



The Great Plains West District (GPWD) hosted four 1-hour courses this past spring. All the speakers did a great job, and their presentations are posted on TOTA's LMS website. The presentations were: "A Holistic Perspective of Post-Amputation OT Interventions & Education Across Settings," "Transitioning from Student to Practitioner," "Understanding the Impact of Childhood Trauma for Healthcare Providers," and "Manual Therapy for the Wrist and Fingers." Please check them out and the other great courses on TOTA's LMS website.



To celebrate OT Month in April, we hosted a social event in Abilene to play mini golf at Play Faire Park. We had about 20 people (including kids) attend and enjoyed nice weather and some live music while at the park.

Get involved with
your local district >
www.tota.org

DISTRICT BEAT

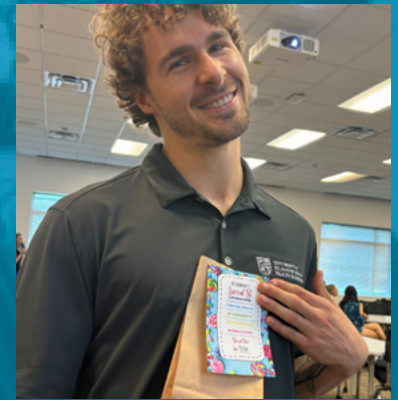
Capital CenTex

Lacey Spark, OTD, MOT, OTR
Capital CenTex District Chair



The Capital CenTex district has been busy so far this year with CEU events, social gatherings, and outreach to our student members in the district. In February, we hosted a CEU event on "Health and Wellness Through the Lens of Occupation" presented by our very own district chair for the Committee on Membership, Carol Regli, OTD, OTR, at the ACC campus with practitioners and UMHB students streaming into the link as well! Our vice-chair, Beth Lambert, OTR, MS was out at Pinthouse Pizza Brewing in April to host a social gathering of local OTPs to celebrate OT Month. Lastly, our board has just started to hand out encouragement goodie bags to the students across the OTP programs in our district! We hope that this small token of encouragement helps our future colleagues know that we are so excited and ready for them to join us to keep moving our profession forward!

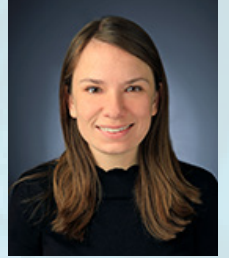
As we look forward to the second half of the year, we will continue to meet as a board every month to plan ways to serve our members. Currently, we are planning to make it to all OTP programs in the district to deliver the goodie bags, host a social gathering in the Salado area in August, and put together a team for the Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas' BuddyWalk in October in Georgetown. So, keep your eyes peeled on the TOTA website and social media platforms for more updated information as we finalize details! We are open to other ideas as well, so just reach out and let us know if there is an event or way that we could help support our profession in our district! We would love for you to join us for our meetings and our events. Please don't hesitate to reach out anytime to get more information, chat, or get involved. Looking forward to seeing you at future events and the annual conference later this year!



DISTRICT BEAT

Rio Grande

Kaleigh Stevens, OTD, OTR
Rio Grande District Chair



Thank you to everyone who attended the TOTA Rio Grande networking event in April. Practitioners and OT/OTA students from across the district came together to meet new friends and celebrate OT Month. Also, thank you to the members of the Rio Grande District Board for your assistance in organizing the event. We hope to host another district networking event soon, so please be on the lookout! In the meantime, here are some fun ideas to stay cool when working with pediatric patients, offered by some savvy West Texas pediatric therapists:

- Water gun target practice: draw chalk targets on an outdoor wall and use water guns to spray the targets away.
- Place a paper with lines and shapes in a ziplock bag and place on a cookie tray or casserole dish, then pour water in the dish and freeze overnight. Have a skating party with toys and follow the lines and shapes.
- Make homemade ice-cream.
- Make homemade popsicles with juice and cut up or blended fruit (this one may take several sessions).
- Make foil boats and practice dropping pennies onto the boat.
- Freeze small toys in an ice cube tray. Use water droppers with warm water to melt the cubes and get the toys out.

Have fun and stay cool!

