

REVISTA OT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

VOL 38 NO. 1 / Winter 2025 EDITION



Thank you for attending the
TOTA 2024 Annual Conference!



329 Gail Ritchie's Pediatric NDT Intensive Handling Intervention

Friday-Saturday June 20-21, 2025 Dallas, TX
Friday-Saturday August 1-2, 2025, Addison, TX

372 Addressing Neuroplasticity in the Pediatric Concussion, TBI and Stroke

Friday, April 4, 2025 Dallas, TX

352 Handling The Rib Cage for Improved Respiratory Coordination in Function

Friday-Saturday, May 16-17, 2025 Addison, TX



306 CAN-EAT Approach ...Using medical, motor, & therapy strategies in pediatric feeding

Friday-Saturday, October 3-4, 2025 San Antonio, TX

357 Mastering Pediatric Postural Control: Foundations and Strategies for Balance Development and Treatment

Saturday, October 11, 2025, 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM Houston, TX

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2025



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San Marcos, Texas
November 14-15, 2025

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San Marcos Hotel
Conference Center



Call for
Proposals
Opens
March 1
and Closes May 31

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO:
<https://www.tota.org/2025-annual-conference>

SAVE THE DATE



JUNE 6-8, 2025
THE GUNTER HOTEL
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



THE AMERICAN
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Celebrating 60 years!

Join us for #AOTFFoundationFriday April 4, 2025
AOTA INSPIRE Conference and Expo in Philadelphia:

- Breakfast with a Scholar
- State of the Science
- Research Excellence Symposium

TOTA 2025 Day at the Capitol February 4, 2025

TOTA Day at the Capitol is our Legislative Advocacy Day and is open to everyone, members and non-members, students and practitioners. Register now and plan to attend the virtual orientation on January 28, 2025. Registration is required for all participants. Registering helps us to schedule meetings with legislators and staff.

[Click Here](#) and Register Today

Registration link: <https://tota.memberclicks.net/2025-day-at-the-capitol>

Mandatory Virtual Day at the Capitol Orientation

January 28, 2025

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM CST

Enroll Here - <https://texas-occupational-therapy-association.teachable.com/p/tota-day-at-the-capitol1>

Would You Like a Ride?

The Texas Chapter of the National Black OT Caucus has organized round-trip bus transportation for the Houston area.

Link: <https://www.txbotc.com/event-details/tota-day-at-the-capital-bus>

TOTA Day at the Capital Transportation

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PICK UP: 5:30 AM

RETURN: 7:15 PM

\$55



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WE NEED YOU!

to let other OTs and OTAs understand the importance of becoming a member of TOTA – the **ONLY** professional organization that supports and advocates for occupational therapy practice in Texas. Invite someone to join TOTA today!



Scan code to see the benefits of a TOTA Membership and Join or renew today!



SAVE THE DATE

NOV. 14-15, 2025
TOTA 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Embassy Suites by Hilton
San Marcos Hotel
Conference Center



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.

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REVISTA OT: WINTER EDITION 2025

THANK YOU TO OUR TOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPONSORS AND EXHIBITORS!

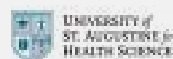
PLATINUM



SILVER



TEXAS STAR



ADDITIONAL EXHIBITORS

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| Care Options for Kids | Sanctum Health Partners, LLC |
| CNS Neuroskills | Small Hands Big Hearts Pediatric Therapy Management |
| Cornerstone Pediatric Therapy | Texas Health and Human Services |
| Cross Healthcare Management | Texas Occupational Therapy Foundation (TOTF) |
| Envision University | Texas Tech Health Science Center |
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| Kids Spot Rehab | TIRR Memorial Hermann |
| Milestone Therapy Services | UT Tyler |
| NAIOMT | Viva Pediatrics Home Health Services |
| NBCOT | |
| North Texas Therapy & Home Care | |
| Parkland Health & Hospital | |

Your Flight is Boarding Now

John S. Luna, OTR, OTD, TOTA President



John S. Luna, OTR, OTD

“Ding.” The familiar sound of a boarding announcement filled the air: “Will all passengers in flight group 5 please make your way to the general boarding line?” Typically, this prompts travelers to casually, yet hurriedly, gather their belongings and head to the gate. But on that particular afternoon at Kansas City’s airport, something was different.

Occupational therapy practitioners and students filled the terminal, lingering to finish conversations before boarding. Even as they lined up, the sense of connection remained. Passengers helped each other stow bags in the overhead compartments and exchanged pleasantries: “Where are you headed?” or “What brought you to KC?” I overheard one passenger proudly share, “I’m a vendor, just finished exhibiting at AOTA’s Annual Conference. This is my favorite event of the year—the attendees (occupational therapy practitioners and students) make you feel right at home.”

The atmosphere on that flight, in a small way, reflected a part of the spirit of occupational therapy, or as Susan Peloquin (2005) described it, *the ethos of occupational therapy: a deep interconnection of values, sentiment, and spirit* (Peloquin, p. 611, 2005). Together, the OT community on that flight created a sense of community that dispelled the typical challenges of air travel—whether finding overhead space or sitting next to a headphone-resistant neighbor. The problems seemed lighter when faced as part of a community.

Yet, when we disembark and return to the shifting landscapes of our daily work, challenges such as reimbursement, scope of practice, professional development, productivity pressures, and burnout can feel daunting. Why do we often try to face these challenges alone? The answer is simple: **we do not have to.**

The Role of State Associations

State associations, like the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA), were established to benefit professionals and students of occupational therapy. TOTA’s why is “To inspire, inform, and connect our members to make a greater impact on the occupational therapy profession.” Together, we have inspired new legislation to be introduced into the Texas legislature, such as The Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact Act (HB 932). We have informed practitioners practice as a recognized approver of continuing education courses in Texas. We have connected students and practitioners to the single biggest OT conference in Texas every November.

However, while state associations, like TOTA, represent the entire OT community in states like Texas, only about 10% of practitioners and students are members. This leaves significant opportunities untapped:

- **Missed opportunities to connect** that could build a larger community.
- **Missed opportunities to influence** or amplify our voice on critical professional issues.
- **Missed opportunities for the next great idea** at the decision-making tables where solutions to our challenges are crafted.

Occupational therapy’s message is too important to go unheard. Jim Hinojosa (2007) emphasized the role of professional associations in providing outlets for dialogue. Membership amplifies that dialogue, and your engagement strengthens our ability to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of the profession in Texas.



A Personal Appeal

To the many of you who are already TOTA members, thank you. Your commitment provides the foundation for TOTA to address the needs of our profession. Your voice and engagement are invaluable.

But as the demands on our profession grow, so must our collective voice. When friends or colleagues ask me, “Why should I join TOTA? What can TOTA do for me?” my answer reframes the question: “What can TOTA do with you?”

Together, we can:

- Respond more effectively to external changes in healthcare and education.
- Find innovative solutions through expanded dialogues.
- Overcome challenges as a community of practitioners.

As Charles Christiansen (1999) noted, “There is much opportunity for occupational therapy as a special and unique service that provides opportunities for people to establish, maintain, or reclaim their identities.” While he may not have been speaking directly about state associations, I believe his words are relevant. TOTA is a unique community where practitioners and students can establish, maintain, and sometimes even reclaim their professional identities to serve our clients across their lifespan.

The Call to Action

Our shared work is too important to face in isolation. Membership in TOTA is not just about what the association can do for you—it is about what we can achieve together. I hope that everyone will board this flight and join us in strengthening our voices, advancing our profession, and building a community that makes occupational therapy feel like home, wherever we are.

Christiansen, C. H. (1999). Defining lives: Occupation as identity: An essay on competence, coherence, and the creation of meaning. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 53(6), 547–558. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.53.6.547>

Hinojosa, J. (2007). Becoming innovators in an era of hyperchange. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(6), 629–637. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.61.6.629>

Peloquin, S. M. (2005). Embracing our ethos, reclaiming our heart. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 59(6), 611–625. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.59.6.611>

John S. Luna

Judith Joseph, Executive Director



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

Lessons Learned from the 2024 Annual Conference

Let me start by saying thank you again to everyone who attended, presented, volunteered, and exhibited at the TOTA 2024 Annual Conference. We hosted 364 Occupational Therapy Practitioners, 365 Students, and over 100 vendors staffing 62 exhibit booths.

Sessions and Posters

The call for proposals resulted in a TOTA record of 187 submissions. As a result, we ran 9 concurrent sessions. On Friday there were 33 educational sessions, 22 posters, and the Research Forum contained 9 presentations. Saturday included the annual awards ceremony, keynote address, 22 sessions, 21 poster sessions, and the school-based practice research forum containing 2 presentations. In addition to the in-person content, conference attendees can access over 10 hours of on-demand content available until February 14, 2025.

Registration and Course Selection

Although registration did not require session selection, we recognize the need to require registrants to select sessions and assign sessions to rooms based on the seating capacity. In 2025 you should anticipate session selection being a requirement.

Lanyardgate

Many of you are not old enough to understand this analogy. Texas Woman's University was our lanyard sponsor. TOTA uses an independent vendor to provide conference bags, lanyards, and name badge holders. We were fortunate to have a local pediatric clinic, [Envision Hope Pediatric Therapy](#) receive our items, saving us on storage fees. The sponsored lanyards were delivered to the wrong address, and we were unable to recover the package, this forced us to order generic lanyards from a Dallas area vendor and use what we had in reserve.

Feedback

Thank you to those who provided positive and constructive feedback. I have reviewed every comment and found many opportunities for improvement. Look for an even better conference in 2025. If you did not have the opportunity to provide feedback, you can email me directly at [judith.joseph@tota.org](mailto:joseph@tota.org).

Local Hospitality Co-Chairs

If you live in the San Marcos area and would like to serve as a local hospitality committee chair, please reach out.



Get Ready for a Busy 2025!!!

We have a busy calendar this year. Let's start with the regular session of the 89th Texas Legislature, which is scheduled to convene from January 14, 2025, to June 2, 2025. We need every licensed occupational therapy practitioner to be engaged this year. This is our opportunity to let our legislators know the impact of occupational therapy on the mental and physical health of all Texans.

Have you considered running for an elected position? This is an odd year and there are plenty of opportunities to serve at the State and district level. The deadline for submitting nominations is April 30, 2025. Elections will occur in June and new officers will take their seats at the table in October 2025.

January is a great time to start looking at your colleagues and review the TOTA Award Categories. The call for award nominations will take place in April, so I encourage you to begin your search for a deserving OT practitioner or student.

TOTA 2025 Major Events:

January

- 24 -25 TOTA State Board of Directors Association Development Meeting
- 26 TOTA State Board of Directors Meeting
Time: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM (time subject to change)
- 28 TOTA Day at the Capitol Virtual Orientation

February

- 4 TOTA Day at the Capitol is our Legislative Advocacy Day.
Register now and plan to attend the virtual orientation on January 28, 2025.
[Click Here and Register Today](#)

The [Texas Chapter of the National Black OT Caucus](#) has organized round-trip bus transportation from the Houston area.

Pick up: HCC West Loop Campus. 5601 W Loop S.
Houston, TX 77081

Leaving Houston at 5:30 AM

Leaving Austin at 4:30 PM

Cost: \$55 round trip + +\$1.38 service fee.

Tickets: Must be purchased by Monday, January 13, 2025.
This ticket includes round-trip transportation, water, and snacks

May

- 17 OTBE/TOTA Mental Wellness Symposium – Focus on Maternal Mental Health
Details to come.

June

- 13-14 The 2025 TOTA OT and PT Service Delivery in Schools: Policy, Research and Best Practices
Location: Austin Community College – Eastview Campus: 3401 Webberville Rd location in building 8000, Austin, TX 78702

November

- 14-15 TOTA Annual Conference in San Marcos!!!

Officers

President:	John Luma
Vice President:	Keegan McKay
Secretary:	Laurie Stelter
Treasurer:	Jason Perez
Executive Director	Judith Joseph (<i>employee</i>)

District Chairpersons

Alamo South:	Thelma Ochoa
Capital Centex:	Lacey Spark
Great Plains West:	Chris Lasek
Gulf Coast East:	Chanae' Jones
Rio Grande:	Grisel Contreras
Trinity North:	Angela Duell

Appointed Committee Chairs

Committee on Conference:	Evie Harness
Committee on Development:	Sue Ram
Committee on Education:	Megan Taylor
Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs:	Olivia Gargiulo
Committee on Membership:	Patricia Bowyer
Committee on Standards and Practice:	Michelle Atanu
Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:	Dahlia Castillo

Adhoc Committee Chairs

Social Media Committee	Tamara Traber and Amanda Elsner
Awards and Recognition Committee	OPEN
Mentorship Program	Monica Clark

Appointed Board Members

Historian	Esther Bell
Parliamentarian	Lynda Jennings
OTA Representative	Layman Darnell Miller
OT Student Representative	Annabeth Dorris
OTA Student Representative	Kimberly Garcia

Consultants

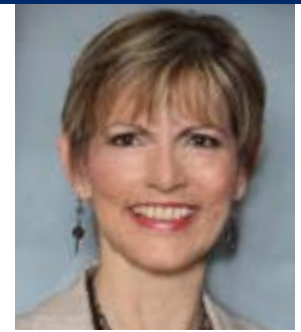
Legislative Advisors	Denise Rose, JD - Lobbyist
TOTA Legal Advisor	Richard Y. Cheng, JD, OT, CHC

Newsletter

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TOTA Conference 2024 – It's A Wrap

Evie Harness, OTR



Evie Harness, OTR
TOTA Conference Chair

With more than 59 live educational sessions, 42 live poster sessions, and 155 speakers the TOTA conference closed out 2024 with a very successful conference. Students, I hope you participated in the Student Knowledge Bowl and the Chat & Chew Networking Event. Both events received rave reviews. Thank you to our amazing Judi Joseph and Kami Lusson who are the masterminds all year long orchestrating the many details going on behind the scenes for conference planning. Thanks also to the Conference Committee for 2024 including: Eileen Garza (Conference App Organizer), Megan Taylor (Education Committee Chair), Theresa Powers (Check-in and Volunteers), Jean Polichino (Program Chair), Ashley Bower (Local Hospitality Team Leader), and India Williams (Local Hospitality Team Leader), who put in many volunteer hours of work helping to facilitate the various components of the conference. You are appreciated more than you know.

We also couldn't have pulled it off without all of you, the members who supported conference by attending, our wonderful exhibitors who filled the exhibit hall and sponsored various events, and finally the speakers who provided us with a full schedule of educational sessions that enabled us to bring this conference to you. This year we had a record number of submissions for the Call for Papers which not only surprised us but took us to a whole new level of review and selection of presentations.

The good news is the conference continues. Please take advantage of the on-demand presentations that will be available through February 14th and are listed with 400 course numbers.

Don't forget to pencil in conference next year which will be held November 14th and 15th 2025 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos.

Blessings to you and yours during the upcoming holiday season and see you next year at the conference!

TOTA 2024 Award Recipients



OT of the Year
Marcie Campbell,
OTD, OTR



Roster of Merit
Patricia Bowyer,
EdD, MS, OTR, FAOTA



Roster of Merit
Judy-Ray Skarbeck,
OTR, MSRS



Horizon Award
Sue Ram,
OTR, OTD



**Academic Educator
of the Year Award**
Pei Fen Chang,
PhD, OTR



Honorary Life Member
Helen S. Cohen,
EdD, OTR, FAOTA



Honorary Life Member
Joan Bell, OTR



Honorary Life Member
Mary Frances Baxter,
OT, PhD, FAOTA



Interdisciplinary Team Award
The Second Annual GO BABY GO Team

Texas Woman's University School of Occupational Therapy
Texas Women's University School of Nursing,
Texas A&M School of Engineering
Mary Baxter OT, PhD, FAOTA
Suzanne Scheller, MS, RN, Assoc. Clinical Professor
Kevin Birdsall, MD, M Eng
Ramya Varadarajan, MD, MEng
Clair Collins, class of 2025 student of TAMU EnMed program

TOTA 2024 Service Recognition Awards

ALAMO SOUTH

Monica Clark, OTR, OTD –
District Chair 2020 -2024

Theresa Grundy, OTR, MOT –
District Committee on Development Chair

DeAnna Scapperotti, OTR, MOT –
District Committee on Membership Chair

CAPITAL CENTEX

Laura Novak, OTD, OTR, BCG –

District Committee on Standards & Practice Chair

Beth Lambert, MS, OTR – District Vice Chair 2022-2024

Crystal Mandudi, OTR, LSVT BIG –
District Committee on Education Chair

Rachel Sales – District OTA Student Representative

Meghan Connelly – District OT Student Representative

Hannah Smith – District OT Student Representative

Heather Doreck, OTR –
District Committee on Development Chair

Natalie Spencer, COTA – District OTA Representative

GREAT PLAINS WEST

Molly Amlung, OTR, MOT – District Treasurer

Gwen Calvert, OTR, CLT-LANA – Development Committee

Ashley White, COTA – GPWD OTA Representative

Kristen Blasko – GPWD Student Representative

GULF COAST EAST DISTRICT

Sabrina Starks, OTR, MOT, COTA – District Secretary 2021-2024

Osarume Ododo, COTA – District OTA Rep

RIO GRANDE

Kaleigh Stevens, OTD, OTR – District Chair

Anmarie de la Rosa – District Student Representative

TRINITY NORTH

Julie Hebert, OTR, OTD – District Vice Chair

Ashley Brewer Harrell, OTR, OTD – District Secretary

Melissa Morgan, COTA, MA, PhD –
District Education Committee Chair

TOTAPAC

Naida Roden, OTR

Sherry White, COTA, MHA, FACMPE

STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jason Stark, OT, MHA – President

Shari Felton, OTR – Treasurer

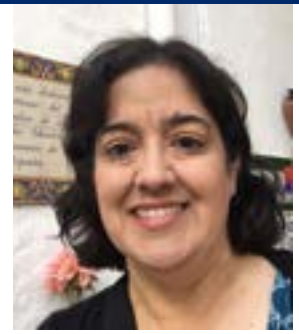
Giuli Krug, PhD, OTR, CLA – Development Committee Chair

Kira Elizabeth Beal, OTR, Ed.D., OTD, CPAM, CLT –
Co-Chair Mentorship Adhoc Committee

TOTA DEI Committee Chair

Dahlia Castillo, OTR, OTD

Creating a sense of belonging is fundamental to enhancing occupational therapy practice, as it fosters trust, collaboration, and mutual respect in both professional and client interactions. Belonging is cultivated by acknowledging and valuing diverse identities, perspectives, and lived experiences. Belonging creates an inclusive environment where individuals feel seen, heard, and respected. For clients, this involves tailoring interventions to align with their cultural, social, and personal contexts, to ensure that their voices are central to the therapeutic process. For professionals, a sense of belonging arises through supportive workplace cultures that encourage diversity, equity, and teamwork, empowering practitioners to share ideas and thrive. By embedding belonging into practice, occupational therapists can promote holistic care, strengthen therapeutic relationships, and contribute to inclusive and equitable environments that enhance outcomes for all stakeholders.



Dahlia Castillo,
OTR, OTD
DEI Committee Chair

The following peer-reviewed articles provide valuable insights into this area:

Hitch, D., & Pepin, G. (2020). Doing, being, becoming and belonging at the heart of occupational therapy: An analysis of theoretical ways of knowing. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 28(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2020.1726454>

Summary: This article explores foundational concepts of doing, being, becoming, and belonging, exploring their theoretical significance in occupational therapy. Authors analyze how these concepts shape the profession's ways of knowing and practicing. They emphasize the interplay between these dimensions to address holistic client care, advocating for approaches that promote not only functional outcomes but also a deeper sense of identity and inclusion for clients.

Reid, H., & Pride, T. (2023). Colliding Identities and the Act of Creating Spaces of Belonging in the Occupational Therapy Profession. *Healthy Populations Journal*, 3 (1) 19-29. <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/hpj/article/view/11476/10435>

Summary: This article investigates the challenges of intersecting identities within the occupational therapy profession and their implications for creating inclusive spaces. Authors discuss how systemic structures, and personal experiences influence a sense of belonging for both practitioners and clients. They propose strategies to foster inclusion, equity, and diversity, with a focus on transforming professional environments to better reflect the diverse identities they serve.

Continuing the Conversation

Layman Darnell Miller, OTA

Meet-ups at conferences are wonderful events-- they can be a great way to connect with old friends or make new ones. Meet-ups help bring people together who share similar backgrounds or areas of interest such as: the same college or university, similar areas of practice, or even an early morning walking group. The beauty of a meet-up is its ability to allow everyone a voice in a less formal environment.

Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) had a meet-up during conference, bridging practitioners from varied areas of practice, and experience ranging from three to forty years. Each participant discussed their roles at their work setting and the gratitude felt from performing that role.

A topic that came up was community. Many OTA's work in facilities where they may be one of few or, in some cases, the only one. Where do you go, or who do you reach out to when you have a specific OTA question? We get so consumed in our jobs and our lives, that we do not have the time, or energy, to establish professional connections. Where is our OTA community?

We started this conversation, but unfortunately time ran out and we were all off to our next conference sessions.

We agreed to continue this conversation into the new year and would like to invite others to join in. If you are interested in being a part of this discussion, contact me: ldmiller@southtexascollege.edu.



Layman Darnell Miller,
TOTA State OTA
Representative

TOTA Education Chair

Megan Taylor, OTR, OTD



Megan Taylor, OTR,
OTD
OTA Education Chair

Exciting Developments and Upcoming Opportunities

TOTA is thrilled to announce the addition of two new District Education Chairs to our team:

Terri Grundy - Capital Centex
Catherine Tsang-Wu - Trinity North

These dedicated professionals will play key roles in organizing and promoting regional Continuing Education (CE) events, fostering networking opportunities, and contributing to the TOTA State Education Committee. Their efforts will help us expand and enhance educational offerings for all TOTA members.

A Great Opportunity Awaits!

We currently have an OPEN District Education Chair position for **Rio Grande**. This is an exciting opportunity for any licensed OT or OTA in Texas, who is a TOTA member in good standing, and resides within the Rio Grande district. If you are interested in serving in this vital role, please reach out to [Judi Joseph](#) or [Megan Taylor](#) (megan.r.taylor@ttuhsc.edu).

Our Goal for 2025: More CE and Networking Opportunities

Here are some ways to maximize your professional development in the coming year:

- **On-Demand Sessions:** Access additional 2024 TOTA Annual Conference sessions and posters via the Whova App, available until February 14, 2025.
- **TOTA Learning Management System:** Check regularly for new courses added throughout the year.
- **Save the Date:** Mark your calendars for the TOTA 2025 Annual Conference in San Marcos on November 14-15.

Looking Ahead: Contribute and Grow with TOTA!

As we continue to elevate our professional development efforts, we encourage you to:

- **Submit a Proposal:** What will your topic be for the 2025 Annual TOTA Conference? Stay tuned for the Call for Proposals on the TOTA website.
- **Present Locally or Statewide:** Proposals for district-wide or statewide presentations are always welcome.

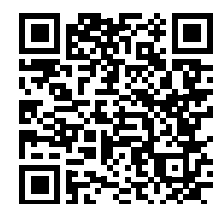
Let's continue to work together to advance the education and professional growth of Texas OTPs!

Get
creative!



Submit
your idea

For the 2025 Conference theme!



Resilience: A Reflection on TOTA 24

Sue Ram, OTR, OTD



Reflecting on my experience at the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) annual conference this past November, the theme of resilience resonates deeply within me. This year's conference was an opportunity to share knowledge and reflect on my personal journey and the challenges I have faced along the way. I had the privilege of presenting to over 100 attendees on home education programs in pediatric settings, an area I am passionate about. The moment was humbling and empowering, marking a significant milestone in my professional growth.

This year has been challenging for many of us in the occupational therapy community. Personally, my resilience was tested more than ever. But through every obstacle, I was reminded that resilience is not just about bouncing back; it is about the strength to keep moving forward despite setbacks. It is about learning, growing, and finding new paths in the face of adversity.

At the conference, I was surrounded by some of the most important people in my life who have supported me through thick and thin. My PhD mentor from Texas Woman's University (TWU) was there, offering guidance and encouragement, as always. I also had the opportunity to reconnect with my current students at Houston Community College (HCC), whom I have been teaching as an adjunct professor this semester. Their presence was a reminder of the importance of education and our impact as educators in shaping the next generation of occupational therapists.

My friends Jennifer and Dulce, who have been unwavering sources of support, were also in the audience. Their friendship has been a constant anchor, seeing them at the conference was a reminder that no journey is ever walked alone. Additionally, I was thrilled to have my TWU graduate students, whom I assist as a graduate teaching assistant, there with me. Their support and dedication to their studies inspire me daily. Finally, I met a new friend, Sarah, whose kindness and enthusiasm for the field remind me of the joy of building new connections.



Sue Ram, OTR, OTD
TOTA State
Development Chair



When I think back to my path, I cannot help but acknowledge the resilience it took to get to this point. This year, like many, was not easy. I faced a job layoff after three years in a role I loved. It was a hard blow, but it also taught me that setbacks do not define us—they refine us. Amidst this uncertainty, my passion for occupational therapy and my commitment to serving clients and families pushed me forward. The unwavering support from my network and the strength I drew from my colleagues at TOTA ultimately led me to a new opportunity: the Director of Student Affairs position at Edgewood College's new hybrid OTD program. This new role is my dream job, and it would not have been possible without resilience and determination to keep pushing forward.

One of the most profound moments of the conference came when I was honored with the Horizon Award. This recognition was particularly special because I was nominated by my mentor, Judith Joseph, who has been a guiding force since my early days as an OT student in Florida. Judi has always believed in my potential and supported my aspirations, and her nomination meant the world to me. The recognition from TOTA was a testament to the power of mentorship, community, and perseverance.

Looking back on this past year, I realize that resilience is not something we are born with; it is something we develop through our experiences, relationships, and passions. Whether we are students, practitioners, or academics, we all have the tools to be resilient. The strength we need to overcome challenges exist within us, and often, it's the communities we build, and the networks we rely on that help us realize it.

TOTA 2024 was not just a conference, it was a reminder of how far we have come, the challenges we have overcome, and the incredible potential to continue growing. It reminded me that resilience is not about perfection but progress. As long as we continue to move forward, we will always be ready for the next challenge. Together, we can achieve great things—not just for ourselves but for our clients and families.

TOTA 2025 Call for State and District Board of Directors Nominations



Eligibility Requirements

State Officers:

- Any candidate for the office of President, President-Elect or Vice President of TOTA must have been a member of the Association for three (3) years immediately prior to the nomination deadline.
- State officers may reside in a border state, but must be licensed to practice in Texas.
- All officers shall maintain membership in good standing with TOTA and AOTA during their terms of office.
- No state officer can concurrently hold a position as an elected officer in AOTA, a district division of TOTA, or another state's OT membership organization.

District Officers:

- Nominees for District Chair must have been a member of the district for a minimum of one year prior to the nomination deadline.
- Officers must be licensed to practice in Texas and have chosen to be a member of that geographical district.
- All officers must remain TOTA members in good standing throughout their term.
- No District Officer shall concurrently hold more than one elected position in AOTA, a state office of TOTA, or another state's OT membership organizations.

2025 TOTA Elections

State Board:

Vice President
Secretary

TOTA members: nominate yourself or a colleague for an elected volunteer position.

District Positions:

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

TOTA invites all members to submit nominations for the 2025-2026 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.

The following table is an overview of important dates regarding nominations and voting.

January/February	Call for Nominations will be posted on the TOTA website and printed in Revista. The chair of the Nomination Committee will be selected by the committee.
April	Deadline for submission of all names to state and district nomination committees.
June	Ballots will be live on the TOTA website. Deadline is June 30.
July	Election results will be announced to the membership on July 5th.
November	New Officer orientation. All elected state officers and district officers shall assume office upon adjournment of the annual business meeting at which their election has been announced.

Thank you to our members for helping make TOTA great!

Resilience and Relationships: The Journey from Student to Practitioner

**Annabeth Dorris, OT Student Rep, and
Kim Garcia, OTA Student Rep**



Annabeth Dorris,
OT Student Rep



Kim Garcia,
OTA Student Rep

Reflecting on our time at the annual TOTA conference, we had the privilege of meeting fellow students and practitioners while attending sessions and networking. One of the conference's highlights was the Student Knowledge Challenge Bowl, hosted by Ensign Therapy on Friday night. The electric atmosphere was unmatched as students passionately represented their program's SOTA groups for a chance at fabulous prizes. The conference provided a unique opportunity to learn from industry leaders, network with peers, and gain insights into the latest trends in occupational therapy. If you missed it, mark your calendar for next year—you do not want to miss the energy and camaraderie of this event!

On Saturday morning, we hosted the Chat and Chew, a networking event designed for students. We started the session by sharing all the exciting student leadership opportunities within TOTA. Attendees got to know each other through an engaging bingo activity, and Dr. Kira Beal's inspiring message about embracing your journey as a leader left us all feeling motivated and empowered. She reminded us that leadership at every level is vital to the future of our profession.

As state student representatives, we were honored to collaborate and plan the Chat and Chew event. Its purpose was to help students make meaningful connections with peers nationwide and build networking skills that will serve them well throughout their careers. This year's conference theme, "Building Resilience in Changing Times," resonated deeply. To stay resilient through challenges and adversity, we must remember that building relationships and fostering a strong sense of community is not just important, but essential. Our occupational therapy community is a source of strength in these times.

Membership in an organization like TOTA is the first step in creating those connections. It bridges the gap between students and practitioners across Texas, a state with so much ground to cover! The journey from student to clinician—and even throughout your career—can sometimes feel daunting and isolating. But stepping out of your comfort zone to take on leadership roles, like we

did, makes all the difference. We were strangers when we applied to be state student representatives, but through this role, we have built a lifelong friendship and professional network. These opportunities have taught us the value of teamwork, relationship-building, and resilience.

We urge you to get involved! You are the profession's future, and your voice and leadership will shape occupational therapy in the years to come. Whether through applying for leadership roles, attending events like the Chat and Chew, or joining TOTA as a member, every step you take strengthens our community.

TOTA 2024 was an unforgettable experience! We sincerely thank Judi Joseph and the conference planning committee for hosting such a seamless event. Thank you to John Luna and Dr. Kira Beal for sharing their wisdom and inspiring the next generation of student leaders. Lastly, thank our mentor, Sue Ram, for her unwavering support and guidance. We could not have done this without such an incredible team behind us.

Now it is your turn to step into leadership and become part of this vibrant community. Together, we can continue building resilience and shaping the future of occupational therapy. On to TOTA 2025—see you there!

GET CREATIVE>

**Submit Your Idea
for the TOTA 2025
Conference Theme!**



TOTA 2025 Capstone Student



Name: Abrianna Pellegrino
Institution: Texas Woman's University- Dallas Center

TOTA Involvement if any: Student Member since 2021

What will your Capstone Project Focus on?
Advocacy and participation in the 2025 Texas legislative session

Anticipated Graduation Date: May 2025

Interests/Professional Goals:
Advocacy, physical dysfunction, and improving the lives of adults with intellectual disabilities

Abrianna Pellegrino is a doctoral student at Texas Woman's University (TWU) in Dallas, expected to graduate in May 2025. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from TWU Denton and has long been passionate about helping others. Abrianna has been a student member of TOTA since 2021 and looks forward to completing her capstone project under the mentorship of TOTA's executive director. Her capstone project will focus on advocacy and participation in the 2025 Texas legislative session. In addition to her interest in advocacy, Abrianna is also interested in physical dysfunction and supporting adults with intellectual disabilities (ID). Inspired by her personal experience with her uncle, who has an ID, she is dedicated to advocating for adults with ID to improve their quality of life and access to services.

Attention Texas OT Association Students...



Mock Interviews
October 14th-30th
Hosted by: Great Plains West District
13 slots available!
Interviews will be held via Zoom and last 30 minutes.
Sign ups are open until October 10th and for all TOTA members.
Sign up link below!

Fuel Your Future Event
Event details
Friday, September 19th, 12:00-12:30 PM
1:00 p.m. on Zoom.
Online event for OT & OTA students, both members and non-members.
Learn what TOTA does for students and how you can get involved!
Questions?
Email: kim@tota.org
kim@tota.org or kim@tota.org

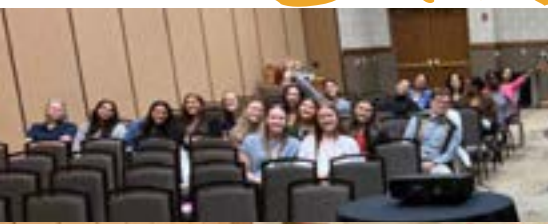
Help us get to 200 followers!

Did you know that there is an Instagram page dedicated to TOTA OT and OTA students? This platform is created by and managed by your State Student Representatives.



Follow Today!

Chat & Chew



We LOVE Our TOTA Student Members!



Student Knowledge Challenge Bowl

Ashley Keenan SLP
 Jessica Smiddy
 Jay Jupillo COTA
 Andy Cisneros PTA
 Jon Anderson PT

Sponsored by:
 Ensign Services



Our decision to introduce and sponsor The Knowledge Bowl is deeply rooted in our commitment to one of our core values: Passion for Learning. We also believe that fostering healthy student programming not only invigorates our current staff with fresh ideas but also enhances their skills as clinical instructors. This dynamic between students and staff creates an environment that benefits everyone involved.

By sponsoring The Knowledge Bowl, we aim to present our organization to students and educational institutions highlighting who we are and what we stand for. This allows us to give back to the profession by supporting the development of future practitioners.

Our sponsorship also aligns with our desire to assist TOTA in creating a vibrant and engaging event. We are excited to contribute to an event that not only promotes learning and professional growth but also fosters a sense of community amongst participating schools. Through this sponsorship, we hope to make a meaningful impact on the profession and support the continuous growth and development of both students and professionals.

1st



Houston Community College OTA Program First Prize

2nd



Abilene Christian College OTD Program Second Prize

3rd



University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio 3rd Prize

Great Plains West

Chris Lasek, OTR
Great Plains West District Chair
Lasekc2003@yahoo.com



The Great Plains West District (GPWD) had another year of being well represented at TOTA's annual conference. Some of our district members that gave presentations included: 1) Amy Gibbs, assistant OT professor at ACU, presented on the DIR/Floortime intervention for children with feeding disorders; 2) Laura Alexander, assistant OT professor at TTUHSC, taught us about chronic pain and interventions to help patients manage their pain; 3) Megan Taylor, assistant OT professor at TTUHSC, shared with us about AOTA's OT Practice Guidelines for Adults with Stroke along with case examples and corresponding interventions. We also were able to have a district meetup at conference during lunch. It was fun getting to catch up with friends / colleagues as well as meet new ones.



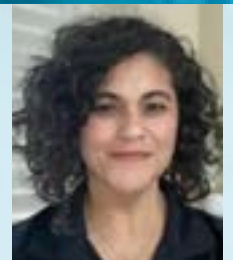
We have several exciting CEU's lined up for this next year. In January, Selina Elder - OT at West Texas Rehab Center in San Angelo - will be presenting on "Understanding Traumatic and Non-traumatic Brain Injuries and Treatment Considerations." This will be available both in-person and via Zoom through TOTA's Learning Management System. From February through April, we will be doing a Lunch & Learn Series via Zoom and the LMS with the focus being on pediatrics. We also hope to plan several networking / social events as well as team up with our TTUHSC & ACU SOTA groups to participate in some activities. Stay tuned!

Please let me know if you would like to get more involved in our GPWD. The more people we have, the more we can offer, and the stronger we can be. From now on, we will be sending out email announcements for when our next district meetings are scheduled, and we encourage anyone who can to attend so that we can get your input / feedback. Thanks for allowing me to serve as your district chair!

DISTRICT BEAT

Alamo South

Thelma Ochoa, OTD, OTR, C/NDT
Alamo South District Chair



As the District Chair for Alamo South, I am fully committed to dedicating my time and effort to supporting the Texas Occupational Therapy Association and advancing the field of occupational therapy. My dedication is driven by a deep belief in the value of our profession and the transformative impact it has on the lives of those we serve.

I aim to increase the representation of occupational therapy practitioners within the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), also known as the Valley, a region in Deep South Texas encompassing Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties. This effort focuses on fostering awareness, accessibility, and opportunities to grow the profession in this underserved area.

I am continually inspired by the commitment of the practitioners within the Alamo South District and look forward to working alongside them. Together, we can strengthen our community, advocate for the profession, and create meaningful change for those who depend on our expertise and care.

Trinity North

Angela Duell, OTR, MS, OTD
Trinity North District Chair



Membership, Connection, and Continuing Momentum: A Message from the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) Trinity North District Chair

As the new year approaches, we are reflecting on the incredible growth, resilience, and collaboration demonstrated by our members over the past year. Together, we have strengthened our professional network, expanded our reach, and built a strong foundation for advancing occupational therapy in Texas. Now, we invite you to join us in continuing this momentum as we step into the opportunities of 2025.

Membership: The Heart of Our Success

Our members are the lifeline of the Trinity North district. Your dedication and passion drive our collective success, whether through advocacy efforts, participation in district events, or contributions to advancing the profession. As occupational therapy practitioners and students, we share a commitment to empowering individuals and communities through meaningful occupations. Membership provides access to invaluable resources, including continuing education opportunities, professional networking, and updates on legislative efforts that impact our practice. Moreover, being a TOTA member means having a voice in shaping the future of occupational therapy in Texas. Your membership matters -- please spread the word!

Connection: Building a Stronger Community

In 2024, we focused on fostering connections among our members, recognizing that collaboration is essential to thriving in our profession. Our district events both virtual and in-person offered opportunities to share knowledge, learn from one another, and develop lasting professional relationships.

Looking ahead, we are committed to creating even more opportunities to connect. The Trinity North district will continue to provide platforms for meaningful engagement. We plan to work together to strengthen the bonds within our district.

Continuing Momentum: Into the New Year

As we set our sights on 2025, the momentum we have built offers an exciting path forward. This year, we will focus on three key priorities:

- **Advocacy:** We will continue to champion policies that enhance access to occupational therapy services and promote the unique value we bring to healthcare and community settings.
- **Education:** Our district will offer dynamic continuing education programs designed to meet your professional development needs while addressing emerging trends and evidence-based practices.
- **Engagement:** By amplifying member voices and expanding participation, we aim to make the Trinity North District a welcoming and vibrant community for all occupational therapy professionals.

DISTRICT BEAT

Capital Cen Tex

Lacey Spark, OTD, MOT, OTR
Capital Cen Tex District Chair
lspark@usa.edu



What a fun year the Capital CenTex district had! As we closed out 2024, we reflected on our CEU event, social gatherings, student outreach efforts, fundraising, and the fun, learning, and connection we found at conference. Since our last update in July, we hosted 2 social gatherings: one in Salado in August at Barrow Brewing and another in Austin in September at Cidercade. In October, we had a Buddy Walk team raise funds for the Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas, and at conference in November, we gathered for a happy hour and lunch to catch up with students and practitioners in our district. December was a time for rest and reflection.

As we look forward to 2025, we will continue to meet as a board every month to plan ways to serve our membership. Currently, we are planning to continue our 2024 efforts of promoting knowledge, connection, and advocacy. We would love to have anyone join who wants to be involved, ask questions, share ideas, or just wants to know what is going on in the district. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me, your district chair, if I can help get you connected in any way- we are here to serve you and our profession. Hope to see you at a future meeting, gathering, or event in 2025!



DISTRICT BEAT

Non-Traditional Occupational Therapy Careers for Therapists Seeking New Paths

Michelle Atanu, OTR, MOT



Michelle Atanu,
OTR, MOT
TOTA Standards and
Practice Chair

Occupational therapy professionals are some of my favorite people. I love the way they think, solve problems and just the way they are. You know what is concerning? When I encounter occupational therapy professionals who are burnt out, frustrated, ready to leave the profession and not using their valuable gifts to their maximum potential. To the therapists out there who feel like they have come to a brick wall at work in the hospital, clinic and/or the school district, there are so many ways that you can use your skills in non-traditional but equally impactful ways.

Here are 5, non-traditional ways occupational therapy professionals can use their valuable skills and continue to add valuable contributions to our profession.

1. Sell your self-made products.

- I have met so many occupational therapy professionals who have created the most incredible toys, documents and gadgets that could be easily sold on websites like Etsy, Teachers Pay Teachers and even Amazon. You can literally sell your creations to others all over the world while making meaningful contributions to another person's life and our profession. Give a round of applause to passive income or even a fulltime income stream if you do this the right way.

2. Work in the Non-profit World

- Non-profit organizations have so many opportunities for occupational therapy professionals to use their skills. From leading support groups for adults to providing skills groups to children are in demand. There are also opportunities in community outreach, program development and fundraising where therapists can thrive in their gifting areas.

3. Try Getting into Management and Leadership Roles

- Occupational therapy professionals make for leaders that people seem to love. I have had people tell me "I love OTs!" Well..."so do I," I say...hahaha! Hospitals, insurance

companies, recreational organizations, academia, wellness companies and even large corporations are looking for people who have compassion, can interpret data, can think outside of the box, and can lead people towards a common goal. Now, this skill set is what many therapists are made of.

4. Tech, digital and AI

- The virtual world for occupational therapy professionals is present and thriving! From app and software creation and contribution, website design, podcasting, social media influencing, to documentation automation, the tech field is dynamic and growing fast. If you are looking on the entrepreneurial side of things or wish to work for an established company, the online world has a lot to offer professionals.

5. Nature Based

- People are spending less time outdoors and more time on their screens...indoors. And guess what? There is a job to address the need for people to get back to basics and go outside! There are companies out there who's primary focus is to provide therapeutic intervention and education in nature. If you love the outdoors, what could be better than sunshine, walking barefoot in the grass and the smell of fresh air while you are at work. Yes!

Cheers to the gift that keeps on giving!