

# REVISTA OT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

VOL 37 NO. 1 / Winter 2024 EDITION



**Changing  
Lives  
Through  
Occupation**

**TOTA Makes a Difference**





## Onsite CEU Course

### #326 Pediatric Handling Intensive: Contemporary Practice of NDT



With Leslie Paparsenos, PT, Physiotherapist, MS, C/NDT  
Children's Health, Dallas, TX  
Friday- Saturday, February 23 - 24, 2024

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## TOTA 2024 Annual Conference

Frisco, Texas | November 15-16, 2024

Embassy Suites by Hilton  
Dallas Frisco Hotel &  
Convention Center

Call for  
Proposals  
Opens  
February 15

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO:

<https://www.tota.org/2024-annual-conference>

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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!



**Click here to make a nomination!**



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**NOV. 15-16, 2024**  
**TOTA 2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
 Embassy Suites by Hilton  
 Dallas Frisco Hotel &  
 Convention 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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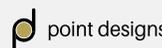
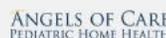
**REVISTA OT:** Winter Edition 2024

## THANK YOU TO OUR TOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPONSORS AND EXHIBITORS!

### PLATINUM



### TEXAS STAR



### ADDITIONAL EXHIBITORS

Baylor University  
 Behavioral Transformations  
 Circle of Care  
 Clydon Vista College Life Coach  
 Evidence In Motion  
 H2 Health  
 Houston Methodist  
 Kids Care  
 LegiLiner, LLC  
 MD Anderson Cancer Center  
 Med Travelers  
 Medline  
 NBCOT  
 Parkland

Pearson Assessments  
 QRM Health  
 Real OT Solutions  
 Reliant Rehabilitation  
 Texas Health and Human Services  
 Early Childhood Intervention  
 Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center  
 Texas Occupational Therapy Foundation (TOTF)  
 Therapy Busy Box  
 TIRR Memorial Hermann  
 UT Tyler

# Judith Joseph, Executive Director

## The Occupation of Event Planning



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

**T**he TOTA 2023 Annual Conference was the seventh conference held under my leadership as the executive director. The first conference was in 2017 following the retirement of the previous executive director, Mary Hennigan, and office staff, Debbie Mincher. The 2017 conference came on the heels of Hurricane Harvey, and somehow, we had a record attendance of more than 800. There were big shoes to fill and a huge learning curve. The 2020 in-person conference was scheduled to occur in Denton, Texas, however, we were forced to cancel it due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Through AOTA I was able to participate in a state association collaboration group and found the tools to turn a potential cancellation into a virtual conference for over 560 attendees and exhibitors. The 2021 Annual Conference faced the obstacle of an ongoing Pandemic and COVID restrictions for large gatherings. Because of the need for social distancing, a larger venue was required. The Force Majeure clause was used to cancel the contract with the Sugar Land Marriott, quickly locate a new site, and sign a mandatory two-year contract with the Hyatt Regency Downtown Houston (2021 and 2023). Bear in mind that we still had a contract with the Denton Embassy Suites that required us to return there in 2022 or face a huge financial loss. The TOTA 2023 Conference returned to Houston with concessions placed in the contract that allowed us to have 2021 prices for rooms, food & beverage, and AV.

Reflecting on the 2023 Annual Conference I would like to thank everyone who provided feedback, it's always helpful to know the areas where we fell short. We will implement some of the suggested changes in 2024 along with some areas we have identified for improvement. The conference was attended by almost 800 attendees, presenters, and exhibitors. Hosting a state level annual conference is not possible without the participation and cooperation of all of you.

### Site Selection 2024

The Embassy Suites and Convention Center in Frisco was selected to host our 2024 Annual Conference on November 15th - 16th based on room rate, size, and availability. We are in the process of submitting requests for proposals (RFPs) to several venues for 2025. Our goal is to return to the Austin area; however, we are already running into barriers with prices and facilities undergoing renovations during our required dates. I promise to keep you all updated.

### Program

We reviewed your feedback from the 2023 conference. There were suggestions to host the awards ceremony and keynote address on Saturday during the day as opposed to the evening on Friday. I have already reached out to the Embassy Suites and requested a change in our contracted space. Many people were happy to see the addition of 60-minute sessions and this will continue in 2024. We need to do a better job of promoting submissions for practice forums as there were only three last year. The live in-person poster sessions were brought back, and the smaller-sized posters were a success with at least 40 live poster presentations. The longer lunch break appears to have been well received allowing for more time with the exhibitors and opportunities to "meet up" during lunch.

### Price

A "cost-based" conference fee was implemented. The overall cost of producing and hosting the conference includes marketing, printing, food and beverage, technology needs, professional fees, exhibit hall setup, and many other necessary expenses to host a conference. There was a price for members and a higher price for non-members. Students and practitioners paid the same price. Discounts were available to volunteers, board members, committee members, presenters, and groups. The Early bird registration discount remained in place. This system will remain in place for 2024. The required number to make up a group will be reduced from 15 to 10.

### Business Meeting

The TOTA Annual Business Meeting was held virtually before the conference on Oct. 27, 2023, and attended by almost 100 members. The recorded business meeting is still available for viewing in the TOTA LMS. You can always submit an [Ask the Board of Directors Form](#) to voice any questions or concerns at any time during the year. The 2024 Annual Virtual Business Meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 23rd.

### TOTA in The Community

We began a tradition in 2021 of reaching out to support local non-profit organizations in the community where the conference is being held. In 2023 Second Servings of Houston picked up the unclaimed boxed lunches on

## Officers

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

## District Chairpersons

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

## Committee Chairs

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

Saturday and distributed them in the Houston Community. Second Servings is Houston's only perishable food rescue organization. "Surplus food donations from events such as the TOTA event help us build a healthier community by providing access to nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste (Barbara Bronstein 8/17/2023)." For more info, visit: [www.secondservingshouston.org](http://www.secondservingshouston.org)

On Friday, November 3rd I hope you took advantage of the opportunity to support The Celebration Company by purchasing items created by some very talented individuals from the Houston community <https://store.celebrationcompany.org/>. *Celebration Company provides life skills and meaningful employment to individuals with disabilities who, with joy and purpose, provide services and create products that celebrate the good of life.* They also provide level I fieldwork opportunities to some of the Houston academic programs. I purchased a beautiful glass cutting board created by Ryan Albright. The store is open all year round.



**If you live in the Frisco area, let me know of a deserving non-profit we can promote during the 2024 TOTA Annual Conference.**

## 2024 Conference Timelines

The Call for Proposals of courses and posters for the 2024 annual conference will open on February 15.

## Tentative 2024 Dates

<b>Call for Proposals Opens</b>	<b>February 15</b>
<b>Call for Proposals Closes</b>	<b>May 31</b>
<b>Committee Decisions Emailed</b>	<b>July 10</b>
<b>Accepted Presenter Contracts Emailed</b>	<b>July 10</b>
<b>Early Bird Registration</b>	<b>September 6-October 20</b>
<b>Regular Registration (no onsite)</b>	<b>October 20- November 9</b>
<b>Hotel Room Book Deadline</b>	<b>October 23</b>
<b>Handouts Due</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>Conference</b>	<b>November 15 - 16</b>

You can expect a return of the practice forums, a student-focused course track, and the inclusion of a school-based practice track.

## Thank You

Finally, thank you to all the call for proposal reviewers, the conference committee, presenters, volunteers, exhibitors, sponsors, attendees, academic programs, student groups, and most of all, to my number one partner in TOTA, Kami Lusson.

Judi

# 2023 Conference Wrap Up

Layman Darnell Miller, OTA



Layman Darnell Miller,  
TOTA State OTA  
Representative

**M**any participants were surveyed the results are in, TOTA's conference in Houston was a success. From the broad range of topics to the expertise of the presenters to the participation of the conference attendees during the sessions, this past conference was informative and engaging.

This year's OTA Forum, "Creating Your Treatment Playbook", was created in response to OTA practitioners expressing a need for opportunities to increase their clinical skills. The Forum was attended by over 50 OT practitioners, (mostly occupational therapy assistants), who learned the process of selecting occupation-based interventions by focusing on the patient problems participants, not the diagnosis.

Moving forward into 2024, my goals are to find innovative ways to promote, enhance, and expand the role of the OTA in the State of Texas. The OTA District Representatives are planning on meeting with OTA program students in the upcoming months to explain the role of the OTA in practice, encourage TOTA membership, and discuss the many volunteer opportunities offered by TOTA.

We want to explore creating cohorts to complete AOTA micro-credentialing as an option to expand the skill level of the OTA. These cohorts can also serve to help develop professional networks across the state.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, **we want to increase OTA membership. Currently only 132 OTAs in Texas are members of TOTA compared to approximately 6,860 licensed OTAs.** To increase our voice, we need to increase our participation.

The goals we have for OTAs in Texas are ambitious, yet achievable if we work together. Please reach out to me if you have any comments or ideas to share.

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## TOTA DEI Committee Chair

Dahlia Castillo, OTR, OTD



Dahlia Castillo,  
OTR, OTD  
DEI Committee Chair

**T**his committee focuses on training occupational therapy practitioners on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues. Other important DEI elements include justice, access, and belonging and the concepts of cultural humility and cultural safety.

AOTA recently hosted a panel discussion entitled Let's Talk DEI Live recorded on December 7, 2023, with two TOTA member panelists. Use the following link to this educational and informative session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEF6iEjCo7A>

# Voices of Advocacy – Letters to the Editor

## Texas Department of Insurance/ Workers Compensation Update

**Bubba Klostermann OT, CEAS II**  
**Certified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist II**



For those of you who provide therapy for injured workers, every year the Texas Department of Insurance Division of Workers Compensation increases or reduces the reimbursement fee schedule for therapy (Physical medicine and rehabilitation) based on Medicare Guidelines. This coming year, 2024, we will see a 4.6% increase which is a nice surprise.

The Medical Fee Guideline conversion factors are established by 28 Texas Administrative Code §134.203. Under Labor Code §413.011(a), fee guidelines adopted by the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) for non-network services and approved out-of-network services are based on the most current reimbursement methodologies, models, and values or weights used by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

DWC established a conversion factor and an annual update to provide predictability and reflect changes in medical service delivery costs to system participants. The annual update is based on the Medicare Economic Index (MEI), which is a weighted average of price changes for goods and services used to deliver physician services. The MEI for 2024 reflects an increase of 4.6 percent.



Questions? Call Comp Connection for Health Care Providers at 800-252-7031 option 3, or email [CompConnection@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:CompConnection@tdi.texas.gov).

Comp Connection staff are very helpful in answering any questions that we may have about any aspect of the workers compensation process.

Also, here is a very helpful link for those of you who want/need more information/training to better understand/navigate the workers compensation process: <https://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/hcprovider/index.html>

Applicable from	Applicable to	Anesthesia	Evaluation and management	General medicine	Pathology	Physical medicine and rehabilitation	Radiology	Surgery in an office setting	Surgery in a facility setting	MEI percentage adjustment
1/1/24	12/31/24	\$67.81	\$67.81	\$67.81	\$67.81	\$67.81	\$67.81	\$67.81	\$85.12	4.6%

Conversion factors to be applied for services provided based on the following time frames

*The views and comments expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily those of TOTA.*

**ATTENTION**  
**If you are not receiving emails from our contact center, please add memberclicks-mail.net. to your safelist.**

# Voices of Advocacy – Letters to the Editor

## A Call to Action

**Kate Lundgren, OTR, MBA, CST**  
**Owner, Clinical Director Cutting Edge Pediatric Therapy**



Kate Lundgren, OTR,  
MBA, CST

**A**s Occupational Therapy Practitioners, we have one of the greatest professions. I have been an Occupational Therapist for 35 years now and feel privileged to have chosen this field as my career. It has been a privilege to serve the thousands of clients that I have had the opportunity to touch their lives, as they have touched mine, and inspired me in my journey.

That being said, I have a call to action for everyone in this profession in our great state of Texas.

It has come to my attention that a private insurance company is looking at reducing the reimbursement rate for one of our primary treatment codes, which is 97530. This suggestion in reducing reimbursement has me concerned for multiple reasons. First, this is an “offense” on our field and profession because it devalues the vital service that we provide to those in need. Specifically, the overall ramifications of these reductions will significantly reduce providers’ abilities to continue to offer Occupational Therapy services. We have not had an increase in reimbursement for 97530 since well before the pandemic, which made it extremely difficult to sustain in providing high quality services. Private practice owners are currently facing formidable challenges due to the intersection of inflation and stagnant reimbursement rates from commercial insurance plans. Commercial insurance plans’ failure to adjust reimbursement rates in line with inflation is creating an unsustainable financial environment for private practice owners.

Overall costs since the pandemic have increased by 25%. Additionally, the insurance company has approximately 25% market share in Texas. This paints a very difficult reality for providers who employ Occupational Therapy practitioners. I am a provider with two locations in the DFW metroplex. We, as a company, currently provide over 10,000 Occupational Therapy client visits annually. With this change, unfortunately, the rate reduction will put us in a position where it would make it very

difficult for us to provide Occupational Therapy services. This will, in turn, result in fewer Occupational Therapy practitioners available and fewer providers for clients to access services.

Secondly, the same company is also proposing a reduction in reimbursement to 85% for Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA) treatments. This will obviously negatively impact our current COTA practitioners and those considering joining the profession. Again, less reimbursement for providers.

We do have a voice as a profession, and I strongly encourage you to use your voice. By supporting organizations like TOTA and AOTA. Secondly, speaking out to those who are negatively impacting your profession by letter, call, or social media platforms, and involve state lawmakers are just a few ideas. Most importantly, organize within your profession as there is power in numbers!

I am thankful for organizations like the Texas Occupational Therapy Association, who within their mission statement “can respond to organizational, political, economic, and social features of the health care delivery system at the local state and national levels.”

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# Voices of Advocacy – Letters to the Editor

## Water From Rocks

Sharon Wisnieski, OTR, MS



Sharon Wisnieski, OTR, MS

Providing occupational therapy (OT) is rewarding work. Not one day passes in which a life is not touched, pushed, or propelled forward by the skilled and compassionate work occupational therapists provide. But something is wearing down those who devote their lives to serving. Skilled and seasoned OT practitioners are leaving the field, young and ambitious potential future OT providers are opting to earn degrees in other fields, and private OT practices are closing their doors. Why is this?

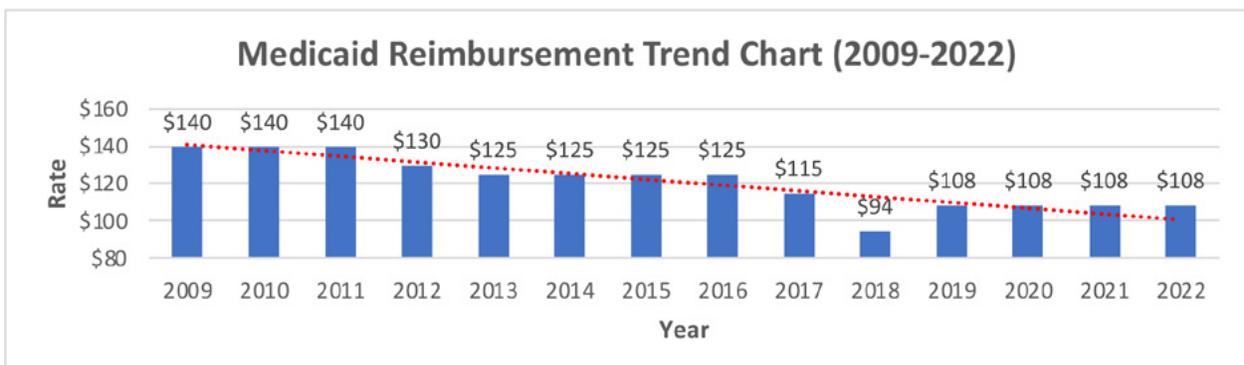
Occupational therapists are healthcare providers, but that does not mean they should ignore the fundamental financial requirements to support best care practices. To do so is to neglect a vital factor for best patient care. How did OTs earn the privilege to serve? We studied, we paid tuition for 6+ years to earn a master's or doctorate degree in OT, and we completed 6+ months of unpaid internships. We work holidays, go in early, stay late, and document outside of paid office hours. We miss our families, our loved ones, and are pushed into a corner that requires us to finally speak up about the imbalance of static or falling reimbursement rates in a time of surging expenses. Our patients deserve better; we deserve better.

Service provision requires financial support. Behind each great OT is a list of expenses that allow that clinician to provide the best services possible in a safe, comfortable, and effective manner. Materials, physical space, electronic support, equipment, cleaning supplies, and more are necessary. Each year the costs associated with provision of care increases, without fail. Each year, just as in all other professions, OT practitioners expect to be given a raise. And they deserve it. How are these mounting expenses covered? Why are OTs accepting pay cuts for more work? For over 15 years, insurance reimbursement rates have not increased. In fact, with some payers, they have decreased. Yes, that's correct, the money received for the provision of OT services has remained the same or decreased for nearly 2 decades. When others outside of OT hear these facts, they are jaw-dropped. "How can OT providers and organizations survive when pay for service rates do not increase and those providing the services have no power to increase them? How do practitioners keep their doors open? All other professions provide market adjustments, so why doesn't OT? This will not keep up with inflation. This is insane." They are right. Rising costs are outpacing the flat or decreasing reimbursement rates.

Service does not equal sacrifice. We have all heard the stories about, or personally experienced, the horrors of 90, 95, or even 98% productivity expectations. As healthcare providers who help patients find balance, optimal health, and energy conservation, we certainly aren't helping ourselves. Who is protecting the health of OT practitioners? Better yet, why are these inhumane and impossible productivity requirements established in the first place? If insurance reimbursement rates were higher, would OT clinicians be stretched so thin? No. When OTs devote their lives to providing OT they did not sign up for stagnant wages, unsustainable productivity requirements, and the expectation that they must complete documentation outside of work hours.

Insurance reimbursement rates must, at minimum, increase each year commensurate with inflation. Why are OT clinicians experiencing burnout? Stagnant or dropping insurance reimbursement rates. Why are OT practitioners held to unhealthy and impossible productivity requirements? Stagnant or dropping insurance reimbursement rates. Why are OT practitioners leaving the profession? Stagnant or dropping insurance reimbursement rates. Why are private practices closing their doors? Stagnant or dropping insurance reimbursement rates. Why are OT practitioners not attending professional meetings or joining their state OT organizations? They are exhausted...and likely completing documentation after hours due to stagnant or dropping insurance reimbursement rates. OTs are being squeezed decade after decade. Sadly, their patients also feel the fallout with growing waitlists due to the above mentioned conditions.

There is a solution. The strains and challenges surrounding the OT profession today would improve, if not completely disappear, with increased insurance reimbursement rates. Laws must be created to require this. Occupational therapists must unite and demand this. We cannot continue to serve our patients if we are not physically and financially able, due to our depleted health and empty accounts.



Sharon Wisnieski is an occupational therapist and private practice owner with over 20 years of OT experience. Her experiences include providing pediatric OT via inpatient, outpatient, home based, and aquatic settings (Texas Children's Hospital, Children's Hospital of Austin/currently Dell Children's Hospital, and Line Leader Pediatric Therapy), collegiate teaching (adjunct faculty at University of St. Augustine and guest lecturer at

Austin Community College), and volunteering with professional groups (Vice Chair Capital Centex District of TOTA and Co-Chair Austin Community College Advisory Board). She also volunteers her time presenting to numerous professional and parent groups regarding child development and best care practices. Outside of OT, Sharon enjoys exercising, baking, and making memories with her husband, 2 children, and 2 dogs.

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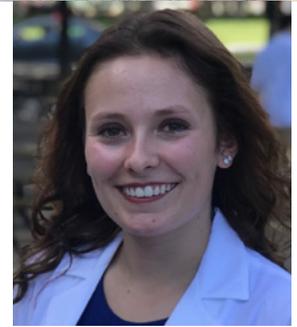
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SAVE THE DATE: TOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOV. 15-16, 2024

# Voices of Advocacy – Letters to the Editor

## Call to Action: Advocating for Occupational Therapists in Mental Health Settings

**Keagan Carpenter, OTR, OTD**  
LT, U.S. Public Health Service,  
Federal Medical Center, Carswell



Keagan Carpenter,  
OTR, OTD

**A**fter commissioning into the United States Public Health Service during my final year of school and graduating from occupational therapy (OT) school in May of 2022, I was fortunate enough to receive orders to work at the Federal Medical Center Carswell. This is the only women's federal medical center in the country and has both medical and mental health missions. This presented me with the opportunity to start working as an OT, with the primary mission to create and build the OT behavioral health programming to serve the mental health units. Having now served in this capacity for a year and a half, I recognize the unique and valuable role that occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) can play on an interdisciplinary behavioral health team. To better advocate for OTP's role in this setting, I would like to 1) Share lessons that I have learned to encourage more OTPs to recognize our value and enter this field and 2) Emphasize the importance of advocating on local, state, and national levels.

Based on my own experiences while building OT Behavioral Health programming in a correctional environment, I would like to share some insights for other OTPs. My hope is this will benefit all experience levels interested in working in a behavioral health setting, from students to seasoned practitioners.

### 7 lessons for OTPs practicing in mental health:

- 1. Seek mentorship.** Seek out others working in the field, both through formal and informal programs. I recommend finding both other OTPs, as well as other mental health providers. I have gained incredible insights by working together with providers in different fields, their clinical expertise is invaluable to building your own clinical rationale, as well as evaluating situations holistically.
- 2. Collaborate with the interdisciplinary treatment team.** Work in collaboration with other providers. Ask questions and seek out feedback. Understand that you are one piece of the puzzle – you work best and provide the best care when you are communicating with
- 3. Consider the environment.** Our education and training prepares us to thoroughly evaluate the environments and contexts that patients are performing occupations. Always consider the environment when making a treatment plan and make environmental recommendations. Currently, we are working to modify the environment on several units to create a therapeutic environment, as well as create sensory paths and sensory rooms to facilitate self-regulation and mindfulness.
- 4. Complete a needs assessment.** While OTPs can address a variety of occupations and skills, first assess the needs of your facility to determine where you are most needed. Screen patients on your units and talk with other providers to develop priorities at individual, group, and population levels.
- 5. Trial and error.** Start small and try new things. Use programs that are available to get you started as you create new programs based on the needs of your population and facility. Be flexible and adaptable, especially in this setting. Don't be afraid to fail – every failure is a learning experience that will allow you to better serve your population.
- 6. Continuing education.** Never stop learning. Seek out continuing education courses and in-person opportunities to network and learn new skills. Always be willing to challenge yourself and evolve in your clinical skills. Challenge yourself to practice at the top of our scope, because mental health impacts all 9 occupations that are in our scope of practice.
- 7. And finally, advocate on local, state, and national levels.** Get involved with professional organizations and initiatives, network with other OTPs and other behavioral health professions, and advocate for OTPs role in mental health settings in policies and legislation.

*The views and comments expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily those of TOTA.*

# TOTA 2023 AWARD RECIPIENTS



**Roster of Merit**  
Katherine Lawson,  
OTR, LMSSW, PhD



**Letter of Appreciation**  
Beverly Palmer, OTR,  
and Eddie Palmer



**Letter of Appreciation**  
Senator Tan Parker



**Award for Clinical  
Excellence**  
Emilie Klingman,  
OTR, MOT



**Academic Educator  
of the Year Award**  
Megan Taylor,  
OTR, OTD, MSOT, CLT

## 2023 Student Membership Circle

### GOLD LEVEL

**Parker University**  
Occupational Therapy Assistant Program  
**South Texas College**  
Occupational Therapy Assistant Program  
**University of Mary Hardin-Baylor**  
Occupational Therapy Program

## TOTA 2023 Service Recognition Awards

### STATE OFFICERS

Secretary - Rachel Perez, COTA  
Term: 11/11/2023 (appointed -interim)  
Secretary - Vicki Thomas, COTA 2021 – 2023  
Vice President – Laurie Stelter, OTR, PhD

### STATE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Committee on International Affairs  
Evangelina Moncayo, OTR, SLP  
Committee on Development  
Sharon K. Hennigan, OTR, MA, CCM, QMHP-CS  
TOTEL Ad Hoc Committee Chair  
Adele Brunson, OTR, MOT

### ALAMO SOUTH

Vice Chair - Christopher Gillis, OTR

### GULF COAST EAST DISTRICT

District Chair - Kira Beal, OTR, Ed.D, OTD, CLT  
Treasurer - Esmeralda Lizcano, OTR  
Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs  
Aichen Chih, OTR, MA, CLVT

Committee on Membership – Seneca Wilson, OTR, MOT

### CAPITAL CENTEX

Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs  
Micah McDaniel, MOT, OTR  
OTA Representative - Tiffany Pflugger, COTA  
Student Representative - Christina Montalbano

### TRINITY NORTH

District Chair - Keegan McKay, OTR, MOT, OTD  
Treasurer - Keith McWilliams, OTD, OTR, DRS

### GREAT PLAINS WEST

Vice Chair - Leroy Warman, OTR, MOT  
Student Representative - Maley Mader

### RIO GRANDE

Treasurer – Timothy Tu, OTR, SCD  
Vice Chair - Carolyn Pena, OTR  
OT Student Representative - Marcelo Pena  
OTA Student Representative - Crystal Salazar

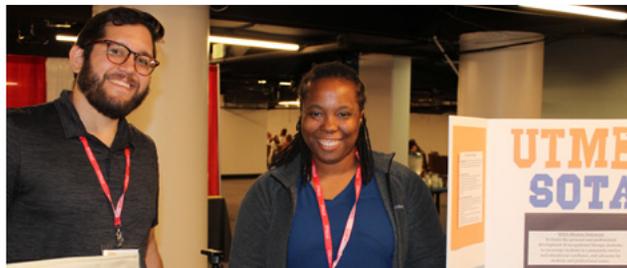
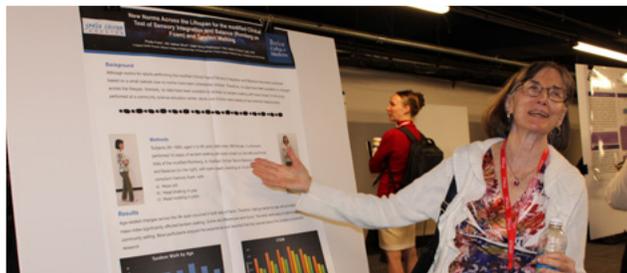
### TOTAPAC

Treasurer - Jerilyn Callen, OTR, MSOT, OTD

# TOTA 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

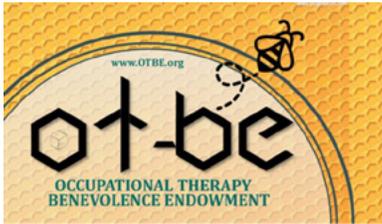
# THANK YOU

## FOR ATTENDING!



# Benevolence Who Benefits Most?

Reggie Michael Campbell OT, MS



Reggie Michael  
Campbell OT, MS

Traditionally January is the time to make resolutions and set personal goals. As the new year begins, the Occupational Therapy Benevolence Endowment Board invites you to start the year introspectively, reflecting on the connection between benevolence, gratitude, health, happiness, and the mission of OTBE.

The word introspection comes from the Latin word "introspicere" meaning to investigate, examine attentively. The act of introspection has been shown to be an important quality of leadership and a valuable self-help tool for promoting mental health and happiness.

Karns (1) proposes:

*"Good leaders are regularly introspective about their leadership role and focus on how they can make a positive difference within their organizations. They ask, "what I need to do more of; do less of; start doing; stop doing." (1)*

In 2017 following Hurricane Harvey, the Texas occupational therapy community acted benevolently to establish and sustain the OTBE mission:

**"to support benevolence as a professional value to sustain the delivery of occupational therapy services, following disaster or catastrophic life events".**

Over the last 5 years, OTBE expanded benevolence beyond natural disasters acknowledging Texas OT practitioners are not immune from stress, loss of health, and productivity both at the time of and following significant life crises. To date a total of 7 benevolence OTBE grants, up to \$500 per applicant, have been awarded to sustain the delivery of occupational therapy following a significant life crisis.

**BENEVOLENCE** is defined as both the desire to do good to others and acts of kindness. Studying the value of who benefits from benevolence is an emerging concept in motivation theory and research. Research suggests that benevolence can have a "reciprocal/bidirectional relationship" on mental health and wellbeing and happiness. Stress and depression can reduce acts of benevolence, and acts of benevolence can reduce stress and depression.

## GRATITUDE

Gratitude has been said to be a typical response to perceived benevolence, "fostering prosocial behavior for beneficiaries, as well as benefactors alike".

*Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life...  
It makes sense of our past, brings peace for today,  
and creates a vision for tomorrow". Melodie Beattie*

If a person could do only one thing to increase their health and happiness, expressing gratitude and establishing a habit of gratitude might be it.

## HEALTH & HAPPINESS

A sampling of the literature on the relationship between benevolence, gratitude, health, and happiness states:

Psychology researchers recognize that being thankful has benefits for well-being. "Not only does gratitude go along with more optimism, less anxiety and depression, and greater goal attainment, but it's also associated with fewer symptoms of illness and other physical benefits" <https://theconversation.com/when-youre-grateful-your-brain-becomes-more-charitable-105606>

J. Andrew Armour a leading neuro-cardiologist reports when one lends a helping hand, altruistic oxytocin levels increase and stress decreases. Altruistic benevolent acts have also been found to increase the production of good chemicals, such as dopamine and endorphins. <https://www.heartmath.org/articles-of-the-heart/generous-others-youll-happy/>

Elizabeth W. Dunn, Lara B. Aknin and Michael I. Norton found participants randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than those assigned to spend money on themselves. <https://www.heartmath.org/articles-of-the-heart/generous-others-youll-happy/>

The OTBE Board is grateful to all who have acted benevolently with donations to the OTBE mission. As you prepare for 2024 you are encouraged to visit the [otbe.org](http://otbe.org) webpage to reflect on the value of benevolence and how your donation can make a positive difference for others, self, and occupational therapy.

## Reference

(1) [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/christine\\_karns](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/christine_karns)

(2) [Frontiers | Publisher of peer-reviewed articles in open access journals \(frontiersin.org\)](https://www.frontiersin.org)

# TOTA 2024 Call for State and District Board of Directors Nominations



## Upcoming Events

**January 24, 2024**  
Workshop (available on livestream)  
Behavior and the Impact on the Daily Life of a Student

**January 27, 2024**  
TOTF Virtual CE Webinar  
Treating Neurodiverse Populations: Evidence Based Treatments for Autism and ADHD

**January 28, 2024**  
State Board of Directors Meeting

**February 15, 2024**  
Call for Proposals Opens

**April 30, 2024**  
Deadline for State and District Position Nominations

**May 31, 2024**  
Call for Proposals Closes

**June 30, 2024**  
Deadline for State and District Position Ballots

**July 5, 2024**  
Election results announced

**November 15-16, 2024**  
TOTA Annual Conference

## 2024 TOTA Elections

### State Board:

President  
Treasurer

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

### District Positions:

<b>Alamo South</b> Chair	<b>Capital Centex</b> Vice Chair Secretary	<b>Great Plains West</b> Chair	<b>Gulf Coast East</b> Vice Chair Secretary	<b>Rio Grande</b> Chair	<b>Trinity North</b> Vice Chair Secretary
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TOTA invites all members to submit nominations for the 2024-2025 leadership positions to be elected. Occupational therapy assistants are encouraged to run for elected office and are eligible to be nominated for all positions. Self-Nominations are allowed. Refer to the [website](#) for eligibility requirements.

**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.

For up-to-date calendar of events, please visit the TOTA website at: [www.tota.org](http://www.tota.org)

**Thank you to our members for helping make TOTA great!**

## 2023 Student Membership Circle

**Gold Level Recognition**  
*(100% TOTA Student Membership)*

**There were three programs recognized for 100% student membership.**

**Parker University  
Occupational Therapy  
Assistant Program**

**South Texas College  
Occupational Therapy  
Assistant Program**

**University of  
Mary Hardin-Baylor  
Occupational Therapy  
Program**

The Winner of the \$250 award prize drawing was Parker University. The Program Chair, Angela Duell, OTR, MS, OTD, donated the prize money to Panola College's OTA program to cover the cost of 8 new student memberships.

## Rio Grande

**Kaleigh Stevens, OTD, OTR**  
**Rio Grande District Chair**  
**Kwarn187@gmail.com**



The Rio Grande District welcomed several new members to the board in 2023.

### New Officers



**Membership  
Chair – Valerie  
Vasquez**

"I decided to join TOTA because I figured it would be a great way to collaborate

with other occupational therapists. I am very passionate about giving back to the community as well as helping to create a support system for current and future practitioners. I have been an occupational therapist for 5 years. I have worked primarily in pediatrics, but I have also worked in acute and outpatient settings with adults. I am also a certified lymphedema therapist. I love working with people of all ages!"



**Legislation  
Chair – Debbie  
Hernandez**

"I'm an occupational therapist working in acute care at a local El Paso

hospital. I'm a born-and-raised El Pasoan and joined TOTA to meet other local occupational therapists in the area."



**OT Student  
Representative –  
Annmarie De La  
Rosa**

"I am currently a second-year entry level doctorate student at The

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). I'm interested in working with pediatrics and learning more about sensory integration and processing with these special individuals! My reason for joining TOTA is to make connections outside of the Textbooks and network with OTRs. TOTA will also give me tools to advocate for OT and how OT can promote a higher quality of life for my community."

Welcome to our new volunteers and thank you for your contribution to TOTA!



**OTA  
Representative –  
Alberto Valdez**

"It is exciting to be part of an occupational therapy association that is

in the greatest state of them all, Texas. I have found TOTA to be a great way to share and advocate what occupational therapy has to offer to the community. I look forward to attending more TOTA events in the future."

## Great Plains West

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



The Great Plains West District was well represented at the TOTA 2023 Annual Conference. Molly Setliff, assistant OT professor at TTUHSC, taught us a new method for writing quick and effective therapy notes. Haley Glover, our Lubbock Liaison district representative, shared with us how we can help our patients who deal with chronic pain. We also organized a district meetup at the conference. It was fun getting to meet and connect with students and practitioners in our district.



*Great Plains West District members lunch meet-up at the TOTA 2023 Annual Conference*

DISTRICT BEAT

# TOTA vs AAA

Judith Joseph, TOTA Executive Director



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



**Every week I receive calls and emails from non-members asking for help.** These calls make me think about my AAA Roadside Assistance membership. If my car breaks down, I can count on AAA to come to my aide. I have a personal fear of breaking down on a highway, so I keep my membership current. I entered in the Google search engine, "Can I call AAA if I am not a member?" The answer was "If your car breaks down or runs out of gas and you don't have an AAA Membership, you can still call 800-AAA-HELP to sign up for a AAA Membership and receive service right away. AAA has been helping motorists for decades with everyday problems such as: needing a tow, fixing a flat tire, having a dead battery, or needing help when locked out of the car.

Like AAA, TOTA has been helping Texas OT practitioners for decades. TOTA works at the state level advocating for policy changes and reimbursement issues. The current proposed rate reduction by BCBS is following the national trend from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). TOTA provides financial support for our lobbyists to find solutions. We strive to present strong evidence including solid information and statistics to these governing bodies, not just anecdotal stories. When TOTA and AOTA send out calls for action, this is your opportunity to amplify your voice and get a seat at the decision-making table.

TOTA leaders, including myself, travel to Austin and other cities to meet with legislators, HHSC, and other

stakeholders on behalf of occupational therapy practice all year round. We provide public comment, we tracked over 100 Bills during the 88th regular Texas Legislative Session. TOTA members have provided countless public testimonies to the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate.

According to the Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners (TBOTE), approximately 12,500 occupational therapists and 6,860 occupational therapy assistants are currently licensed by the Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners. TOTA is currently financially supported by only 4 percent of OT practitioners in Texas.

**TOTA works on behalf of its members. Part of our mission is "to anticipate and respond to the organizational, political, economic and social features of the health care delivery system at the local, state and national levels". Just like AAA, when the health care delivery system breaks down TOTA will and is currently protecting OT practice. You can call TOTA at 832-915-9238 and sign up for membership right away to help protect your financial future.**

Our voice can be amplified with a strong membership. Support the only organization in Texas that advocates for occupational therapy. Join TOTA and have your membership ready to support you today. <https://tota.memberclicks.net/tota-membership-application>

# TOTA 2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

# SAVE THE DATE

November 15 - 16, 2024

The TOTA 2024 Annual Conference will be held in Frisco, Texas at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Dallas Frisco Hotel & Convention Center

## CALL FOR ENTRIES

Put on your creative hat and submit your idea for the 2024 Conference theme!

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT YOUR IDEA](#)