

# REVISTA OT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

VOL 39 NO. 3 / Summer 2026 EDITION



**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

**HELPS MAKE EVERY DAY**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**TOTA**

**90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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**What benefits does a TOTA Membership offer?**

## 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!



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

Office Number: 832-915-9238  
email: [judith.joseph@tota.org](mailto:judith.joseph@tota.org)  
Web: [www.tota.org](http://www.tota.org)

**REVISTA OT:** Summer Edition 2026

# TOTA

## 90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

### A WEEKEND TO REMEMBER!

### TOTA 2026 Annual Conference and 90th Anniversary Celebration

### LEARN. EDUCATE. COLLABORATE

### November 13-14



Click or scan code to learn more about this year's conference in San Marcos, TX



# FREE VIRTUAL CE/CEU\*

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convenience



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TODAY**



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\*AOTA, CCMC,  
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CE/CEU  
AOTA Approval  
ID#13541

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- Describe the unique process involved in researching and evaluating mobility equipment solutions that are available for your clients.
- Differentiate between key mobility equipment participants and providers involved in the automotive mobility equipment industry.
- Identify useful mobility equipment resources to assist clients and their caregivers
- Summarize the risks of poor awareness about safe mobility equipment options.





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## VISIT OUR WEBSITE



**Visit us at the TOTA Annual Conference in San Marcos!**

\*Depends on claim volume

# John F. Barnes' Myofascial Release Seminars®

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Cervical Thoracic Seminar - November 13-15, 2026

Fascial Cranium Seminar - November 20-22, 2026

Location: Renaissance Dallas Addison Hotel

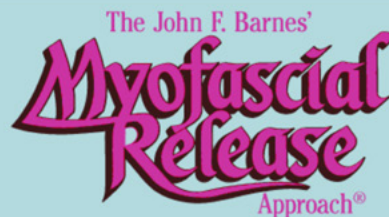
**Approved for CEUs by Texas Occupational Therapy Association**

### TO REGISTER:

1-800-327-2425 ext4

[www.myofascialrelease.com](http://www.myofascialrelease.com)

[seminars@myofascialrelease.com](mailto:seminars@myofascialrelease.com)



**COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH**  
*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA HEALTH SCIENCES*

**Study: Occupational Therapy and Pain Management: A survey of practice patterns**

**Principal Investigator: Lisa Milhan, OTD, OTR/L, CHT**  
IRB# 18950

- If you are a licensed occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant, you are eligible to participate in a 10-minute anonymous research survey.
- If you choose to participate, your involvement is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Participation involves completing a survey about the role of occupational therapy in treating clients experiencing pain.
- If you have any additional questions, please contact Lisa Milhan via email [lisa.milhan@ou.edu](mailto:lisa.milhan@ou.edu) or phone 405-271-2131 ex: 47120.
- Please click on the hyperlink or use your phone to scan the QR code to direct you to the consent form and survey.

[OT and Pain Management Survey](#)

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# LEADERS & LEGACIES SOCIETY

The OT Leaders & Legacies Society will identify, honor, and fully engage a cadre of occupational therapy professionals who have demonstrated their leadership abilities and skills through service in a variety of civic and professional organizations...

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PRESERVING OT HISTORY

PROFESSIONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL MENTORING

SOCIAL JUSTICE

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- EXPAND YOUR LEADERSHIP
- PRESERVE THE LEGACY
- GET INVOLVED



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is your resource to access live and recorded, TOTA-approved continuing education courses. Choose from a wide variety of topics that serve to enhance professional development and meet certification and licensure requirements.



# Online Learning

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Most meetings are FREE to current TOTA members!

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TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Enhanced Recovery After Delivery®

# ERAD® CEU Certification Training

**15 Contact Hours**

**Make Functional Recovery  
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**Open to OT & PT Practitioners**

Learn how to support recovery during hospital admission and the first 6 weeks postpartum using a model adopted by 120+ hospitals.

## What's Included:

- ✓ Clinical pathways for maternity unit consults and early recovery
- ✓ 1:1 consultation to support your program or initiative

**Training Details: Only \$997 (Non Member \$1297)**

- 📅 November 13, 2026
- 🕒 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM 📍 San Marcos, TX
- 💻 Hybrid Format (Online + In-Person Lab)

**Limited to 20  
Participants**

**Register by October 15, 2026**

**REGISTER NOW >**



**AOA** American  
Occupational Therapy  
Association

Approved Provider

**Approved by the Texas Board of Physical Therapy Examiners**

# Lollipops, Leadership, and Letters to Judi.

John S. Luna, OTR, OTD – TOTA President



John S. Luna, OTR, OTD

One of my favorite TED Talks, and one that had one of the biggest impacts on me during, "...the second chapter of my career" is Drew Dudley's (2010) *Everyday Leadership*.

In the TED Talk from Toronto, Drew Dudley begins his talk with a simple question: *How many of you feel comfortable calling yourselves a leader?*

He chuckles, or at the very least smirks, as he notices many people hesitate to raise their hands. He suggests that perhaps we struggle with that question because of how we have defined leadership. Too often, leadership is viewed as something larger than us, something reserved for titles, stages, awards, or moments so significant they feel beyond the reach of everyday people. Maybe, one day in the future, we will allow ourselves to claim that title, but to do so today somehow feels uncomfortable, possibly even arrogant.

Dudley argues that when we define leadership this way, we minimize the everyday moments when we truly lead, and we devalue the simple interactions where we genuinely make a difference in the lives of others.

Dudley recounts a story from his days promoting a non-profit organization during a university orientation, where he handed a lollipop to a nervous young man and jokingly encouraged him to introduce himself to a nearby student. At the time, the interaction felt insignificant, just a small moment of humor and kindness on a busy day. Years later, a young woman approached Drew to tell him that before that interaction, she had planned to leave campus and give going away to college altogether, but that moment of laughter and connection made her feel like she belonged. She thanked him for being such a positive influence in her life and smiled as she mentioned she was still dating the young man from that line, a couple whose wedding Drew would later be invited to attend.

Dudley calls these moments "lollipop moments" the seemingly small everyday acts of kindness, encouragement, humor, honesty, or support that unexpectedly change someone's trajectory. He reminds us that leadership is not reserved for the extraordinary. Leadership lives in the everyday moments where we step up, connect with someone, and help move them forward in their journey.

Perhaps, most importantly, he reminds us that many of us never hear about our lollipop moments. Likewise, many of us never take the time to tell others when they have had that kind of impact on us. As long as we continue treating leadership as something bigger than ourselves, we excuse ourselves from expecting it from one another and expecting it from ourselves.

I love this TED Talk because it has helped me redefine

leadership in a way that feels deeply human. It helped me embrace the opportunities we all have to make a difference through everyday service, everyday conversations, and everyday interactions. But more than anything, what stays with me is the importance of telling people when they have positively influenced your life.

And that brings me to today's message; What I call *Letters to Judi*.

In my opinion, Judi Joseph not only embodies leadership in all the ways books and seminars describe it, but it is through her everyday leadership that has made the greatest impact. Through her everyday interactions with practitioners, students, board members, lobbyists, legislators, volunteers, educators, researcher, and leaders across Texas, Judi has quietly and consistently shaped our profession in ways many of us may never fully realize.

For me personally, her gentle reminders, candid conversations with life lessons, encouragement, and unwavering belief in what occupational therapy can become, have made a positive influence in my life. She helped me redefine my own expectations, not only for myself, but for what can be accomplished for our profession when people are willing to step forward and serve.

Soon, Judi will enter the next chapter of her journey and retire as Executive Director of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association. As Judi begins this next chapter, her impact on the organization and the profession is already deeply woven into the people, programs, and relationships she helped shape. Take a moment to share your "Lollipop moment," and send in your "Letters to Judi."

Take a few moments over the next few months to write a short note thanking her for the everyday leadership that made a positive influence in your life, your career, your professional journey, or our profession as a whole.

Your letter does not need to be long or polished. It does not need to be profound. If nothing else, your letter can simply say:

*Dear Judi,  
Thank you.*

So, between now and November, open your laptop, take the cap off your favorite pen, and simply begin:

*Dear Judi...*

References:

Dudley, D. (2010). *Everyday Leadership*: Ted X Toronto 2010. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/drew\\_dudley\\_everyday\\_leadership](https://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership) on 5/31/26.



# Let's Talk About the Sustainability of TOTA and the Future of Occupational Therapy



**Judith Joseph, OTR, MA, FAOTA**  
Executive Director, Texas Occupational Therapy Association

Judith Joseph,  
OTR, MA, FAOTA

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) has always been powered by its members. Our structure is lean by design: one full time employee, the Executive Director, and two part time staff members, Paula Cook (Continuing Education Coordinator) and Sarah Stevens (Client Relations Manager). Every state and district board member is a volunteer. Every elected officer serves without compensation. This model has worked for decades because our members believed in the mission strongly enough to give their time, talent, and energy.

But today, that model is showing signs of strain.

During the 2026 election cycle, the Nominating Committee was unable to recruit candidates for two district chair positions. For five additional elected roles, we could not assemble a dual slate. In May, there were still 20 unfilled appointed positions across state and district levels. These gaps are not isolated; they reflect a broader trend we have been watching for years: low practitioner membership and declining volunteer engagement.

Take the Rio Grande District as one example. Only 32 licensed practitioners are members. The remaining 113 members are students; many of whom will see their memberships expire soon. This imbalance raises difficult questions about the long term sustainability of our association.

If TOTA cannot recruit volunteers to serve as officers, committee chairs, and leaders, we will not be able to function in the way our members expect. What will we have to change? What programs or services might we have to eliminate? How do we engage more clinical practitioners, not just academic faculty, in leadership roles? I do not have all the answers, but I do have concerns which we must confront together.

TOTA has not raised membership dues in more than a decade. We have added flexible membership categories and multiple discount options. Yet practitioner membership remains stagnant. Meanwhile, social media is full of free or low cost groups where practitioners and students can find community, connection, and resources. This raises a hard but necessary question—one I ask frequently when speaking to academic programs:

**Are we failing as an association?** If so, where is the disconnect?

We also cannot ignore what is happening within the profession itself. We hear, anecdotally and increasingly, that entry level practitioners are leaving their first jobs, and in some cases, leaving the profession entirely. Productivity demands, overwhelming caseloads in school settings, lower-than-expected pay, and limited work life balance are common themes. These concerns are not new, but their tolerance for them has changed. What was once considered “industry standard” is no longer acceptable to many Gen Y and Gen Z practitioners.

So what needs to change? What can employers do to meet the expectations of today’s workforce? How can TOTA partner with employers to expand advanced training, specialty certifications, and meaningful professional development? Where can we collaborate with AOTA or other organizations to strengthen the profession and offer more value to our members?

These are big questions, and I do not pretend to have all the solutions. But I believe deeply that the OT community in Texas can answer them together. The sustainability of TOTA, and the future of our profession, depends on our willingness to engage honestly, think creatively, and commit to building something stronger for the next generation.

I hope that this conversation continues, grows, and leads us toward real, actionable solutions. Our profession deserves nothing less.



## Officers

President:	John Luna
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:	Renee Shepherd
Rio Grande:	Grisel Contreras
Trinity North:	Kayla Allen

## Appointed Committee Chairs

Committee on Conference:	Evie Harness
Committee on Development:	Paula Perkins
Committee on Education:	Open
Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs:	Open
Committee on Membership:	Patricia Bowyer
Committee on Standards and Practice:	Leslie Smart
Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:	Open

## Adhoc Committee Chairs

Awards and Recognition Committee	Carol Regli
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## Appointed Board Members

Historian	Esther Bell
Parliamentarian	Lynda Jennings
OTA Representative	Layman Darnell Miller
OT Student Representative	Carolina Sanchez
OTA Student Representative	Kennady Tooke

## Consultants

TOTA Legal Advisor	Richard Y. Cheng, JD, MBA, CHC
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## Newsletter

Editor:	Rachelle Elliot
Design and Production:	Justine Boyer

## TOTA Staff

Executive Director	Judith Joseph
Client Relations Manager	Sarah Stevens
Continuing Education Coordinator	Paula Cook

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Foundation

Texas Society  
for Hand Therapy

TIRR Memorial  
Hermann

OT Leaders &  
Legacies Society

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

*LOOK WHAT'S NEW*

## 2026 TOTA Election Results

Thank you to every member who participated in the 2026 TOTA Elections. Voting opened on June 1 and closed on June 30, and we appreciate the strong engagement from practitioners and students across Texas. Your participation ensures that TOTA continues to be guided by leaders who are committed to advancing our profession and supporting the OT community statewide.

The official election results will be posted on the website and in the July 10th TOTA Tidbit e-newsletter after all votes are certified and candidates are notified, in accordance with TOTA election procedures.

All state and district elected positions will serve a two year term from October 2026 through October 2028. Newly elected officers will formally assume their roles following the 2026 Annual Business Meeting, scheduled for October 13, 2026.

We look forward to welcoming the incoming leaders who will help shape TOTA's advocacy, education, and member engagement efforts over the next two years.

### TOTA State Board of Directors Meeting #2

**Date:** July 11, 2026

**Time:** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Registration Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/eH8RiLcGSqO6OdeU6axqLA>

Agenda: TBD

Please note that the meeting time is subject to change

## TOTA 2026 Annual Conference Registration Coming Soon

Join us for the TOTA 2026 Annual Conference on November 13 – 14, 2026, in San Marcos, Texas

Experience two inspiring days filled with engaging educational sessions, meaningful networking opportunities, and professional development designed to support and strengthen occupational therapy practitioners across Texas. Connect with practitioners, educators, and students, explore current trends and evidence-based practice, and leave energized with new ideas to enhance your professional journey!

### TOTA State Board of Directors Meeting #3

**Date:** October 3, 2026

**Time:** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Agenda: TBD

Please note that the meeting time is subject to change

## The TOTA 2025 Annual Business Meeting - Virtual

**Date:** October 13, 2026    **Time:** 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM CST    **Location:** Virtual via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/DQikoPSdSbWi7TdZ8P5AQA#/registration>

**Agenda:** To be posted on or before September 22, 2026

Click here to submit questions or comments to the board of directors

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

*LOOK WHAT'S NEW*

## Save the Dates for 2027: Don't Miss These Key TOTA Events

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association is already looking ahead, and we want to be sure you have the opportunity to plan early for three major events that elevate, strengthen, and support OT practice across Texas. Mark your calendars now and stay tuned for more details.

### **TOTA Day at the Capitol** (This is our Advocacy Day)

Elevating the Voice of Occupational Therapy in Texas

**Anticipated Date:** February 9, 2027

Event Page: <https://tota.memberclicks.net/day-at-the-capitol>

Join colleagues from across the state as we come together in Austin to advocate for our profession and the clients we serve. TOTA Day at the Capitol is our signature advocacy event, an opportunity to educate legislators, build relationships, and ensure occupational therapy remains visible and influential in statewide policy discussions.

### **2027 OT & PT Service Delivery in Schools: Policy, Research, and Best Practices**

**Dates:** June 10–11, 2027

**Format:** Hybrid (Virtual Option + On-Site)

**Host Site:** Region 10 ESC

400 E. Spring Valley Rd., Richardson, TX 75081

This collaborative statewide conference brings together OT and PT practitioners working in school-based settings to explore emerging research, policy updates, and innovative service delivery models. Whether you join us virtually or in person at Region 10 ESC, you'll gain practical tools and insights to support students and strengthen your practice.

## Advertising Opportunities

Career Center	Varies
Website Sponsorship	\$800/year
Revista OT Quarterly E-Magazine	As low as \$75
TOTA Tidbits E-Mail Blast Banner	As low as \$200
TOTA Annual Conference Digital Experience	\$300
TOTA Annual Conference Sponsor Booths	As low as \$950

TOTA offers a variety of high-impact advertising opportunities to elevate your brand and connect with the occupational therapy community. Thank you for your valued support of TOTA.

Please contact Sarah Stevens with inquiries  
[sarahstevens@tota.org](mailto:sarahstevens@tota.org), 832-915-9239

# TOTA Membership MATTERS

## TOTA Membership Matters Your Voice. Your Profession. Your Community.

Patricia Bower, OTR, MS, Ed.D., FAOTA, SFHEA



Patricia Bower, OTR,  
MS, EdD, FAOTA

Occupational therapy continues to evolve across Texas in response to changes in healthcare delivery, reimbursement, education, technology, and workforce demands. In this environment, professional connections and collective advocacy are more important than ever. Membership in the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) strengthens both the profession and its future.

TOTA serves as the unified voice of occupational therapy practitioners, educators, and students across Texas. Through membership, practitioners strengthen advocacy efforts, expand professional visibility, and support the advancement of occupational therapy statewide.

Members also gain access to meaningful professional development opportunities, including conferences, webinars, committees, and district engagement. These experiences foster leadership growth, networking, and ongoing learning aligned with evolving practice demands. The TOTA Annual Conference remains a key opportunity for collaboration, innovation, and shared professional growth across the state.

As the profession advances, every member matters. Whether practitioner, educator, student, administrator, or retiree, each contribution strengthens advocacy, professional identity, and occupational therapy's impact across Texas.

### Get Involved in Your District

District engagement is a valuable way to stay connected, informed, and involved in professional opportunities across Texas. Members are encouraged to reach out to district leaders to learn more about local initiatives and leadership opportunities at [info@tota.org](mailto:info@tota.org).

- Alamo South:  
Jennifer Parpacen-Smith
- Great Plains West: Leslye Morris
- Capital CenTex: Carol Regali
- Rio Grande: Claudia Yagel
- Trinity North: Kayla Allen
- Gulf Coast East: Renee Shepherd

State Membership Chair supports member engagement, recruitment, and statewide connection.

Patricia Bower, State Membership Chair

**JOIN. ENGAGE. STRENGTHEN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ACROSS TEXAS.**

# TOTA Mentorship Program Relaunch

By Monica S. Clark, OTR, OTD, CNS, TIE  
Ad Hoc Mentorship Committee Chair



Monica S. Clark,  
OTR, OTD, CNS, TIE

We are excited to announce the relaunch of the **TOTA Mentorship Program**, an initiative designed to support connection, growth, and leadership across our profession.

Whether you are looking to grow in your career or give back through mentorship, this program offers a meaningful opportunity to engage with colleagues across Texas in a structured, supportive environment. The program will run as a 3-month cohort with opportunities to continue the relationship beyond the formal program if desired.

## Why Participate?

Participation in the Mentorship Program offers a valuable opportunity to cultivate meaningful professional connections while gaining insight, guidance, and support from experienced colleagues. Participants also have the opportunity to develop leadership and mentorship skills, which can contribute not only to their own professional growth but also to the advancement of the occupational therapy profession as a whole.

## We Are Currently Recruiting:

**Mentors** with 3 or more years of experience, who are interested in sharing their knowledge and supporting others through mentorship.

**Mentees** who are seeking guidance in professional, leadership, or skill development.

## How to Apply

Please complete the application at the link below:

[www.tota.org/mentorship](http://www.tota.org/mentorship)

Applications will open July 10 and will remain available through Aug 10.

## What to Expect

Applications will be reviewed by the Mentorship Committee, which will thoughtfully match mentors and mentees based on areas of practice, professional goals, and availability. The program will begin with a virtual kickoff and orientation session held at the end of August.

Throughout the three-month program, participants are expected to engage in at least one meeting per month. These meetings may occur in person or via text, email, or virtual platforms, allowing for flexible and accessible communication. In addition, TOTA will provide ongoing support and resources to participants throughout the program.

This program is being led by the TOTA Ad Hoc Mentorship Committee. We look forward to building a strong and connected community of mentors and mentees. Thank you for your continued commitment to advancing occupational therapy in Texas.

**Together, we are building a stronger OT community.**



# TOTA - An Organization That Serves Every Career Stage

Layman Darnell Miller COTA, MBA Med  
TOTA OTA State Representative



Layman Darnell Miller,  
COTA, MBA Med

Oh, what an exciting time it is. It is that time of year when we congratulate and welcome to the profession the many graduates of the various Texas Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Programs. There are nineteen OTA programs in the Lone Star State, and the majority of these programs have graduations in May. After the successful completion of 2 years of intense coursework and study, seemingly endless practical skills check assessments, and 2 8-week clinical rotations, these graduates have earned the right to be called entry-level practitioners.

As an occupational therapy assistant, you will spend the majority of your time delivering direct patient care, where you will develop deep, trusting relationships. You get to celebrate the “little things” with your patients, like tying shoes, donning a shirt, or managing medications. For you it is a goal achieved, but for them it is occupation and independence restored.

It is important to advocate for your patients to ensure they have the tools and resources to live successful, meaningful lives.

Advocate not only for our patients, but advocate for the OT profession and the role you play in the profession. As laws and regulations change, and other professions encroach on our vision and mission, it is the support, voices and testimonies of OT practitioners that protect our livelihood. This is why membership matters.

Your degree has taught you how to adapt, problem-solve, and implement care plans. But you are not alone. When seeking that first job, look for a company that places a high value on mentoring and strong communication. A place where you feel comfortable asking questions and sharing your insights. A place that will nurture and grow your skills.

So, what’s next? There is that small concern of a national certification exam. But believe it or not, your program has prepared you with the foundational knowledge to meet the challenge. There are excellent online examination resources that are available, many free of charge, that will help with your preparation. And do not forget your peers with whom you can form study groups.

## Job Prospects

Some of you may be worried if you will find employment. The demand for OTA’s is at an all-time high, not just here in Texas, but across the country. Here is a link to the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes312011.htm>

You are entering a beautiful profession where science meets compassion. Take what you have learned, trust your clinical intuition, and never stop making a difference in the lives of others. Congratulations on your accomplishment and much success in your upcoming career.



# Occupational Therapy's Vital Role in Early Recovery After Birth

Rebeca Segraves, PT, DPT, PWCS  
Women's Health Physical Therapist  
Founder, Enhanced Recovery After Delivery®



Rebeca Segraves,  
PT, DPT, PWCS

I'm returning to Texas for the 2026 TOTA Annual Conference to teach an in-person Enhanced Recovery After Delivery® (ERAD) lab. This feels like a full circle moment from when I worked at Texas Children's Hospital (TCH) in Houston and tried to pitch to an OT to work with me on the maternity unit. At the time, she was heavily involved with the Adult Congenital Heart Program, but she agreed to consults on the maternity unit every so often.

She proved to be an invaluable asset and taught me about preserving dignity during sessions surrounding perinatal loss and significant changes in identity. She showed me how to help patients stay engaged in meaningful occupations while navigating intense grief.

## Preserving Dignity Through Meaningful Occupation

I remember co-treating with her on a patient who was recovering from a C-section and perinatal loss after a long high-risk pregnancy stay. The OT had her stand and reach to retrieve baby clothes she had received as gifts. The woman stood to fold each piece of clothing that her baby would never wear. While the activity incorporated standing and reaching tasks that aligned with the woman's physical therapy goals, the beauty was that my colleague was able to help the woman find the will to get out of bed and do something that was deeply meaningful to her. I realized that I was only scratching the surface on the role of OT in early postpartum recovery.

Another patient had Functional Neurological Disorder postpartum that caused her to have significant difficulty with walking and she required a front wheel walker after birth. My OT colleague helped her change her baby's diaper while standing at the bassinet for the first time in the three days since she delivered. She helped me see how a mother could still be deeply engaged in caregiving tasks despite the significant functional challenges that compromised her safety with her baby.

Last year, I interviewed Dr. Karin Fox, a maternal fetal medicine physician and surgeon who specializes in placenta accreta spectrum disorder. I worked with her at Texas Children's Hospital. She shared that she primarily refers to acute care OTs in the hospital because they are so valuable in getting mothers back to their daily activities after a major surgical birth.

## The Landscape in Early Postpartum Rehabilitation Has Changed

The landscape has changed since my early days of establishing early rehab after hospital birth at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. There are now over 120 hospitals in the U.S. that offer rehab on the maternity unit, and many are led by OTPs. I've spoken with practitioners across the country who are teaching pelvic health recovery to OB nurses using pelvic models to demonstrate what they teach to moms after perineal repairs. OTPs are being featured on the news and winning health system-wide awards for their work in early rehab after birth. There is no longer a barrier of providers "not knowing what OTs do". They are taking the lead and showing the entire team what is possible.

As we prepare for the ERAD® lab at this year's annual conference and 90th Anniversary Celebration, I am looking forward to exploring how we can further integrate both disciplines into early postpartum rehab practice. We know that mental health is inseparable from physical function, and that being a part of early recovery care positively impacts the entire family unit, including the newborn. I hope this training provides a space for OTPs to continue dreaming big and see how their skills are essential in every part of early recovery. There truly is no limit to the impact an OTP can have on a mother's journey. Occupational therapy practitioners are necessary in this setting, and I look forward to reconnecting with their amazing work in Texas.

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# Shifting the Future: Why Leadership and Promotion Matter in Occupational Therapy

Sandy Hanebrink, OTR/L, CLP, FAOTA, PLY  
Secretary, OT Leaders & Legacies Society



Sandy Hanebrink,  
OTR/L, CLP,  
FAOTA, PLY

Occupational therapy (OT) transforms lives by empowering individuals, families, and communities. However, the profession's continued growth relies heavily on active leadership and strategic promotion. Organizations like the OT Leaders & Legacies Society (OTL&LS) exemplify how structured mentorship and advocacy secure the field's future while honoring its rich history.

## The Pillars of OT Leadership

Leadership in occupational therapy extends far beyond administrative titles. It thrives within clinical spaces, higher education, and community advocacy.

The OTL&LS framework highlights three vital areas where leadership drives the profession forward:

- **Practice Innovation:** Leading both traditional and entrepreneurial ventures to expand care delivery.
- **Organizational Service:** Serving academic, professional, and civic bodies to shape healthcare, disability, and other social justice policy.
- **Scientific Research:** Advancing the evidence base to prove the clinical efficacy of OT interventions.

True leadership requires lifelong engagement. Effective leaders are not defined by past achievements. Instead, they remain continuously active, leveraging decades of experience to guide the next generation.

## Promoting the Profession to Society

Promotion is critical to ensuring the public and healthcare policymakers understand the distinct value of occupational therapy. Strategic promotion achieves three clear objectives:

- **Demonstrates Impact:** Shows how OT improves the quality of life for people with disabilities.
- **Preserves History:** Captures the historical milestones and societal contributions of the field.
- **Secures Resources:** Drives funding, better insurance reimbursement, and legislative support.

When practitioners promote their worth, they bridge the gap between complex clinical science and public understanding.

## Power in Global Community

A unified, diverse network amplifies the profession's voice. The OTL&LS illustrates this strength through its global footprint, uniting members across multiple countries and dozens of states. Their collective experience spans 10 to more than 70 years of professional activity.

This vast network creates a robust database of interests dedicated to volunteerism and mentoring. By connecting seasoned experts with students and faculty, the society ensures that historical knowledge is sustained, enriched, and passed down.

## The Path Forward

The future of occupational therapy requires active participation. Practitioners must step into leadership roles, publish research, and mentor peers. Embracing these responsibilities protects the legacy of the profession and expands its capacity to heal communities worldwide.

The OT Leaders & Legacies Society serves as a resource and opportunity to engage. A growing collection of historical documents, interviews and legacies are publicly available and used by researchers, academic programs, and advocates. The mentoring program is available for professionals looking for new leadership skills, strategies for advancing careers, or new directions as well as supporting other organizations like state associations with governance, sustainability, and leadership development. The social justice program has many opportunities to collaborate and advocate for OT, and the communities OT serves. The growing speaker's bureau and other member driven projects give leadership opportunities to our members and opportunities to advance and meet the needs of the profession. To learn more about these resources, projects, or membership opportunities visit: [www.otleaders.org](http://www.otleaders.org).

# Occupational Participation in Disaster Preparedness for Individuals with ASD/IDD: An Interprofessional Expo Model



Patricia Bowyer, OTR, MS, EdD, FAOTA, SFHEA

Patricia Bowyer, OTR, MS, EdD, FAOTA, SFHEA

The LoneStar LEND Disaster Readiness Expo was held on May 9, 2026, at the Fonteno Senior Education Center in Houston, Texas, and brought together families, first responders, military personnel, clinicians, and community partners for a one-of-a-kind event focused on disaster readiness for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD). The EXPO highlighted the importance of inclusive emergency preparedness and hands-on community engagement for individuals with disabilities and their families. It also provided an important opportunity for interdisciplinary engagement and collaboration among professionals, students, first responders, and families preparing for disasters and emergency situations.

The LoneStar LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities) program is an interdisciplinary leadership education and training program that prepares future leaders from multiple professional disciplines to improve systems of care for individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities. The program emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, family partnership, and systems-level thinking to enhance health, community participation, and access to services across the lifespan.

The EXPO was organized and supported by the LoneStar LEND leadership team, including Pauline Filifpek, M.D., LEND Director; Patricia Bowyer, EdD, OTR, LEND Training Director; Judy Blake, parent and LEND faculty member; Annie Rangel, parent and LEND Program Coordinator; and Bertha Frausto, parent and LEND Assistant Program Coordinator.

The event addressed two critical concerns commonly expressed by parents and caregivers during disasters and evacuations: 1) whether their child, youth, or adult family member would willingly enter a rescue watercraft, and 2) whether they would remain safely in the rescue vehicle during an emergency situation.

To support emergency preparedness within a meaningful, real-world context, the United States Marine Corps Littoral Craft Company C, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion attended

with three impressive rescue watercrafts measuring 30, 42, and 46 feet in length. The EXPO also featured numerous Houston, Texas first responders, including fire, police, high-water rescue vehicles, and smaller rescue boats.

Children, youth, and adults with ASD/IDD actively engaged with emergency personnel and equipment in a highly supportive, sensory-considerate environment. Participants climbed aboard rescue vessels, interacted directly with equipment, and even used a fire hose with the assistance of first responders. To support participation and reduce sensory barriers, noise-canceling headphones were available, enhancing comfort and increasing engagement in these real-world emergency occupations.

Participants also explored rescue equipment, played structured games using life preservers, and tried on combat helmets and night-vision goggles. More than 40 volunteers supported the event, helping to create a welcoming and inclusive environment that promoted confidence, autonomy, and participation in unfamiliar emergency contexts.

Many parents were emotional as they observed their loved ones willingly engage with rescue personnel and equipment; experiences many had previously believed would not be possible. The Expo demonstrated how occupation-based, interprofessional experiences can reduce fear, build readiness skills, and strengthen community participation for individuals with ASD/IDD.

Organizers hope to continue growing the EXPO as an annual event in Houston, Texas. Community members and professionals interested in disability leadership and interdisciplinary training are encouraged to apply for the year-long LoneStar LEND interdisciplinary training program, which prepares future leaders to improve systems of care and support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

For more information about the LoneStar LEND program and EXPO event, contact Ms. Annie Rangel, Program Coordinator, at [annie.a.rangel@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:annie.a.rangel@uth.tmc.edu).



ASDIDD Disaster Preparedness Expo



# Texas Society for Hand Therapy

Jessica Johnson, OTR, MOT, CHT, CPAM  
President – Texas Society for Hand Therapy



Jessica Johnson, OTR,  
MOT, CHT, CPAM

Our hands are our primary tools for interacting with the world. When injury, surgery, or chronic conditions impact the upper extremity, specialized rehabilitation is essential. Texas Society for Hand Therapy (TSHT) proudly supports hand therapy and wants to share knowledge, raise awareness, and highlight the critical importance of this medical specialty.

## What is a Hand Therapist?

A hand therapist is a registered occupational or physical therapist specializing in complex conditions affecting the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, and shoulder. Many achieve the prestigious Certified Hand Therapist (CHT) credential by passing a rigorous exam of advanced clinical skills.

### Key Clinical Advantages:

- **Accelerated, Safe Recovery:** Customized, evidence-based programs designed using a deep understanding of upper extremity anatomy.
- **Custom Orthotic Fabrication:** On-site creation of custom orthoses to protect healing tissues, avoiding generic, ill-fitting braces.
- **Non-Operative Solutions:** Specialized therapy that can eliminate the need for surgery for conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, or minor fractures.
- **Restoring Functional Independence:** Providing the specific tools and exercises needed to return to daily tasks like sports, cooking, driving, and typing.

From complex traumatic accidents to chronic conditions like arthritis, specialized hand therapy bridges the gap between medical intervention and a full return to daily life. Both pediatric and adult skills and function are fully supported by hand therapists, helping patients of all ages maximize their independence. Join TSHT in celebrating hand therapists who prioritize your upper extremity health and recognize the specialists who make a daily difference.



## Meet the State Student Reps –

Get to know your State Student representatives for 2026/2027. Let's start with Carolina >



### FUN FACTS

**TOTA:** Where do you attend school?

**CAROLINA:** Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

**TOTA:** What inspired you to pursue OT?

**CAROLINA:** I have always thought OT was such a special and personal profession because it allows you to make a meaningful impact on someone's daily life while building strong, individualized relationships with clients and their families.

**TOTA:** What's your favorite thing about the OT profession?

**CAROLINA:** My favorite thing about the OT profession is that everything we do is tied to helping people be more functional and independent in their everyday lives. I love that our interventions have a direct impact on the activities that are most meaningful and important to everyone.

**TOTA:** What do you hope to accomplish as a future OT practitioner?

**CAROLINA:** As a future OT practitioner, I hope to make as many lives as possible more meaningful and enjoyable by helping individuals participate in the activities that matter most to them. I want to empower my clients to overcome challenges, maximize their independence, and improve their overall quality of life.

**TOTA:** What are you most excited to contribute in your role as a State Student Representative?

**CAROLINA:** I am most excited to serve as an advocate for the occupational therapy profession and help ensure that student voices are heard and represented at the state level. I also look forward to being a leader and resource for other OT students, helping connect them with opportunities, information, and involvement within our profession.

Carolina Sanchez,  
Co' 2027



TOTA State OT Student Representative



### QUICK TAKES

**TOTA:** Describe yourself in one word.

**CAROLINA:** Determined

**TOTA:** Favorite movie quote?

**CAROLINA:** "At the end of the day, faith is a funny thing. It turns out, all you have to do is believe." - Meredith Grey

**TOTA:** Favorite sport, pastime, or hobby

**CAROLINA:** I love to rock climb!

**TOTA:** What Disney character are you?

**CAROLINA:** Rapunzel!

**TOTA:** Marvel or DC?

**CAROLINA:** Marvel, because my favorite superhero is Spiderman!

**TOTA:** Starbucks or a local coffee house?

**CAROLINA:** STARBUCKS!!!

**TOTA:** Go to social media platform?

**CAROLINA:** Instagram!

**TOTA:** Spotify, Pandora, Apple Music?

**CAROLINA:** Apple Music!

**TOTA:** Do you have a pet?

**CAROLINA:** Yes! I have a 3-year-old Husky named Princess! She is the sweetest ESA!!

**TOTA:** If you could redesign the food pyramid with zero health consequences, what would be at the top?

**CAROLINA:** Iced coffee!!

**TOTA:** Bonus: What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know?

**CAROLINA:** English is my 2nd language!!

# Meet the State Student Reps –

Get to know your State Student representatives for 2026/2027. Let's meet with Kennady >

## FUN FACTS

**TOTA:** Where do you attend school?

**KENNADY:** Panola College, Carthage, TX

**TOTA:** What inspired you to pursue OT?

**KENNADY:** As a kid, before I even knew of Occupational Therapy, I knew helping people was what my adult self would do. I knew early on that I felt joy when others accomplished things that they may have never thought possible. It wasn't just the act of helping though that brought me immense joy, it has always been about others finding their success. Through life experiences and sought out opportunities, it's been confirmed that the OT profession is where I am meant to be.

**TOTA:** What's your favorite thing about the OT profession?

**KENNADY:** My favorite thing about the OT profession is that it ultimately isn't about me at all. I get to be with a person, with a story, and be a part of it. Their story doesn't stop with me but is a stepping stone and that's my favorite part.

**TOTA:** What do you hope to accomplish as an OT practitioner?

**KENNADY:** Within the OT profession, something I hope to accomplish is establishing more motor labs and community built opportunities for different rural communities needing additional resources for therapy.

**TOTA:** What are you most excited to contribute in your role as a State Student Representative?

**KENNADY:** Hearing how the Texas OTA schools vary but also have similarities, I hope to capture the current and future students voices through the connection and networking.

## QUICK TAKES

**TOTA:** Describe yourself in one word.

**KENNADY:** Tenacious

**TOTA:** Favorite movie quote?

**KENNADY:** "This is a jumbo coffee morning. I need coffee in an I.V." – Lorelai Gilmore: *Gilmore Girls*

STUDENTS - REACH OUT TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVES WITH ANY QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND NEWS!

Carolina: [txotstudentrep@tota.org](mailto:txotstudentrep@tota.org)  
Kennady: [txotastudentrep@tota.org](mailto:txotastudentrep@tota.org)

Kennady Tooke



TOTA State OTA Student Representative

**TOTA:** Favorite sport, pastime, or hobby

**KENNADY:** Sport: Basketball

Pastime/ Hobby: I'm currently training for a half marathon that is in October, so running takes up some of my time! I'm a big reader, I'll try any genre but fantasy is so fun! I love filling my time serving at church and finding a good concert!

**TOTA:** What Disney character are you?

**KENNADY:** I think I most align with Mulan. I believe I can achieve anything regardless of the obstacles because of the determination instilled in me through values and love.

**TOTA:** Marvel or DC?

**KENNADY:** DC - The trinity is my favorite including Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman.

**TOTA:** Starbucks or a local coffee house?

**KENNADY:** Local coffeehouse - I LOVE finding a coffee shop anywhere I travel.

**TOTA:** Social media platform of your choice?

**KENNADY:** Instagram!

**TOTA:** Spotify, Pandora, Apple Music?

**KENNADY:** Apple Music

**TOTA:** Do you have a pet?

**KENNADY:** I have two! One dog, she's a cattle dog mix named Hope. Then one cat, a calico named Taxi.

**TOTA:** If you could redesign the food pyramid with zero health consequences, what would be at the top?

**KENNADY:** I'm so not a picky eater and will eat pretty much anything but I prefer to eat less onions and butter so those two would be top for me.

**TOTA:** Bonus: What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know?

**KENNADY:** When I was little, I had a dream to attend The Julliard School because I have always loved music and the performing arts.

# Congratulations!

## TOTA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



**Juliet Adams**

**Institution:**

Texas Woman's University

**TOTA Involvement:**

- Member, TOTA
- Participation in TOTA Day at the Capitol (advocacy)

**Current Academic Status:**

- Completed Fieldwork IIa (FW 2a), currently in capstone preparation

**Anticipated Graduation Date:**

May 2027

**Interests/Professional Goals:**

My professional goal is to pursue a PhD focused on advancing OT research that improves meaningful participation and quality of life for individuals with disabilities, with a particular interest in supporting people with visual impairments.



**Aislyn Beauregard**

**Institution:**

University of Texas Medical Branch

**TOTA Involvement:**

- Student Member, TOTA

**Current Academic Status:**

- Final semester of the didactic portion of my program.
- In the upcoming academic year, I will complete my Level IIA and Level IIB fieldwork rotations, followed by doctoral capstone

**Anticipated Graduation Date:**

August 2027

**Interests/Professional Goals:**

My professional interests include pelvic floor therapy and aquatic therapy. After graduation, I hope to begin my career as a travel occupational therapist to gain experience in a variety of settings, build confidence as a clinician, and better support individuals in achieving independence, participation, and quality of life.



**Marlyn Garcia**

**Institution:**

Lone Star College Tomball

**TOTA Involvement:**

- Student Member, TOTA

**Current Academic Status:**

- Beginning my second year

**Anticipated Graduation Date:**

May 2027

**Interests/Professional Goals:**

I plan to pursue pediatrics. Most children don't choose the life they are born into and my goal is to provide them with the skills they need to be as independent as possible and have the best quality of life.

# Alamo South: Let's Connect, Collaborate, and Grow Together

**Thelma Ochoa, OTR, OTD**  
**Alamo South District Chair**



Thelma Ochoa,  
OTD, OTR, C/NDT

One of the things I love most about occupational therapy is that no two practitioners have the same journey. Across the Alamo South District, we have clinicians, educators, researchers, administrators, entrepreneurs, fieldwork educators, and students who are making a difference every day in the lives of the people they serve.

Our district spans a large and diverse region of Texas, encompassing vibrant cities, rural communities, and everything in between. While many of us may never work in the same building, or even the same city, we are connected by a shared passion for helping others participate in meaningful occupations.

As your Alamo South District Chair, I want to take a moment to celebrate the incredible work happening throughout our district. Whether you practice in pediatrics, neurorehabilitation, hand therapy, mental health, acute care, home health, schools, higher education, or emerging areas of practice, your contributions strengthen our profession and the communities we serve.

One of my goals is to create more opportunities for connection and collaboration among our members. Occupational therapy is strongest when we learn from one another, share ideas, and support professional growth across settings and career stages. Some of the best innovations begin with a simple conversation between colleagues who are passionate about making a difference.

Do you have an innovative program, community project, research idea, student initiative, continuing education topic, or practice area you would like to share? Are you interested in presenting, mentoring, networking, advocacy, district events, or connecting with fellow practitioners in South Texas? I would love to hear from you.

Our district is filled with talented professionals whose knowledge and experiences deserve to be highlighted



and celebrated. Together, we can create opportunities to support one another, strengthen our professional community, and promote the value of occupational therapy throughout South Texas.

Thank you for all that you do to advance occupational therapy and serve your communities. I am honored to serve as your District Chair and look forward to working together to continue growing and strengthening Alamo South.

## Let's connect, collaborate, and celebrate occupational therapy together.

Have an idea for a district event, continuing education opportunity, community outreach project, student engagement activity, or advocacy initiative? Reach out—I would love to hear from you. The future of Alamo South is built through the voices, ideas, and involvement of its members.

# DISTRICT ZONE

## Capital Centex

Lacey Spark, EdD, OTD, MOT, OTR  
 Capital Centex District Chair

The Capital Centex district is gearing up for some exciting events and initiatives this year with CEU events, social gatherings, and outreach to our student members in the district. We are in the midst of planning a CEU event, a volunteer opportunity at the annual Buddy Walk to support the Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas, and we are working to develop a resource to help clinicians and students connect to local organizations. As always, we are planning to host meet ups at conference during the fall. Keep your eyes peeled on the TOTA website and social media platforms for more updated information as we finalize details!

We are continuing to meet monthly as a board to further our ideas and discuss more ways we can help support the district. We are open to other ideas and people joining



Lacey Spark, EdD, OTD,  
 MOT, OTR

as well, so just reach out and let us know if there is an event or way that we could help support our profession in our district! We would love for you to join us for our meetings and our events. Please do not hesitate to reach out anytime to get more information, chat, or get involved. Looking forward to seeing you at future events and conference later this year!

**Reach out today!**  
[lsark@usa.edu](mailto:lsark@usa.edu)

# DISTRICT ZONE

## Great Plains West

**Chris Lasek, OTR, MOT**  
**Great Plains West District Chair**

The Great Plains West District (GPWD) had a busy spring. We held our annual Bubba Klosterman series - hosting 3 Lunch & Learn virtual courses focusing on adult rehab. -all these were great CEs. If you missed them, members are able to view them on TOTA's LMS website. For OT Month, our district participated in several events including an annual walk for autism in Abilene, SOTA pickleball tournament in Lubbock, speedy documentation CE, social / networking event at HOTWORX in Amarillo, and an OT Month Proclamation Day in Abilene put on by ACU. We also provided OT Month gift bags to the OTA students at Amarillo College. For upcoming events - in August, we are planning a CE on value-based care and in the fall, a career development event for students. If you are interested in connecting with other Occupational Therapy Practitioners in our region and/or serving with TOTA, please let me know. We also wanted to highlight one of our district's Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) groups.

This spring has been full of excitement and engagement for the Texas Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) SOTA group. Several members had the opportunity to attend the AOTA conference in Anaheim, where they deepened their understanding of the various facets of the occupational therapy profession through networking, educational sessions, and professional development opportunities.



*TTUHSC SOTA Members posing in front of the AOTA sign at the AOTA INSPIRE Conference*



**Chris Lasek, OTR, MOT**

TTUHSC SOTA was proud to host a pickleball tournament. The event brought students and community members together for a friendly competition and raised money for the organization. Thank you to everyone who came out to support the event.



*TTUHSC SOTA Pickleball Tournament*

In honor of OT Month, the organization donated funds to four local organizations that provide increased access and opportunities for individuals with all abilities in the community. These organizations included AMBUCS, MyRide, High Point Village, and Redeemer rEcess. The organization wrapped up OT Month with a celebratory potluck lunch for all members, featuring laughter and some singing.

Lastly, the organization welcomed a new group of officers as the current officers prepared to begin their first level II fieldwork placements. They are excited about what the rest of the year holds and send their best wishes to the outgoing members as they begin their placements.

Update provided by Avery Britten, TTUHSC SOTA representative

# DISTRICT ZONE

## Gulf Coast East

Renee Shepherd, COTA, Ed.S  
District Chair



Renee Shepherd,  
COTA, Ed.S

During OT Month 2026, the Gulf Coast East District celebrated the profession through service, connection, and community engagement.

District members volunteered at the **Houston Food Bank**, where they helped sort and package food for families across the region. The event was a meaningful way to give back while reflecting the values of occupational therapy, including health, participation, and quality of life.

Members also participated in this year's **Walk With Me** in support of the **March of Dimes**. By joining this community event, the district helped raise awareness and support for maternal and infant health while showing its commitment to causes that align closely with occupational therapy practice.

These OT Month activities not only supported important community organizations but also strengthened connections among district members. They served as a reminder that advocacy and service are key parts of who we are as occupational therapy practitioners.

Looking ahead, the Gulf Coast East District hopes to build this momentum by creating more opportunities for member engagement through volunteer events, outreach efforts, and networking activities throughout the year. We look forward to continuing to grow participation and connection across the district.

We also extend our congratulations to the spring graduates of OT and OTA programs and offer our sincere

thanks to the student volunteers who supported the efforts of the district. Your energy and dedication have made a meaningful impact, and we are looking forward to seeing your growth as you begin the next stage of your professional journey.



# Trinity North: More Than Membership: Building Community, Leadership, and Impact



Kayla Allen, OTR, OTD, CALM, CDP, CSRS  
Trinity North District Chair

**Kayla Allen, OTR, OTD, CALM, CDP, CSRS**  
Trinity North District Chair

The Trinity North District continues to make meaningful strides in supporting the Texas Occupational Therapy Association's mission through community engagement, student leadership development, advocacy, and professional collaboration. This spring, our district focused on creating opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners and students to connect, serve, and grow together.

## Supporting Our Communities Through Service

In March, Trinity North District partnered with Pate Rehabilitation for their annual 5K and 10K Trail Run in honor of Brain Injury Awareness Month. The event brought together rehabilitation professionals, students, families, and community members to support the Brain Injury Association of America – Texas Chapter and raise awareness for individuals living with brain injuries.

This event directly supported Trinity North District's strategic initiatives by:

- **Increasing community outreach and advocacy** through public awareness of brain injury rehabilitation and recovery.
- **Creating student and practitioner engagement opportunities** through volunteerism and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Enhancing visibility of occupational therapy** within the community while demonstrating our profession's role in improving quality of life.

## Investing in the Next Generation of Leaders

Occupational Therapy Month provided an exciting opportunity to connect with students through a collaborative event with Texas Woman's University Denton SOTA. The Lunch & Lead: OT in Action program featured leadership discussions, career pathway exploration, therapeutic use of self-experiences, and opportunities for students to learn more about TOTA membership and involvement. Students also participated in an OT Month Impact Wall, reflecting on why they chose occupational therapy and the impact they hope to make in the profession.

The turnout, energy, and engagement were outstanding. Events like these strengthen the bridge between academic programs and professional practice while encouraging future practitioners to become active members and leaders within TOTA.

## Making a Difference Through Adaptive Recreation

In May, Trinity North District partnered with KSM Bear Creek Farms for the inaugural Ride and Shine Equestrians with Disabilities Event in Burleson, Texas. The event celebrated riders who have overcome physical and developmental challenges and provided an opportunity for participants to experience confidence, independence, joy, and belonging through equestrian activities.

Occupational therapy students and practitioner volunteers played a vital role by assisting riders, promoting safety, providing encouragement, and supporting successful participation throughout the event. Their presence helped create meaningful experiences that empowered riders while highlighting occupational therapy's commitment to participation, inclusion, and quality of life.

## Growing Leadership Within Trinity North

We are excited to welcome **Kaela Morris** as our newly appointed OT Student Representative and **Abrianna Pellegrino** as our Legislative and Political Affairs Chair. Their passion, leadership, and commitment to advancing occupational therapy will strengthen our district and expand opportunities for student engagement, advocacy, and professional development.

We are also seeking members interested in serving in the following leadership roles:

- Committee on Membership
- OTA District Student Representative

## Your Voice Matters

Get involved by attending events, exploring leadership opportunities, renewing your TOTA membership, and sharing ideas for future initiatives.

Together, we are strengthening our profession and advancing occupational therapy across North Texas.

[trinitynorth@tota.org](mailto:trinitynorth@tota.org)





**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

**HELPS MAKE EVERY DAY**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**TOTA**

**90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.