

GW SOTA Newsletter

The George Washington University's Student Occupational Therapy Association

April 2024 Issue

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HAPPY OT MONTH!

Written by Jenny Kim

Can you believe we are already in April? Time flies in the GW SOTA program! We'd like to wish everyone a Happy OT Month with a few fun facts!

Did you know?

- OT Month began in 1980 to recognize the important work of occupational therapists and therapy aides.
- Occupational Therapy is ranked #4 according to U.S. News Best Healthcare Jobs.
- There's a theme for every annual OT Month! This year's theme is OT: Advancing Health, Well-being, and Quality of Life.

There are many ways to celebrate this special month! If you haven't already this month, share a post, story, or fact about OT to someone who may not know OT.



AOTA INSPIRE 2024: ASD REFLECTION

Written by Emma Tober

We're excited to share some insights and highlights from the recent American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conference, Inspire 2024. Along with each theme are links to learn more!

Embracing Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion were recurring themes throughout the conference. Sessions focused on understanding and addressing the unique needs of diverse populations, including those from different cultural backgrounds, abilities, and identities.

[Workshop \(Handout with Resources\):](#)

Reframing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: Using an OT Approach for Equity & Inclusion

Brigitte C. Desport, DPS, OTR/L, BCP, ATP,
Leon Kirschner, OTD, MPH, OTL, ATP, CBIS,
c/NDT and Nancy W. Doyle, OTD, OTR/L

[Short Course:](#) **Affirmation of Transgender & Gender Diversity in OT**

- [AOTA Gender Affirming Language](#)
- [AOTA Sexuality Resource](#)
- [AOTA Affirming Gender Identity & Pronouns](#)

Technology in OT Practice

The integration of technology into OT practice was a hot topic at Inspire 2024. From telehealth platforms to virtual reality applications, presenters showcased innovative ways to leverage technology to enhance client care, improve outcomes, and increase access to services. OT students were encouraged to explore ways to incorporate technology into their future practices to better meet evolving needs of clients.

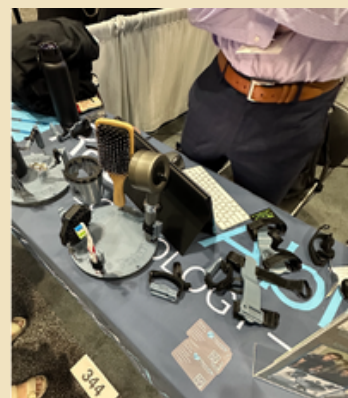
Expo Hall Technology Vendors



Anti-roll back system
for wheelchairs



iBOT PMD



ReachAble Technology

[Workshop:](#) **Leveling the Playing Field With Do-It-Yourself Adaptations to Make Participation in Play & Recreation**

Led by Judith Schoonover, MEd, OTR/L, ATP,

FAOTA, a founding member of the *Loudon County Assistive Technology Program*, with Judith Schoonover, Elisa Wern, and Beth Poss
Resources: bit.ly/AOTA304

Advocacy and Policy

Advocacy and policy discussions underscored the critical role that OTs play in advocating for the rights and well-being of their clients. Sessions covered topics such as healthcare policy, reimbursement issues, and legislative advocacy strategies. OT students were inspired to become advocates for change and to actively engage in efforts to promote occupational justice.

Short Course: Status Check on Medicare Part A Post-Acute Care Payment

Jennifer Bogenrief, JD, Diane Dismukes, OTR,RAC-CT, Ciera Whitmore, MOT, OTR/L, COS-C

- [Medicare Home Health Accessibility Act introduced in the 118th Congress | AOTA](#)
- [AOTA Fact Sheet on OT's Value in Home Health as a Medicare Qualifying Service | AOTA](#)

Learn more about the [American Occupational Therapy Political Action Committee \(AOTPAC®\)](#), efforts advocating for our future profession!

Mental Health and Wellness

Given the growing recognition of mental health in overall well-being, numerous sessions at Inspire 2024 focused on mental health promotion and intervention strategies within the scope of OT. Presenters highlighted the role OT plays in addressing mental health challenges across the lifespan

and emphasized the importance of holistic, client-centered approaches to care.

Short Course: Trials & Tribulations of Integrating OT Into an Active Community Mental Health Clinic to Optimize Client Engagement and Student Learning Outcomes

Deek Cunningham, MS, OTR/L & Jil Sea, MS, OTR/L

- [Mental Health Parity Act | AOTA One Page Summary](#)
- [OT Role in Mental Health](#)

Workshop: Mental Health OT – Who Me?

Linda Riccio, OT/L, Sabrena McCarley, MBA-SL, OTR/L, CLIPP, RAC-CT, QCP, FAOTA, RACCTA, Melissa Tilton, OTA, MS, COTA, ROH, Jennifer Bogenrief, JD

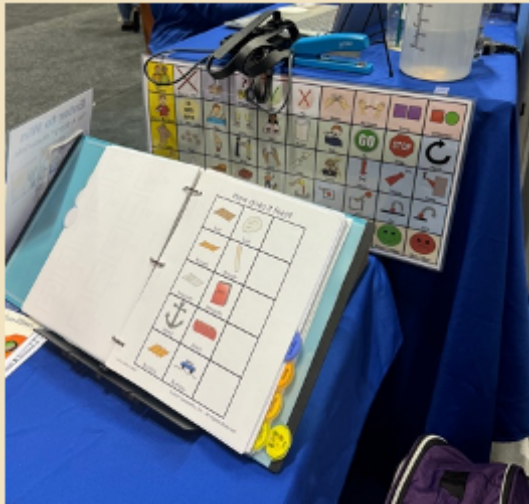
- [Identify 3 mental health assessments for disability-focused post-acute care.](#)
- [Understand reimbursement documentation for mental health intervention in disability post-acute care.](#)

Lifelong Learning and Professional Development

Inspire 2024 provided ample opportunities for OT students to engage with OTPs. From hands-on workshops to networking events with seasoned practitioners, attendees had the chance to expand their knowledge, develop new skills, and forge connections within the OT community. Students were encouraged to take full advantage of these opportunities as they embark on their journey in the field of OT.



Lesson Pix: Create custom visual materials with this affordable online platform. The options are endless! You can create schedules, communication boards, story books, and more with this affordable membership- only \$36/year!



Lesson Pix example

Learning without Tears: This company, formerly known as *Handwriting without Tears*, offers training and certification for professionals. You do not have to be an OT to become a specialist © ! This video highlights the conference atmosphere & stars two of our classmates! *Learning without Tears* held presentations and facilitated conversations at their large booth at AOTA.

LSVT Global: Specialty training in LSVT therapies for Parkinson's, pediatrics, and other populations.

CL-ASI Certifications in ASI: The Collaborative For Leadership In Ayres Sensory Integration®

Travel Therapy Vendors

- Fusion Medical Staffing
- MedTravelers | Advanced Allied

NBCOT Prep

- TrueLearn
- PocketPrep
- NBCOT All Inclusive Study Pack (\$85)
- NBCOT App – get one free practice question a day!

Thank you to all who attended!



Pictured left to right (starting in the back row): Carolin Capurro, Abby Grace Buchanan, Alexis Clapper, Rachel Metts, Kate Agnes, Emma Tober, Amy Eybers, Tori Leger, Sabrina Luu, Justine Williams, Amy Arellano, Collese Daley

Volunteer!

Baby Bloomers Urban Garden
2024 Spring Garden Opening

Saturday, April 13, 2024

Rain Date: Saturday, April 20, 2024

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

**Early Learning and
Early Intervention Center**

Baby Bloomers Urban Garden

3400 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20032



Sign Up at: tinyurl.com/BabyBloomerVolunteer

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: REBECCA WARREN

Written by **Katie Jewett**

Rebecca, a first year student, celebrates Passover with her family. Passover is a Jewish festival celebrated in the spring to remember the Israelites liberation. Rebecca says, "Passover is all about food!" The meal eaten during Passover is called Sedar. Foods such as matzah, maror, and charoset are all common foods to eat during Sedar. Rebecca says that the foods are all very symbolic. For example, matzah is eaten because "during the escape [of the Israelites], we could not have leavened bread." Rebecca says that her grandmother sets up the dinner table very nicely for Sedar. Her grandmother will use nice silverware, a special Sedar plate, and a fancy tablecloth for the dinner.

During Sedar, Rebecca and her family will read from a book called Haggadah. This tradition is very dark and sad because the book recalls a dark time for the Jewish community. Rebecca and her family like to make it more uplifting and lighthearted to celebrate being together. Rebecca says that this tradition is really special to her because, "It shows off how unique we are and really emphasizes to me what really matters in all of this, togetherness." One of the games Rebecca and her family play involves hiding a piece of matzah somewhere in the house. Children in the household go find it, and as a reward they get five dollars.



Rebecca and her sister on Passover.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: SOTA EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS

Written by **Katie Jewett**

SOTA executive board elections were held Wednesday, March 27th during lunch for both cohorts. Almost every position was filled, excluding newsletter editor and social media chair.

Those who obtained new positions include Justine Williams, as president, Jenny Kim, as vice president, Celia Accardi, as secretary, Maya Chavez and Meghan Moriarty, as fundraising co-chairs, Candice Dixon, as ASD representative, and Katie Jewett, as community service chair.

Justine's goals as president include being involved with members, helping them grow as learners and professionals, as well as increasing committee and general SOTA involvement. Justine is very excited to serve as SOTA president.

Our new vice president, Jenny, values being supportive and a team player, which will make her a fantastic vice president. Our new secretary, Celia, prides herself in being highly organized, timely, and communicative. These attributes will keep SOTA organized and help Celia be the best secretary.

Our new fundraising co-chairs, Maya and Meghan, have various goals that will help continue building strong foundations for SOTA. Maya wants to be more involved and to

make more meaningful connections through this role. Meghan would like to engage more in the community and help raise money for our new ASD representative, Candice, to go to the 2025 AOTA conference. Candice, prides herself in being understanding, approachable, and an advocate for OT. She is very professional and will be a great representative for our program at future AOTA conferences. Likewise, Katie is a great fit for community service as she has previously worked in other community service and outreach positions. She is excited to get started in this new role and to learn more about how SOTA serves the local community.

While Rebecca Warren, SOTA historian, will be maintaining her position, she will also temporarily help in fulfilling duties of the social media chair while awaiting a member to obtain the position. This includes Rebecca posting the SOTA events she documents to the SOTA Instagram page, too!

NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD

President - Justine Williams

Vice President - Jenny Kim

Secretary - Celia Accardi

Treasurer - Rachel Metts

Professional Development - Natalie Harper

Community Service - Katie Jewett

Social Chair - Brianne Shust

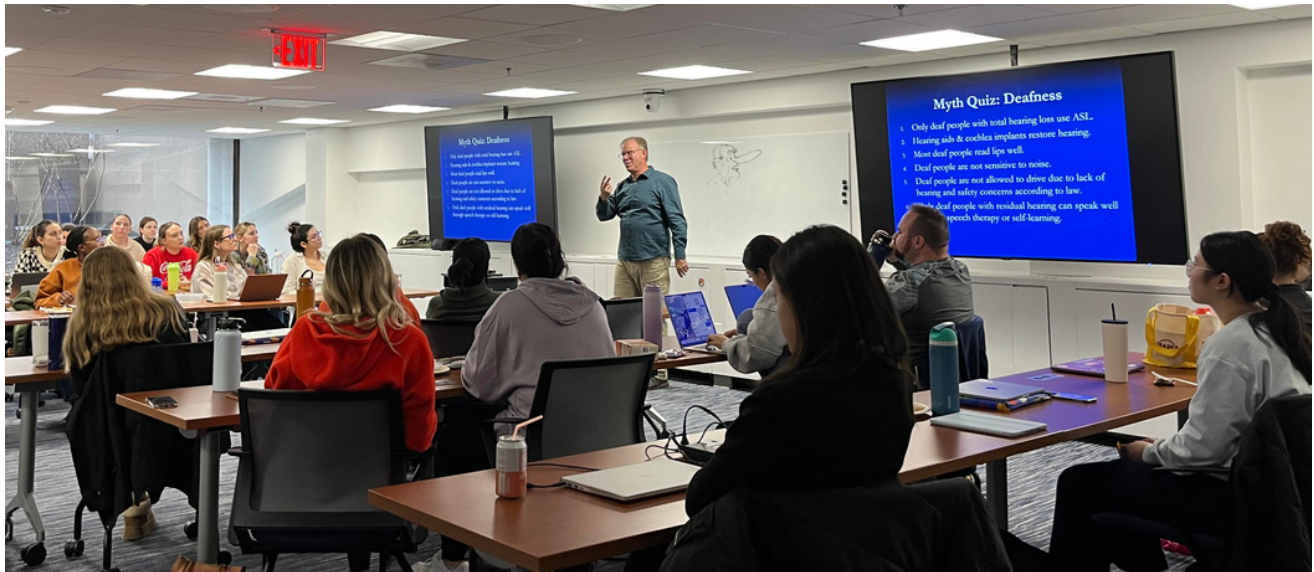
Fundraising - Maya Chavez & Meghan Moriarty

Public Relations Chair - Vincent Walters

Historian - Rebecca Warren

ASD Rep - Candice Dixon

If you are interested in the Newsletter Editor position, please reach out to Celia or Jenny for more information!



EXPANDING OUR HORIZONS: A LESSON ON DEAF CULTURE

Written by **Celia Accardi**

Last month SOTA hosted a lecture by Professor Michael O'Donnell, a professor of American Sign Language (ASL) and deaf studies at GWU. Professional development chairs, Natalie Harper and Pranathi Meda, had been on the search for a way to expand SOTAs knowledge on deaf culture to provide a space for self reflection and to think of ways to promote holistic care for this population in future practice.

The intended purpose of this event was to understand and relate to another person's life story while considering one's therapeutic use of self. Natalie, Pranathi, and Professor O'Donnell aimed to keep the event fluid to ensure conversation and learning happened organically. With Professor O'Donnell's

informative story telling and members' inquisitive participation, this event was nothing short of organic. The response was very active with mentions of pop culture, personal experiences with the deaf community and deaf culture, and eagerness for conversations post lecture.

Professional development co-chair, Pranathi, believes this event was in part successful due to its high accessibility for both cohorts- on campus during residency for all students. SOTA member, Vincent Walters, expressed his appreciation for this event, saying, "...it taught me a lot about ASL and helped me better understand connections between Hartford, CT and deaf culture."

Professor O'Donnell really enjoyed SOTAs general engagement and positive energy. He, Natalie, and Pranathi are aiming to have a lecture in the future since there is so much more to be said. He would especially like to tie OT into the conversation and discuss what members' roles will look like with this community as future OTPs.

THANK YOU, FUNDRAISING!

Written by Celia Accardi

Fundraising chairs, Fatima Koroma and Collese Daley, organized their last fundraising event for SOTA with the Panera Fundraiser on March 6th. They did a great job organizing and promoting the event which resulted in around \$100 of funds for SOTA.

This event was made to build foundational fundraising relationships with on-campus companies for future philanthropic endeavors related to SOTA. Collese noted that this event had further benefits for the OTD program as well due to the fundraising table being located in the student center near Panera. "It was nice creating an OT table... to educate undergraduate students on our program. Since it's a new program, not many people [knew] about it and they were very excited to know GW has an OTD program," Collese said.

Fatima and Collese hope this, among other relationships they built, can aid in creating reoccurring events to minimize stress for future fundraising chairs. Fatima also hopes that as SOTA grows, fundraising events can expand through selling merchandise and even larger events.

Thank you to fundraising for helping make all events thus far possible. We look forward to what our upcoming fundraising chairs can do!

See what lasting words our fundraising chairs have left with us!

Collese says, "You'll be surprised how many donations you get by establishing good relationships with people!"

Fatima says, "Thank you to everyone who has supported any of our fundraising efforts through the [time] that we've been in this role. Shout out to Dr. Kells for being our biggest supporter and encouraging all of our ideas!"



Community Dinners
L'Arche

Come join L'Arche residents for a joyful dinner this April! Enjoy a night of good food, good conversation, and even better company.

Start at 6 p.m.

Text Justine if you have questions:
206-849-2550

Sign up [here!](#)

WHAT'S YOUR SPECIALTY?

Written by Jenny Kim

After analyzing the previously sent-out Newsletter Poll, the results are in! SOTA members are interested in the following specialty areas: palliative care, pediatrics, early intervention, assistive technology, mental health, geriatrics, and hand therapy. Check out a few interviews from practicing OTs in these areas!

Acute/Palliative Care

Ann Henshaw

Ann is originally from the Boston area and has a background in healthcare consulting. Her OT journey blossomed from her close relationship with her cousin, JP, who has cerebral palsy. Through her own experiences of losing and caring for her family members, she developed the skills and passion to work in acute/palliative care. Ann loves to work with this population. While others may stray away from “sick, complicated” cases, Ann tackles these cases with curiosity and care. Her work in this field demonstrates how practitioners can bridge personal experience and professional expertise together, to provide the best patient care possible.

In this space, everyday responsibilities may look like seeing multiple patients, writing evaluations, doing billing, collaborating with the interpersonal team, and communicating with family and patients. More specifically, Ann often helps patients by advocating for them, learning and understanding their needs and wants, giving support to their caretakers, and alleviating day-to-day barriers.

If interested in stepping into this space, Ann recommends volunteering in hospice or skilled nursing facilities. Check out AOTA's Communities of Practice (CoP), Ann recently launched a Palliative CoP! Additionally, skills that will help in this field include using therapeutic use of self, mental health skills, psycho-social skills, self-reflection, and general willingness to deal with the complicated and discuss spirituality.

Ann's general advice for SOTA members is to be willing to be wrong and learn from your mistakes! Building a community of practice now as a student can be a great resource for after graduation.



NICU

Rachel Carpenter

Rachel has a background working in pediatrics, building her own OT practice (handwriting skills development), and serving in acute care. Today, Rachel works as a Level II NICU OT.

The NICU setting can be very intense. Rachel mentions how there can be certain work cultures and hierarchies within the interprofessional team. Rachel warns against toxic culture and recommends to “keep fighting the fight” and to “kill them with kindness!” In the NICU, attitude is everything. Every day is an opportunity to show resilience, empathy, and compassion. Good bedside manner goes a long way, especially for families struggling in this space.

A day in the life as a NICU OT includes checking on and evaluating lots of babies, feeding times, cluster care (to protect babies’ energy levels), performing exercises/massage, leading educational classes, and teaching/helping parents.

If you’re interested in the NICU, Rachel suggests working in early intervention and having a good background in human development.

After graduation, Rachel advises students to try to work in a career setting where there are lots of other occupational therapists. Why? Having other OTs on your team helps you get valuable feedback!



Early Intervention/Pediatrics

Erica Fuentes

Erica is originally from the DMV area and her OT journey was heavily influenced by her early experiences working with children with disabilities.

Early intervention typically has an age range of birth to 3 years of age however, there can be state-by-state differences. Maryland, where Erica works, counts early intervention up till 4 years of age. Location can bring many opportunities or limitations to practice. Erica shares how she enjoys working in Montgomery County because of the diversity in ethnicities and socio-economic status. Through her job, Erica has had opportunities to experience culture in different ways, especially through home visits. Erica recalls a time when she was able to experience another culture’s breakfast food (uji from Kenya), when trying to learn her client’s daily morning habits.

As an early intervention OT, understanding how to fit into a client’s family dynamic and how to appropriately engage with them can be hard at first! Not overcompensating or proving your expertise to parents can go a long way! Being humble and admitting what you do and don’t know can help learning and working with parents feel more natural. Some important skills in this area is having a good understanding of human development, other disciplines’ roles in the interprofessional team and how to explain things well in adaptable language.

Erica’s general advice for OT students is to realize there are no constants in life, only change. Be an advocate for your own learning and be able to adapt to change! Ask yourself what makes you the best OT you can be, what you want to learn, and how you can make any opportunity a chance to learn.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Created by Celia Accardi

See what's up and coming this month in SOTA! Don't forget to review event details on the next page.

APRIL CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 5:50pm L'Arche Dinner	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 12:00pm Movie Night
21	22	23	24 5:50pm L'Arche Dinner	25 TBD Smithsonian Accessibility Event 5:50pm L'Arche Dinner	26	27 8:30am Best Buddies 5k TBD SMHS Formal
28	29	30	1	2	3	4

APRIL EVENT DETAILS

Thursday, 4/11 @ 5:50pm: L'Arche Dinner (3 people and 8 people options)

Social and community service chairs have curated an opportunity to connect with members of the community and one another through dinner nights at L'Arche homes in Adams Morgan. Volunteer to cook, bring, and share dinner with L'Arche members. Dinners are often followed by Uno, singing, and an occasional movie!

- **Locations:**
 - **Ontario Home Address:** 2474 Ontario Rd NW, Washington, DC 20009
 - **Euclid Home Address:** 2525 Ontario Rd, NW, Apt 103, Washington, DC 20009
- **Sign up:** [Here!](#)

Saturday, 4/20 @ 12pm: Movie Night

Community service is looking to continue building relationships with local communities while learning more about public space accommodations for individuals with disabilities that increase occupational participation and enjoyment. Join SOTA in watching a movie with L'Arche members!

- **Location:** AMC Hoffman Center 22 (206 Hoffman St, Alexandria, VA 22314)
- **Movie:** Shrek 2
- **Sign up:** [Here!](#)

Wednesday, 4/24 @ 5:50pm: L'Arche Dinner (8 people)

- **Location:** 2474 Ontario Rd NW, Washington, DC 20009
- **Sign up:** [Here!](#)

Thursday, 4/25 @ 5:50pm: L'Arche Dinner (3 people)

- **Location:** 2525 Ontario Rd, NW, Apt 103, Washington, DC 20009
- **Sign up:** [Here!](#)

Thursday, 4/25 (time TBD): Smithsonian Accessibility Event

D1 students will take a guided accessibility tour through the museum and learn about different ways the community can increase accessibility for all individuals. Reach out to our professional development chair (natalie.harper@gwmail.gwu.edu) for more details!

Saturday, 4/27 @ 8:30 am: Best Buddies Friendship Walk

Community service is looking to organize a group for this 5k walk/run!

- **More details:** [Here!](#)
- **Location:** National Mall
- **How to sign up:** register [here](#), then text Justine at (206) 849-2550 to be added to the groupchat.

Saturday, 4/27 @ TBD: SMHS Formal

For details reach out to our social chair: brianne.shust@gwu.edu