

GW SOTA Newsletter

The George Washington University's Student Occupational Therapy Association

December 2023 Issue

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THIS MONTH IN SOTA

Written by **Celia Accardi**

November has gone by in a flash! The two cohorts, class of 2025 (D1) and 2026 (D2), have done an incredible job balancing schoolwork while participating in various SOTA activities. The SOTA executive board has also been working diligently to provide clarity for our new organization. This has been done through various executive board meetings and creation of a GWU SOTA GroupMe (see how to add yourself on page 8)!

December will note the end of the fourth semester for D1 and the first semester for D2. With finals being the focus of this month, SOTA meetings will re-convene in January. Hopefully everyone finishes the semester on a positive note and finds time to rest and relax over break!

BEST BUDDIES HOMECOMING & GALA

Written by Jenny Kim

Best Buddies is a non-profit organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This international organization hosts a variety of different programs that help the community form meaningful relationships, secure jobs, live independently, improve communication skills, and feel valued by society.



On November 10th, Best Buddies VADC hosted their annual *Homecoming Party and Champion of the Year Gala* at the Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center. Several SOTA members volunteered to support the cause.

The annual Homecoming Party served as an unforgettable night of socializing, eating, and dancing for high school students of the VADC area!

Students were seen posing at photo-booths, playing games in the game room, drinking punch, socializing, and taking breaks in the quiet room. Volunteers helped to distribute and pin corsages and boutonnieres, serve food, and manage the dance floor.





Meanwhile, on the other side of the Ronald Reagan Building, another event was happening: *The Champion of the Year Gala*. This is an annual fundraising competition. The Gala features a select group of individuals, professionals, and community leaders who serve as philanthropic trailblazers. They compete annually to raise the most funds for Best Buddies. The winner earns the ultimate title of *Champion of the Year*.



The Gala featured a photo booth station, a chef's tasting menu, silent and live auctions, and a *Champion of the Year* ceremony. Many SOTA volunteers were seen registering guests, and assisting with the auctions. Thank you to our student volunteers for helping out an important cause!

Overall, the two parties were a huge success. Watch the [YouTube video recap](#) for more!

THE LATEST OT RESEARCH: A QUICK LOOK AT DIVERSITY IN OT

Written by Celia Accardi

The latest occupational therapy (OT) research can be found in published journals around the globe. The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)*, an *American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)* publication, publishes peer-reviewed research that aims to further the OT profession. The first issue of *AJOT* was published in January 1980. Since then, articles have covered material spanning across all OT settings. Reviewing evidence-based techniques increases OT practitioner's (OTPs)'s ability to provide efficient and effective care (AJOT, n.d.).



In the latest issue of *AJOT*, articles covered topics in pediatrics, hand therapy, and mental health. Additional focuses included diversity in leadership and other potential advancements to consider. "Leadership Development of Women of Color in Occupational Therapy: A Qualitative Intersectional Analysis," by Ushantha Nirmul, Pamela Talero Cabrejo, and Cristina Reyes Smith, was one of the articles *AJOT* published to further investigate professional advancement opportunities. The article explores the implications of racial inequity in OT leadership.

Familiarity with the term intersectional theory is beneficial to further investigate the findings of this analysis. Intersectional theory notes that people are layered individuals with multiple identities that influence one another. These identities are tied to the surrounding world and the impacts of historical norms (Nirmul et al., 2023). It is oftentimes helpful to address issues through an intersectional lens—a perspective that reviews the multifactorial aspects of one’s identity. Nirmul et. al’s review of how intersectionality affects diversity of leadership in OT shines a light on the importance of inclusion within the profession.

Categories of intersecting patterns of social identity include: identity structures, social constructs, and symbolic representations (Nirmul et al., 2023). Identity structures (e.g., race, ethnicity, or professional roles) shape how one engages and understands one’s surrounding world. Social constructs (e.g., mentorship or sponsorship) affect one’s perceived experiences. Symbolic representations (e.g., feeling different, or “other”) impact one’s ability to see oneself in differing social constructs (eg: leadership roles).

Expanding the current level of diversity in OT leadership will lead to future leadership diversity for the profession. Although OTPs cannot influence factors like early leadership opportunities, they can offer mentorship, authentic identity recognition, and enact impactful change once leadership positions have been obtained.

To read more on the findings of this study, click [HERE](#).

Resources:

Nirmul, U., Cabrejo, P. T., & Smith, C. R. (2023). Leadership development of women of color in occupational therapy: A qualitative intersectional analysis. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 77(6), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.050331>

About the american journal of occupational therapy (n.d.). AOTA: AJOT. <https://research.aota.org/ajot/pages/About>

REST & RELAXATION

Written by Katie Jewett

Are you ready for winter break? Are you worried about knowing how to rest and relax after finals? Here are my favorite ways to rest and relax:

1. **If the weather is nice, go on a walk.** This is a great way to get your blood pumping while simultaneously calming your mind.
2. **Regulate your mind through body temperature.** Think about your mental health at the moment. Your mind might be too overstimulated to actually rest and relax. One way to ease your mind or nervous system is to utilize your body’s temperature control. If you are feeling anxious, drink something cold or put an ice pack on your chest or neck. If you are feeling sad, drink something warm or take a hot bath or shower.
3. **Make time for down time.** For some this may be a nap, quiet time, reading a book, etc. My favorite down time activity during winter break is a long nap when the weather is cold and cloudy.
4. **Prioritize self care.** For some this may include going to the gym, for others it may look like a spa day. The key is that you are doing something for yourself that results in you feeling happier and calmer than before.

FALL BAKE SALE

Written by Katie Jewett
Edited by Celia Accardi

SOTA recently held its annual fall bake sale to support and raise money for the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's (AOTF) St. Catherine Challenge. This challenge is a national, student-led fundraiser to support OT research grants. Awards for this challenge are given to schools who solicit the most funds for AOTF. Special notice is given to the newly established OT program that raises more than others. Currently, SOTA's goal is to raise more funds each year than the year prior. This year SOTA beat last year's record by raising over \$425.

Students were encouraged to participate by baking goods for the bake sale or manning tables to sell them. Goodies that were sold included pumpkin chocolate chip cookies, snickerdoodles, rice krispies, coconut macaroons, nutella knots, peanut butter cup cookies, brownies, apple cake, and so much more. One student, Rachel Metts, commented on her experience at the bake sale saying, "I really loved the bake sale because it allowed me to get to know other peers better while spreading the word about our program and what OT is. We made sure to have a fun time!" Rachel also noted that events like these help her to connect with other SOTA members while feeling grateful that she can help raise money for an important cause.

SEASONAL TRADITIONS

Written by Jenny Kim

We hope everyone is having a great holiday season! During this time, many students and faculty members are celebrating their own meaningful and cultural traditions. Read below for this month's interviews!

What holidays or traditions do you celebrate during this time? Who do you celebrate with? When do you celebrate?

Dr. Kimberly Conrad

Dr. Conrad is the current D1 Group Dynamics Professor. During holiday season, she enjoys decorating her Christmas tree as early as November 1st! Christmas is Dr. Conrad's favorite holiday. She shared that decorating the tree with her husband early helps lift joyous spirits!

For Thanksgiving, Dr. Conrad visits her family for dinner every other year. At their dinner, they prepare dishes like turkey, chicken pastry, cheesy potato casserole, and yams. Her father's side of the family happens to be sweet potato farmers! Imagine how delicious the yams must be.

Another family tradition in Dr. Conrad's family is to watch *The Grinch* together every year.

When Christmas rolls around the corner, she celebrates at her mother's house. They eat dinner together and open presents. Her family also plays an exciting game of *Dirty Elephant*!



Pranathi Meda

Pranathi is a second-year student and serves as the Co-chair of SOTA's Professional Development Committee. Around the Fall, Pranathi celebrates the Hindu holiday, Diwali.

Diwali, or Deepavali, is a festival of lights. This holiday celebrates the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. During Diwali, many celebrate by enjoying delicious foods, playing fun games, meeting family and friends, going to temple, and practicing religious ceremonies.

This year, Pranathi celebrated Diwali at her home. She and her roommates, decorated their space with elaborate decorations and lights. The group wore beautiful traditional outfits like lehengas and kurthis. Traditional desserts and food were also prepared. Foods like rasgulla and gulab jamun were served. For holiday festivities, they all played boardgames and sparked up the evening with sparklers and fireworks!



OT CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Created by Katie Jewett

Across

1 - A class that first years take in order to better understand how the brain and nervous system works.

5 - Another name for CN III.

6 - The acronym used for warning signs of a stroke.

11 - A condition in which cerebrospinal fluid builds up in ventricular spaces.

12 - A model for occupational therapy that evaluates the person, the occupational environment, a press for mastery, and occupational participation.

13 - Means "little brain."

14 - Occurs when the eyes and head do not move together, is a normal response.

Down

2 - The type of information that travels through the posterior part of the spinal cord.

3 - The term for a bone marrow transplant (BMT) where a sibling or donor is matched.

4 - The opposite of spasticity, used to describe hypotonic arm position.

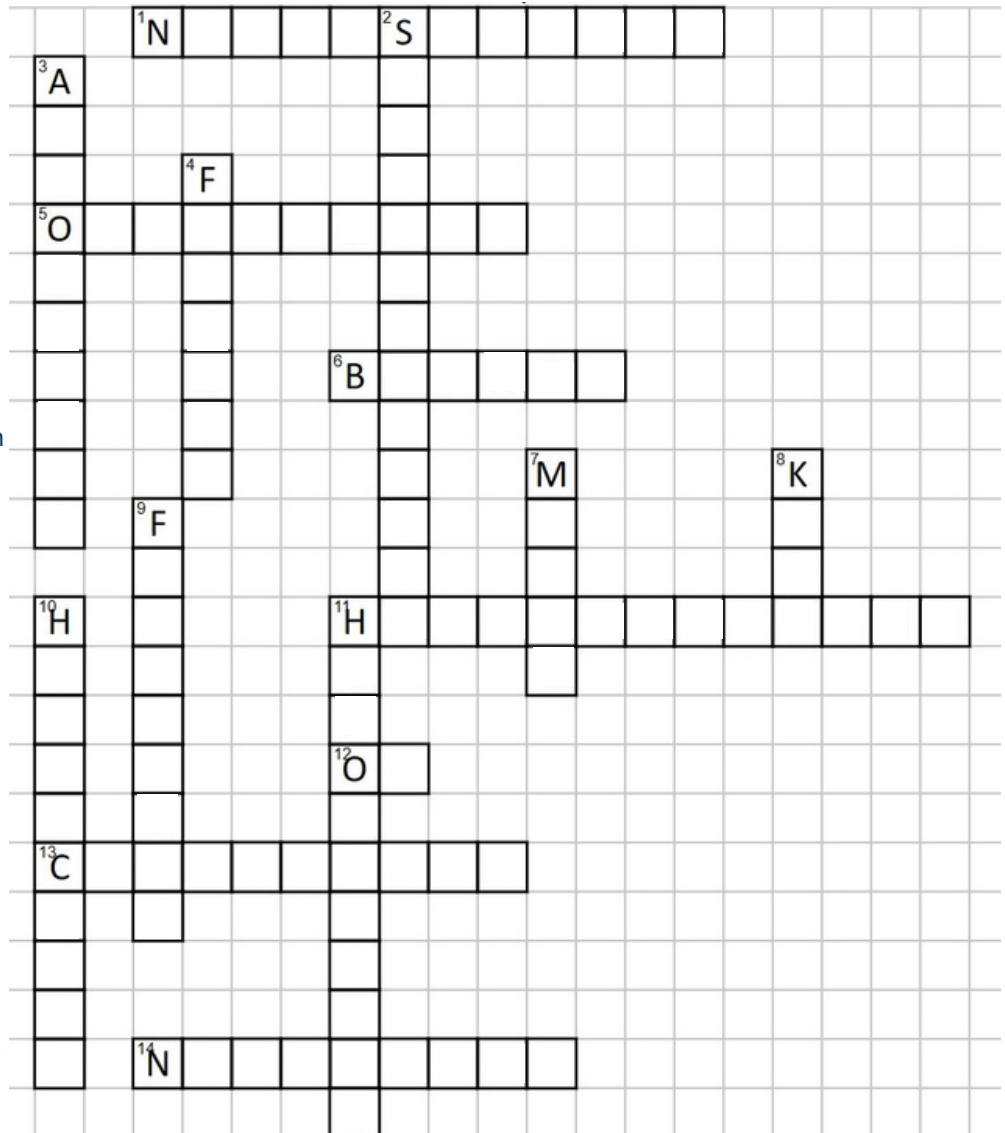
7 - The type of information that travels through the anterior part of the spinal cord.

8 - A model for occupational therapy that gives a non-Western perspective (*hint: involves terms such as "Sukima"*).

9 - OT students must do this in order to graduate, it involves going into multiple OT settings to advance learning.

10 - A map of the brain that represents sensory neurons for each body part.

11 - Another name for CN XII.



ASD/AOTA NEWS

ELEVATE YOUR IMPACT WITH EVERYDAY ADVOCACY

Written by Emma Tober
Edited by Celia Accardi

At the heart of advocacy lies the foundation of support. AOTA membership allows you to become part of a dynamic network that propels your professional journey forward while simultaneously contributing to a collective voice that amplifies the impacts of occupational therapy.

AOTA student membership costs \$78 annually; a small investment with significant returns. Dues should be viewed as more than a membership card. They are a vital investment in the future of our profession. Luckily, if membership is not a current option for you, AOTA can still be a great resource!

Explore how you can advocate on a daily basis with AOTA's [Everyday Advocacy Decision Guide](#) and [Seven Ways to be an Advocate](#). Engage in conversations about impactful change and discover how your actions can resonate within the OT community and beyond.

Join the movement—become an everyday advocate! Let your positive actions speak volumes for the profession of OT.

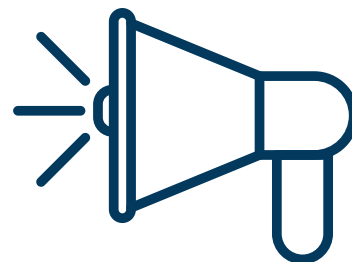
GREAT NEWS!

Thinking of attending AOTA's Spring 2024 national conference in Orlando, FL?



AOTA members enjoy the benefits of saving almost \$100 on conference costs!

To learn more about AOTA membership, you can contact our ASD representative, Emma Tober (etober@gwmail.gwu.edu), or view the AOTA website!



STAY CONNECTED!

ATTENTION SOTA MEMBERS! Make sure you are following SOTA on Instagram and are in the SOTA GroupMe.

SOTA Instagram: [@gwu.sota](https://www.instagram.com/gwu.sota)

GroupMe link:

https://groupme.com/join_group/97611375/HxBjnARh



DECEMBER CALENDAR

Created by Celia Accardi

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5 HOLIDAY CARDS DUE	6	7 9am-2pm: Special Olympics (Fall Festival Event)	8 9am-2pm: Special Olympics (Fall Festival Event)	9
10	11	12	13 12:30-1:30pm: Professional Development Event	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

DECEMBER EVENT DETAILS

Tues, 12/5: Holiday Cards due

- **Drop-off location:** Large lecture room
- *If you have additional questions about this event, please contact the community service board members:*
 - Marina Bien: bienmg@gwmail.gwu.edu
 - Justine Williams: justine.williams@gwu.edu

Thurs, 12/7 @ 9:00am-2:00pm: Special Olympics - Fall Festival Event (DAY 1)

- In need of additional volunteers (sign-up [here](#))

Fri, 12/8 @ 9:00am-2:00pm: Special Olympics - Fall Festival Event (DAY 2)

- In need of additional volunteers (sign-up [here](#))

Weds, 12/13 @ 12:30-1:30pm: Professional Development Event with Special Guest Speaker Vikram Pagpatan

- A special lecture reviewing the benefits and opportunities of student membership in local and national professional organizations, like DCOTA and AOTA.
- Content will be catered towards student interests.
 - **Location:** In-person @ 2600 Virginia Ave, NW
 - *Zoom link will be available for those who cannot travel to campus (link to be sent out at later date)*

KEEP IN MIND FOR JANUARY

- **The first SOTA meetings after break:**
 - **Thurs, 1/18 @ 12pm:** Executive Board Meeting (via Zoom)
 - *link to be sent out at a later date*
 - **Weds, 1/24 (time TBD):** All-member meeting (in-person)
- **ENJOY BREAK!**

