



Fall 2007 e-letter



Executive board members presenting outgoing President, Sandy Fletchall, with the Lifetime Member Award.

TOTA members Mary Swoboda and Johanna Lehfeldt enjoying the day.



Agrability Staff presenting at the annual conference.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Some of the objectives of my leadership were to increase membership, increase educational opportunities for practitioners, update our scope of practice within the licensure statutes, work to create separate Board of OT Examiners for licensure, increase the activity at the district level, and develop the infrastructure for a vibrant future for TOTA.

Our membership levels have tripled to over 350 members over the last four years. We currently have 226 OTs, 78 OTAs, and over 50 students in our organization. We are serving more members with continuing education opportunities and inviting more of our colleagues to join us in our organization than ever before.

The vastly improved infrastructure has enabled us to maintain our financial stability and track and serve our membership. We have the capability now to invite most of the over 2700 TN practitioners to join us if they are not already a member. A far cry from not even being sure who our member were! Our website is much improved over our earlier version, with an electronic newsletter, an active listserve and many improvements coming soon! Your board is set to continue making refinements in TOTA's infrastructure to improve our service to our members.

Our Educational offerings have increased on both the district and state levels. Our Ethics and Jurisprudence courses have been well received. Thanks in large part to the undying efforts of our Continuing Education Chair, Dr Jeanne Sowers, our PAMs courses have been steadily building response with our practitioners. All in all, over 1300 hours of Continuing Education have been provided to TN practitioners this year alone by TOTA at either no cost or a very reasonable rate. This allows out TN practitioners to apply these hours easily toward their licensure requirements.

Our efforts on Capital Hill in Nashville have vastly improved with the retention of John Williams as our lobbyist, for over three years now. John has assisted the Executive Board as we worked towards updating our licensure statute, which includes a model scope of practice. He worked with TOTA and TPTA to draft a bill, which later become law, to separate the OT and PT Licensure Boards. He has been instrumental in overseeing the legislative bills and legislative committee work that could impact the profession of Occupational Therapy. He regularly meets with your Board to keep us informed on needed actions and responses to legislation.

Your Board and I have worked tirelessly to reduce costs on every level. We have utilized electronic communication of newsletters and mailings, conference calls, electronic bookkeeping and budgeting, and many other cost containment measures. At the same time we have begun to build more income producing areas, such as sales of website offerings, advertising and mailing lists.

In addition, I have worked diligently to ensure that the future of TOTA has a sound foundation. For several years, TOTA has paid to bring in leadership development experts to ensure that the business of TOTA is run according to the highest ethical and legal standards. I know that the practitioners we train today, will be the leaders of our profession and our organization in the future. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you and the profession of Occupational Therapy.

Sandy Fletchall OTR/L,CHT,MPA,FAOTA



TOTA Scholarship awards

Each year, through funds received at silent auction at the our annual conference, TOTA awards scholarship money to student members engaged in an entry level OT and OTA program within the state of Tennessee. Scholarships are awarded based on academic performance, leadership skills and professional service.

This year we had 2 standouts, Karen Dobyys and Haley Helms. Both of these recipients exemplify the qualities of first rate OT students and future OT practitioners.



Karen Dobyys of University of Tennessee Health Science Center Memphis campus is a TOTA and AOTA member. She volunteers at 2 hospitals in rehabilitation service and a special care unit. She has had several OT related written pieces published. Karen is the author of one of the most active OT student web journals in the nation. She is also a class officer and maintains a 4.0 GPA.

Haley Helms of University of Tennessee Health Science Center Chattanooga campus is a TOTA member. She is working on a community initiative project aimed at incorporating OT into a psychiatric rehabilitation service promoting acceptance and reintegration. She is also involved in Project Playhouse, a fundraiser involving the construction of playhouses with universal design. Haley is a class officer and maintains a GPA of 3.78.





OT TEAMS UP WITH THE SMOKIES



The Roane State Community College OTA Classes of 2008/2009 has teamed up with the Tennessee Smokies Baseball team to kick off OT Awareness during the month of April. There will be a photograph display board of therapists performing interventions set up during the game as well as many other things to increase awareness and demonstrate what OT offers to the community. Students, families, friends and therapists from all over the area will be attending.

The game is scheduled for Saturday, April 12, 2008 at 7:15 EST. The Tennessee Smokies will host the Jacksonville Suns who are affiliated with the LA Dodgers. Tickets are \$6.00 for bleacher seats or \$8.00 for field level. One dollar from every ticket sold will go to a charitable organization and be presented in a pre-game ceremony.

We are very excited about this philanthropy project to help the community, promote OT, and hope to launch an annual RSCC OTA tradition! We want massive attendance!!! Any help that you could give our class would be greatly appreciated! If you or someone you know is interested in purchasing tickets please contact the persons below. This will be a great outing for your family, friends, therapy departments, church groups, clubs or other business colleagues.

For more information contact:

Janet Neely
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1-865-481-2011 * toll free 1-866-G02-RSCC ext. 2011

Q and A with Jeremy Keough, the new Secretary of TOTA

How long have you been a member of TOTA?

I joined TOTA after moving to Tennessee in Jan 2003. I was an active member of the Kentucky OT Association and thought it was important to continue to participate in the Tennessee OT Association.

How long have you been an OT and in what areas have you practiced?

I graduated from Eastern Kentucky University in 1999. I have practiced mostly in inpatient rehabilitation but have also practiced in acute care, outpatient therapy, and long term care.

Do you have any specialties or certifications?

I have attended the 3-week NDT course and my primary area of practice has been with neuro disorders. I also graduated from Belmont University in 2002 with an emphasis in higher education.

What led you to OT?

I can remember wanting to work in healthcare ever since high school. I enjoy helping others. Occupational Therapy enables me to help people become independent and feel that I have done the right thing by helping others.

Q and A with Craig Edwards, the new President of TOTA

What is your vision for TOTA?

I would like to see TOTA focus on 3 areas. First, I see TOTA as a premier source of reasonably-priced continuing education for TN practitioners. Who knows better what we need to know to continuously improve our service to Tennesseans, than Tennessee practitioners. In this, I see TOTA offering more courses at the District level so that practitioners can attain their continuing education credits locally throughout the year. Second, advocacy should play a large part in our mission. In working together with our state licensure board, our national organization (AOTA) and our own consumers, we can ensure that our profession flourishes and improves the lives of Tennessee's citizens and their families. One way we can do this is to implement the Centennial Vision passed by our AOTA Assembly. Third, we have a responsibility to help develop our own membership to its highest professional potential. Mentoring tomorrow's leaders, researchers and educators to strive for excellence is today's investment for tomorrow's growth. Along these lines, I would like to see a stronger relationship with the educational programs in our state and more opportunities for professional leadership development, with possibly access to a "Leadership Forum." If we focus on developing these three areas, our Association will continue to move forward.

How do you plan to get practitioners across the state more active and involved in TOTA?

I see our strength as an organization on several levels. In the past, we have all heard various TOTA Board members use the phrase, "We are only as strong as our members." Well, this is very true. I plan to have infrastructure completed that will ensure easy lines of communication to all TN practitioners. Without an active, broad-based, outspoken membership, we flounder in our mission. People usually don't join unless we communicate value to them and then engage them. The second area of strength is our districts. This is the major component in this triangle and the area where we need to focus on drawing our colleagues into active roles, the engagement part. Generally, people ask first, "What is in this for me?" This is quite appropriate. As TOTA has become more and more active during the last four years under your Board and Sandy Fletchall's very capable guidance, we have seen a resurgence of people wanting to be involved. Often, what separates those involved from those on the side-lines is simply, "Can you help me with this?" We are blessed with good strong leaders in each of our districts who can create opportunities for involvement and ask colleagues to join them. As our engagement levels rise and practitioners become more involved, we are looking at creating smaller districts so that practitioners do not have to travel great distances. Lastly, a strong Board with members who understand the team concept in achieving goals is vital. TOTA has been blessed with far-sighted Boards that work well together. I want to continue and mentor these areas further.

What do you see as your biggest challenge as president?

One of the biggest challenges I face as your President is to help our organization to broaden the scope of its self-identity without losing momentum with all the groundwork that has been laid in the last four years or more to make us more dynamic. It is easy to get wrapped up in the concept of being an "all-volunteer, state association", a kind of social club for OT's, and lose touch with the bigger picture. If we take the tunnel-vision approach, and treat our Association casually, we will limit our voice and service to others. But if we broaden our concept of who we are and what we are about; think and develop in a proactive, creative manner; use sound business principles to work together and look at one another as team colleagues, we can create a huge impact on our professional lives and our profession, and thus fulfill our mission to improve the function of our state's citizenry. I suppose, the real challenge before me is to help you, our members, excel in each of these areas. We need to hold our mission and vision firmly in our grasp while we continue to build a solid TOTA.

Q and A continued...

How long have you been a member of TOTA?

I joined TOTA shortly after my graduation from UT Memphis' OT program in 1995. I maintained my membership for several years but got no communication from TOTA except a request for dues! I honestly saw no value in maintaining my affiliation and dropped my membership. Then a colleague invited me to a district networking meeting in the Fall of 2003. Mary Swoboda's leadership impressed me. The Board's leadership impressed me. I rejoined and have since served 1 year as a District Chair and three years as Vice-President. It has been a wonderful experience and I constantly am in awe of the talent and creativity and vision in our membership. I can honestly say that Tennessee holds some of the finest OT practitioners!

How long have you been an OT and in what areas have you practiced?

I have been practicing since October 1995 as an OT, mostly at the VA in Memphis. I started in General Medicine and Surgery but went solely into Mental Health practice after a year. I had a great mentor, Nancy Thomas, who continues to inspire me today. Guiding people with psychiatric disabilities in their recovery process is my passion. I took off a couple of years to explore a monastic vocation with the Benedictines in 1998-2000.

Do you have any specialties or certifications?

I do not hold any specialties in OT, but am currently studying for a CPRP credential. I am certified as a Mentor through the University of the South Education for Ministry program and am also very involved in providing Theological education with them.

What led you to OT?

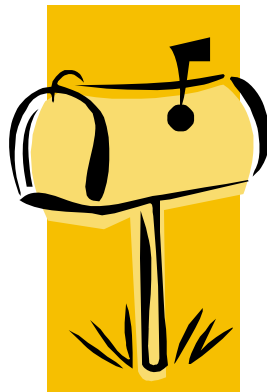
I worked in Customer Service with BellSouth for 13 years and as I approached 30, I knew I needed a change. As I began to explore various options, OT kept coming to the foreground. So I did some volunteer work and loved my experience. Wow! What a profession! I love to see people grow and change. I guess that is why I love TOTA so much, it is so dynamic!

I would just like to add one thought. I am so very humbled by the trust you have placed in me to lead this Association. I feel that I am serving an amazing group of professionals. I look forward to an exciting two years working together with you and with our Board.



A letter from the editor...

For those of you who read this newsletter know, your editor remains silent; however, on this one subject, I wanted to share a few thoughts. I'd like to thank Sandy Fletchall, whose tenure as president is coming to an end. She has put in a lot of hard work and long hours; has dedicated herself to the organization, the board, and its growth; has been reliable; and above all has had integrity. I first came on board the TOTA staff two years ago and since that time, Sandy has been honest and supportive in all of her dealings with me and everyone else that I've seen her work with. She's truly been an inspiration to me as an Occupational Therapist and a TOTA board member. So, Sandy, thank you.



If you have any questions about the TOTA newsletter or wish to make a submission (other than job or CEU postings), please contact Melissa Sitton at: msitton3@comcast.net.