

TNOTA - 2025 Annual Business Meeting Minutes

September 14, 2025 - Jackson, Tennessee

I. CALL TO ORDER

The 2025 Annual Business Meeting of the Tennessee Occupational Therapy Association (TNOTA) was called to order by President Stephanie Lancaster, EdD, OTR/L, ATP.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

President Lancaster presented TNOTA's mission to advance Occupational Therapy in Tennessee through education, advocacy, communication, and legislative involvement. The association continues to serve as the primary resource, authority, and public voice for the profession in Tennessee.

Current Board Officers:

- **President:** Stephanie Lancaster, EdD, OTR/L, ATP
 - **Vice President:** Valery Hanks, OTR/L, C/NDT, CPAM
 - **Secretary:** Brandy McCarter, COTA/L, CDCS, CFPS
 - **Treasurer:** Christine Watt, PhD, OTR/L
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III. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

President Lancaster reported a growth in membership for the period September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025:

Membership Statistics:

- **Total Members: 873** (increase of 34 members from prior year)
- **Total Audience: 3,203** (increase of 107 from prior year)
- **Five-Year Growth: Net gain of over 1,750 individuals** in the TNOTA community since 2020

The largest membership categories are OTs and students, with opportunities identified for growth in OTA-specific programming and engagement.

It was noted members receive substantial benefits including free continuing education (62 pre-recorded courses), conference discounts, required compliance training at no cost (Ethics &

Jurisprudence, Suicide Prevention), advocacy representation, and access to Communities of Practice. Annual dues are \$80 for OTs and \$60 for OTAs.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer Watt presented the financial status showing strong organizational health:

Financial Position:

- **Total Assets: \$211,313.96** (increase from \$187,256.08 prior year)
- **Net Income (August 2025): \$6,653.97**
- **Year-to-Date Income: \$19,388.33**

Primary Revenue Sources:

- Membership Dues: \$53,733.95
- Conference: \$22,059.05
- Continuing Education: \$15,712.82
- Advertisements & Sponsorships: \$756.00

The organization maintained fiscal responsibility with most expense categories coming in at or below budget.

V. STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMING

New Programming

Each District or Committee Chair or representative thereof shared their key accomplishments and work performed over the past year. Of note, TNOTA has partnered with a continuing education provider to offer 62 pre-recorded courses free to members, plus additional member-only and student-only content. This represents a significant expansion of member value and professional development opportunities.

Key Committee Accomplishments

The TNOTA Mental Health Committee expanded suicide prevention training significantly:

- Created OT-specific suicide prevention curriculum
- Provided 7 training courses on a bimonthly schedule
- Developed team of 4 volunteer trainers
- Supported legislative advocacy for OTPs' role in addressing firearms access for at-risk clients

The Mentorship Committee expanded to a 10-month program for students and practitioners across the state, advocated for CE credit recognition in the TN OT Practice Act, and conducted 2 CE events in 2025.

The Student Involvement Committee received ASAP's "Thinking Outside the Box" award at the AOTA Conference and provides one year of free TNOTA membership to elected student representatives from each program.

The Advocacy Committee participated in TNOTA Hill Day 2025 which was organized by the TNOTA President and has scheduled Hill Day 2026 for March 4, 2026. The committee continues to expand and develop advocacy resources for members.

VI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Presented by Legislative Chair: Cindy Blackwell, OTD, OTR/L

Special recognition was given to Dr. Susan McDonald for her years of service as Legislative Chair. Dr. McDonald was inducted posthumously as the first member of the TNOTA Hall of Fame.

Major Federal Legislative Impacts

Omnibus Budget Reconciliation and Balanced Budget Act (OBBBA) - Passed July 2025

Critical Impacts to OT Practice:

- **Medicaid:** Approximately 12 million individuals predicted to lose eligibility; decreased federal matching percentages will reduce access to OT services via Medicaid and ACA marketplace; potential hospital and SNF closures in high-Medicaid areas
- **Financial Aid:** Elimination of subsidized loans and Grad PLUS loans may discourage future OTPs from enrolling in graduate programs (Pell grants and PSLF unchanged)
- **Medicare Part B:** One-year increase of 2.5% included (positive development)

Ongoing Advocacy Priorities:

- **OT Licensure Compact:** AOTA and states working with compact commission for rollout to Tennessee
- **OT Mental Health Parity Act:** Expanding Medicare access to OT for mental health and substance abuse issues
- **Fighting OTA payment differential** (effective January 2022) and further reimbursement cuts
- **Medicare Part B and Home Health payment cuts:** Active advocacy to protect OT reimbursement

Department of Education: Future uncertain with increased state/local influence expected. OTPs must advocate for their role in supporting educational outcomes at local and state levels.

VII. DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

TNOTA District Chairs presented highlights. There are six TNOTA districts (West, Rural West, Middle, East, Northeast, Southeast) collectively:

- Provided over 15 continuing education events statewide
- Maintained full leadership teams across most districts
- Conducted strategic planning and member needs assessments
- Hosted student networking events and compliance training days
- Participated in community outreach and university partnerships

Districts continue to serve as the primary vehicle for local professional development, networking, and grassroots advocacy efforts.

VIII. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

President Lancaster shared that all OT and OTA programs in Tennessee have an opportunity to have an elected student board representative, representing strong engagement across the state's educational pipeline. The Student Video Contest Winner was UTHSC, and the Student Lounge was sponsored by Tennessee State University.

XII. COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Three active Communities of Practice continue to serve specialized professional interests:

- Hand Therapy CoP
 - Pediatrics CoP
 - Mental Health CoP
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IX. TENNESSEE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOUNDATION

Amanda Newbern, TNOTF representative, presented the recognitions and awards from the Tennessee Occupational Therapy Foundation (established 2019), awarding \$2,500 in student scholarships:

- **\$1,000:** Hannah Dougherty (ETSU OTD, Class of 2026)
- **\$1,000:** Brittany Ford (UTC OTD, Class of 2026)
- **\$500:** Clara McLemore (UTHSC MOT, Class of 2026)

An additional scholarship opportunity for students pursuing OT as a second career will be posted following the conference. The Excellent Educator Award was awarded by TNOTF to Stephanie Lancaster, Associate Professor at UTHSC.

X. PHILANTHROPY PARTNERSHIP

2025 Philanthropy Partner: Brightsong, Inc.

Fundraising activities included photo booth proceeds and a competition among SOTA groups and OT/OTA programs statewide. From Oct. 15-Nov. 15, TNOTA members can nominate other non-profits whose missions align with that of TNOTA as our 2026 Philanthropy Partner and vote from Nov. 20-Dec. 15, with the new partnership beginning on Jan. 1, 2026.

XI. UPCOMING ELECTION

Position: Secretary

Term: Two years (January 2026 - December 2027)

Timeline:

- Nominations: October 15 - November 15, 2025
 - Voting: November 20 - December 15, 2025
 - New term begins: January 1, 2026
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XIII. CALL TO ACTION & FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Visit about the new website – it was unveiled with a sneak peek provided to attendees.
 - It was also announced that a membership drive was being supported to run through World OT Day (10/27).
 - First-time attendees were recognized at this conference.
 - Members were encouraged to participate in the March 4, 2026 Hill Day.
 - Attendees were reminded to consider making a nomination for the Secretary position.
 - Members were encouraged to visit the Advocacy Booth at conference.
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XIV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandy McCarter, COTA/L, CDCS, CFPS
TNOTA Secretary