

SPECIAL CONFERENCE EDITION

nOTeworthy in NJ

A Note from your Membership Chair

NJOTA's Annual Conference and the months leading up to it are always exciting for me as the Membership Chair. This is typically when we see an increase in new members and renewals, and when our members are reminded of the many benefits that membership has. This year was no exception. Right now, membership remains steady with 570 members. Ninety-nine people joined or renewed in September alone with another 20 in October! Our total membership and the activity leading up to the conference are higher than 2016 demonstrating the ongoing growth and commitment of NJOTA and its members.

This year's 43rd annual conference yielded an impressive turnout. Over 200 people attended, with well over 100 presenters. Students, practitioners, and guests were able to network, visit posters and exhibitors, attend various courses, and enjoy the words of our keynote, the esteemed Ellen J. Kolodner, who shared a valuable perspective of the history and future of our profession.

I hope that attendance at this year's conference was not only viewed as a benefit by our current members, but also motivated others to renew or join NJOTA. As not only a board member of NJOTA, but a clinician and educator in New Jersey, I truly understand the importance of NJOTA's efforts. I hope that you will continue to support NJOTA, through membership, volunteering, and attending events such as the conference. We are already planning this year's Spring Membership Meetings and hope to see you there. Stay tuned for details! Thank you for making this year's conference a great success. It was great to see so many of you and I hope to work with all of you more in the future!

Megan Foti, DOT, MS, OTR
NJOTA Membership Chair

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Supporting Leaders in New Jersey OT Practice: NJOTA Awards Committee

By: *Diane Durham, OTR, Jennifer C. George, OTD, Karen Z. Kowalski, MPH, OTR, Angela Verdi, COTA*



The NJOTA Awards Committee announced six award winners from very diverse backgrounds with one factor in common, all are leaders either within their organization or in the community.

Dana Blumberg, OTR received the Award of Merit OT: Excellence in Clinical Mentorship for Children & Youth. Dana is the owner of Positive Steps Pediatric Occupational Therapy Center in Livingston wherein she fosters a continuous learning environment for her staff members and strong advocacy for families.

Jennifer C. George, OTD received the Award of Merit: Innovation in OT Practice Through the Use

of Therapeutic Animals Across the Lifespan. Jennifer and her registered therapy dogs, Sasha and Harley, implement the CHANCE vocational program, which she developed, provide education of children regarding therapy dogs and assists in stress reduction during exams for students at Princeton University.

Susan Guydish, OTR received the Award of Merit OT: Role Model for Future OT Practitioners in the Areas of Clinical Excellence within Adult/Older Adult Practice. An Advanced Clinical Instructor for Genesis Rehab Services, Susan has expertise in low vision and urinary incontinence as well as is an outstanding fieldwork educator.

Marvin Lawson, OTR received the Award of Merit OT: Geriatric Practice Innovation. In addition to obtaining the prestigious AOTA Board Certification in Gerontology, Marvin is credited with the development of programs at Fox Rehab in the area of driving and for interventions specific to individuals with Parkinson's Disease and Dementia.

Andrea Tyska, OTR, SIPT received a Certificate of Appreciation for Contribution to the Community Through OT Practice. An advocate for evidenced-based practice and scholarship, Andrea is an inspiration for students at Salus University, volunteers to support programming for visitors at the Franklin Institute and supervises fieldwork students within clinical practice at Bancroft School.

The volunteers contributing to the revision of the 2007 "NJOTA Guide for Providing Occupational Therapy Services in New Jersey Schools" received a Certificate of Appreciation for Promotion of School Based OT Practice in New Jersey. Members of this committee have worked as authors, editors, researchers and reviewers with an anticipated publication date of January 2018.

The NJOTA Awards Committee was developed to provide accolades and recognition to occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants and those who support the profession at the annual conference. The committee is grateful to the individuals who submitted nominations as well as to Occupational Therapy Consultants who provides the certificates that allow for lasting memories of this special award. There are many other individuals in New Jersey who are actively shaping the next one hundred years of occupational therapy practice – perhaps the next person to receive an award will be you!

NJOTA Conference Recap

By: Sabrina Walter, OTS; *Stockton University*

This year's NJOTA conference, themed "Shaping our Next 100 Years," was held on October 15 at the National Conference Center in East Windsor, located in central New Jersey. There were 240 attendees and 110 presenters. The presentations included 3 workshops which covered topics including the Size Matters handwriting program, evidence-based fall prevention interventions, and facilitating student success in level II fieldwork. This year's conference also hosted 22 short courses, which educated attendees on a wide range of topics including the therapeutic use of animals in occupational therapy, transition programs for elementary students, sensory processing disorder, strength training for the dementia population, and transitioning from the clinic to academic setting for practitioners. Many of the courses described evidence-based strategies and interventions to improve occupational performance and functional outcomes for various populations across the lifespan.

In addition to the workshops and short courses, 27 posters were presented at this year's conference. Attendees were able to view the posters and speak with presenters during three poster sessions scheduled throughout the day. This year's keynote speaker was Ellen Kolodner, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA, whose presentation emphasized the importance of being a role model in occupational therapy, and creating a legacy for others to follow. Ms. Kolodner was recently named one of the profession's 100 Influential People, and is chair of the AOTF Leaders and Legacies Society.

Overall, the 2017 NJOTA conference provided valuable insight from both seasoned therapists and aspiring students, ample education regarding evidence-based practice in many areas of interest, and plentiful opportunities to network with other practitioners and students.

NJOTA Student Award SpOTlight

By: Danielle McCabe, OTS; *Stockton University*

NJOTA proudly awards three student scholarships each year to students currently enrolled in either an occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant program. Scholarships of \$500 each are awarded to two current occupational therapy students and one current occupational therapy assistant student. This year's NJOTA Scholarship recipients are as follows:

Carla-Maria Stamboni, OTS; *Stockton University*

Carla-Marie Stamboni is a second-year student in the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program at Stockton University. Carla is also currently the NJOTA student representative at Stockton. Last year, she had the privilege of being the Stockton student representative of the Assembly of Student Delegates at AOTA conference. Prior to being a student of occupational therapy, Carla earned a M.A. in Drama Therapy from NYU and spent the last 7 years as a licensed creative arts psychotherapist. She has dedicated her life to the service of others, working with children, adults, and geriatric patients in psychiatric hospitals, substance abuse rehabilitation, and nursing homes. After 7 years as a psychotherapist, Carla left her fulltime career to pursue a bigger dream of becoming an occupational therapist.

Carla is honored and grateful to be a recipient of the 2017 NJOTA Occupational Therapy student scholarship. This generous scholarship will help pay for books to advance her studies and build her OT library for future reference as a practitioner. Carla looks forward to a rewarding and fulfilling career as an occupational therapist and she greatly appreciates NJOTA for supporting her goals!

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Student Award SpOTlight (continued)



Ciara Catling, OTS; Stockton University

Ciara Catling is currently in her first year of Stockton University's Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT) program. After graduating in three years with a Bachelors in Psychology from Rowan University, Ciara spent the next year working multiple jobs to gain experience with different age groups. She worked as a residential counselor at a psychiatric group home for adolescents, was an activities assistant at a nursing home, and was a nanny for a family with three children. She plans to take the experiences and lessons learned from these jobs and integrate it into her future role as an OT. Ciara is a proud recipient of the NJOTA scholarship, and it means a great deal to her as it will go far in helping her offset the cost of being a commuting student. Ciara is very thankful to NJOTA for this honor as she loves the field of occupational therapy and is very proud to be a part of it!

Krysta Grande, OTAS; Thomas Jefferson University

Krysta Grande is currently attending Thomas Jefferson University's Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. She is about to finish up her first year and will graduate in January 2019. Krysta is keeping an open mind for specialization, but would love to work in pediatrics one day. The NJOTA scholarship has relieved some of the financial burden that comes along with school and has allowed her to put all of her focus and passion in developing the skills to be an excellent occupational therapy practitioner. She is very thankful for this scholarship provided by NJOTA!



2017 President's Award: Katie Saccente, OTS; Kean University



Katie Saccente is a student at Kean University who is currently finishing up her final Level II Fieldwork. Katie is excited to further her involvement in advocated for OT! She would like to thank NJOTA for the support and learning opportunities they have afforded her!

NJOTA President, Felicia Chew, shared a few thoughts: Katie Saccente was awarded the 2017 President's Award for her commitment to NJOTA for the previous year. Katie joined the NJOTA Board as the Kean University Student Representative. While the student representative is a valuable position on the board in terms of keeping touch with a very important sector of membership, the activities on the board

have been loosely defined. Katie has spent the past year contributing valuable perspective to the board and accomplishing many great things. Katie developed a tip sheet for prospective OT students needing volunteer or shadow hours. This resource helps prospective students focus their efforts and contact sites for necessary observation hours. Katie also took a lead role in developing a new template for board member job descriptions. This was a long overdue task and Katie jumped right in. Katie offers thoughtful insight into the needs of the OT and OTA students in NJ and also as a soon to be entry level practitioner. While Katie may be ineligible to continue as a student rep for NJOTA, we certainly hope she will consider running for a board position and continue to share her ambition and dedication!

A Stockton Student's Perspective: NJOTA Conference 2017

By: Danielle McCabe, OTS; *Stockton University*

In October I attended the 43rd annual NJOTA conference held in East Windsor, NJ. As a first year MSOT student at Stockton University, this conference was very special to me because it was the first professional conference I had the opportunity to attend. Throughout the day I found inspiration in all of the occupational therapy practitioners and students around me, confidence in myself and my emerging abilities, and reassurance that I would indeed make it through OT school and one day become an occupational therapist. Attending this conference also made me realize that I am a part of something bigger than myself and it made me very excited for my future in this amazing profession.

As I moved throughout the conference from presentations to workshops to vendors, I found inspiration and knowledge at every turn. As a student volunteer, I had the opportunity to spend a large amount of time with a variety of vendors which gave me a chance to learn about many of the opportunities and resources available to both occupational therapy practitioners and students. I also had numerous opportunities throughout the day to network with other occupational therapy practitioners and acquire information about possible future employment prospects.

For me, one of the most inspirational parts of the day was witnessing many of Stockton's second year MSOT students present and professionally interact fluently with experienced occupational therapy practitioners. It was both staggering and encouraging to know that these second year MSOT students were in my shoes just one year ago because it was, and still is, very difficult to envision myself standing where they were while confidently presenting.

I was curious to know what it was like for a student to present at the NJOTA conference, so I spoke to Stockton University's Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) president and second year MSOT student, Jemila Worley. Jemila shared her personal experience presenting at this past NJOTA conference with me which provided great insight and perspective. Jemila stated that she and a few of her classmates had the wonderful opportunity to conduct a course titled, "Evidence-Based Practice in Pediatrics from CIMT to Yoga" at this past conference. During the presentation, Jemila and her group focused on explaining the effectiveness of constraint-induced movement therapy (CIMT) to improve functionality in children diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Jemila expressed that presenting at the NJOTA conference provided a professional platform to inform experienced occupational therapy practitioners, and students alike, about an effective intervention they may have been unaware of previously. Jemila described her experience presenting at the NJOTA conference to be both rewarding and empowering.

Overall, I feel as though this conference truly changed my perspective and allowed me to grow both professionally and personally. It was an honor to have the opportunity to volunteer and experience all that the NJOTA conference had to offer. I look forward to attending and participating in many more NJOTA conferences and initiatives during the remainder of my time as an OTS and throughout my future career as an occupational therapist!



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