

Fall 2024 Newsletter



SAVE THE DATE

LEGISLATIVE DAY 2025

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

NEW MEXICO STATE CAPITAL

Please join NMOTA, community practitioners, and students to promote the value of Occupational Therapy in New Mexico. Learn how you can make a difference for the profession by advocating to your legislators.

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The Reacher was edited by Shayna Kymes, Communications and Social Media Chair for NMOTA
 Contact us - email: communications@nmota.org
 or complete the form <https://www.nmota.org/contact>



Executive Corner

The executive board of NMOTA would like to share with you some updates and successes that our beloved organization has had over the past year. For the first time, NMOTA has held our annual conference as a one-day event with the hopes of being more focused, accessible, and economical for our members while still providing the opportunity for earning PDUs. Feedback garnered from a post-conference survey shows that this was well received and we plan to move forward with the one-day conference style in the future. Secondly, we have pivoted to a new member management system called StarChapter that we hope will add value to our organization. ... Lastly, we would like to extend a warm invitation for any members to join our upcoming meetings. You are always welcome and we value hearing from our members. Please email our Secretary (secretary@nmota.org) to receive the invitation link to the meetings held over Zoom on the 3rd Thursday of every other month.

By: Mark Hardison PhD, OTR/L and Melodye Thomas

Upcoming NMOTA Board Meetings

Thursday March 20, 2025 @6pm - 7:30 pm
Thursday May 22, 2025 @6pm - 7:30 pm
Thursday July 24, 2025 @6pm - 7:30 pm

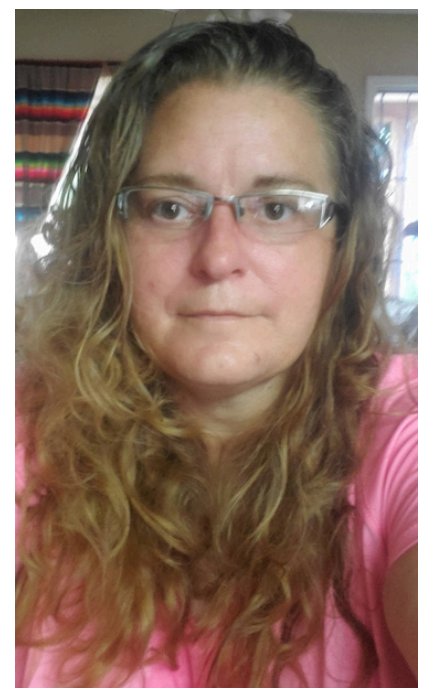


Welcome to the President!

Gaylene Tool, MOT, OTR/L CBIS

Gaylene started a DD Waiver Private Practice first as a COTA, then maintained it after she attained her OT/R degree. Gaylene is an active educator of occupational therapy students as a Fieldwork Educator, a Problem-Based Learning facilitator and a guest lecturer in business subjects and CarFit, a collaboration between AOTA and AARP that helps improve the safety of drivers of any age.

Gaylene has obtained her CBIS – Certified Brain Injury Specialist and is an advocate for patients and families with brain injury to engage in community resources. Gaylene maintains a practice in neuro-rehabilitation at an inpatient rehabilitation facility in Albuquerque, NM.



Interview with the NMOTA President 2025-2027

1 - What is your professional background (practice setting/credentials)

I have been an occupational therapy practitioner in New Mexico for almost 14 years now. I started out as a COTA working in the Developmental Delay Waiver before going back to college for my Master's in OT at the University of New Mexico. I continued with the DDW as an OT for a while after graduating while also working PRN at a SNF for 2 years. I worked briefly with children in treatment foster care programs as a PRN OT. I transitioned to full-time at Lovelace Rehabilitation Hospital 4 years ago. I got my certification as a brain injury specialist there and have loved working with people who have brain injuries and their families. I have worked as a temporary part-time adjunct faculty at the University of New Mexico's OT program as a problem based learning facilitator, field work educator and guest lecturer. I volunteer with the Brain Injury Alliance of New Mexico.

2 - What made you willing to participate in NMOTA leadership?

Honestly I was thinking about getting more involved when Carmen McClelland asked if I would be willing to take on the role of President. I know it is an important role for my first time volunteering with NMOTA, but I am up for the challenge even though I have a healthy dose of being scared at the same time. I am excited to step into this role to support this profession and my New Mexico OTP's. I initially started school as a COTA here in New Mexico with the plan to move back to Colorado; however, as I started making contacts through my fieldwork sites, attending NMOTA conferences and college, I could not see myself moving out of New Mexico. I have felt supported and heard as a member of NMOTA and believe it is time to give back.

3 - What do you love about being an OT/OTA in NM?

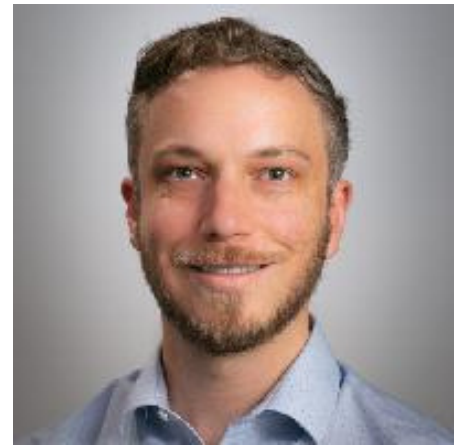
There are so many things I love about practicing OT in New Mexico. First I love the people and 2nd the weather. The landscape here is as diverse as its people. I enjoyed the 8 years I traveled the state working in the DDW setting, just as I have enjoyed working with people from all over our state at Lovelace Rehab. I have met so many amazing professionals. I think there is so much opportunity for growth and advancement of the OT profession, especially with the need for services in our state. I think we are only limited by our imaginations.

4 - Anything else you think NMOTA members would want to know?

I am originally from Colorado. I moved here to start OTA school back in 2009. I love being outdoors, gardening, walking my dog, Dutton, and continuing to learn more about OT daily. I am looking forward to being your NMOTA president. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at president@NMOTA.org

Interview with the Secretary

Mark E. Hardison, PhD, OTR/L,
NMOTA Secretary 2024 - 2026



1 - What is your professional background (practice setting/credentials)

Hello and thank you for welcoming me into your community! I am an occupational therapist and assistant professor of occupational therapy living in New Mexico for the past 6 years. I was trained in occupational science at the University of Southern California where I received my PhD. Before that I received my Master's of Occupational Therapy at the Boston School of OT at Tufts. I am an active OT researcher in the area of mental health and wellness-based practices as a component of OT interventions. So, my primary area of practice is research, but I stay connected to OT practice through my research.

2 - What made you willing to participate in NMOTA leadership?

I have been in New Mexico for more than half a decade and it has truly become home for me. That being said, I still feel like I am quite new and just recently emerging into my role as a future leader. I participated in various NMOTA events while teaching at UNM's OT program and have been looking for a way to give back and stay engaged with the OT community in the state. NMOTA does important work and I'm honored to be a part of it.

3 - What do you love about being an OT/OTA in NM?

We always say that occupational therapy is a small world, and I think that holds especially true within our state. I love seeing our members and leaders in different roles across time. It is a small but strong community that values mutual support and is truly grass-roots.

4 - Anything else you think NMOTA members would want to know?

Don't hesitate to reach out to me if you want to connect and/or attend any of our Board Meetings! (secretary@nmota.org)

Nominating Results

Announcing the Results of the 2024 NMOTA Election

On behalf of the Board of the New Mexico Occupational Therapy Association, I would like to thank members who participated in this year's election that ended October 20, 2024. Consistent with our bylaws, current NMOTA members were solicited to vote via e-mail and voting was conducted electronically. Open positions for this election were President and Treasurer. 42 NMOTA members cast votes in favor of **Gaylene Tool for President** and in favor of **Melissa Tencza for Treasurer**, no abstentions.

Please join me in congratulating Gaylene and Melissa. They will hold their positions from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026.

Sincerely,

Sarah Sutherlin, OTR/L
NMOTA Nominating Chair



Pictured: Treasurer -
Melissa Tencza

Treasury Report

Our plan to decrease expenses by exploring a new conference venue and catering companies, simplify bookkeeping fees/expenses, and trial a new operating platform/webhost system was successful. Prices for operating expenses have increased across the board, but we are working to keep up with these expected increases each year.

Net Gain this year: +\$11,410 (vs Net Loss last year: -\$22,736)

We are able to add in more membership appreciation events over the last year, and we plan to continue to offer this once/quarter (please reach out if you're interested in helping host).

We are also able to re-instate AOTF Student Scholarship donation (\$1,000) after a successful silent auction at conference. We were unable to donate to this fund last year and are very happy to add it back to our budget this year. This scholarship is available for all NM OT and OTA students to apply through the AOTF website.

By: Melissa Tencza MOT, OTR/L





Pictured: UNM OT Students, ENMU - Roswell OTA Students, and OT/OTA practitioners at the NM State Capitol

Legislative Matters

The Legislative Committee has done a significant amount of work advocating for New Mexico Occupational Therapy practitioners this year. Over the past year, the committee has met with leadership from AOTA, our lobbyist, Linda Siegle, and state representatives to discuss legislation and other issues impacting Occupational Therapy practitioners in the state. The following are bills and other issues important to NM Occupational Therapy practitioners.

NM Occupational Therapy Scope of Practice Act:

- The sunset date for our practice act is 2027, therefore the Legislative Committee will work on the Practice Act in 2026.

HB 81: Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact: Sponsor - Rep. Liz Thompson

- The purpose of the compact is to facilitate interstate practice of occupational therapy with the goal of improving public access to occupational therapy services.
- Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants who are licensed in good standing in a Compact member state may practice in other Compact member states via a “compact privilege.”
- The practice of Occupational Therapy occurs in the state where the patient or client is located at the time of the patient or client encounter.
- The compact preserves the regulatory authority of states to protect public health and safety through the current system of state licensure.

HB 52: Rural Health Care Tax Credit Eligibility: Sponsor - Rep. Miguel P. Garcia

- \$3,000 tax credit to Occupational Therapists who have provided health care during a taxable year for at least 1,584 hours at a practice site located in an approved rural health care underserved area.

Legislative Matters Cont.

HB 118: Professional Recruitment and Retention Act: Sponsor - Rep. Kathleen Cates

- Grants a loan to a qualified professional (including Occupational Therapists) for the down payment or closing costs associated with the purchase of a home in New Mexico in exchange for practicing in the state for ten years, (at least 30 hrs per week).
- Income cap for applicants (150% of area median income).
- Loan will not exceed 10% of the purchase price of the home.
- The loan is a lien on the property for ten years. Lien is removed if the professional pays off the loan or fulfills a 10 year service obligation.
- If professional violates loan terms (moves out of state, lapses licence, doesn't work >30 hrs per week, etc) they must pay back the loan with interest (5.5%) as described:
 - 0-5 years - 100%
 - 5-7 years- 50%
 - 7-10 years- 25%

Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) OTP Rate Changes:

NMOTA has been working with several community occupational therapy practitioners to address the DDSD contracted Rate Study Recommendation Report that, for the first time, recommended vastly different reimbursement rates for OT vs. PT and SLP providers contracted through the Developmental Disabilities Waiver system. An Advocacy/Position Statement addressing this issue will be sent to membership soon, along with action steps.

Occupational Therapy Legislative Day will be held in-person at the State Capital in Santa Fe, New Mexico on February 10th, 2025. During this next legislative session, we are focused on educating and advocating to our state legislators and the public about the distinct value of occupational therapy. There are several important bills that we will be supporting, as well as advocating for issues impacting occupational therapists across the state.

Last year, community practitioners and students from the University of New Mexico and Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell participated in advocating for Occupational Therapy at the Roundhouse. Thank you to everyone who participated and look forward to seeing you all again in February 2025.

By: Jessica Salazar OTR/L

Practice Areas - How to get involved

Hello Fellow NMOTA Members,

Many of you have expressed interest in creating an online space to connect, share ideas, and offer support. We're excited to invite you to our first online forum, where we'll have the chance to network and discuss how we can shape the future of our community.

Join us as we work together to build a supportive and strong group.

Date: Tuesday, February 4th

Time: 6:30 PM

Zoom link

[https://lcpzoom.us/j/9452928431?](https://lcpzoom.us/j/9452928431?pwd=VkFjMitrRjl0cFRGTIVxNUo3dFRodz09&omn=85481592792)

[pwd=VkFjMitrRjl0cFRGTIVxNUo3dFRodz09&omn=85481592792](https://lcpzoom.us/j/9452928431?pwd=VkFjMitrRjl0cFRGTIVxNUo3dFRodz09&omn=85481592792)

Meeting ID: 945 292 8431

Passcode: 9x8gmL



By: Kecia Sanders OTR/L

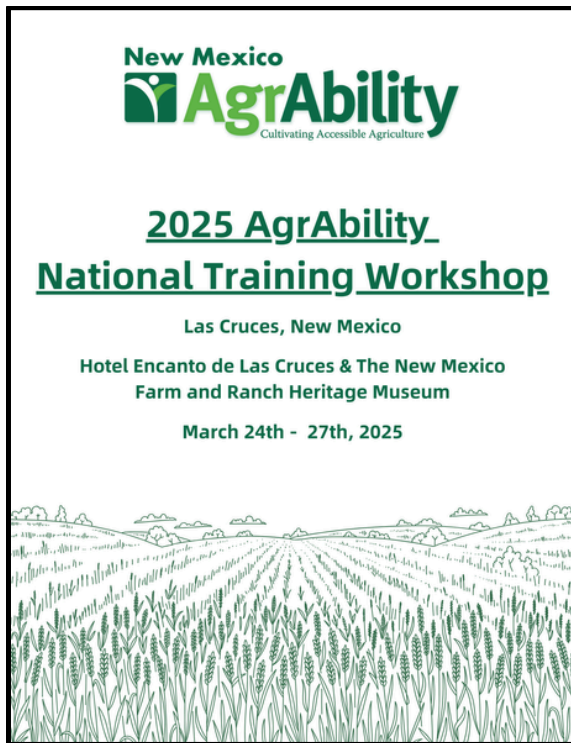
Conference Success

The NMOTA Annual Conference was a great success. The NMOTA Board would like to thank the organizing committee for recruiting a prestigious national speaker, Alyson Stover, President of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Additionally, 12 presentations were well distributed among pediatric, adult, and community subjects. The silent auction returned in 2024 and raised \$1000 for the Julia D. Sweeney Endowed Scholarship. The Ellen Reevis soiree was a hit! A room full of OT practitioners earned CEUs from more than 6 student posters while catching up with each other. 120 occupational therapy practitioners and students attended the 1-day conference. Up to 7 CEUs were available in one amazing day. The feedback from the 2024 attendees will be used to make the 2025 conference even stronger.

Organizing a statewide conference has a lot of details. If you see Allondra Jiminez, Carmen McClelland, Melodye Thomas and Melissa Tencza in the community - please thank them for their efforts.

By: Mary Thelander & Carmen McClelland





Occupational Therapy Practitioners

We want to inform you of an interesting learning opportunity. The National Training Workshop (NTW) for the federally funded AgrAbility program will be held in March 2024 in beautiful Las Cruces NM. Please see the schedule on the [AgrAbility NTW website](#).



ATTENTION MENTAL HEALTH OTPS!!

By: Melodye Thomas

Do you know about the Mental Health Occupational Therapy Interstate Coalition (MHOTIC)?

- This is a group of OTPs across the nation that discuss and promote OT in mental health. Current topics involve:
- Including Mental Health OT in alterations to state practice acts
- Successful/unsuccessful attempts at state legislation
- Billing approaches to mental health OT
- Forming relationships/collaborative efforts with other MH professionals
- Successful state/regional efforts to spread MH OT amongst existing practitioners
- Conversation about opening a mental health private practice as an OTP

Contact NMOTA VP, Melodye Thomas, with input or questions needing answers regarding Mental Health OT in New Mexico. vicepresident@nmota.org

Accessible Play in New Mexico!

By: Mary Thelander, MOT OTR/L ATP

A Park Above - Rio Rancho, NM



Pictured: A park above

Universal design throughout this neighborhood park allows people with sensory or motor differences to play, walk pets, and access picnic and bathroom facilities.

Highlights include wheelchair swings, outdoor musical instruments, and a labyrinth walking path.

La Ladera Playground - Albuquerque, NM



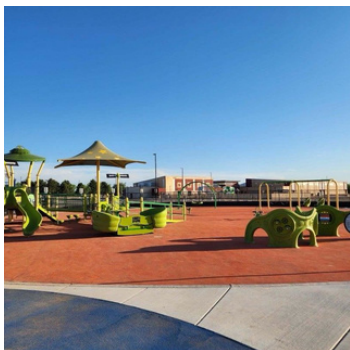
Pictured: La Ladera Playground

This sensory-friendly inclusive park includes bongos, chimes, mazes, and kaleidoscope prisms.

The Omnipspinner and Oodle Swing accommodate children who experience difficulties with movement.

Shade structures, accessible paths, and safety surfaces make this park fun for people of all abilities.

Horizons Playground (All-Inclusive) - Roswell, NM



Pictured: Horizons Playground

Horizons playground is inclusive for people with motor or sensory needs. It includes safety surfacing, accessible swings and gliders, a cozy dome, and more.

In Construction: Boundless Journey Adventure Park - Farmington, NM

Planned to have accessible paths, sensory play areas, outdoor musical instruments, adaptive swings, accessible bathrooms and more!



Thank you to Ryn Armstrong, MS, OTR/L who offered an insightful round-table at the 2024 NMOTA Annual Conference entitled "Neurodiversity Inclusion in Public Recreation Settings." Thank you, also for all participants of the round-table conversation who shared about community resources.



Community Corner: Carolyn's Causes wants to grant funds to OT projects.

To honour the memory of Carolyn Rustvold, a gifted paediatric OT in our community whose life was taken, NMOTA is hosting information about the Carolyn's Causes Mini-Grant.

Carolyn Rustvold was a giving, passionate person who believed she could make a difference in the world. She was an occupational therapist by career choice and worked through the Albuquerque Public Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico with children with developmental disabilities. Carolyn really enjoyed the children and her gift with them was obvious to all who watched their interaction. She honestly believed that she could make a difference.

Carolyn's friends and family created a fund in Carolyn's honour called Carolyn's Causes. To honour Carolyn's memory, Carolyn's Causes funds mini-grants to help pay for specialty training, equipment, supplies or other items that may help people in New Mexico function in their daily activities, the things they want to do, need to do or have to do in the job of life.

For More Information:

www.nmota.org/Carolyn_s_Causes_Mini-Grant

Contact Carolyn's Causes

Mail To:

Carolyn's Causes, c/o Kay Thurman 10528 Ridge Top Ct. NW; Albuquerque, NM 87114

Who can apply:

Occupational Therapists, Occupational Therapy Assistants, educators, parents, families, students,, people who have difficulty completing their activities in some way or other therapists. Carolyn's Causes decides on grants based on the need, the amount and the qualifications of the person asking for the grant. There is no deadline.

How to apply:

Send a letter to Carolyn's causes describing the need for the mini-grant. Please offer specifics about how the funds will be used. (Mailing address listed below)

Include a budget that describes how the funds will be used. Please include costs and any pictures (with no client details/information) that can help the mini-grant reviewers make their decision. Include your contact information and the best mailing address for a check to be sent in the event that the mini-grant is approved.

If your grant is funded, please write a thank-you letter and include any pictures (with no client details/information) of the training/materials/products so that Carolyn's Causes can see the results of the mini-grant.

Please note:

NMOTA hosts this information to honour Carolyn's memory and as a service to the community. NMOTA does not respond to requests for the mini-grant or have any influence on the mini-grant decision.