



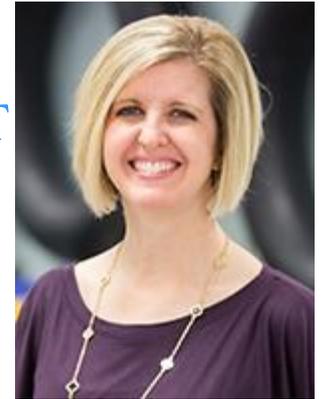
**Winter 2020**

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## A MESSAGE FROM

## THE NEW MSOTA PRESIDENT



Seasons greetings!! Looking back over this past year, I am reminded of just how crazy 2020 has been. Both in our professional and personal lives, we have had many new experiences and learned new ways to accomplish familiar tasks. However, as occupational therapy practitioners, we are experts in adapting to our circumstances and moving ahead with confidence.

In continuing with the new experiences this year, I am honored to serve as your new MSOTA President. I would like to sincerely thank Kelly Crawford and the previous board for serving our state so well through their outstanding leadership and advocacy efforts for our profession. I hope to continue this legacy throughout my term as President. I would also like to thank YOU - our members! We are here to serve you, and we value your involvement and support for this organization. Please invite your friends and colleagues to join us if they are not yet members. MSOTA has a LOT to offer!

As December comes to a close, it is often a time of reflection of the past and excitement for the future. I am excited for what 2021 will bring, and I am looking forward to serving as your next MSOTA President!

Sincerely,

Megan Ladner, DHA, MS, OTR/L

**MSOTA SPRING CONFERENCE**

**APRIL 10, 2021**

  
**IMPORTANT**  
*Spring  
conference  
date has  
moved to  
April 10,  
2021—watch  
for more  
details from  
MSOTA  
early spring!*

  
**IMPORTANT**



## ANNUAL CONFERENCE UPDATE

In a "normal" year, we would start getting details set and registration forms ready for our annual conference. This, however, is not a "normal" year. The year 2020 has brought about new words such as "social distancing" and changed how we view large gatherings. With that in mind, we had to plan our next annual conference for 2021 with many new considerations.



We have heard the demand for it and feel that with necessary adjustments, an in person conference can be achieved. The Muse Center, our home for the annual conference for the past few years, has ample space to accommodate up to 135 of us with regard to social distancing regulations. If restrictions are lightened by the time of conference, we will extend registration to others. With spacing requirements, we will also implement social distancing changes into the actual conference regarding meals/snacks, breaks, etc. This will be relayed to attendees closer to the time of the conference.

Most importantly, we have chosen to change the date of the conference from February 13th to April 10th, 2021 due to current safety regulations in place with the COVID pandemic and for the safety of our members. Planning is ongoing regarding speakers and topics for the conference. We will again have a pediatric and student track option as well. We will all come together for a portion of the day for our annual business meeting and advisory council Q&A session.

We hope to make conference just as successful and engaging as 2020 was! Please let us know if you would like to volunteer or have any vendor opportunities to explore by contacting Erica Reeves at [ericadreeves@gmail.com](mailto:ericadreeves@gmail.com).

Erica Reeves. OTR/L , CHT

## MSOTA HOLDS OFFICER ELECTIONS

### ONLINE VOTING THROUGH DECEMBER 15th 2020

Recently, MSOTA accepted nominations for **Vice President and Secretary Treasurer Elect**. These elected board members will begin their service on the Board in January of 2021. The deadline to VOTE is December 15th.



MSOTA

VICE PRESIDENT

Check your email! Currently, the Board has vacancies for a Delta District Chair, Coastal District Chair, and Continuing Education Chair. These are not elected positions but are appointed by the current



MSOTA President. You must reside in the respective District to serve as that Chair. If

MSOTA

SECRETARY-TREASURER

you are interested in serving in any of these positions; send an email of your interest to [mississippiota@gmail.com](mailto:mississippiota@gmail.com).

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## MSOTA 2021 LEGISLATIVE DAY CANCELLED

A representative from the Mississippi State Capitol recently notified us that all events at the Mississippi State Capitol for the 2021 calendar year have been suspended which required MSOTA Legislative Day 2021 to be cancelled. We were saddened by this announcement as this is such a great opportunity for us to “hobnob” with our legislators, but we agree that the safety of our community is of greater importance. If the event is rescheduled or other plans are determined, I will send an email blast to the membership. As always, if any federal or state issues arise that may affect our profession, I will keep you updated!





IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

MSOTA'S ANNUAL

CONFERENCE

HAS BEEN

RESCHEDULED!!

THE NEW DATE IS

**APRIL 10, 2021**

**SAVE THE DATE!!**

**ATTENTION ALL TECH SAVVY MEMBERS!** We would love your help with our social media accounts. If you are interested in this please email Erica Reeves at [ericadreeves@gmail.com](mailto:ericadreeves@gmail.com)

**SEEKING VOLUNTEERS FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE!** If you are interested please email Erica Reeves at [ericadreeves@gmail.com](mailto:ericadreeves@gmail.com).



## REIMBURSEMENT NEWS

Amanda Jordan, OTR/L

### HHS Secretary Renews Public Health Emergency

#### AOTA website

On October 2, 2020, Secretary Azar renewed the Public Health Emergency (PHE) for another 90 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The renewal became effective on October 23, 2020, and will expire on January 20, 2021. This means that federal waiver flexibilities granted since the PHE was initiated will continue.



For occupational therapy practitioners this means that federal waiver flexibilities granted to health care providers earlier in the spring may continue until the PHE expires to better serve patient needs and streamline the efficient delivery of health care services during the pandemic. These flexibilities include the allowance to perform telehealth in both outpatient and institutional settings, the ability for occupational therapists to open home health cases and conduct the Start of Care for home health agencies, and granting OTAs the ability to perform maintenance therapy in outpatient settings. Flexibilities granted to other providers, such as hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and inpatient rehabilitation facilities, will also continue for the duration of the PHE.

Section 319 of the *Public Health Service Act* grants authority to the HHS Secretary, who may determine that a disease or disorder presents a public health emergency. This is the second renewal of the COVID-19 PHE; the previous renewal was effective April 26, 2020.

### 2021 Proposed 9% Payment Cut

#### McKnight's LTC News and Gawenda Seminars

On August 3, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued the calendar year (CY) 2021 Proposed Rule for services paid under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS). This would include outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapy services provided in all settings (private practice (both therapist-owned and physician-owned, skilled nursing facilities doing Part B, comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities, rehabilitation agencies, home health agencies providing Part B therapy services in the home and hospital outpatient therapy departments).

Therapy groups and industry stakeholders expressed wide concern and disappointment after the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services released its 2021 PFS proposed rule. It would be effective Jan. 1, 2021, with the start of the new fiscal year. Last year, therapy providers took an 8% cut. The American Health Care



## **Continued News from the MSOTA Reimbursement Chair Amanda Jordan, OTR/L**

Association/National Center for Assisted Living expressed disappointment in the proposed payment cuts for therapy services but also showed optimism about the proposal to permanently adopt some telehealth expansions from the COVID-19 pandemic under the rule.

“Such dramatic cuts proposed in the midst of a pandemic that uniquely impacts older adults with multiple comorbidities is very concerning, as access to care from a variety of providers, including therapists, may be impacted at a time these beneficiaries are on the road back to recovery,” AHCA/NCAL said in a statement to *McKnight’s*.

Overall, the proposed rule recommends payment reductions to more than three dozen healthcare provider groups, and the cuts are a way for CMS to offset payment increases for primary care physicians, explained the American Physical Therapy Association, American Occupational Therapy Association and the American Speech-Language Hearing Association.

Audiologists are facing a 7% cut and speech-language pathologists are facing a 9% cut, added ASHA President Theresa Rodgers, MA, CCC-SLP.

The organizations also called on Congress and CMS to advance “well-reasoned fee schedule payment policies and waive budget neutrality.” They added that they don’t oppose payment increases for primary care physicians and said the “increases can be implemented without imposing payment reductions on other providers.”

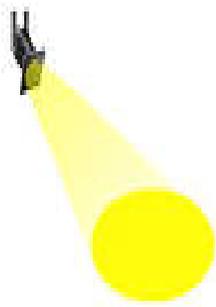
Patel also noted that Congress needs to offer critical financial relief to “countless physical therapy and specialty practices” who face severe reimbursement cuts if the proposed PFS rule is implemented.

Keep in mind that some CPT codes will see a greater than 9% decrease while others will see less than a 9% decrease due to changes in the relative value units (RVUs) of each CPT code.

## **Medicare 2021 Deductibles and Premiums Announced**

### **Gawenda Seminars**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced the 2021 Medicare Part A and Part B premiums and deductibles. In 2021, the Part B deductible will be \$203.00. This is a \$5.00 increase from 2020. This means that the first \$203.00 of covered Part B services will not be paid by the Medicare program. It will be applied to the Medicare beneficiaries deductible and either the Medicare beneficiary will have to pay that amount or possibly their secondary insurance (Medigap plan) may pay the annual Medicare Part B deductible.



## MSOTA SUPPORTS MEMBERS DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC



## The MSOTA Spotlight is on...



## Here to help

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been many questions submitted to MSOTA in regard to our state regulations in relation to OTA supervision, telehealth coverage, payment of telehealth visits, and what defines a telehealth visit/supervisory visit. We take all your questions seriously and answer them to the best of our ability keeping in mind that MSOTA is a membership organization advocating for our profession in the state of Mississippi. We cannot interpret the regulations as they are regulated by the Mississippi State Department of Health. However, we work very closely with the Mississippi OT Advisory Council as well as the Mississippi State Department of Health in answering your questions and ensuring that our profession is well represented and maintains the highest standards of practice. If there is not a clear and quick answer to your question, it is submitted to the Advisory Council for review. The Advisory Council will be meeting with the MSDH in January to review and discuss many of those submitted questions.

We love to hear from our members so please continue to submit your questions. You can email them to MSOTA at [mississippiota@gmail.com](mailto:mississippiota@gmail.com). If I cannot answer them to the best of my knowledge, I will send them to the Advisory Council to review. I will also send an email blast to the membership of any decisions, changes, etc. that may be made in early 2021 by the Advisory Council and MSDH.

Amanda Jordan,  
MSOTA Executive Director

# Membership News!!



We have 203 OT members and 97 OTA members.

There are 1070 OT and 593 OTA practitioners in the state of Mississippi, putting our membership percentage at 18% at this current time.

We have 164 student members. Student Membership numbers by school UMMC: 107, Holmes CC: 22,

ICC: 16, PRCC: 10, South Alabama: 1, St. Katherine Univ: 5, St. Augustine: 1, Eastern KY: 1, and 1 not listed.

Recently, we started gathering more demographic information from our members. We are using this information to better understand the needs of MSOTA members. We want to cater to the practice areas with continuing education and to assist with networking of members. This will also help the MSOTA board to assess member retention. We are always trying to grow and

adapt with member needs and this is another way to assist us in doing that. Thank you to everyone that updated their demographic information!

If you would like to talk about

membership needs,

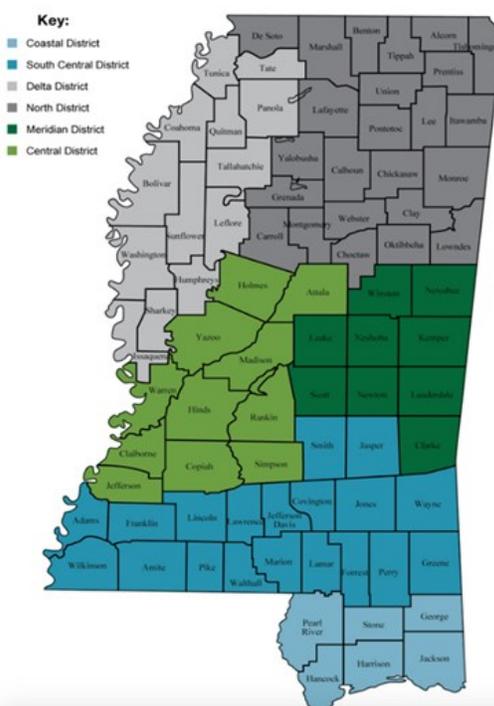
please email me at:

[h\\_calnan@bellsouth.net](mailto:h_calnan@bellsouth.net)

Heather Calnan,  
Membership Chair

## MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS BY DISTRICT

North: 62,  
Delta: 16,  
Central: 139,  
Meridian: 20,  
South Central: 34,  
Coastal: 23, and  
6 members that did not list their areas.



## MSOTA DISTRICT NEWS

### COASTAL DISTRICT

The Coastal District hosted a successful and first ever online Fall Mini Conference Saturday, October 24, 2020 with 30 professionals in attendance from across the entire state of MS representing every MSOTA district. Dr. Bonnie Inkel, MPA, OTR/L and Courtney Broome, MS, OTR/L, represented the new OTA program at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Perkinston and Biloxi as the online “host” site. They discussed



“ACOTE and AOTA Guidelines for Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education: Before, During, and After COVID-19”. Everyone had positive comments about the presenters. They also recently received great news that their program is accredited and that they are accepting their first cohorts January 2021! Be on the lookout for their fieldwork students and graduates eventually because they are our future professionals and need the TLC that we once needed to become successful. Mentorship is the key, and we have the awesome opportunity to train our future successors!

I announced my official “retirement” from the MSOTA board because I have permanently moved to Louisiana! I have reached out to some Coastal District members to ascertain their interest in District or co-District Chair positions and am awaiting their responses for the upcoming January 2021 vacancy. I have had the pleasure to serve on the Board since 2005 as the Coastal District Chair and Newsletter Editor

## MSOTA DISTRICT NEWS

### COASTAL DISTRICT continued

from 2005-2010 in the dawn of the internet and the age of limited social media! How times have changed! I also served again as Coastal District Chair from 2014-2020 and as Vice-President from 2017-2019. I will remain a member of MSOTA and still participate in events. Thank you all so much for being a part of my MSOTA life! By the time you receive this, I will have competed in my first Ballroom Dancing Competition in Baton Rouge! So, life is forever moving onward!

Julie LeBlanc, MS, LOTR, SCLV

Coastal District Chair

juliemslaot@att.net



*Les Cavaliers Mardi Gras Ball February 13, 2016 in Biloxi, MS, at the IP Casino with a dear friend, Paul Watts, from Meridian, as one of the Dukes, and me. His wife, Nancy, is one of my best friends!*

## SCHOOL NEWS

### Holmes Community College



Like many of you, this year required us, the OTA faculty at Holmes Community College, to approach the semester cautiously and be creative in educating students and solving problems. We have instituted several new safety protocols within our program to reduce the spread of germs during the pandemic. In addition to masks, students now sit at the same desk which are 6-feet apart and must disinfect their area after each class. Students are asked to clean any item used during class (i.e. goniometer, marker, scissors, etc.) and wash their hands frequently. Bottles of hand sanitizer has been placed at the front of the classrooms to promote hand hygiene as well.

Our second-year students completed their level 2A fieldwork during the fall semester and were able to see the changes in practice occurring. Sondya Hudson was able to experience delivering pediatric OT services via tele-health in the Jackson area; Maggie Paulk's time at Forrest General Hospital allowed her to treat the sickest patients in the ICU, while Katie-Nolle Steed saw how the aftereffects of Covid-19 can linger to the outpatient stage of recovery. We have 15 second-year students who will complete their level 2A and 2B fieldworks in the spring at various locations in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Alabama.

Our eleven first-year students finished the semester strong. While we were not able to take advantage of outside learning opportunities, we were able to have guest lecturers from the community and virtual tours of Mississippi State Hospital, state fairs from various states, and T.K. Martin Center. The spring will see the arrival of an OTD student from UMMC. She will be completing her Capstone project which will consist of assessing our space to help devise optimal storage solutions, seeking grant funding to develop a sensory corner, and other various tasks

D. Cade Montague, MOTR/L  
Program Director  
OTA Program  
Holmes Community College



## SCHOOL NEWS Continued Itawamba Community College

Itawamba Community College faculty and students are excited to report that we survived the fall semester!! Students took their final exams this week and will not have to return until after the first of the year. I'm sure that everyone is ready for a much needed break. We have ensured students that if they could survive this semester they can do anything!

Our freshman students were troopers as they embraced the new normal - of course they don't know anything different. The sophomores have completed their Level I fieldwork rotations and

are gearing up for their final Level II rotations in the spring. I think they can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel and graduation within their reach!

Earlier this month, we held elections for freshman SOTA officers who will serve over the next two years. Unfortunately, community service opportunities which SOTA plays a big part in have been slim to none. Students will, however, be decorating the exterior of a nearby skilled nursing facility for Christmas. Hopefully, we will have opportunity to resume community service involvement in the spring.

While COVID has presented many challenges, in true OT fashion, our students have learned to adapt and

be flexible. As you can see in the pictures below our freshman students have "embraced the masks" and the sophomores ("all smiles") are excited to be finished with the academic portion of their education and can't wait to get started with their clinical experience.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!!

Dee Dee and Shannon



## SCHOOL NEWS

### Pearl River Community College

As I begin to type I think about how I (Tim) said to myself at semesters start - “if we can make it to mid-November...”. And by “make it” I mean “to still be living!” (wink) ... and here we are!!

The class of 2021 completed their last classroom exam today (Nov 20, 2020) and it is special in the way that returning to a warm, dry home after being caught in a deadly storm seems special.

This class, like the rest of the world, was cruising along until spring break 2020. And like a random twist of fate, it was never the same.

But this class showed flexibility, perseverance, a positive can-do attitude, and kept putting one foot in front of the other until today came, and the bus stopped, and they stepped off and out to their level II fieldwork.



Class of 2021: Front - Dillon McMullan; First row - Michelle Haynes, Breanna Cochran, Annika Jones, Molly Burke, Shelby Woodworth, Taylor Pickett, GraceMarie Lindsey, Hailey Conway; Last row - Madison Nickens, Irina Yoder, Anna Floore, Portia Simmons, Bethany Saucier, Lindsey Hamilton, D’Andre Averett, Tim Pulver (not pictured - Annessya Culpepper and O’Nesius Wallace)



## SCHOOL NEWS

### Pearl River Community College

The program would also like to acknowledge our freshmen class whom has shown similar determination and with having only known the program during Covid-19. And finally, an extra THANK-YOU from the heart to all of our fieldwork instructors and the organizations that host them. Without you, we cannot do what we do and the students cannot realize their OT dreams. Thank you for going the extra mile during this unusual time!!

Tim Pulver, M.Ed, OTR/L  
Program Director  
Pearl River Community College

Thank

You

## SCHOOL NEWS Continued

### University of Mississippi Medical Center

We are pleased to share that our Department hosted a very successful virtual site visit with ACOTE for our OTD Program's initial accreditation November 2-4, 2020.

Our site reviewers were from Connecticut and Virginia. We are especially thankful for all of the community support in the 3 day process. We had employers, graduates, fieldwork educators, and capstone mentors successfully log-in from across the state of Mississippi to support the visit. The evaluators were very complementary of our program, students, and community partners. The team identified seven areas of strengths for our program and found no areas of non-compliance. While we will have to await the ACOTE council's meeting for the final vote to affirm accreditation, we are optimistic about the outcome, and we are looking forward to graduating our first accredited OTD class in May of 2021. This journey to graduate the first OTD class has been full of unexpected joys and challenges, perhaps COVID the greatest challenge of all. Yet, due to the dedication of our faculty, students, and OT community, we are well positioned to accomplish this visionary goal we set seven years ago in 2014!



OT Faculty Celebrating Post-Site Visit

We are continuing to do many things the same (e.g., lecture, conduct labs, give exams) and many things very differently as we've adjusted to graduate level health care education amidst COVID. Masks, virtual learning, small on-campus groups, and altered schedules are just a few of the daily differences between OT education today versus one year ago. However, one thing definitely remains the same—our commitment to prepare OT graduates to work alongside of you effectively.

We are so thankful for those of you who are on the front lines of this pandemic and working hard to rehabilitate our friends and neighbors. Thanks you for all you are doing during the most challenging of times!

Christy Morgan

Chair, UMMC OT Department



PTE Honor Society Induction Ceremony—Class of 2022



2020 Halloween Fun—Class of 2023



## CONTACT US

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# MSOTA WEBSITE

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE!

[mississippiota.org](http://mississippiota.org)



MISSISSIPPI OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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### WHY SHOULD YOU BE A MEMBER?

Keeping you up-to-date on current events at the state and national level via the website, newsletters, and email blasts.

Giving you access to a member only portion of our website to define your profile and network with other members throughout the state.

Having a voice in regards to your profession through MSOTA sponsored surveys, elections, and District meetings.

#### Quick Links

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#### MSOTA Calendar

No events

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