



SOTA Newsletter

The George Washington University's Student Occupational Therapy Association

November 2025 Issue

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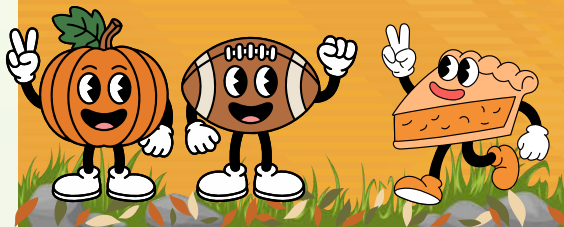
LEAVES ARE FALLING, OT IS CALLING

Written by Matt Eggers



Gobble, gobble!! That's "turkey-speak" for Happy November!! As the leaves fall and the semester workload piles up like autumn leaves, we're raking together another issue packed with good stuff! This month's newsletter features a special guest article, fresh student and professor spotlights, and new volunteer opportunities that'll warm your heart faster than a second serving of mashed potatoes. Plus, don't miss the SOTA Tonic fundraiser, St. Catherine's Challenge information, and a look at the latest OT vocational research.

So before you get too *stuffed* with assignments, feast your eyes on the November Newsletter!



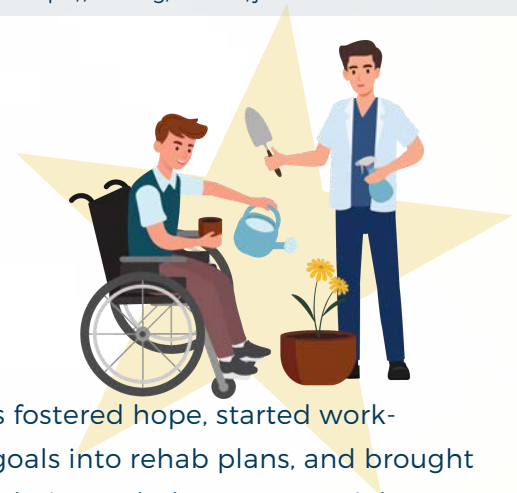
LATEST OT RESEARCH: EARLY VOCATIONAL REHAB GETS PEOPLE BACK TO WORK SOONER (BUT IT'S A SLOW-BURN)

Created by Matt Eggers

In a randomized controlled trial, Monash University researchers tested an Early Intervention Vocational Rehabilitation Service (EIVRS) for adults aged 16–70 who were employed pre-injury and sustained traumatic brain injury (TBI), spinal cord injury (SCI), or multi-trauma orthopedic injuries (MTO). Participants (n=170; mean age 38; 75% male) were recruited roughly 47 days post-injury and randomized to EIVRS or usual rehabilitation.



Reference:
Ponsford, J., Downing, M. G., O’Kearney, E., Bedekar, Y., Hilton, G., Mortimer, D., Fossey, E., Barclay, L., Olver, J., Castle, W., Nunn, A., McKenzie, D., & Ross, P. (2025). Early intervention vocational rehabilitation for return to work following traumatic injury: A randomized controlled trial. *Annals of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine*, 68, 101972. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rehab.2025.101972>



EIVRS wasn’t just “think happy thoughts.” Dedicated therapists fostered hope, started work-focused conversations early, embedded return-to-work (RTW) goals into rehab plans, and brought in peer support. How very OT! Client-centered goals, activity analysis, graded exposure to job demands, and real-world context.

Results required patience. At 1 year, the EIVRS and control groups looked similar on employment outcomes, though EIVRS participants reported lower anxiety. By 2 years, the slow burn paid off: the EIVRS group worked more hours and returned to work faster. Median weekly hours were 38 (IQR 24–40) for EIVRS versus 29 (23–36) for controls. Time from injury to first job was 166 days (87–280) with EIVRS versus 238 days (144–325) in usual care. Effects were consistent across diagnoses (no group-by-diagnosis interaction), with the strongest trends in MTO and TBI. Mental health and quality of life evened out by 2 years.

Why does this matter for OT students? Well, it validates early, occupation-focused intervention as more than a feel-good add-on. Building RTW goals into rehab from the beginning can translate into tangible participation outcomes... just not overnight. Clinically, this points to screening early for work roles and barriers, advocating for graded RTW and employer education, and tracking useful data like hours worked and days to first RTW.

Bottom line: Early vocational rehab is the tortoise, not the hare... but by year two, it helps people work more and get back sooner. OT for the win yet again.

GW SOTA

Cocktail Fundraiser

FOR OT RESEARCH!

NOV 1 -
DEC 3

- * TONIC AT QUIGLEYS
- * 2036 G ST NW.
WASHINGTON, DC
20036



Order an "OT-rita"!!

PROFESSOR SPOTLIGHT: DR. LIBBY HLADIK, PHD, OTR/L



November's Faculty Spotlight shines on Dr. Hladik, whose work exemplifies the core values of the GW OTD program. With expertise spanning Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), developmental disabilities across the lifespan, community participation, and adolescent mental health, Dr. Hladik is dedicated to creating more inclusive communities for all. Dr. Hladik's professional journey is guided by a strong belief in social inclusion and community participation. *"For me, it's really important that our society works together to build supportive communities that help all people thrive... my work in OT and research is my way to contribute to developing our society to uphold those values."*

When asked about their favorite aspect of the GW OTD program, Dr. Hladik highlighted the shared commitment to values that define the program's mission. *"Occupational justice and inclusive engagement in society are not just buzzwords here. They're values we talk about and work to develop every day."*

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Hladik brings a creative flair to their life. Few would guess that they were once a theatre director! With a BFA in Theatre Studies, they spent over a decade directing and producing plays in Chicago before finding their calling in OT. Family time also takes center stage. Dr. Hladik, their spouse, and child share a love for both adventure and cozy connections. Traveling, visiting museums, and exploring new restaurants, while also cherishing quiet moments at home building Legos, reading, or watching movies together.

For current OTD students, Dr. Hladik offers heartfelt advice: *"Be open to learn from every situation. The scope of OT spans the lifespan and many settings, which can feel daunting, but it's also amazing! What you learn in one space or with one client will continually add to your understanding of OT as a whole."*





SOTA is supporting

ST. CATHERINE'S

CHALLENGE

JOIN US FOR THE NATIONAL STUDENT-LED FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDED BY THE AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOUNDATION.

YOUR DONATION HELPS TO FUND FUTURE INTERVENTION RESEARCH GRANTS (IRGs), WHICH FILL A CRITICAL GAP IN OT RESEARCH BY SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE TREATMENT METHODS BASED ON RESEARCH EVIDENCE. IRGs ARE THE FIRST STEP TO IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF QUALITY CARE.

THE GOAL OF THIS YEAR'S CHALLENGE IS TO RAISE ENOUGH TO FULLY FUND ONE IRG WITH FUNDS RAISED BY STUDENTS.



LINK TO DONATE:

[justgiving.com/GWU AOTF St Catherine's Challenge](https://justgiving.com/GWU/AOTF%20St%20Catherine's%20Challenge)



STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS:

YEWANDE SOFOLA

Meet Yewande, our SOTA Public Relations Chair and certified multitasker. She always knew she wanted a meaningful, hands-on career in healthcare, but nothing clicked until she volunteered at Drayer Physical Therapy. Surrounded by PTs, she found herself drawn to the OTs' creative and holistic approach, and the rest is history.

Yewande's now passionate about outpatient neuro rehab and performing arts OT, blending neuroscience with choreography. One highlight of the OTD program for her has been learning about sensory integration and how OTs use it to support clients of all ages.

Outside class, Yewande's a lifelong dancer, choreographer, and teacher, and she keeps her creativity flowing through writing, painting, and songwriting. Her study fuel? Mike and Ike's, Sour Patch Kids, and popcorn... with a side of Hannah Montana, of course.



KENAN CARTER

Kenan's journey to OT began with her love for working with kids, something she discovered as a youth yoga instructor. Watching children grow through movement showed her how powerful play can be as a therapeutic tool... and now she wants to turn that passion into a career by helping kids reach their goals while having fun along the way. Her main interests are pediatrics and mental health, and one big takeaway from the OTD program has been how adaptable OT truly is. "OTs are like chameleons," she says. "We can fit into so many different settings and populations."

Outside of OT, Kenan loves tennis, live music, hiking, and exploring DC comedy clubs and history museums. She's a Fleetwood Mac fan, record collector, and movie lover (thanks to her director dad who raised her on The Sound of Music and Ferris Bueller's Day Off). Her current anthem: "You Get What You Give" by New Radicals, all while fueled by mint gum and Cape Cod Chips. Hopefully not at the same time.



VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NOVEMBER

Written by Bonny Thach

Hey everyone! Here are some extra community service opportunities for November:

REMEMBER! →

Article 3, Section 3, Part B of the Constitution: "... A member in good standing must attend and participate in at least two SOTA community service events a semester."

GroW Community

The GroW Community Garden is an awesome opportunity for anyone with a green thumb or looking to learn how to grow vegetables and herbs! All produce is donated to Miriam's Kitchen, which uses fresh ingredients to prepare meals for those experiencing homelessness in D.C. It is located on H Street NW between 23rd and 24th ST (behind Ross Hall/Himmelfarb Library). The link to sign up is below! <http://bit.ly/grow-garden>

Shepherd's Table

Located in Silver Spring, MD, Shepherd's Table helps support those experiencing food insecurity and homelessness by offering fresh meals, compassionate care, and support services that foster hope and self-sufficiency. Volunteer opportunities include meal services, clothing sorting, assisting with food pick-up, and helping out with the eye clinic! More information about volunteering can be found in this link! <https://www.shepherdstable.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

The Arlington Food Assistance Center

The AFAC is an awesome organization to volunteer with, especially this holiday season. Located in Arlington, VA, AFAC helps support the community by distributing food to our neighbors who need an extra hand. Additionally, they are partners with Culpepper Gardens (an awesome senior living facility and one of the wonderful Level 1A field work sites!) Volunteer opportunities can be found through this link: <https://afac.org/volunteer/>

Miriam's Kitchen

Located here in Foggy Bottom, Miriam's Kitchen provides healthy, made from scratch meals as a way to connect guests with personalized services that help combat the ongoing housing crisis in Washington, D.C. More information about volunteering at Miriam's Kitchen can be found in this link! <https://www.miriamskitchen.org/get-involved/volunteer/>



Bread for the City

Located in Washington D.C., Bread for the City helps support local DC residents needing assistance by providing food, clothing, medical care, and other services that help reduce some of the burdens being faced. Volunteer opportunities are through this sign-up link located in either NW or SE DC. <https://breadforthecity.org/volunteer/>



THE ADAPTIVE TRAINING ACADEMY: MAKING FITNESS MORE ACCESSIBLE

Written by Savannah Halabuk

Fitness is an important part of many of our lives; it can be a site of triumph, growth, challenge, and titrated discomfort. For some, fitness can even be a site of acceptance and belonging. For others, however, fitness can be an inaccessible space due to cost and limited access, mobility requirements, and explicit or implicit norms that exclude certain groups of people. At a CrossFit gym, for instance, most group classes have one workout option per day with preset movements, prescribed weights for males and females, and a normalized structure requiring people to move quickly and listen to complex instructions. For a lot of people, this predictability and prescriptiveness is relieving and effective. For others—people with disabilities, limb differences, cognitive impairments, or who identify outside of the gender binary—this results in exclusion and inaccessibility.

To fight against this commonplace exclusion and inaccessibility, the Adaptive Training Academy (ATA) was founded in 2012 to train coaches and trainers how to tailor their environments and methods to account for the needs of people with varying abilities. Their mission is to “enable accessible and inclusive fitness training for every body, regardless of ability,” and they train coaches how to be prepared to work with people with physical impairments, sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, and neuromuscular impairments (ATA, 2025).



In November 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the ATA’s training and was honored to glean from the expertise of the instructors who offered knowledge, insight, methods, and empathy in how to serve diverse populations in the fitness industry. The ATA’s training has increased my toolbelt as a coach, and has better equipped me to think outside of my preconceived notions to meet people where they are.

Reference:

Adaptive Training Academy. (2025, October 25). Empowerment through education. <https://www.ata.fit/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Created by Matt Eggers

All quiet on the SOTA front!

Check back each month to see what's up and coming this month in SOTA!




NOVEMBER 2025

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: left;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>St. Catherine's Challenge & Tonic SOTA Fundraiser</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>ALL MONTH!</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> </div>						
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Veterans Day 	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving 	28	29
30						



HELP WANTED CO-NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Love writing, organizing, or just knowing all the tea before everyone else? 

SOTA is looking for a Co-Newsletter Editor to gather info, stories, and updates for our monthly newsletter!

What you'll do:

- Work with the current editor to collect highlights from classmates, upcoming events, and fun features (like Student Spotlights!)
- Help shape content into something readable, engaging, and scroll-worthy
- Meet with the current editor at least once per month
- Time commitment approximately 4 hours per month

What's in it for you:

- Add a polished, real-world experience to your resume
- Build skills in writing, editing, and communication
- Expand your network within the grad program and SOTA community
- Flex your creativity while sharing fun, meaningful content
- Reimbursement as high as \$0 per hour, but true payment is the wonderful memories made along the way

This role is in addition to your current grad school responsibilities and SOTA tasks. DI's will be prioritized for this position.

Interested? Reach out to Matt at m.eggert@gwmail.gwu.edu

We'd love to have you on the team!



SOTA E-BOARD CONTACTS



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