

WVU Occupational Therapy E-News

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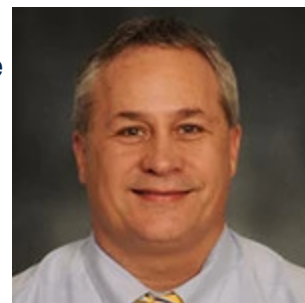
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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Our February 2024 edition of OT E-News once again features the accomplishments and positive impacts of our alumni, faculty, and students. In the midst of our 25th Anniversary celebrations, the Division of Occupational Therapy continues to provide high quality education to master's and doctoral degree students while making impactful contributions locally, across the state, and throughout the nation.



In October 2023, the Division welcomed reviewers from the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy (ACOTE) for the

accreditation visit for the Occupational Therapy doctoral program. Under the leadership of Dr. Diana Davis, the positive review resulted a seven-year accreditation, which is the most that can be awarded by ACOTE for a new program. Faculty, students, administrators, fieldwork educators, and capstone partners participated in the on-site evaluation. The WVU entry-level OTD program is the only educational program of its kind in the state of West Virginia.

Students, families, and faculty gathered at the WVU Mountainlair Ballrooms following the December commencement ceremony to celebrate the many successes of the December 2023 MOT graduating cohort. Student award winners included Juliet Hart (Academic Achievement, Elizabeth Devereaux), Brooke Driscoll (Academic Achievement), Julee Frazee (Research, Mountaineer), Hayley Woods (Research), Jenna Lenhart (Research), Madison Wetzel (Research, Community Outreach), Caitlyn Shaffer (Academic Achievement), Sarah Hendrickson (Mary Hager), and Alexander Ritchie (Academic Achievement), along with the leaders of the Student Occupational Therapy Association. Speakers at the event included Dr. MaryBeth Mandich, Vice Dean, Professional and Undergraduate Programs, and [Annika Thrasher](#), the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy 2024 Outstanding Alumnus. Thrasher currently serves as Chief Compliance Officer with Best Life Therapy, E-School Docs, and Integrated Speech Solutions.

Additionally, the fall 2023 semester was filled impactful events, important recognitions, and new collaborations. These included:

- Alumni and Division of Occupational Therapy faculty Breanna Adkins (EdD, AT Still University) and Kayleigh Nolan (PhD, Towson University) were awarded post-professional doctoral degrees.
- Adkins, in collaboration with a team from WVU Medicine, helped initiate a Brachial Plexus Clinic for children.
- Current student Whitney Coffield successfully defended her crown as Division of Occupational Therapy Cornhole Tournament champion. This year, she partnered with classmate Caylie Snyder.
- Dr. Richelle Gray, OTD, OTR/L, ATP, CDP joined the Division of OT faculty in July 2024. Gray is an expert in assistive technology and seating and mobility, and she is sharing her expertise both in the classroom and the clinic.
- The third-year OTD students presented their research projects at the inaugural Doctoral Research Symposium.
- The Division, in collaboration with the West Virginia Occupational Therapy Association (WVOTA), hosted the state association's annual conference in Morgantown.

A commitment to alumni relations and outreach is among the many goals of the Division's strategic plan. Ongoing initiatives include a virtual journal club, Division-sponsored continuing education, electronic newsletter and annual report and AOTA Conference social events. Those interested in participating can [contact SueAnn Woods](#). All alumni, friends, faculty, fieldwork supervisors, and current students are invited to our gatherings every month. If you have yet to participate in one of our prior events, please register using our [convenient online form](#).

The spring 2024 semester is guaranteed to be full of exciting announcements, program improvements, and important events. Among these are the transitions of [Dr. SueAnn Woods](#) to the position of MOT Program Director. Dr. Woods will lead the MOT Program's ACOTE re-accreditation process which will culminate on the review on-site visit in June 2024. Dr. Kayleigh Nolan will assume Woods' prior role as OTD Doctoral Capstone Coordinator. The spring semester will also mark the graduation of our first OTD cohort and pinning ceremonies for second-year OTD and MOT students. Our 25th anniversary fundraising continues. We hope that you'll donate and help us reach our goal using our secure online giving page: <https://give.wvu.edu/OccupationalTherapy25Years>

Donors of \$250 or more will be recognized in a plaque that is maintained in the OT Lab. For more information on the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy, [visit our website](#), [follow us on Facebook](#), or [send us an email](#). We look forward to hearing from you.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

“From pencil grip to posture, handwriting is a complex fine motor activity that can present challenges to many children,” WVU OT Instructor Carrie Smith-Bell, MOT, OTR/L says. “Our concern is what happens to students who aren't in the public school's referral pipeline — are those children getting the help they need?”

To help answer this question, Smith-Bell and other researchers in the School of Medicine's Division of Occupational Therapy are [evaluating the effectiveness of handwriting intervention for elementary-aged homeschooled children](#).

Under the direction of [Richelle Gray, OTD, OTR/L, ATP, CDP](#), the WVU occupational therapy students had the opportunity to experience [powered mobility learning activities](#). Dr. Gray is one of 15 Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) credentialed providers across the state of West Virginia.



[Breanna Adkins, OTR/L](#), assistant professor of occupational therapy at the WVU School of Medicine, joins the [WVU Brachial Plexus Clinic](#). Led by P. David Adelson, MD, executive director of the CNC, and Stephanie Ferimer, MD, Pediatric Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, will offer the latest treatment options, therapies, and surgical interventions, including nerve grafting, for patients who have sustained these types of injuries.

EXPLORE MORE



The joy of experiencing play and mobility is radiating from this child's face as he received a modified ride-on car this fall through the Go Baby Go program. Cars are customized to the child and possible modifications include seating support, changing activation control from foot to a hand switch, and steering modifications. The service project is provided by OT students under the supervision of Carrie Smith-Bell, MOT, OTR/L and Diana Davis, PhD, MA, OTR/L. The cars and any necessary modifications are free to the child and their family, thanks to generous donors. Gifts can be made online at <https://give.wvu.edu/gobabygo>.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

As leaders in the field of occupational therapy, WVU OT alumni continue to achieve success and recognition. Please join us in congratulating the alumni who have earned certifications and recognitions recently.

[Lauren Rees, MOT, OTR/L, CSRS](#), was recognized by Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Morgantown as the employee of the year! Rees serves as the comfort, professionalism, and respect champion to educate new employees about the hospital's core values. She is a SAEBO certified therapist and a Certified Stroke Rehabilitation Specialist. Rees has completed professional development related to the use of technology in practice including the Bioness H200, BITS, and Vector systems. Additionally, she recently provided a guest lecture to the WVU OT students and serves as a clinical instructor for OT fieldwork students, providing them with an excellent experience during their clinical rotations as they transition from student to clinician.

On Dec. 8, 2023, [Kaitlin Thompson, MOT, OTR/L, BCP](#), earned the Board Certification in Pediatrics (BCP) credential. Occupational therapists with a minimum of three years of experience and a

minimum of 3,000 hours of clinical practice are eligible to sit for the exam. Thompson currently provides occupational therapy services in outpatient pediatrics, pediatric aquatic therapy, and acute care. She has previously provided services in school-based pediatric therapy. She notes that her education from WVU has provided her the opportunity to travel across the country, and even provide OT services on the West Coast. Thompson reported that she is proud to be a WVU OT graduate, and the feeling is mutual!

[Meredith Mull, MOT, OTR/L](#), is working daily to innovate and transform the future of healthcare. She has practiced clinically in a variety of rehabilitation settings, and quickly ascended into leadership roles expanding her knowledge of healthcare reimbursement and management. She is Certified as an Aging in Place Specialist, HIPPA Privacy Administrator, and in Remote Patient Monitoring. Mull has also continued her educational journal with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health with an emphasis on Population Health Management. [Hear her episode of the Healthcare Now Radio Podcast](#) on the topics of virtual patient monitoring, patient engagement, healthcare concierge, and barriers to care.

[Abigail Dorsa, MOT, OTR/L](#), is a Fulbright Scholar currently teaching English in Cambodia. “I knew that I just spent three years learning how to teach or reteach life skills to people, and I realized that speaking English is just another life skill and my academics will translate well to a classroom setting,” Dorsa said.

Know a WVU OT alum who should be featured? [Submit nominations via our online form.](#)

CONNECT WITH US

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For more information on the WVU Division of Occupational Therapy, [visit our website](#), [follow us on Facebook](#), or [send us an email](#). We look forward to hearing from you. Let's go, Mountaineers!

[Steven Wheeler, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, CBIS](#)
Professor & Chairman

STAY CONNECTED

Support Occupational Therapy

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