



Previous ILOTA Award Recipients

(1980-2025)

Occupational Therapist of the Year

This award recognizes an occupational therapist who has made significant contributions which advance occupational therapy in Illinois and positively impact the ILOTA.

- 1980 – Lillian Parent, OTR
- 1981 – Barbara Loomis, OTR
- 1982 – Elizabeth Cada, OTR
- 1983 – Norma Howat, OTR
- 1984 – Shirley Esenther, OTR
- 1985 – Beverly Myers, OTR
- 1986 – Velma Reichenbach, OTR
- 1987 – Cynthia Hughes, OTR
- 1988 – Florence Goold, OTR
- 1989 – Barbara Townsend, OTR
- 1990 – Shari Intagliata, OTR
- 1991 – Peggy Sabol, OTR
- 1992 – Nancy Richman, OTR
- 1993 – Batia Levy, OTR
- 1995 – Kimberly Bryze, OTR & Elizabeth Wittbrodt, OTR
- 1997 – Catherine Brady, OTR
- 1998 – Coralie Glantz, OTR
- 2003 – Cynthia Carr, OTR
- 2006 – Mary Michaelsen, OTR
- 2007 – Terry Giese, OTR
- 2009 – Lisa Mahaffey, OTR
- 2012 – Cheryl Huber Lee, OTR
- 2013 – Bev Meyers, OTR

- 2015 – Molly Bathje, OTR & Susanne Higgins, OTR
- 2017 – Katharine Preissner, OTR
- 2019 – Caren Schranz, OTR & Steven Taylor, OTR
- 2020 – Kelsey Watters, OTR/L
- 2021 – John Dudzik, DHS, OTR/L
- 2022 – Ashley Stoffel, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- 2023 – Bridget Hahn, OTD, OTR/L
- 2024 – Frank Czuba, DrOT, OTR/L
- 2025 – Leslie Marriott, OTR/L, BCP

Occupational Therapy Assistant of the Year

This award recognizes an occupational therapy assistant who has made significant contributions which advance occupational therapy in Illinois and positively impact the ILOTA.

- 1980 – Maureen Massart-Reardon, COTA
- 1981 – Kathleen Peter, COTA
- 1982 – Robin Jones, COTA
- 1983 – Betty Czekala, COTA & Kathleen Moylan, COTA
- 1984 – Kathryn Melin Eberhardt, COTA
- 1985 – Frances Lewis, COTA
- 1986 – Cheryle Palahnuik, COTA
- 1987 – Christine Casey, COTA
- 1989 – Sue Lynn Hansen, COTA
- 1990 – Peter Blazina, COTA
- 1991 – Clementine Carder, COTA
- 1992 – Patrica Heath, COTA
- 1995 – Jennifer Young, COTA
- 1997 – Michelle Zurisk, COTA
- 1998 – Mary Jo Boehm, COTA
- 1999 – Kate Parent, COTA
- 2001 – Kim Packwood Navarro, COTA
- 2004 – Mark Stojakovich, COTA
- 2006 – Jeanne Rehr, BA COTA
- 2011 – Peggy Smutny, COTA
- 2020 – Abigail Swidergal, MS, COTA/L, CKTP & Joni Kamstra, COTA
- 2021 – Ray Cendejas, COTA/L

Occupational Therapy Assistant/Occupational Therapist (OTA/OT) Partnership Award

This award recognizes exemplary collaborative intraprofessional partnerships between OTAs/OTs that promote the advancement of the occupational therapy profession in Illinois; and promotes the collaborative model of practitioners (OTA/OT).

- 2025 – Abi Swidergal, MS, COTAL, CKTP, ROH and Moira Bushell, OTD, MEd, OTR/L, BCP, CRA, FAOTA

Outstanding Occupational Therapy Student Award

This award recognizes an occupational therapy student who has demonstrated leadership and excellence in academic or clinical performance and exceptional ability to promote occupational therapy through their activities; and provides an incentive for occupational therapy students to contribute to the profession at the student level of professional preparation.

- 2014 – Justin Kaspyk (Midwestern University)
- 2016 – Nadia Marasti (Midwestern University)
- 2017 – Marlana Mosbacher (Rush University) & Ryan Walsh (University of Illinois at Chicago)
- 2019 – Morgan Stasell (Rush University)
- 2021 – Rolando Jara (University of Illinois at Chicago)
- 2022 – Ariana Carrillo-Ortega (Midwestern University)
- 2023 – Suraj Patnaik (Governors State University)
- 2024 – Courtney Bland (Midwestern University)
- 2025 – Nikayla Gordon (Governors State University)

Outstanding Occupational Therapy Assistant Student Award

This award recognizes an occupational therapy assistant student who has demonstrated leadership and excellence in academic or clinical performance and exceptional ability to promote occupational therapy through their activities; and provides an incentive for occupational therapy assistant students to contribute to the profession at the student level of professional preparation.

- 2019 – Krecia Sweeney (McHenry County College)

Early Career Impact Award

This award recognizes efforts which demonstrate significant contributions to ILOTA by an occupational therapy practitioner in the first five years of their career.

- 2023 – Ricardo Ramirez, OTD, OTR/L
- 2024 – Michele Govern, MS, OTD, OTR/L, CBIS

Mentor Award

This award recognizes an occupational therapy practitioner (clinician, supervisor, educator, or researcher) who has demonstrated outstanding mentorship of one or more students, colleagues, or employees in a sustained partnership in practice, academic, or research contexts, wherein mutual respect, guidance, and knowledge are shared.

- 2023 – Leslie Marriott, OTR/L
- 2024 – Kerry Ball, OTD, OTR/L
- 2025 – Jennifer Richert, OTR/L, BCPR and
Nancy Richman, OTR/L, FAOTA

Innovative Practice Award

This award recognizes an occupational therapy practitioner or a group of practitioners whose efforts improve the provision of occupational therapy services in Illinois.

- 2023 – Andrea LeFlore, OTD, OTR/L
- 2024 – Adam Steuer, DHSc, OTR/L, CLT
- 2025 – Paula Lundell, OTR/L

Political Action Award

This award recognizes promotion of occupational therapy practice, payment for occupational therapy, or disability rights in the political arena.

- 2023 – ILOTA Medicaid Task Force Members: Gail Fisher, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA; Brenda Koverman, PhD, MBA, MS, OTR/L; Nancy Richman, OTR; Monika Robinson, DrOT, OTR/L; Jenna Verdicchio, OTR/L; Megan Win, OTR/L

- 2024 – Kira Meskin Schiff, OTD, OTR/L, CAPS, ECHM, ADAC
- 2025 – Kaitlin Peters, OTR/L

***Public Awareness Award**

This award recognizes members of the ILOTA or **non-members** who are not occupational therapy practitioners or students, who have made outstanding contributions toward increasing the public's awareness or understanding of the value of occupational therapy; and expands awareness of the profession to potential future occupational therapy practitioners.

- 1980 – Barbara Loar, OTR
- 1981 – Jeff Blackman & Mark Des Jardins
- 1982 – K. B. Hudgens, OTR
- 1983 – Licensure Committee: Beth Cada, Robin Jones, Jessica Presperin, Sue Cummins, and Norma Arras
- 1985 – Terri Giese, OTR, Terrie Nolinske, OTR
- 1987 – Mae Brandon, OTR
- 1989 – Maggie Montejano, OTR
- 1993 – Archives Committee
- 1997 – Nancy Richman, OTR
- 1998 – Katherine Burson, OTR
- 1999 – Peggy McRoberts, OTR
- 2000 – Barbara G. Fox, OTR
- 2001 – Kim Marshall, OTR; Elizabeth Cada, OTR; Students: Erin Forbes, Sunny Harries, Kelly Keserich, Carolyn Krusinowski, Elaine Naranjo, Nathan Rieder, Renee Rossetti, & Cheryl Widstrand
- 2002 – Deanie Loconte
- 2003 – Clementine Carder, COTA/L
- 2007 – Laura Obara, OTR & Rhonda Schleis, OTR
- 2010 – Nancy Daly
- 2020 – Laura Van Pumbrouck, PhD, OTR/L
- 2021 – Claudia Cirrincione, OTD, OTR/L
- 2024 – Pooja Patel, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, CDP, CFPS
- 2025 – Community Outreach Committee: Bridget Hahn, Anne Kiraly-Alvarez, Cynthia Carr, Ricardo Ramirez, Ruby Loera, Izabela Liszewski, Elsie Polari, Phyllis Hughes, Liz Zubenko, Claudia Cirrincione, Luther King, Gifty Abraham, Leah Thoma, and Ashley Burks

***Award of Appreciation**

This award recognizes an individual, group or organization that demonstrates support and advocacy for the advancement of occupational therapy in the State of Illinois.

- 1980 – Senator John D’Arco & Saul Morse
- 1981 – Edward Lis, MD & Dianne Kolzow
- 1984 – Charles Chevillon
- 1990 – Paschal Panio, MD & Wendy Meltzer
- 1992 – Subash Shah, MD
- 1994 – Catherin Meyer, MD
- 1995 – Janet Hogan
- 1997 – Elizabeth Coulson
- 1999 – Michelle Henderson
- 2001 – Elizabeth Coulson
- 2018 – Louis Fogg
- 2021 – Maureen Mulhall
- 2022 – Jenny Kray and Aaron Paramore
- 2025 – Camp I Am Me

Board Award of Merit

This award recognizes individuals on the ILOTA Board who have made outstanding contributions toward facilitating board business and advancing the practice of occupational therapy in the State of Illinois.

- 1980 – Pamela Silverman – OTR
- 1981 – Marilyn Karim, OTR
- 1982 – Claudia Papke, OTR
- 1983 – Carolyn Yoss, OTR
- 1984 – Gail Fisher, OTR & Kathryn Melin Eberhardt, COTA
- 1985 – Barbara Townsend, OTR
- 1986 – Nancy Richman, OTR
- 1987 – Debbie Walens, OTR
- 1989 – Katie Chrystal-Piazzi, OTR & Carolyn Yoss, OTR

- 1990 – Karen Gablesen, OTR
- 1991 – Clementine Carder, COTA
- 1992 – Mary Andree Darnall, OTR & Elaine Novak, OTR
- 1993 – Linda Moran, OTR
- 1997 – Paula Jo Belice, OTR, Letty Sargant, OTR, & Ruth Ann Watkins, OTR
- 1998 – Coralie Glantz, OTR
- 2001 – Mae Brandon, OTR & Letty Sargant, OTR
- 2006 – Laura Obara, OTR & Alma Tan Torres PhD, OTR
- 2007 – Rachel Galant, OTR, Angelica Barraza, OTR, Veronica Llerena, OTS, Carrie Nutter, OTR, & Judith Abelenda, OTR
- 2008 – Kathryn Melin Eberhardt, MAEd, COTA/L, ROH
- 2009 – Monika Robinson, OTR
- 2011 – Carolyn Calamia, OTR
- 2014 – Peggy Nelson, OTR
- 2019 – Lisa Mahaffey, OTR
- 2021 – Janet Adcox, OTR/L, C/NDT, CSRS, CKTP; Lisa Iffland, OTR/L
- 2022 – Molly Bathje, PhD, MS, OTR/L and ILOTA Leadership Development Program (LDP) Committee (John Dudzik, DHS, OTR/L; Catherine Killian, OTD, MEd, OTR/L; Lisa Mahaffey, PHD, OTR/L, FAOTA; Nadia Marasti, MOT, OTR/L; Abigail Swidergal, MS, COTA/L, CKTP; and, Laura VanPuymbrouck, PhD, OTR/L)
- 2023 – Moira Bushell, OTD, MEd, OTR/L, BCP
- 2024 – Anne Kiraly-Alvarez, OTD, OTR/L, SCSS

Award of Merit (also referred to as the Historian’s Award)

Honors members of the ILOTA who have shaped the course of occupational therapy in the state by making a comprehensive and sustained contribution to the growth and development of occupational therapy in Illinois.

- 1980 – Beatrice Wade, OTR
- 1982 – Marian Gilpin, OTR

- 1983 – Margaret Hollowell, OTR
- 1984 – Lynette Barnes, OTR
- 1988 – Fred Sammons, OTR
- 1989 – Eva McCormick, OTR
- 1990 – Sarah Skinner, OTR
- 2001 – Patrick Bloom, OTR
- 2003 – Deanna Sava, OTR
- 2006 – Christine Helfrich, PhD., OTR, FAOTA
- 2010 – Elizabeth Wittbrodt, OTR
- 2012 – Kim Bryze, OTD, OTR
- 2013 – Ruth Bixby, OTR
- 2014 – Mary Lou Ross, OTR
- 2019 – Nancy Richman, OTR, FAOTA
- 2020 – Linda Olson, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- 2021 - Leslie Roundtree, DHS, MBA, OTR/L
- 2023 - Gail Fisher, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- 2025 – Brenda Koverman, PhD, MBA, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA

Fieldwork Educator Award

This award recognizes an OT practitioner's exemplary contributions in their role as a fieldwork educator.

- 2025 – Jillian Rancatore, MOT, OTR/L

Lifetime Achievement Award

Recognizes long-term members of ILOTA who have performed distinguished service in the field of occupational therapy and with the ILOTA board; this award is granted by the ILOTA Executive Board and the recipient is granted an honorary lifetime membership in ILOTA.

- Ruth Hadra, OTR
- Beatrice Wade, OTR
- Fred Sammons, OTR
- Barbara Loomis, OTR
- 2017 – Catherine Brady, OTR, Kathryn Melin Eberhardt, MAEd, COTA/L, ROH & Melanie Ellexson, OTR
- 2019 – Mae Brandon, OTR and Nancy Richman, OTR, FAOTA

- 2020 – Clem Carder, COTA/L, LMT, CKTI & Gail Fisher, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- 2021 – Elizabeth Cada, OTR/L
- 2024 – Lisa Mahaffey, PHD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- 2025 – Katharine Preissner, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA

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