

## Illinois Occupational Therapy Association Awards

Purpose/Description	Eligibility	Criteria
<p><b>Note: Nominees who are OTRs, OTAs, OT or OTA students are required to be ILOTA members at the time of their nomination.</b></p> <p><b>There are two awards that can be presented to non-members who are not OTA/OT students or practitioners, indicated by an asterisk (*).</b></p>		
<p><b>Occupational Therapist of the Year</b>                      Recognizes an occupational therapist who has made significant contributions which advance occupational therapy in Illinois and positively impact the ILOTA.</p>	<p>The nominee shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be a licensed occupational therapist and a member in good standing of the ILOTA at the time of nomination and receipt of the award.</li> <li>2. Have a minimum of 5 years of demonstrated contributions.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The nominee shall have demonstrated excellence in one or more of the following areas:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical practice, research, administration and/or leadership</li> <li>• Participation in clinical or academic education programs</li> <li>• Publications, oral presentations or media activities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Further consideration for years of service and impact of sustained activity on ILOTA and the profession.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Occupational Therapy Assistant of the Year</b>                      Recognizes an occupational therapy assistant who has made significant contributions which advance occupational therapy in Illinois and positively impact the ILOTA.</p>	<p>The nominee shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be a licensed occupational therapy assistant and a member in good standing of the ILOTA at the time of nomination and receipt of the award.</li> <li>2. Have a minimum of 5 years of demonstrated contributions</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The nominee shall have demonstrated excellence in one or more of the following areas:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical practice, research, administration and/or leadership</li> <li>• Participation in clinical or academic education programs</li> <li>• Publications, oral presentations, or media activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Further consideration for years of service and impact of sustained activity on ILOTA and the profession.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Occupational Therapy Assistant/                      Occupational Therapist (OTA/OT)                      Partnership Award</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognizes exemplary collaborative intraprofessional partnerships between OTAs/OTs that promote the advancement of the occupational therapy profession in Illinois.</li> <li>2. Promotes the collaborative model of practitioners (OTA/OT).</li> </ol>	<p>The OTA/OT partners shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be a licensed occupational therapy assistant and an occupational therapist</li> <li>2. Be members in good standing of ILOTA at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award</li> <li>3. Demonstrate evidence of working collaboratively within the OTA/OT model.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only OTA and OT teams are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The OTA/OT partnership shall have demonstrated contributions which may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a practice model or method of evaluation and/or treatment with significant application.</li> <li>• Development of programs or approaches utilizing the OTA/OT partnership to enhance the education, leadership, and/or practice of occupational therapy practitioners in Illinois</li> <li>• Participation in research activities that benefit the profession and reflect the OTA/OT partnership, and/or</li> <li>• Collaboration which demonstrates and shares their expertise and knowledge through publications and/or presentations at the state, regional, national, or international level.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Outstanding Occupational Therapy Student Award</b></p> <p>1. 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.</p> <p>2. Provides an incentive for occupational therapy students to contribute to the profession at the student level of professional preparation.</p>	<p>The nominee shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A student enrolled in an ACOTE approved program in Illinois.</li> <li>2. An ILOTA member in good standing at the time of nomination and receipt of award</li> <li>3. A student member of ILOTA during their academic coursework and fieldwork.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The nominee shall have made a significant contribution at the student level in one or more of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical practice, research, and/or public relations</li> <li>• Student occupational therapy association and/or ILOTA</li> <li>• Other related activities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Qualifying evidence relevant to consideration for the award includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written and oral communication activities.</li> <li>• Leadership of and participation in student occupational therapy organizations.</li> <li>• Involvement in organizations and activities related to occupational therapy and the persons served by the profession.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Outstanding Occupational Therapy Assistant Student Award</b></p> <p>1. 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.</p> <p>2. Provides an incentive for occupational therapy assistant students to contribute to the profession at the student level of professional preparation.</p>	<p>The nominee shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A student enrolled in OT coursework or fieldwork at an ACOTE approved program in Illinois.</li> <li>2. An ILOTA member in good standing at the time of nomination and receipt of award</li> <li>3. A student member of ILOTA during their academic coursework and fieldwork.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The nominee shall have made a significant contribution at the student level in one or more of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical practice, research, and/or public relations</li> <li>• Student occupational therapy association and/or ILOTA</li> <li>• Other related activities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Qualifying evidence relevant to consideration for the award includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written and oral communication activities.</li> <li>• Leadership of and participation in student occupational therapy organization.</li> <li>• Involvement in organizations and activities related to occupational therapy and the persons served by the profession.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Early Career Impact Award</b></p> <p>Recognizes efforts which demonstrate significant contributions to ILOTA by an occupational therapy practitioner in the first five years of their career.</p>	<p>The nominee shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A licensed occupational therapy practitioner for 5 years or less</li> <li>2. An ILOTA member in good standing at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The nominee shall have demonstrated significant contributions which may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an emerging practice program</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Service to ILOTA</li> <li>• Contributions to the profession's body of knowledge</li> <li>• Leadership, and/or</li> <li>• Volunteerism</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Mentor Award</b> 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.</p>	<p>The nominee shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A licensed occupational therapy practitioner</li> <li>2. An ILOTA member in good standing at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The nominee shall have demonstrated outstanding mentorship in one or more of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisement and guidance of the mentee(s)</li> <li>• Advocacy (i.e., advocating on behalf of the mentee, or coaching self-advocacy of the mentee(s))</li> <li>• Instruction of the mentee(s) in specific skills/strategies and/or provision of resources/opportunities for independent learning</li> <li>• Communication and facilitation of the mentee’s progress toward achieving professional development goals.</li> <li>• Performance as an inspiring role model for the mentee(s)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Innovative Practice Award</b> Recognizes an occupational therapy practitioner or a group of practitioners whose efforts improve the provision of occupational therapy services in Illinois.</p>	<p>The nominee(s) shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Licensed occupational therapy practitioners</li> <li>2. An ILOTA member in good standing at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award.</li> </ol> <p><b>An individual or a group of individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The nominee(s) shall have demonstrated ingenuity through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision, conception, design, and implementation of innovative programs, practices, partnerships, policies, and/or activities</li> <li>• Efforts that improve and/or expand the provision of occupational therapy services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political Action Award</b> Recognizes promotion of occupational therapy practice, payment for occupational therapy, or disability rights in the political arena.</p>	<p>The nominee(s) shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Licensed occupational therapy practitioners or current OTA or OT students</li> <li>2. ILOTA members in good standing at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award.</li> </ol> <p><b>An individual or a group of individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The nominee(s) shall have demonstrated contributions at the statewide or local level in Illinois which may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership role in planning and implementing legislative or policy advocacy</li> <li>• Initiation of meetings and actions with elected or appointed officials as part of an advocacy campaign</li> <li>• Development of a political action initiative and the recruitment of others to join in the initiative to influence state legislation, regulations, or policies.</li> <li>• Education of legislators or other key government officials about the purpose and function of occupational therapy</li> <li>• Participation in the Illinois Occupational Therapy Political Action Committee (IOTPAC)</li> </ul>

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<p><b>* Public Awareness Award</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognizes members of the ILOTA or <b>non-members</b> 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.</li> <li>2. Expands awareness of the profession to potential future occupational therapy practitioners.</li> </ol>	<p>The nominees shall be:            A licensed occupational therapy practitioner and an ILOTA member in good standing at the time of nomination and receipt of the award, an OT or OTA student, or a <b>non-member</b> who is not an occupational therapy practitioner or OT/OTA student.</p> <p><b>An individual or a group of individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The nominee(s) shall have provided an outstanding contribution to the public's awareness and understanding of the value of occupational therapy through one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio, television, social media, blogs</li> <li>• Newspapers, journals, magazines</li> <li>• Presentations to community groups</li> </ul> <p>Participation in student recruitment activities through organization and leadership.</p>
<p><b>* Award of Appreciation</b></p> <p>Recognizes an individual, group or organization that demonstrates support and advocacy for the advancement of occupational therapy in the State of Illinois.</p>	<p>The nominees shall be:            An individual or group of individuals who <u>are not</u> occupational therapy practitioners or students, or an organization that is not an occupational therapy organization.</p> <p><b>An individual, a group of individuals, or an organization is eligible for this award.</b></p>	<p>The nominee(s) shall have promoted the advancement of occupational therapy in one or more of the following ways, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteerism of time, funds, or supplies for activities supporting the profession</li> <li>• Demonstration of advocacy for the profession</li> <li>• Establishment of relationships with legislative personnel, regulatory agencies, or organizations to advocate for the provision of services by an occupational therapy practitioner</li> <li>• Participation in organizations and/or activities related to occupational therapy and the persons served by the profession</li> </ul>
<p><b>Board Award of Merit</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The nominees shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Licensed occupational therapy practitioners and ILOTA members in good standing at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award.</li> <li>2. Current executive or full Board members, or have transitioned off the Board in the previous year.</li> </ol> <p><b>An individual or a group of individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The nominee(s) shall have provided outstanding service in their role on the Board, benefitting both the profession and ILOTA in one or more of the following areas:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding achievement in administration, management, or leadership while on the Board.</li> <li>• Specific contributions to identify the professional needs of the membership and establish objectives and procedures to meet those needs through their role on the Board.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Further consideration for time served on the Board and their impact while carrying out their role.</li> </ol>

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<p><b>Award of Merit (also referred to as the Historian’s Award)</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The nominees shall be:</p> <p>Licensed occupational therapy practitioners and ILOTA members in good standing at the time of nomination and receipt of the award.</p> <p><b>An individual or a group of individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nominee(s) shall have made outstanding contributions to the profession of occupational therapy in <u>more than one</u> of the following areas of occupational therapy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practice</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Research</li> <li>● Administration</li> <li>● Leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>Nominees’ contributions shall have benefited the growth and development of the profession in Illinois over an extended period of time.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Lifetime Achievement Award</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes long-term members of ILOTA who have performed distinguished service in the field of occupational therapy and with the ILOTA board.</li> <li>The Lifetime Achievement Award is granted by the ILOTA Executive Board and the recipient is granted an honorary lifetime membership in ILOTA.</li> </ol>	<p>The nominees shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensed occupational therapy practitioners and ILOTA members in good standing at the time of the nomination and receipt of the award.</li> <li>Actively employed as occupational therapists or occupational therapy assistants for at least 30 years.</li> <li>ILOTA members for at least 25 years.</li> <li>Previous members of the ILOTA Executive and/or ILOTA Full Board for at least 10 years; or ILOTA members that have made significant contributions to ILOTA in other ways such as frequent conference presentations, articles published in the ILOTA <i>Communique</i>, or a member of the IOTPAC Executive Committee.</li> </ol> <p><b>Only individuals are eligible for this award.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nominee shall have demonstrated exceptional service to the field of occupational therapy through advocacy, community engagement, scholarship, education, and/or clinical practice.</li> <li>The nominee shall have made substantial contributions to ILOTA over an extended period of time.</li> </ol>

**Key:**

Illinois Occupational Therapy Association (ILOTA)  
 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)  
 Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE)  
 Occupational Therapist (OT)  
 Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)

2024-25 Awards Committee:  
 Coordinator: Gail Fisher, OTR/L  
 Members: Mae Brandon, OTR/L, Jennifer Reedy, OTD, OTR/L;  
 Jeanne Rehr, COTA/L, and Erin Simpson, DrOT, MOT, OTR/L