

# 2025 Symposium Preliminary Program

Session CEU's have been approved by ATRA and NCTRC



## SOUTHEAST RECREATIONAL **SRTS** THERAPY SYMPOSIUM

Southeast Recreational Therapy Symposium

March 26 – 28, 2025

Greenville, South Carolina

Embassy Suites Greenville Golf Resort & Conference Center

**Scheduled Sessions and Times Are Subject to Change**

03/10/2025

# 2025 Symposium Schedule

## Wednesday, March 26

11:00 am – 4:30 pm	Registration
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	<b>Opening Keynote Session</b>
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm	Break
2:45 pm – 4:15 pm	Concurrent Sessions
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Break
4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Concurrent Sessions

## Thursday March 27

7:30 am – 4:00 pm	Registration
8:30 am – 10:00 am	Concurrent Sessions
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Break
10:15 am – 11:15 am	Concurrent Sessions
11:15 am – 1:30 pm	<b>Lunch and Keynote Session</b>
1:30 pm – 1:45 pm	Break
1:45 pm – 3:15 pm	Concurrent Sessions
3:15 pm – 3:30 pm	Break
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	Concurrent Sessions
4:30 pm – 4:45 pm	Break
4:45 pm – 5:45 pm	Concurrent Sessions

## Friday, March 28

7:30 am – 11:00 am	Registration
8:30 am – 10:00 am	Concurrent Sessions
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Break
10:15 am – 11:45 am	Concurrent Sessions
11:45 am – 12:00 noon	Break
12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	<b>Closing Keynote Session</b>

***Up to 1.50 CEU's available - CEU's pending ATRA and NCTRC approval***

**Wednesday, March 26, 2025**

**1:00 – 2:30 pm      Welcome & Opening Keynote Session**

## **Ensuring Your Seat at the Table: Unpacking Professional Identity in Recreational Therapy**

Ashley Hamilton, MS, CTRS, CARSS II    Angela Wozencroft, PhD, CTRS, CARSS II

This presentation explores the essence of professional identity in recreational therapy, focusing on how recreational therapists perceive their roles and how they believe they are viewed by clients and the broader healthcare community. Through a blend of reflection, inspiration, and actionable insights, this session will empower attendees to embrace their unique contributions to the field, address challenges to professional identity, and celebrate the transformative impact of recreational therapy. Participants will leave motivated and equipped to shape a stronger, more unified identity for the profession.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- ≈ Identify at least one professional experience/moment that shaped their professional identity in RT.
- ≈ Name two contributors and two constraints to their professional identity in RT.
- ≈ Gain at least one strategy for fostering professional identity in RT.

**2:45 - 4:15 pm Concurrent Sessions**

## **ATRA in Action: Advancing Your Profession Through Advocacy, Education and Engagement**

Brent Wolfe, PhD, LRT, CTRS, FDRT

ATRA's mission is to empower recreational therapists, and this commitment is at the heart of everything we do. In this session, we'll explore how ATRA fosters both empowerment and engagement for its members through advocacy, educational resources, and networking opportunities. We'll discuss ATRA's recent initiatives and ongoing efforts to support recreational therapists, as well as how members can actively participate to shape the future of the profession. Discover how you can feel more empowered and connected through ATRA—and leave inspired, engaged, and ready to make a difference in the world!

### **Learning Outcomes**

- ≈ State ATRA's mission and vision
- ≈ List 3 ways ATRA is empowering and advocating for recreational therapists in their practice and professional growth
- ≈ Identify 1 way to get involved with ATRA to experience empowerment firsthand

## **Serve's Up, Let's Rally! Recreational Therapists Ace the Implementation of Wheelchair Tennis**

Mckenna Woodhead, Student at Clemson University Ariel Bailey, CTRS  
Nicole Entrup, CTRS, CARSSII, CASC

Come learn the basics of how to develop and deliver a quality wheelchair tennis program for people with disabilities. Wheelchair tennis is a useful therapeutic intervention used by Recreational Therapists. From start to finish, learn about community collaborations, necessary equipment, rules/regulations, and how to keep participants engaged, and what program outcomes your athletes may experience. Attendees will learn the basics of wheelchair tennis and how to start their own program.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- ≈ Provide an example of what adaptive equipment may be used during adaptive tennis
- ≈ Articulate at least 3 different tennis terms
- ≈ Demonstrate how to hold a tennis racquet correctly

## **PATHWAY to Success: Using a Recreational Therapy Tool for Intervention and Professional Growth.**

Miriam Vichi Beck, MS, LRT, CTRS, CDP

This presentation will focus on how Recreational Therapists can use the PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) for a multitude of applications professionally and clinically. The presenter will highlight how her own PATH Map established her journey to professional competency and her return to the profession after a twenty-year hiatus. This session will examine and demonstrate how this and other similar tools are instrumental in developing individualized care plans, delivering person centered program services, and documenting goal directed progress. Areas of practice will include community reintegration, socialization skill training, substance abuse, mental health, at risk youth, students and older adults. The session will include the experiential opportunity for attendees to draft their own PATH Map for professional competency goals and building professional relationships for long term growth and involvement in Recreational Therapy.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- ≈ Identify three applications of the PATH Map in individual and group RT settings.
- ≈ Create their own PATH Map for professional growth in Recreational Therapy that includes one goal and three objectives.
- ≈ Identify three ways the PATH Map tool is relevant to strength based and person centered treatment services in Recreational Therapy.

## **4:30 – 6:00 pm Concurrent Sessions**

### **Connection, Relevancy and Trends: Transitioning from recreational therapy practitioner to role of recreational therapy manager.**

Kathy Williams, CTRS

*Note: This session was presented in 2023*

Most individuals strive to excel at their work and increase their skills in hopes of advancement - "climbing the ladder to success." As a recreation therapist, that climb can be challenging as you need to maintain your certification as well as manage work units and supervise staff. In this session we will explore various approaches to stay relevant; discuss ways to support the transition to a manager role and look at other trends impacting the job functions of a recreation therapist.

## Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Participants will identify three approaches for maintaining relevancy in the field of therapeutic recreation while transitioning to management roles.
- ≈ Participants will list at least two trends impacting the job functions and responsibilities of a recreation therapist.
- ≈ Participants will develop a personal strategy to support themselves through career transitions in recreational therapy.

## Shooting for Success: Recreational Therapy Takes Aim Planning and Implementing an Adaptive Archery Program

Ariel Bailey, CTRS, Wheelchair Rugby Referee, Level 1 Air Rifle Coach,  
Level 1 Archery Instructor

The focus of this session will be to share information about how Recreational Therapists are planning and implementing adaptive archery for different populations. We will go over therapeutic outcomes that your participants may experience in this sport. This will include an emphasis on how to maintain a safe range at all times while implementing an archery program. We will also discuss best practices, adaptive equipment, equipment management, and certifications related to archery. Come learn in depth about how Recreational Therapists start archery programs from the ground up!

## Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Provide an example of what adaptive equipment may be used during adaptive archery
- ≈ Demonstrate how to hold the bow correctly
- ≈ List the differences between a compound bow and a recurve bow

## Bridging Generations: Enhancing Team Dynamics and Cultural Competence in Recreational Therapy Workplaces

Angela Wozencroft, PhD, CTRS, CARSS II      Ashley Hamilton, MS, CTRS, CARSS II

In a rapidly evolving field, understanding generational diversity in recreational therapy is essential for creating cohesive and effective teams. While working with co-workers can be challenging, this session will provide attendees with actionable insights into the unique values, communication styles, and work ethics across generations—from Baby Boomers to Generation Z—and how these differences impact team dynamics. Participants will leave with strategies to adapt workplace practices that foster collaboration, promote cultural competence, and address generational differences.

## Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Define the four generations and their fundamental characteristics.
- ≈ Identify at least one key generational difference in each of the following: values, communication styles, and work ethic as in the RT workplace.
- ≈ Learn three strategies to foster collaboration and cultural competence in the RT workplace.



## SRTS Meet Up

Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm at

**Group Therapy Pub & Playground**

Start your evening off by catching up  
with your fellow attendees

Thursday, March 27, 2025

## 8:30 – 10:00 am Concurrent Sessions

### **Increasing Awareness of Disability Models in Recreational Therapy Practice**

Shelly Beaver, MS, CTRS

Rooted in the field of disability studies, disability models are theoretical frameworks used to understand and interpret disability. Reflective of societal perspectives of and responses to disabilities, these conceptualizations shape the ideologies, attitudes, and processes of human service professionals while influencing the experiences and self-identities of clients with disabilities. Despite their significance to a client-centered and strengths-based practice, disability models have received limited attention by the field of therapeutic recreation (TR). Therefore, the purpose of this session is to increase awareness of disability models and their application to recreational therapy (RT) practice. Through an interactive approach, participants will learn about prominent disability models in the field of TR and explore their applications to RT service delivery. Participants will also explore their own personal RT philosophies through the lens of disability models to better inform their practice.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Describe a minimum of three disability models and their conceptualizations of disability.
- ≈ Discuss existing applications of disability models in the field of therapeutic recreation.
- ≈ Develop a personal philosophy of RT practice informed by one or more disability models.

### **Recreational Therapy Services in Schools: Empowering Students for Success**

Kristen Fedesco, PhD, CTRS

This presentation will provide participants with foundational knowledge and practical resources for successfully implementing Recreational Therapy (RT) services in school settings. Attendees will gain valuable insights into three key areas: 1. Legislation: Understanding the legal frameworks and policies that support RT services in schools. 2. Role of the Recreational Therapist: Exploring the unique contributions RT professionals make to student success, inclusion, and overall well-being. 3. School-Based Best Practices: Highlighting evidence-based strategies and real-world approaches for effectively integrating RT into educational environments. This session is ideal for professionals seeking to enhance their understanding of RT's role in promoting student success and well-being in schools.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Recognize the impact of legislation on the provision of Recreational Therapy (RT) services in school settings.
- ≈ Identify at least three practical methods or approaches for delivering RT services in school-based environments.
- ≈ Understand and apply best practices for implementing RT services within school settings

## **Cultivating Accountability: Empowering others to create a culture that champions responsibility and collaboration in your organization.**

Cliff Burnham, CTRS, FDRT

In this engaging session, we will explore the essence of a culture of accountability and its pivotal role in fostering high performance and collaboration amongst co-workers and staff. Participants will identify their personal strengths, recognizing how traits like reliability and transparency contribute to accountability, while pinpointing growth areas, such as time management or effective communication. We'll discuss actionable strategies for improving individual accountability, setting clear goals, seeking regular feedback, and embracing self-reflection. Together, we will develop comprehensive approaches to cultivate accountability, emphasizing the importance of creating an environment where ownership is encouraged, mistakes become learning opportunities, and recognition of achievements is practiced. Through interactive discussions and practical exercises, attendees will leave empowered with the tools to enhance personal accountability and inspire their teams to fully engage in a culture that champions responsibility.

### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Define what a culture of accountability means
- ≈ Determine ways to improve your personal accountability
- ≈ Develop approaches to foster accountability among your employees

## **10:15 – 11:15 am Concurrent Sessions**

### **Ensuring Ethical Principles Are Built Into Your Professional Practice**

Maureen Meador, CTRS

Becky Garrett, MS, LRT, CTRS, FDRT

Wayne Pollock, PhD, CTRS, FDRT

Do recreational therapists consider ethical implications when developing and implementing programs and writing policies? What impact does your practice have on consumers and the professional relationships you develop with co-workers? In this interactive session, we will work together to fine tune, enhance, and/or develop policies specific to YOUR practice that ensure ethical principles are transparent and consistently applied.

### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify a minimum of three benefits of incorporating ethical principles into program development, implementation and policy.
- ≈ Identify an example of how each ethical principle may be applicable to specific recreational therapy programs and policy.
- ≈ Identify the method for reporting suspected ethical violations internally (within agency) and externally to professional licensure/certification boards.

### **Bridging the Gaps: Supporting Adolescents with Behavioral Health Diagnoses in Community Based Recreation Therapy Programs Following Long-Term or Residential Treatment.**

Allyson Hagan, MS, CTRS

In recent years, there has been an increase in mental health initiatives around the world to bring awareness, understanding and resources to those who are struggling with mental health diagnoses especially within the adolescent age group. This session will educate attendees on how Recreational Therapy is crucial to continued healing while in an in-patient or residential setting and

how connecting with community resources can continue the path of healing and positive community engagement through participation in Community Based Recreational Therapy or Inclusion Service Programs in their home environment. It will also serve as a discussion on thoughts and ideas to expand programming opportunities within to serve more diverse populations.

Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Attendees will be able to identify 2 positive outcomes of Recreational Therapy in a clinical behavioral health setting and how they are similar/different to a community based program.
- ≈ Attendees will be able to verbally engage with colleagues and identify at least 2 opportunities for inclusion of community based Recreational Therapy programming to meet the needs of those with a behavioral health diagnosis.
- ≈ Attendees will be able to identify how Community Based Recreational Therapy can support the continued mental wellness of youth in community settings.

## **Level Up Your Career: Unlock the Benefits of Obtaining a Recreational Therapy License (#13)**

Brent Hawkins, PhD, LRT, CTRS, CARSS-II, FDRT  
Joan Sutton MS, LRT, CTRS, CDP, FDRT

Licensure is an important step for protecting consumers from harm while also helping recreational therapists to advance their career and contribute to the credibility of their field. In this session, we will explore the benefits of becoming a licensed recreational therapist through the North Carolina Board of Recreational Therapy Licensure (NCBRTL). Participants will gain valuable insights into the licensure process, understand how it can enhance their professional opportunities, and learn how becoming licensed in North Carolina can open doors, even for practitioners from outside the state. Whether you're a practicing recreational therapist, student, or an educator, this session will provide practical information on the benefits of licensure on a personal and professional level. Discover why North Carolina is leading the way in supporting recreational therapists and how you can benefit from NCBRTL's support.

Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Understand the benefits of obtaining licensure through the North Carolina Board of Recreational Therapy Licensure (NCBRTL)
- ≈ Identify the key steps involved in the licensure application process in North Carolina and understand the eligibility requirements for both in-state and out-of-state practitioners.
- ≈ Compare and contrast licensure regulations across states and explore how North Carolina's licensure can benefit recreational therapists practicing in other regions.
- ≈ Advocate for licensure among recreational therapists in their own states and organizations, contributing to the growth and professionalization of the field.

**11:15 am – 1:30 pm    Lunch and Keynote Session**

## **Mastering Advocacy: Tailoring Techniques and Crafting Powerful Pitches for Recreational Therapists to Engage Diverse Stakeholders Effectively**

Brent Wolfe, PhD, LRT, CTRS, FDRT    Cliff Burnham, CTRS, FDRT  
Chelsea Farrington, MPA, CTRS

Advocacy is a responsibility of all recreational therapists and a common topic at many conferences. But rarely do we dive into a discussion regarding specific advocacy techniques and differentiating our advocacy approach. This session will not only explore crafting your advocacy efforts for

different stakeholders, but it will also provide an opportunity for you to develop both short and long advocacy pitches that you can use on a daily basis.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Verbally state the importance of advocacy for recreational therapists
- ≈ Identify the different stakeholders to whom recreational therapists advocate
- ≈ Develop a personal advocacy statement for recreational therapy

## 1:45 – 3:15 pm Concurrent Sessions

### **“Other Duties as Assigned”: A conversation on holding dual roles in the life of a recreational therapist (#29)**

Alice Dupree, GTA

Kayley Siler, GTA

Marcy Ward, RBT, GTA

Bryson Hartsell, GTA

Ben Rivet, GTA

Kelsey Webb, MS,CTRS,CARSs II

Ashley Hamilton, MS, CTRS, CARSs II

In this interactive session, graduate students from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Therapeutic Recreation Program take center stage to share their experiences balancing dual roles as both emerging professionals in the field and primary programmers for the department's camp initiatives. Through humor, personal stories, and candid conversations, they will explore the unique challenges and opportunities of simultaneously developing their professional identities while taking on significant programming responsibilities. This lively session will be part storytelling, part Q&A, and part audience interaction, offering insight into how holding dual roles fosters growth in leadership, teamwork, and adaptability. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how to navigate the demands of being a practitioner while also serving in other capacities within their organization. Join us for a dynamic conversation about holding dual roles in the field of TR/RT.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify at least 3 challenges that are faced when serving in multiple roles in a professional or academic setting.
- ≈ List at least 3 strategies for improving work-life balance.
- ≈ Identify at least 3 ways that holding dual roles will aid in developing skills to be successful in a TR/RT career.

### **One Team, One Purpose: Collaboration Through Recreational Therapy to Support Active Duty Soldiers Through Rehabilitation**

Nicole Entrup, CTRS, Certified Adaptive Recreation and Sports Specialist II, Certified Adaptive Sports Coach, Adaptive Inclusive Trainer, Warriors at Ease Level One

Ariel Malphrus, CTRS, Wheelchair Tennis Referee, Level 1 Air Rifle Coach, Level 1 Archery Instructor

This session explores the collaboration between Soldier Recovery Units (SRUs) and physical rehabilitation programs, highlighting how recreation therapists support service members recovering from injury. By utilizing adaptive sports, Warrior Games preparation, and community reintegration, these programs enhance resilience and coping skills as service members transition from active duty to civilian life. Attendees will gain insights into the unique challenges faced by service members in transition units, helping recreational therapists and professionals in VA hospitals, community programs, and therapeutic settings make more informed decisions. By understanding the recovery journey and transition process, participants will learn best practices to

enhance support for this population, ultimately improving outcomes in rehabilitation and reintegration. This session is essential for healthcare providers dedicated to optimizing care for wounded warriors during their critical transition phases.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Provide an example of how injured service members receive multidisciplinary care through rehabilitation programs and their recovery unit.
- ≈ Identify at least two unique challenges faced specifically by active duty service members recovering from injury as compared to veterans.
- ≈ Explain at least two ways recovery units and rehabilitation teams can collaborate with external programs to create a smooth transition for service members

## **Let's Explore Recreational Therapy Services for the Homeschool Community? How Does That Even Work and Why Is It Important?**

Sandra Rangel, MS, CTRS

According to the National Home Education Research Institute there are at least 3.7 million students enrolled in homeschool in the United States as of 2021. Of those students, it is estimated that over 38% of homeschool students have a disability or medical diagnosis. In this session we will explore the reasons why parents may choose homeschooling for their students with special needs.

Traditionally, therapeutic services are offered in public school settings under IDEA; however, it is important to expand services to students in alternative educational settings. We look at ways the recreation therapist can partner with parents and local organizations to assist in these efforts. We will explore the student's emotional-social needs as well as current modalities and documentation process used at a cooperative learning environment called "Learn Together Lowcountry."

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Will be able to identify 3 specific needs of children that have a diagnosis that can be met through recreational therapy services in the home school community.
- ≈ Will be able to define a homeschool cooperative and 2 recreational therapy modalities that can be utilized in the framework within this community setting.
- ≈ Will be able to understand how the APIED process can be applied to serving individuals with special needs and diagnosis from a homeschool setting.

## **3:30 – 4:30 pm Concurrent Sessions**

### **You're NOT Alone! How to utilize other departments and build collaborations to create Recreational Therapy Programs.**

Cathy Orletsky, CTRS

Brianna Wike, CTRS

Melody Beck, CTRS, AFP, NETA

Kathy Williams, CTRS

Whether you are the only CTRS (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist) in your department or one of many, learn how to incorporate other departments to create a variety of recreational therapy programs and activities. This session will share how three Community Parks and Recreation RT Programs work collaboratively with internal departments to enhance RT programs. As well as, how they create collaborative RT programs that cross city/county lines, by partnering to provide a unique opportunity for the communities they serve. Because after all, we truly are better together! The City of Chesapeake's Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Therapeutic Recreation Programs, the City of Virginia Beach's Parks and Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation Programs and Inclusion Services & the City of Norfolk's Parks & Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation Center will discuss

specific examples of recent program collaborations.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Participants will identify at least three departments/agencies or resources they can partner with to enhance RT program delivery.
- ≈ Participants will identify the steps to develop successful partnerships and collaborations.
- ≈ Participants will develop an action plan to cultivate partnerships for RT programs in their own agency, as well as in the community.

## **Navigating leadership development; Examining the APIED process beyond client use**

Chelsea Farrington, MPA, CTRS

In this session, participants will learn how to apply the APIED process (Assess, Plan, Implement, Evaluate, Document) in supervisory roles to effectively support staff development. Attendees will gain skills in assessing staff strengths and weaknesses using a person-centered coaching approach and learn how to create tailored development plans for their team. The session will also cover the connection between APIED and the theory of FLOW in supervision, helping supervisors identify the optimal balance between staff strengths and challenges. Participants will explore practical strategies for evaluating staff performance during the implementation phase, assessing whether staff are engaged or overwhelmed, and using evaluation forms for feedback. Finally, the importance of documentation will be emphasized, with guidance on how to track staff progress for continuous improvement and follow-up.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Upon completion of this session, the participant will be able to: learn one technique for every step of the APIED process that they can apply in a supervisory role
- ≈ Upon completion of this session, attendees will be able to: identify two strategies used to assess staff strengths and areas for improvement.
- ≈ Upon completion of this session the participant will be able to: Evaluate staff through the use of the APIED process and FLOW

## **Play it Safe: Strategies for Enhancing Community Access and Independence in Recreational Therapy**

Maureen Meador, CTRS

In this informative and engaging session, we will explore key considerations for ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals with mobility disabilities in community settings. Attendees will gain insight into the unique challenges that people with mobility impairments face when navigating public spaces. The session will highlight practical strategies for recreational therapists to support individuals in making safe, independent choices while engaging in community activities.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify at least three unique safety challenges faced by individuals with mobility disabilities in community settings
- ≈ Demonstrate an understanding of at least three safe techniques for helping individuals who use mobility assistive devices
- ≈ Identify three strategies to educate caregivers on promoting safety and independence for individuals with mobility disabilities.

## 4:45 – 5:45 pm Concurrent Sessions

### **Universal Programming.....Designing Recreation Therapy Programs to Be Successful for Everyone!**

Kathy Williams, CTRS

Do you want to be more inclusive with your recreational therapy programming and activities? If so, then join us to learn more about Universal Programming as a guide to develop new programs and to assess the inclusiveness of existing programs. We will share a model which applies key design elements to ensure recreational therapy programs are accessible and offer opportunities for successful participation. Plus you will have the opportunity to assess your own RT program based on the design elements.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify 4 design elements used in Universal Programming.
- ≈ Learn about the evaluation tool used to assess the inclusiveness of a program or activity.
- ≈ Use a checklist to conduct a quick assessment of their own RT program based on the Universal Programming design elements.

### **Program Accreditation in Recreational Therapy: Critical for Educators, Students, & Practitioners**

David Loy, CTRS, LRT, CARSS

For many, accreditation is an educator issue. Come learn how educational accreditation is critical for all professionals and recipients of recreational therapy services. This session will provide an overview of empirical, programmatic, and tangible benefits of accreditation for the recreational therapy profession.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify one major difference between institutional and program accreditation
- ≈ Identify 3 benefits of accreditation to students and employers
- ≈ Identify 2 strategies for working with administration to gain support for program accreditation

Friday, March 28, 2025

## 8:30 – 10:00 am Concurrent Sessions

### **Therapeutic Tides: Harnessing Aquatic Recreational Therapy for Health and Rehabilitation**

Allison Kerstetter, LRT, CTRS

Aquatic Recreational Therapy serves as an important therapeutic modality to assist our patients to regain or maintain their health & wellbeing in all aspects of their lives. Aquatic RT is unlike any other RT modality – we often perform multi-disciplinary sessions or treatments; use a facility-specialized aquatic assessment; develop numerous intervention plans based on our patients diagnoses; provide all documentation for progression tracking and for safety purposes; and maintain adequate staff, as well as staff training, to guarantee our patients safety. This session will go into detail about the different assessment techniques, common diagnoses, contraindications,

and intervention methods used in the Aquatic Recreational Therapy modality. We will also discuss ways to develop ART programs within other facilities.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify at least three ways the properties of water can assist in the promotion of a patient's wellbeing.
- ≈ Demonstrate understanding of at least two aquatic-specific intervention methods, that can be applied to their appropriate population.
- ≈ Describe one potential method to incorporate Aquatic Therapy into their specific setting.

## **Fostering Social-Emotional Growth in Middle Schoolers Through Recreational Therapy Interventions in a 5-week Summer School Program**

Heather Silander, CTRS, Ed.D

Being competent in social-emotional (SEL) skills has long-lasting impacts on the individual, their immediate support system, and the broader community. Previous research shows that improved social-emotional skills increase overall health and well-being, self-confidence, and sense of belonging (CASEL, n.d.; Heyne, 2011). The five competencies of social-emotional learning will be highlighted, and how recreational therapy and SEL were integrated into a 5-week extended school year summer program at an exurban middle school. Attendees will gain insights into the program's structure and the collaborative efforts between the recreation therapist and educators.

Furthermore, preliminary findings from the mixed-method study investigating the impact of recreational therapy on social-emotional behaviors will be shared.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Articulate the five Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies
- ≈ Explain at least three benefits experienced by middle schoolers who participated in the Recreational Therapy (RT) Interventions, emphasizing the positive impact on their social, emotional, and academic development.

Identify two ways to implement recreation therapy in a secondary school setting.

## **Results of a Virtual Reality Recreational Therapy Study: Exploring Changes in Executive Functioning Skills of Young Adults with IDD (#19)**

Lindsey Oakes, Ph.D., LRT, CTRS

Casey Weidner, MS, LRT, CTRS, CARSS I

Virtual reality (VR) has been utilized by researchers in various fields to produce positive outcomes for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD), including outcomes in the physical, cognitive, social, and behavioral/emotional domains. However, there is a lack of published evidenced-based practice literature within the field of therapeutic recreation's professional journals that demonstrate the use of virtual reality with individuals with IDD as a recreational therapy intervention. This session will describe the results of a pilot, randomized weight list control design study that explored changes in executive functioning among young adults with IDD as a result of a 6-week virtual reality gaming intervention. This session will also provide opportunities to engage in interactive discussion regarding implications for recreational therapy practice and future research.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify potential cognitive outcomes of the use of a 6-week VR intervention with individuals with IDD.

- ≈ Describe various program logistics, adaptations, and/or modifications that can be provided to individuals with IDD to increase successful participation in a 6-week VR intervention.
- ≈ Identify implications and potential next steps in future research focused on increasing evidence-based practice that utilizes VR as an RT intervention with individuals with IDD.

## 10:15 – 11:45 am Concurrent Sessions

### **The Benefits of Scuba Diving as Recreational Therapy: A Case Study**

Kayley Siler, Master's Candidate

This session will focus on how recreational therapists can use scuba diving as a therapeutic modality. More specifically, research on a scuba clinic created for individuals with disabilities will be highlighted. During this session we will address program design and implementation strategies specific to an adaptive scuba clinic. We will discuss the benefits of scuba diving, equipment needed, as well as an individual's experience with scuba diving and the adaptive scuba clinics. From this, we will see how scuba diving can be effective as recreational therapy for anyone, and particularly for individuals with disabilities.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Identify 3 benefits of scuba diving as recreational therapy.
- ≈ Identify at least 3 pieces of equipment needed to implement a scuba diving workshop or program.
- ≈ Provide an example of what populations might benefit from scuba as recreational therapy.

### **Using Nature as Therapy in RT settings**

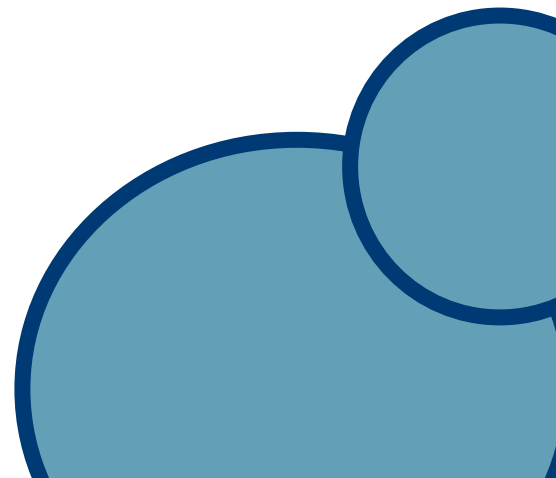
Jennifer Hinton, Ph.D., LRT, CTRS, FDRT

Debby Singleton, M.A., Certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide

In this session, the presenters will describe ways to create (3.02) and deliver (4.01) programming involving nature to improve emotional and physiological responses to common RT client symptomatology including stress, anxiety, and trauma. Sensory elements of the nature experience will be presented (sound, scent, visual, touch) along with ways to determine "dosing" of exposure to natural elements. Participants will also gain an understanding of the training that leads to nature and forest therapy guide certification.

#### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Describe the emotional and physiological effects of nature exposure.
- ≈ Determine which elements of nature may be incorporated with their client population.
- ≈ Explain the elements and benefits of nature and forest therapy guide certification.



## **From Reflection to Action: Concluding the Conference Journey**

Brent Wolfe, PhD, LRT, CTRS, FDRT

Conferences are more than just events—they are journeys of growth, connection, and discovery. As we prepare to part ways, this closing keynote will guide attendees through the "adjourning" phase of the group development process, helping us reflect on lessons learned and transform them into actionable insights for use as recreational therapists. Using the framework of group development—forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning—we will explore how this conference experience has fostered professional and personal growth. Through interactive discussions and reflective activities, attendees will identify key takeaways, share their insights, and set intentions for applying newfound knowledge to their unique professional contexts. This session will leave you energized and equipped to carry the momentum of the conference forward, empowering you to create meaningful change in our profession.

### Learning Outcomes

- ≈ Analyze three key themes or lessons from the conference by summarizing them in a structured reflection activity.
- ≈ Develop an individualized action plan by identifying at least two professional goals and one challenge they may face in implementation.
- ≈ Evaluate the group development process by explaining how at least one phase (forming, storming, norming, performing, or adjourning) influenced their conference experience and how it applies to future collaboration



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