



SOTA

## Rocky Mountain College SOTA Newsletter

January 2021

### Welcome Class of 2024!

by Amanda Bluhm OT/S Rocky Mountain College

January is a month in which the halls of the Charles Morledge Science Building on Rocky's campus are buzzing with anticipatory excitement. 2021 marks the third year of this excitement, and the first year the program is at full capacity. The third-year students have adventured off, embarking on their Fieldwork II experiences, the second-year students looking forward to transitioning from mentees to being mentors, and a new cohort of first-year students are being welcomed into the commencement of their



professional career. When asked how she felt about the program being at full capacity, founding director, Dr. Twylla Kirchen reflected, *"It continues to humble me each and every day to have the honor to work with outstanding faculty and staff to facilitate learning opportunities for our students. The students are making a tremendous impact in our community and region and I am grateful that we have this opportunity. It truly is the students who make all of the difference!"*

True to OT, what better way to start that year off than a play-based approach? Welcome class of 2024, now let's get down to the business of fun! RMC SOTA sponsored a welcome event for the new cohort in the form of a game night. Molly Wollner, our SOTA chapter Activities chair and organizer of the night's event, mentioned the purpose of the night was to provide a fun, interactive way of getting the two classes together. *"I'm so thankful for everyone who made this event a success. It was so nice getting to know so many great new people and playing a bunch of fun new games!"*



Many of the new students commented on how welcomed they felt and are enthusiastic about their future with the support the OTD program has to offer. Dr. Kirchen says, *"It is wonderful to welcome our third class of students to the Rocky Mountain College OTD Program! We are so proud of our second-year students for supporting the transition of the new class by hosting a Game Night and other events. We are the RMC OTD family and our students are amazing future OTs!"*

Leadership of RMC SOTA would like to say CONGRATULATIONS! Congratulations to Dr. Kirchen for the program being in full swing. Congratulations to the class of 2024 for your acceptance and involvement in an amazing OTD program! Welcome home.

### Raising Hope: Turning Bags into Self-Worth

by Amanda Bluhm OT/S Rocky Mountain College

The Community Service committee was at it again this winter with the *Hope for the Holidays* fundraiser on Facebook. This service project helped raise money to purchase duffel bags to donate to transient youth in Yellowstone County. *"The purpose of providing duffel bags was to increase the self-worth of teens in the foster care system,"* stated Hyrum Haroldsen, organizer of the fundraiser and RMC SOTA's Community Service chair of 2020. *"Most of these teens move frequently and their belongings are stored*

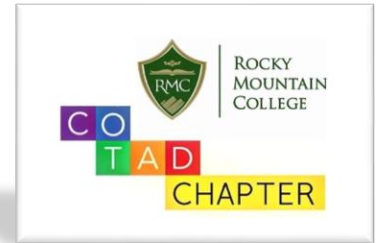
in trash bags. This negatively affects self-worth as it makes the youth feel that they are trash.” By January, a total of 49 duffel bags were purchased and delivered to the organization housing the youth. By using the platform provided by Together We Rise, a company who specializes in helping youth in the foster care system, friends and family of SOTA members were able to donate directly to the organization providing the duffel bags. The committee set their sights high with the amount of money they wished to raise. Although we may not always reach our goals in life, it is a very special accomplishment to have a distinct positive impact on the lives and self-worth of 49 growing individuals!

*Hope for the Holidays* was only one of a few activities the Community Service committee had initiated during the fall and winter months. Thank you, RMC SOTA for the care you convey for future generations of Yellowstone County and for the creative problem solving you have shown in serving our community during the ever-changing year of Covid-19.

## Getting diverse about diversity: Welcoming a COTAD chapter at RMC

by Amanda Bluhm OT/S Rocky Mountain College

The end of 2020 was a time of breath-holding for many, but for one particular SOTA member, it came with an answer to a yearning internal motivation to be an advocate. Shaylynn Conti was voted in to be the first president of RMC’s Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) chapter. On inquiry of why she was interested,



Conti explained, *“I desired to be a part of a coalition that advocates, empowers, and uplifts our neighbors both near and far and aims to bridge the gap between those that have diverse narratives. With an internal calling to amplify voices of others, I figured taking a leadership position would help begin this process from the inside out.”*

The chapter’s 14 founding members held their first meeting in December and have already completed their first event in January: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion + Recognizing Privilege training. The training was led by chapter members for other OT students, faculty, and staff. At the event, they welcomed prospective members from the new cohort and excitement

was extant in the room. The RMC COTAD chapter desires that it support our neighbors far and wide while benefiting the field of occupational therapy and its future practitioners. In doing so, they anticipate a partnership with RMC SOTA’s professional development in events and trainings for students. Conti says it very well indeed, *“With an amazing RMC COTAD chapter member student body, we are eager to see where this year takes us with the ambition and drive each and every student possesses. We are so excited about future events that keep us engaged, occupied, and active in doing the work for equity for all!”*

On behalf of RMC SOTA, welcome to the team!

