

MOBILITY MATTERS

Winter 2026
VOLUME 68



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Tennessee

A Chapter of the American
Physical Therapy Association

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APTA TN

CAREER CORNER

Career Opportunities

The Volunteer Voice is a publication of the Tennessee Physical Therapy Association. The magazine is published up to four times a year and is sent to all members of the APTA in Tennessee.

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTIONS

All advertisements in the Volunteer Voice are accepted on the basis of conformance with the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Association but no effort is made to verify the accuracy of claims made in such advertisements. Acceptance of advertisements does not imply endorsement by the Volunteer Voice or by the American Physical Therapy Association.

RATES

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| 1/8 Page | \$ 60.00 |
| 1/4 Page | \$ 95.00 |
| 1/2 Page | \$ 115.00 |
| Full Page | \$ 200.00 |
| Back Page | \$ 250.00 |

Job Opening and Continuing Education Columns
\$35.00 for under 100 words.
\$65.00 over 100 words, not to exceed 200 words.

Companies listing their name, address, phone number, and representative are called PATRONS.
These companies are listed in each issue of the MOBILITY MATTERS.
Cost is \$50.00 per issue.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$50.00 per year (3 issues) for non-members.
Please submit all articles and news items relation to physical therapy to:

APTA TN Amy Breedlove 1483 N Mt. Juliet Road, #175 Mt. Juliet, TN 37122 O 629.255.0870 Email info@aptatn.org F 615.296.9980

L I C E N S U R E

Office of Health Licensure & Regulation
Board of Physical Therapy
Tennessee Health Related Boards
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243
615-741-7221
State Web Site:
<https://tn.gov/health/>
Peer Assistance Program 1-615-726-4001

APTA TN LOBBYIST

Estie Harris, Managing Principal

HB Strategies

Website - www.hbstrategies.us



APTA TENNESSEE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



Dear APTATN Members,

I want to extend my deepest appreciation to each of you for your daily commitment to your patients and to our profession. Your dedication continues to elevate the standard of physical therapy across Tennessee, and our association is stronger because of your service.

I would also like to thank our APTATN Board members and Delegates for their tireless efforts on behalf of the association. Their perseverance and leadership have been instrumental in advancing the practice of physical therapy in our state.

As many of you know, 2026 began with a major change in several aspects of our practice. We continue to navigate the new Rules adopted by the Tennessee Board of Physical Therapy on December 29, 2025. In response, we have developed brand-new Ethics and Jurisprudence courses aligned with the updated APTA Code of Ethics and the Rules adopted in December 2025. These resources were created to support you in maintaining compliance and ensuring excellence in practice.

We are also excited to share that APTATN has partnered with a development company to create and fully own a new continuing education units (CEU) software platform. This system is designed to greatly improve the ease and efficiency of CEU submission for individuals and course providers, while also streamlining the review process for our reviewers.

Our APTATN Day on the Hill on February 4th was a tremendous success. We had strong attendance, meaningful conversations with legislators, and outstanding student participation from Tennessee State University and Belmont University.



APTA TENNESSEE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS CONT.

As we continue to grow, we are asking for your help. Many members express interest in contributing, but cannot commit to leadership positions. We understand, and now we have opportunities for you to get involved by serving on one of our many committees. By serving on a committee, we get to hear your voice in important matters, yet the time requirements for committee involvement are minimal. We are seeking passionate members to join committees such as:

- Payment Committee
- Practice Committee
- Membership Committee
- Finance Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Programming Committee
- Mentorship Committee
- And several others

Looking ahead, we are excited for our upcoming Spring Meeting on March 20–21, 2026, hosted this year by Tennessee State University. We are already seeing a high level of interest and registration, and we look forward to welcoming everyone. The schedule includes an excellent lineup of CEU courses and a vibrant vendor showcase.

Thank you again for your continued dedication and passion for our profession. Together, we will continue moving physical therapy forward in Tennessee.

Jody Swearingen, DPT, OCS, STC, COMT, CHP
President, APTA-Tennessee Chapter

VICE PRESIDENT CORNER

I hear this question when visiting clinics and facilities across Tennessee: “What has APTA done for me lately?”

Early in my career, my answer might have centered on continuing education. And yes—APTA provides exceptional educational opportunities: high-quality courses, access to research, professional publications, and national meetings like the recent Combined Sections Meeting in California.

But APTA is so much more than continuing education.

Since 1921, our national association has grown to include 51 chapters and 18 specialty sections, representing more than 100,000 members. APTA helps shape the future of our profession through strong governance, strategic leadership, and persistent advocacy. It supports your practice with the Code of Ethics, clinical practice guidelines, professional standards, career development resources, and recognition of outstanding members.

Most importantly, it ensures that the direction of our profession reflects the voice of its members. Over the past several years, with input from thousands of members, APTA developed a strategic framework focused on three priorities:

- **Advancing Our Payment**
- **Empowering Our Members**
- **Evolving Our Practice**

Payment remains one of the greatest challenges we face—across every practice setting. At the state level, APTA Tennessee is actively advocating for improved reimbursement and reduced administrative burden for physical therapist services. These efforts require persistence, relationships, and a unified voice. And that voice must include *all of us*.

Advocacy does not happen because of a few dedicated individuals. It happens when each of us meets with legislators, educates other healthcare professionals, and raises public awareness about the value and impact of physical therapy.

On February 4, despite a significant ice storm, we gathered for our 2026 Day on the Hill. We showed up. We met with legislators. We introduced ourselves not just as individuals—but as a united profession. To those who attended: thank you. Your presence matters.

VICE PRESIDENT CORNER

If you were unable to attend, your voice is still needed. Reach out to your legislator. Introduce yourself. Start the conversation. Advocacy is not a one-day event—it is an ongoing responsibility.

We are also fortunate to have members who go far beyond simply maintaining membership. At our Spring Conference, we will celebrate those individuals at a special Awards Event. I encourage you to join us, congratulate them, and connect with colleagues from across the state. Perhaps next year, it will be your name being called.

If attending statewide conferences is challenging due to time or distance, I encourage you to engage locally through your district. District meetings provide continuing education, networking, and meaningful professional connection—close to home.

As your Vice President, I am here for you. Whether you have questions, ideas, concerns, or simply want to connect, please reach out. Our association is strongest when we engage with one another.

I look forward to seeing you at the Spring Conference—and to continuing the work of strengthening our profession together.

Gretchen Jackson, DPT, GCS



Thank you for your continued support of TPTPAC—your commitment makes all the difference in helping us achieve our mission.

Scan the QR Code to make a monthly donation or a one time donation.



DAY ON THE HILL

2026



APTA
Tennessee

A Chapter of the American
Physical Therapy Association

**2026
SPRING
CONFERENCE**

March 20th & 21st

Nashville, TN

Tennessee State University

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2026

SPRING CONFERENCE

March 20th & 21st



**TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY**

**[Click Here to Register, Book a
Hotel, and Browse the
Brochure!](#)**



2026 SPRING CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

7:30 AM - Registration Opens -PTA SIG Meeting

Professional Track

8:30-10:30 (0.2 CEUs)

Elevate Your Career: Dynamic Strategies for Professional Development in Physical Therapy
Dr. Ron Barredo PT, DPT, EdD, MA, FAPTA, FACHE, FNAP

10:45-11:45 (0.1 CEUs)

Maximizing the Value of the Medical Biller: It's About Time!
Bob Kowalick

12:45-2:45 (0.2 CEUs)

Leadership for Everyone
Dr. Joe Black PT, DPT, SCS, ATC
Dr. Alan Meade PT, DScPT, MPH

3:00-5:00 (0.2 CEUs)

The Importance of an Existential Lens in Treating Patients with Chronic or Identity-Disrupting Pain
Dr. Alivia Stehilc PT, DPT
Dr. Emma Smith PhD, LPC, CST, CCTP

11:45-12:45 - Lunch -District Chair Committee Meeting

Specialty Track

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM (0.3 CEUs)

Bridging Cultural Gaps: How to Use the Health Belief Model to Improve Practice
Dr. Patricia King PT, PhD, FAAOMPT, FAPTA

12:45 PM -5:00 PM (0.4 CEUs)

Muscles Are Friends: A Clinician-Friendly Approach to Screening and Integrating Pelvic Floor Muscle Function
Dr. Marsha Bowman PT, DPT, WCS, BCB-PMD

Student Track

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

NPTEFF Student Board Review

5:00 PM

Awards Ceremony

Join us for a ceremony honoring our award winners with drinks and appetizers

7:00 PM Legislative Committee Meeting (15 minutes)

2026 SPRING CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

7:30 AM - Registration Opens
-Delegate Committee Meeting
-TNCAPT Meeting

General Session

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM (0.1 CEU)

Eat, Drink, Sleep, and Be Merry: Lifestyle Medicine
and Physical Therapy

Dr. Derek Charles PT, DPT, EdD

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM (0.2 CEUs)

Navigating Change in 2026: Local and National Updates In
Physical Therapy That Affect Us

*Dr. Jody Swearingen DPT, OCS, STC, COMT, CHP
President, Tennessee Chapter of the APTA*

11:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Exhibitor Bingo and Poster Presentation

**12:00-1:00 Chapter Business
Meeting and Lunch**

Professional Track

1:15 PM - 5:30 PM (0.4 CEU)

Manual Therapy Must Haves: The Tips, Tools, and
Techniques I "Won't Leave Home Without"

Dr. Patricia King PT, PhD, FAAOMPT, FAPTA

Ethics & Jurisprudence Track

1:15 PM - 5:30 PM (0.4 CEUs)

Ethics in Physical Therapy Practice &
Jurisprudence - The Legal Basis of Physical
Therapy Practice

*Alan Meade, PT, DScPT, MPH
Jane David, PT, DPT, MS*



Please Join Us

For a Reception
Honoring our APTA TN
Award Winners

March 20, 2026

5:00 - 7:00 PM

Tennessee State University

Dinner & Two Drink Tickets

ANNOUNCING

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

**APTA TENNESSEE
GERIATRICS
SPECIAL INTEREST
GROUP
(SIG)**



APTA
Tennessee

SAFE

SUSTAINED ATHLETE FITNESS EXAM

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR TENNESSEE SENIOR OLYMPICS 2026!

PTS, PTAS, AND ALL STUDENTS!!!

JUNE 19-21, 2026

FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY

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SENIOR ATHLETES

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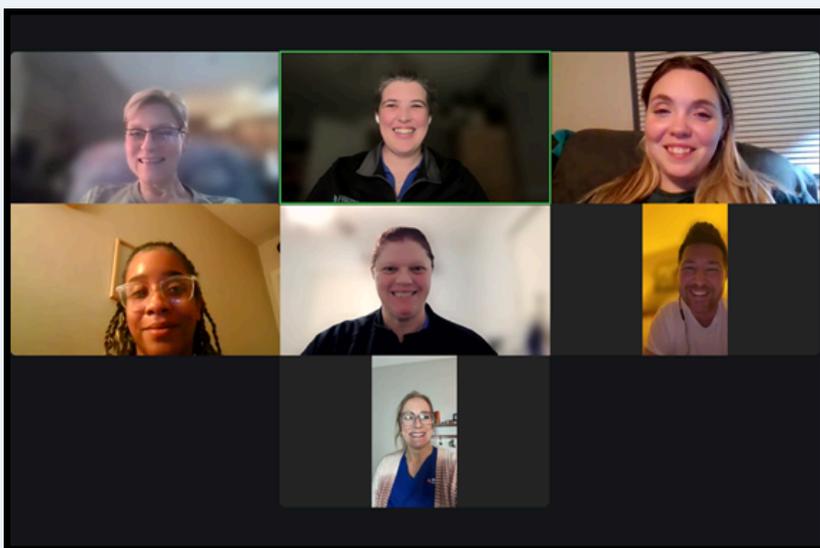




Physical Therapist Assistant SIG



The PTA SIG had a successful year in 2025 with more involvement with the quarterly zoom meeting attendance and also our member meeting in the Spring. We chose to have our member meeting for the fall online via Zoom. This year we are excited to get this year kicked off with more CEU options, Executive Committee elections for Treasure and Secretary during the member meeting at the Spring Meeting, and our Fall meeting that will be held in the Knoxville District this year. I have heard rumors that the location is a must attend



The PTA's in our state have been working hard serving you. From the Executive Committee and other leaders within APTATN in trying to get a law changed regarding how we are able to practice.



Physical Therapist Assistant SIG

Diane Michels, our PTA Council Rep. was able to attend CSM in Anaheim, CA this year. I was able to catch up with her and ask a few questions about her experience at this national meeting. Diane graduated from Roane State Community College in 2023, and has been active in leadership ever since.

Was this your 1st CSM that you attended in person:

Diane: Yes it was.

What PTA Specific meeting(s) did you attend?

Diane: Two, the PTA council meeting and the PTA town hall.

Of those meeting(s) how many were PTA Council Rep. specific?

Diane: One

Were there any APTA TN meetings/gatherings that you attended?

Diane: Yes I did attend an APTA TN Meeting. Thursday evening TN had an informal meet and greet.

If you were not a PTA Council Rep., would you recommend other PTA's to attend future meetings?

Diane: I would absolutely recommend that PTA's attend CSM.

How inclusive as a PTA was the programming?

Diane: The programming was somewhat inclusive. Most language addressed PTs specifically, with the exception of one course that I attended. However, almost all of the topics applied to my treatment of patients, and I was already able to incorporate some of the more pertinent takeaways into my practice already.

What was your biggest takeaway from attending CSM?

Diane: It is critically important to stay up to date on the most recent research to ensure that we are using best practices that will have the most impactful outcomes for our patients. The only way to operate at the top of your license is to keep up to date.





Physical Therapist Assistant SIG



Please remember to nominate individuals for awards, and for those who are wanting to get more involved please submit an interest wanting to run for positions at the state level. It is a great networking opportunity and creates friendships throughout the state that you may never have been introduced to before. These individuals are a valuable source of information and support.

Keep an eye out on our Facebook and Instagram accounts to keep up to date with current announcements and changes. Remember that you are encouraged to invite your coworkers to the CEU courses. Non members will pay a small fee, but our courses are approved by APTA TN. All CEU courses now have to be approved by APTATN, even if they were approved through a different state.



Physical Therapist
Assistant SIG

Save the Date:

March 20-21st Spring Meeting in Nashville- elections held at member meeting

March 26th- CEU opportunity via ZOOM

Speaker: Nathan Roddy, DPT

Topic: ACL rehab for the Athlete

If you ever have any questions or concerns feel free to contact us. Our contact information can be found on the APTATN.ORG website on the Committee Chairs page, under the Member Benefits drop down. You must be logged into the site to access this information.

We can not wait to see you at the Spring Meeting and the upcoming CEU zoom courses!

Jennifer Cunningham, PTA, BS
PTA SIG Chair

PRESENTED BY:



APTA
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A Chapter of the American
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3RD ANNUAL 4 MAN SCRAMBLE GOLF TOURNAMENT

CASH PAYOUT

**TOP 4
TEAMS**

REGISTRATION
DUE:

6/12/2026

20 JUNE 8 AM
2026 SHOTGUN START

WHITE PLAINS GOLF COURSE

• COOKEVILLE, TN



COST

\$100 PER PLAYER, \$400 PER TEAM

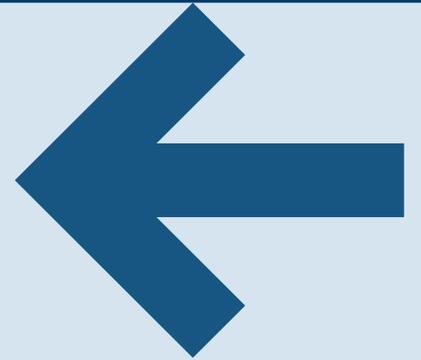
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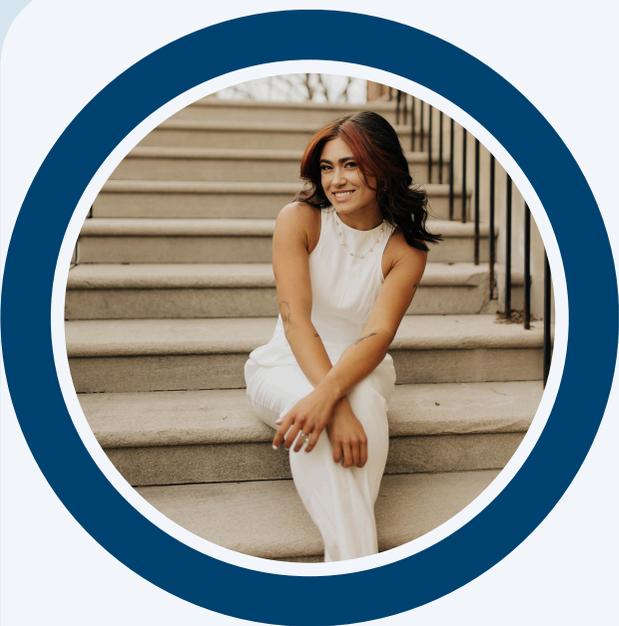
INTRODUCING: 2026 STUDENT SIG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Student SIG President: Benjamin Pobanz



My name is Benjamin Pobanz (I usually go by Bo) and I am a 2nd year student at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. In my personal time I love hiking with my wife, practicing martial arts, reading, and playing board games. My favorite professional experiences have been volunteering at Camp Horizon as well as attending CSM 2026. My long term professional interests include pediatric care, pediatric research and the intersection of physical therapy and public health. I hope to serve by promoting student focused activities and fostering relationships between students in DPT programs across Tennessee.

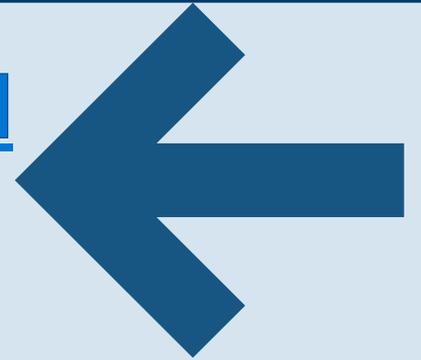
Student SIG Vice President: Hannah Burkhart



My name is Hannah Burkhart, and I am currently a second-year Doctor of Physical Therapy student at East Tennessee State University. My background as a collegiate track and field athlete, combined with a master's degree in Sport Science and Coaching Education, has shaped my professional goal of serving as a comprehensive resource in sports performance and rehabilitation. Through my experience in strength and conditioning at both the high school and collegiate levels, I strive to create a holistic athlete recovery model that seamlessly bridges the clinic and the weight room. As a current collegiate powerlifter, I continue to gain relevant experience working with diverse athletic populations while further developing my ability to balance high-level training, academics, and professional responsibilities.

INTRODUCING: 2026 STUDENT SIG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Student SIG Secretary and APTA TN
Student Council Representative:
Emily Kaesberg



Hi everybody! I am Emily Kaesberg. I am a first year physical therapy assistant student at Jackson State Community College, and am excited to serve as the student SIG secretary and student council representative! I have had experience serving as a secretary and president for my local Phi Theta Kappa chapter. When I have free time outside of the classroom, you can usually find me enjoying time with friends or family, finding local coffee shops, doing some sort of craft, or traveling

Student SIG Student Government Liason:
Taliyah Morgan



My name is Taliyah Morgan, and I am a Doctor of Physical Therapy student at Tennessee State University. I currently serve as Clinic Coordinator for the student-run Tiger Rehab Clinic, helping oversee pro-bono physical therapy services for underserved and uninsured members of the Nashville community. I also serve as APTA Liaison/Legislative Chair for my cohort, promoting student advocacy and professional engagement. Additionally, I lead the Tiger Steps Mentorship Program, connecting pre-physical therapy students with DPT mentors and fostering professional development. As Student Government Liaison to the Tennessee Physical Therapy Association, I am dedicated to strengthening the connection between students and the profession across Tennessee.

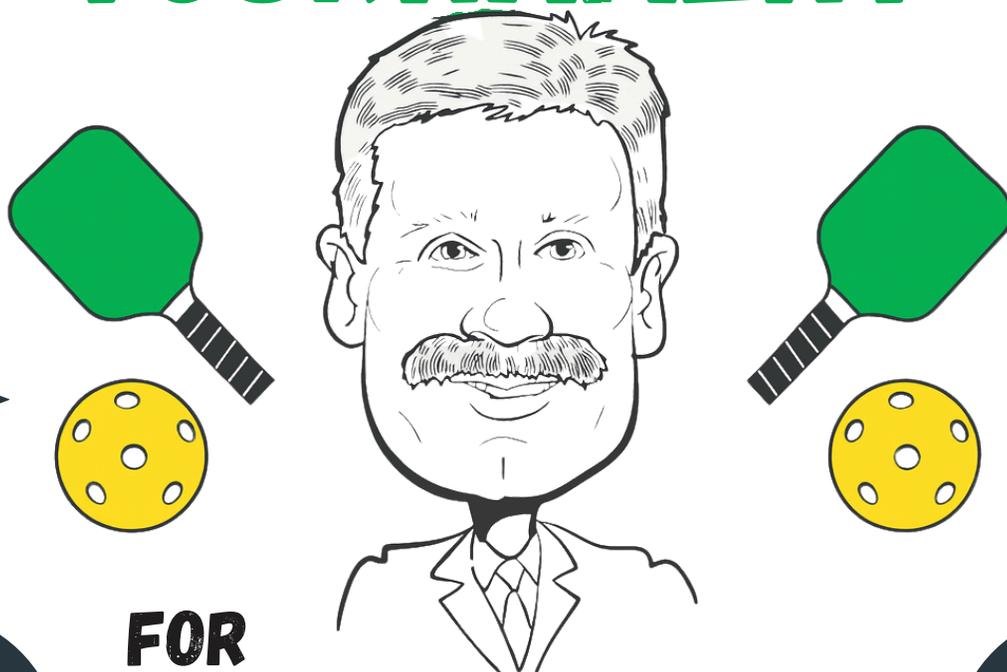


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APRIL 11, 2026

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9:00 AM

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REFLECTIONS ON MOVEMENT: A DANCE FOR PARKINSON'S EXPERIENCE

Jeremy Turner, Jackson State Community College

“Dance is the hidden language of the soul.” - Marth Graham

I was sitting in one of Ballet Memphis' studios when the rhythm began to build. Hands clapped together, and feet struck the floor hard enough that I felt the vibration beneath me. In the corner, a pianist kept time, each note steady and clear, guiding everyone forward. The instructors' voices carried over the music, sharp and supportive, while the group moved in sequence. From my seat, I could sense the energy filling the room as the rhythm created a shared atmosphere that prepared us for what came next.

At the start of class, I introduced myself and explained why I was there. The attendants responded with warm nods, a few smiles, and easy conversation that made me feel welcome almost immediately. Their openness, along with that of the instructors, set the tone for the session. It was clear this was more than a dance class; it was a shared experience built on respect and connection.

As the class unfolded, I noticed how the instructors shaped the flow of movement with precision. Their cues were clear, and their timing was deliberate. I, however, found myself falling a step behind more than once, trying to match the rhythm while watching those around me for guidance. Still, repetition and rhythm anchored the choreography, while the collective charisma of the group fueled the room's energy. At moments, the pace felt demanding, but the atmosphere remained focused and purposeful.

Observing the participants, I was struck by the emotional depth expressed through their movements. Every tendu, echappe, and fifth position carried meaning beyond technique. The choreography demanded strength, balance, and coordination, yet also offered space for expression and connection. In this way, dance became more than exercise; it functioned as a therapeutic activity. The students were not simply practicing steps. They were easing tension, finding rhythm, and building trust in themselves and with one another.

REFLECTIONS ON MOVEMENT: A DANCE FOR PARKINSON'S EXPERIENCE CONT.

Jeremy Turner, Jackson State Community College

"Dance is the hidden language of the soul." - Marth Graham

From the perspective of a student physical therapist assistant, the parallels were easy to recognize, even if they were not spoken aloud. The stomp of feet grounded the body. The sway of torsos tested balance and stability. Repetition reinforced memory and control. Beyond mechanics, the experience felt genuinely cathartic. Dance gave the students a place to release stress, to share musical rhythm collectively, and to find a sense of social connection that strengthens more than just muscle and motor skills.

When the final note faded, silence settled over the room. The echoes of clapping and stomping lingered for a moment like a faint vibration in the air. I noticed fatigue, satisfaction, and quiet pride etched into the faces around me. I was not just an observer. I had witnessed how dance could serve as both expression and rehabilitation, how choreography could unburden the weight of physical limitations while also unburdening the soul. That realization, how dance can help restore both body and mind, opened my eyes to another powerful intervention for those living with Parkinson's disease. This was my first Dance for Parkinson's class, and it will, undoubtedly, not be my last.





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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY: EXPANDING ACCESS AND ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY

Betsy Myers, PT, DHS, Board Certified Clinical Specialist in Orthopaedic Physical Therapy

Physical therapy (PT) services are essential for managing chronic medical conditions, preventing disability, and promoting healthy aging. Underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minorities and low-income groups, often experience higher rates of musculoskeletal disorders. While attending outpatient PT after an emergency department discharge reduces 30-day revisit risk, those with lower socioeconomic status are least likely to follow through — the very people who may benefit most. The traditional PT model creates barriers for many underserved populations through location, cost, and cultural disconnect. Additionally, this system is traditionally reactive, treating the result of illness or injury, rather than engaging in proactive, preventative medicine. Community-based partnerships can bring PT expertise into trusted spaces where people already gather.

Barriers to Accessing Physical Therapy

There are multiple barriers to accessing PT services. Low-income communities have significantly fewer PT providers per capita. Additionally, those living in rural communities may travel 2–3 times farther for PT services. Transportation itself, even in cities, can be a barrier. To travel the seven miles from my home to my PT clinic takes only 12 minutes by car and I can park directly in front of the building. In contrast, taking the bus requires 90–110 minutes, depending on the time of day, consists of two buses and a 15-minute walk over uneven terrain that includes a flight of stairs. Layer in high deductibles, copays, and lost wages from taking time off work for regular appointments, and the financial burden of seeking PT is clearly apparent. Cultural differences in understanding pain, disability, and rehabilitation are additional barriers. Historical medical exploitation, experiences of discrimination, and the dismissal of individual concerns create deep mistrust — one that even the most affirming clinicians struggle to overcome, particularly within a PT workforce that remains predominantly white, cisgender, and heteronormative.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY: EXPANDING ACCESS AND ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY CONT.

The Case for Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are one clear way to overcome these obstacles and improve healthcare access. Community organizations have a clearer understanding of the values and needs within their communities. They have years, sometimes decades, of experience building relationships, trust, and credibility. Community organizations have existing physical spaces and already established transportation networks. This long-term presence and commitment to the community are key factors in creating sustainable PT services. Physical therapists, trained in both clinical reasoning and functional assessment, are uniquely equipped to translate community needs into targeted, effective interventions.

How Physical Therapy Complements Community Services

Physical therapy services can complement existing community services in many ways. They can add a clinical dimension to wellness programs. Physical therapists can provide education programs for lifestyle strategies such as making healthy food choices and reducing trip hazards. They can train community health workers and staff members to identify individuals with functional limitations affecting daily life and connect them with needed services. Just as preventative dental care reduces both suffering and long-term costs, proactive PT can identify and address deficits before they become disabilities. A parallel situation in PT might be encouraging members of a progressive living facility to have an annual PT visit to identify balance, strength, or mobility deficits. Targeting these areas might not only prevent falls and delay, or even avoid, the transition to an assisted living setting but also enhance socialization via the ability to more easily participate in group activities and outings. Another example might be a partnership with a house of worship where a physical therapist provides monthly education sessions after regular services: addressing concepts such as healthy eating and fall prevention or individualized consultations in the “fellowship hall.” PT’s consistent presence within these spaces builds trust over time, while on-site services eliminate the barrier of transportation. Such partnerships provide enhanced services to community members while PTs gain a deeper understanding of the social determinants of health and community strengths.

Building an Effective and Sustainable Partnership

For those ready to act, the following steps offer a practical starting point. The roadmap below outlines a path from identifying community need through formalizing a sustainable partnership (Table 1). Key throughout this process is the essential principle: “nothing about us without us.” At every stage, community members and organizational leaders should shape how, when, and where services are delivered. Commit to, and plan for, long-term sustainability from the beginning. Develop tiered service models with group education, individual consultations, and both pro bono and billable services. Consider pro bono services alongside billable services.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY: EXPANDING ACCESS AND ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY CONT.

| Step | Action |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Identify the Need | Understand who is underserved and what challenges they face in your community. |
| 2. Find Trusted Partners | Seek established organizations: senior centers, faith communities, YMCAs, schools, public housing authorities. |
| 3. Start the Conversation | Begin with informal dialogue to gauge capacity and interest in a healthcare partnership. |
| 4. Conduct a Needs Assessment | Ask community members what, when, where, and how services should be delivered. |
| 5. Pilot a Small Program | Start with a workshop, screening event, or monthly consultation hours to build trust and momentum. |
| 6. Secure Funding | Explore grants, hospital community benefit programs, value-based care contracts, and philanthropic support. |
| 7. Formalize the Partnership | Create memoranda of understanding clarifying roles, responsibilities, and resource sharing. |

Table 1. Partnership Development Roadmap.

The Importance of Training and Adaptability

Recognize that training may be required. Language and cultural awareness training are just a part of what may be needed. Consider a community of unhoused individuals where the biggest problem is diabetic foot ulcers. Clinicians must not only understand wound management but adapt their approach to the patient's real-world circumstances. While a total contact cast may represent the standard of care, it is inappropriate for a patient who cannot reliably return for cast changes. Clinicians must be prepared to innovatively treat such patients while still following evidence-informed care.

Measuring Program Outcomes

Create a means of assessing program outcomes. Recognize that progress may look different in community settings, particularly those with complex social needs. Track traditional clinical measures alongside community-centered outcomes that reflect what matters most to the people you serve. Table 2 illustrates both categories and can serve as a starting framework for outcome tracking. Develop feedback mechanisms for community members to raise concerns throughout the program.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY: EXPANDING ACCESS AND ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY CONT.

| Traditional Clinical Outcomes | Community-Centered |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Strength and range of motion | Confidence and self-efficacy |
| Functional mobility and | Social connection and |
| Pain levels (numeric or visual | Return to valued activities |
| Patient-reported outcome | Medication reduction |
| Reduction in falls | Reduced emergency |
| Discharge to lower level of | Improved chronic disease |

Table 2. Outcome Tracking Framework.

A Call to Action

Community partnerships such as these will build trust and engagement over time, strengthening relationships between healthcare and the community. They provide PTs with the opportunity to expand their clinical reasoning, enhance their communication skills, and improve their cultural humility. Clinicians may have improved career satisfaction and reduced burnout through meaningful engagement with the community. Document your successes, and your failures. Healthcare research has historically underrepresented marginalized communities. By documenting and disseminating both the qualitative data and the human stories behind community partnerships, you can help shift that record — and inspire others to follow. You can be the ripple that starts the wave.

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BEYOND THE CLINIC WALLS: WHAT ADAPTIVE SKIING TEACHES ABOUT PHYSICAL THERAPY

What begins on a mountainside doesn't end there. When seven University of Tennessee at Chattanooga physical therapy students and one Chattanooga State Community College physical therapist assistant student joined Beech Mountain's 44th Annual Adaptive Ski Week (January 26-30, 2026), they discovered something most practicing clinicians eventually learn: the most transformative moments in our profession often happen outside clinic walls. Alongside faculty member Betsy Myers, PT, DHS, and specialists from across the country and the United Kingdom, these students didn't just help skiers navigate slopes—they witnessed how service expands our clinical lens, deepens our empathy, and reconnects us to why we chose this profession. Their reflections capture what one week of volunteerism can teach, and why such experiences matter, not just for students in training, but for all of us seeking to expand our impact beyond traditional practice settings.



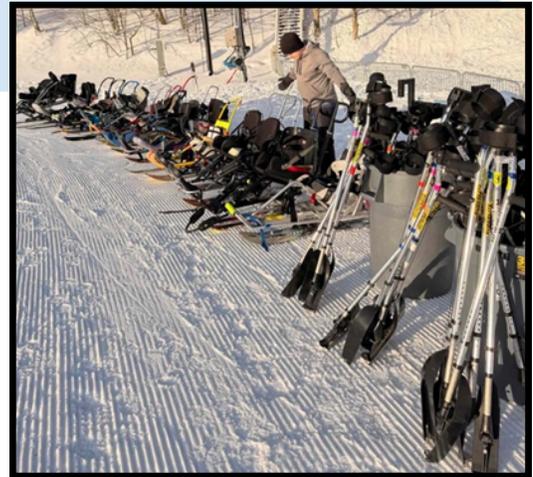
My experience volunteering with Catalyst's Adaptive Ski program at Beech Mountain was so good, mainly because of the time I spent with the participants. I was primarily a slope guardian and worked with several participants who had never done adaptive skiing before or were skiing for the first time since a spinal cord injury. They consistently showed so much joy and excitement to be participating, with one family even telling me their son looked forward to this week the most out of every year. Another girl who I skied with was smiling before we even got on the slopes because of the friends she had made in the lobby; she had come with the intention of meeting other girls her age who were excited about adaptive skiing. While she loved making new friends, she was also fearless on the slopes. At the bottom of her first blue slope, she started laughing and told us she felt the rush of adrenaline that people always talk about when skiing. One other friend I made, who had an amputation below her knee, talked on the ski lift with me about how her various prosthetics gave her the freedom to do different sports. She was already an impressive climber and came to learn how to ski. This was extremely valuable to me to see how much people with disabilities can do if provided with opportunities to do so. I had so much fun this week and would gladly do it again!!

-Isabelle Torrence, SPT, Class of 2027, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

BEYOND THE CLINIC WALLS: WHAT ADAPTIVE SKIING TEACHES ABOUT PHYSICAL THERAPY CONT.

The opportunity to represent UTC at the Beech Mountain Adaptive Ski event provided hands-on experience in a unique environment and created the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the responsibility we have as clinicians to give back to our communities. The event included volunteers from multiple occupations and illustrated that the intrinsic desire to “do good” goes further than any title. For myself, it was enlightening and humbling to see how my small actions gave these participants experiences that they won’t ever forget. One participant stated, “3 years ago I was ready to call hospice care, but now adaptive sports has given me a new breath of life and given the inspiration to keep moving forward.” Another participant had a family member who stated, “Since my father’s diagnosis of Parkinson’s, they have pumped him full of medicine and artificial things, but getting to feel the sun, snow, and wind on his skin while going down the mountain is better than any medicine a doctor could give me.” So, while my part in volunteering for the event felt small, it provided opportunity for so much more for somebody else. This gave a reminder of the obligation I have as a future clinician to use the education and opportunities God has provided me to put back into my community and culture future service to others.

-Cameron Smith, SPT, Class of 2027, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga



The opportunity to volunteer for Catalyst Sports, Beech Mountain Adaptive Ski week, was such an incredible experience. It was truly inspiring to work alongside amazing leaders, ski instructors, and other volunteers who dedicated their time to help others reclaim a lost passion or fulfill a lifelong dream. As a registrant, my role was to provide a warm welcome to the participants and their families/caregivers/friends, and to ensure they had the necessary information to start their day.

The most impactful part of my job was witnessing the pre-lesson excitement, followed by the overwhelming joy and gratitude the participants shared for the staff and Catalyst Sports afterward. Every one of the caregivers was absolutely amazing. Many traveled for hours, navigating the challenges of transporting adaptive equipment while maintaining unwavering patience just to make this experience possible for their loved ones. This week showed me the impact that adaptive sports have on so many and the importance of expanding accessibility. Ultimately, adaptive ski week showcased a profound kind of love and community that I am so grateful to have experienced.

-Grace Warner, Class of 2027, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

BEYOND THE CLINIC WALLS: WHAT ADAPTIVE SKIING TEACHES ABOUT PHYSICAL THERAPY CONT.

The opportunity of volunteering during the Beech Mountain Adaptive Ski Week, organized by Catalyst Sports, was such a special experience. As someone who has had minimal exposure to any adaptive sports, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect or how I would be helping. After arriving and receiving an introduction to the equipment that would be used, how it would operate, and the level of assistance or independence participants could have while on the snow, a new awareness of adaptive sports started to slowly form. It wasn't until I started working with the participants that the picture came into clear perspective though. The individuals that I interacted with were some of the warmest, funniest, and passionate people that I've had the pleasure of meeting. Some were there to learn new skills, perfect their technique or simply have fun during their lessons. My role as a volunteer was to ski alongside the adaptive participants and their instructors to act as a sort of buffer so that others on the mountain wouldn't cut us off or ski in the middle of our little group while the participant was trying to utilize the adaptive equipment. This provided me with a front row seat to see how determined and resilient the participants were. After witnessing this firsthand, the picture of adaptive sports I have now is one of celebrating the different abilities of people and providing equal access to all. This is an experience that I will cherish and that I have already been contemplating making a recurrent event in the winters. Thank you to Catalyst Sports for what they were able to accomplish and for providing people of different abilities this amazing opportunity.

-Caroline Capell, SPT, Class of 2027, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga



UPCOMING EVENTS



March 10, 2026

APTA TN Chattanooga District Meeting and CEU

March 20-21, 2026

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June 20

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