

*SSO Traditions/Rituals are marked with an *

NOTE: Primary presenters are listed here, all contributing authors will appear in the proceedings

Society for the Study of Occupation: USA 2025 Annual Research Conference Occupations and Nature: Connections and Transactions		
Pre-Conference Location: Moody Gardens, Galveston TX Thursday Events all occur in Salon E		
Thursday, November 6, 2025 [Salon E]		
9:00 am - 11:30 am	Pre-Conference Education Session Connecting around Occupational Science Education: A conversation for all Presented by the inaugural SSO:USA Education Committee, Jenny Womack, Chair	
Catered Lunch for All-day Registrants		
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Pre-Conference Research Institute: Water: Muddying Doing, Knowing, and Being Irene J. Klaver, PhD Professor, Department of Philosophy & Religion, University of North Texas	
5:00 pm – 7:30 pm		
Dinner On Your Own & Occupational Balance Break*		
7:30 pm - 9:30 pm	Welcome Ceremony* (Cash Bar) & Poster Sessions [Moody 1]	
7:30 pm - 8:00 pm	Land Acknowledgement* Welcome and Opening Remarks – Kendra Heatwole Shank SSO:USA Society Traditions – Pollie Price & John White	
POSTER SESSIONS	Yousef Babish	Mapping Social Transformation Through Occupation: A Global Initiative for Equity and Justice
	Ashlea Cardin	Grandmother's Flower Garden: Using a Quilt Block Aesthetic to Teach Knowledge Organization and Professional Reasoning
	Sapna Chakraborty	Exploring stress, occupational balance, coping, and well-being in graduate students
	Kimberly Hreha	Impact of Spatial Neglect on Participation in Occupations in Nature

	Heather Locasha	The Temporal Context and How it Influences the Occupation of Weight Management
	Riley Marsh	Analysis of Mental Health Journey Maps to Identify Common Gaps in Care
	Abigail McAllister	Exploring The Elements, Impacts, and Determinants of Unstructured Outdoor Play in Children: A Literature Review
	Jennn Mei Koo	Occupational Injustice in the Wake of Climate Crisis: Addressing Occupational Barriers to Support Climate Refugees
	Tom Mernar	Understanding Accreditation Requirement Trends of Teaching Occupation in Occupational Therapy Curricula
	Jennifer Pitonyak	Routines matter: Men's experiences of substance use disorder treatment in a residential behavioral health facility
	Carrie Smith-Bell	Applying the Model for the Process for Establishing Children's Occupations to Handwriting Among Homeschool Families

*SSO:USA Traditions & Rituals (explanations follow at the end of this document)

Welcoming Ceremony, Land Acknowledgement, Recognition of attendees, Conference format

Occupational Balance Breaks

Celebration of Accomplishments

Talent Share & Sing-a-long

Main Conference: November 7-8, 2025

Location: Moody Gardens, Galveston TX

Note: Presenters are on this schedule. All authors will be included in the Proceedings.

FRIDAY NOV. 7, 2025

7:00 - 8:30 am

Breakfast

7:30 – 8:15

Ritual of Remembrance – Sue Johnson, NIA Center
 Conference Orientation & Announcements – Cynthia Evetts

8:15 – 9:15 am

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING – Kendra Heatwole Shank

9:30 – 10:30 am

Theme Speaker [Moody 1]
Wild and Well: Nature’s Effect on You
 Rebecca Bracken, PhD, Conservation Research Director, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Time	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
10:45– 11:15 am	Katherine Toon Habit Stacking in Nature: Applying Mental Wellness to Self	Yiyang Fang Exploring Occupational Adaptation in Response to the Evolving Nature of Work in the Digital Age		Sarah Grinder #Landback: Contrasting Native American and Settler Colonial Perspectives of Time and Place
11:25 – 11:55 am		Rebecca Aldrich Understanding how nature manifests in North American retired and precarious workers’ experiences of third places	Camille Parchment Problematizing ‘autonomy’ in U.S. mental healthcare and legal systems: An occupational science perspective	Karen Sames Why We Should Care About Occupations Impacted by Warmer Winters

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Lunch On-Your-Own* & Occupational Balance Break- do your own thing OR:

- Beach clean-up - catch the 12:30 trolley to 81st Street Beach to meet Celeste & the sPLASH Team. Sign a waiver.
- On-site Bird Walk - meet Clayton [field biologist, Moody Gardens Conservation & Sustainability] at 12:20 in the hotel lobby by Cafe in the Park, 90 min. walking tour

FRIDAY	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
2:00 – 2:30 pm	Kristine Haertl Occupational Questions for Occupational Science: An Interactive Forum	Glen Cotton Perspectives of People Affected by Parkinson's Disease Who Are Participating in a Program Incorporating Horses	Aaron Bonsall “The Ocean Doesn’t Care:” Connections and Transcendence within Spiritual Experiences of Adaptive Surfers	Yousef Babish Piloting PARQ: Towards a Culturally Responsive, Intersectional Understanding of Privilege in Occupational Science
2:40 – 3:10 pm			Tessa Boston A Walk in the Park: Applying Appreciative Inquiry Methodology in Occupational Science	Kyle Karen Is that a thing? The thing-power of natural and manmade objects
3:20 – 3:50 pm			Kathleen Lockyer Ecoception and the NatureLed Approach: Reclaiming Nature Connection as a Foundational Human Occupation	Elizabeth Larson Inviting middle-school students to design their outdoor spaces: Comparing & contrasting COVID-19 & post-COVID cohorts
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science* [Salon E] “Let’s Take a Moment: Temporality and Significant Experiences” Mary C. Lawlor, ScD, Med, OTR/L, FAOTA			
5:30 – 6:00 pm	Break			
6:00 pm - 6:30 pm	2025 Ruth Zemke Lecturer Reception* [Foyer] Cash Bar			
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	RZLOS Celebration Dinner* honoring Dr. Elizabeth Yerxa [Moody 1] Silent Auction Benefitting Student Scholarships & Research Grants; Celebration of Accomplishments*			
8:30 pm – 10:30 pm	Talent Share* – John White & Karen McCarthy Make a joyful noise, move like you mean it, share, watch, listen and learn.			
LATE NIGHT	Occupational Balance Break* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Star Gazing from the Rooftop Gardens ● Night cap on the top floor at Shearn’s, or at the pool ... 			

SATURDAY NOV. 8, 2025

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7:30 – 9:00 am	Breakfast			
8:00 – 9:00 am	Member Networking – Karen McCarthy, Membership Committee [Moody 1]			
Time	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
9:10 – 9:40 am	Svitlana Stremousova Resource Seeking: The Development of an Occupational Science Construct	Lesley Garcia Tacit clinical reasoning in dementia practice: A qualitative study including the Black Caribbean British experience	Denise Nepveux Faculty Views on Integrating Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability into OT Curricula: A National Survey	Elinor Taylor CANCELED Switch to survive: Exploring autistic people's intersectional experiences of masking and code-switching
9:45 – 10:15 am		Daisy Alvarado Occupation across fronteras: A single case study of occupational opportunities from international border crossings	Nancy Bagatell The Ethnographic Study of Space: Lessons in Occupation and Access	Olivia Henrion Autistic Burnout: Experiences and Occupations of Autistic Adults
10:20 – 10:50 am	Bethany Gruskin Proposing Nesting as an Occupational Science Construct from Place-making and Resource Seeking	Jordan Major Race, Type 1 Diabetes, and Mothering: Reframing Occupational Science Research Through a Race-Conscious Perspective	Kyle Karen Research-in-progress: Dimensions of experience in repair as a community occupation	Lauren Villa Influence of an Inclusive, Nature-Based Occupational Therapy Program on the Well-Being of Neurodivergent Individuals
11:00 – 11:30 am	Jennifer Pitonyak Uncovering the nuance of family occupation via a systematic mapping review	Yujia Mo Applying Symbolic Interactionism to Understand Social Media as an Occupation in Young Adults with T1D	Allysin Bridges-German Cultivating embodied knowledge outside the classroom: Growth in the field	MaryBeth Gallagher Sensory health in community mental health

Lunch on your own & Occupational Balance Break* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student Gathering with Dr. Lawlor [Salon F] – 11:45 am – 12:30 pm ● Drumming experience: Nature’s Beat: Creating and Sensing Through Rhythm, Diana Honorat [Rooftop Gardens weather permitting, or Salon H] – 12:40 – 1:30 pm 				
SATURDAY	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
11:30 am - 1:30 pm				
1:30 – 2:00 pm	Jennifer Pitonyak Lessons learned from a national study of threshold learning in occupational therapy education	Sarah Grinder Relationality as Well-Being: An Indigenous Critique of Individualistic Outcomes in Occupational Science	Hannah Burke Nature-Based Occupational Engagement: A Multi-Theoretical Perspective	Joana Nana Serwaa Akrofi Bridging Past and Present: Occupational Insights from Ghanaian Traditional Healers
2:05 – 2:35 pm		Denise Nepveux Consume, Inhabit, Inherit: Transactions with "Nature" in Nature-Based Therapy Discourse	Eko Sumaryanto Adaptation and Evaluation of the Engagement in Meaningful Activities Survey in Bahasa Indonesia	MaryBeth Gallagher Nature-Based Occupations as Catalysts for Well-Being: Exploring the Transactions Among Youth, Environment, and Participation
2:45 pm - 3:15 pm	Aaron Eakman & Jeanine Blanchard Toward SSO:USA Research Priorities	Saori Ogura The meaning of ancestral grains cultivation to younger generations in Japan	Jessica Cogger Occupational Identity (Re)Construction in the Wake of Chronic Disability: The Role of Online Communities	
3:20 – 3:50 pm		Jian Jones Rooted in Song: An Ethnography on the Use of Music While Sharecropping	Jennifer Whittaker Developing an Interdisciplinary Public Health and Integral Ecology Travel Course: Reflections Through an Occupational Lens	
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Wrap Up Session & Closing Reception* Remembrance and Visioning: Legacies, Current work, and looking forward Storytelling, Memory making, and future orientation. Remembering Dr. Elizabeth Yerxa, summing up what was shared in this conference, and looking to the future study of Occupational Science. Reception/refreshment included.			

EXPLANATION OF TRADITIONS

This narrative represents oral history documented for our benefit by Pollie Price with John White, gathering also from the memories of others who are steadfast supporters of SSO.

Welcoming ceremony: recognition of traditions; acknowledging the indigenous land and the local traditions, sometimes have had performances by local groups. Recognition of attendance: 1st conference, 5 conferences; 10 conferences, all conferences, and international attendees, student attendees.

Format/ content of the conference: can include works in progress, e.g. ROL; preliminary findings, etc. Historical: desire to support students and developing researchers, and to facilitate networking/ collaboration through feedback. Generous amount of time for discussion guided by questions generated by the presenters as part of the abstract; e.g. 15 minutes presentation/ 15 -minutes discussion (could be 20/10). Passing time, and networking breaks (15 minutes is ideal periodically in addition to balance breaks or adjacent to them).

Conference Theme: Probably prompted by AOTA's use of conference themes, each year the Board and/or Conference Committee and possibly in collaboration with the local hosting institution, selects a theme that highlights current events, scientific breakthroughs, regionally significant features, or a specific topic. The theme is often used to encourage presentations that align with the theme as highlighted in the call for papers.

Introduction to the Society's traditions, their history, significance and importance, and how they have evolved and could evolve.

RZLOS/ kaleidoscope: The Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science is a fundamental tradition for the Society for the Study of Occupation USA. Dr. Zemke is an outstanding occupational scientist, in fact one of the founders of the discipline at USC. She has coined her own occupational science concepts but most important for this award, is that she was extremely dedicated to the OS students and early graduates, gently but continually nudging them to take the next step to deeply explore their ideas and contribute to the emerging science of occupation.

Dr. Zemke strongly endorsed developing a community of scholars. The day after the annual USC Occupational science conference, Dr. Zemke would gather the recent graduates, and present students to share their ongoing and emerging research but also their thoughts, concerns, and dreams for occupational science. SSO: USA emerged from these meetings –

To me it was interesting that 4 individuals independently came up with the idea of The Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science Award and at one early conference? committee meeting passionately established it to honour a person who celebrates the growth of ideas. It is important that I say growth of ideas. Unlike the Slagle award where people often present their life's work, the award is for people in process of working toward the growth of occupational science through scholarship, practice or being a member of the OS community.

The tradition of the award goes beyond the lecture. An engraved kaleidoscope, is formally presented to each year's recipient/ who opens it on stage and after having the first amazing look shares it with the OS community. Dr. Zemke chimes in to explain the finer details of the type and make of the kaleidoscope.

But, Why a Kaleidoscope? According to Dr. Zemke, the kaleidoscope serves as a metaphor for occupation. It is a collection of simple, everyday items that can create beautiful and often complex images. People change their perspectives by rotating the kaleidoscope to see the endless variety of images created. Indeed, the kaleidoscope is a well-chosen keepsake for the recipients of the Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science.

In recognition of Dr. Ruth Zemke's mentorship, questing intellect, and ongoing efforts to foster an occupational science community of researchers, this lectureship was named in her honor.

RZLOS Banquet: This event typically takes place in the evening following the delivery of the lecture in order to celebrate the honored lecturer and provide a platform for announcing the next year's lecturer (though the announcement sometimes happens at other times). This event also sometimes folds in other traditions such as celebration of accomplishments etc.

Celebration of accomplishments: champagne/Martinelli toasts: this year's RZLOS speaker, people who have completed the PhD/ SciC, PPOTD; published in the last year, presented in the last year, gotten a grant, earned promotion and/or tenure; retirements, full professor...next year's RZLOS.

History: started before the SSO-USA was established. Students and graduates would gather at The annual AOTA conference for dinner and we would toast our little victories of our building science.

Occupational balance breaks: Professional conferences are typically a flurry of activity. In recognition of our belief and value in occupational balance, the SSO:USA conference intentionally schedule breaks of unopposed time to step away from the conference to play, socialize, and network. Each year, the breaks are 1-3 hours in length and allow conference attendees to explore the local area and attractions. You can find a list of this year's sessions in the program.

Conference-provided meals and cocktail events: Because dining is a valued occupation by so many of the participants and planners, conferences often include a high percentage of meals that are provided. These shared meals often provide opportunities to highlight, kick off, or celebrate other elements of the conference and/or traditions (e.g. the RZLOS Banquet with heavy hors d'oeuvres or dinner, The Annual Business Meeting-most often accompanied with a breakfast). One challenge of this tradition has been in how it may add to the cost of the conference (however since most conference hotels require a minimum food and beverage charge, careful planning can make these meals and events fit within the cost of contracting with the hotel).

Talent share/ sing along: Bring your talent! It doesn't have to be a song; it could be dance, poetry...whatever moves you and expresses your being.

History This has been a tradition since before SSO-USA was established and it actually did start in a hot tub! In the beginning, we were a relatively small group, so it was easy to gather in a hot tub with wine and sing spontaneously started by whoever was inspired. At the first SSO-USA Conference in Galveston, TX, we were in a large acoustically resonant hall, and song broke out spontaneously. From there, a group would informally gather somewhere at the conference hotel and share songs, poetry, etc, but mostly songs. Within a few years of these informal gatherings formal time was set aside for this emerging tradition, and remained a spontaneous circle for several years. John White and Doris Pierce began to bring instruments, song books, and karaoke-type lyrics, adding structure. In the last few years, especially prompted by the pandemic and virtual meetings, and in an effort to be more inclusive, it has become a bit more structured in the form of a "talent share" that has invited a broader range of talents to be shared