

## Featured Member

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Gwendolyn Short, ATR-BC, LCPAT, is the Membership Committee Chair (and member since 1976) of the AATA and founder and CEO of *Cradle of Art*, a community arts center in Capitol Heights, MD. She has held numerous leadership roles in the Association over the past thirty-five years, including as a member of the Board (2012-16), Multicultural Committee Chair (2005-07), Honors Committee member (1991), and Governmental Affairs Committee member (1981-83). She also served eight years on the Registration Standards and Certification Committees of the Art Therapy Credentials Board and contributed to the creation of the first Credentialing Exam, which she herself was unable to take because she read the exam on tape for a special needs applicant (1994).

A graduate of The George Washington University art therapy program, Short has over forty years of clinical experience. She worked in various capacities, both as an art therapist and an administrator, at Prince George's County Health Department, Division of Mental Health and Division of Addictions and Mental Health, in Prince George's County, MD from 1977 to 2013. In 2013, she founded *Cradle of Art*. She currently works part-time at [CREATE Arts Center](#) in Silver Spring, MD.

Short values her AATA membership because it allows her to stay current in the field. Attending the annual conference exposes her to new techniques, and provides her with contacts for seeking advice if she chooses to incorporate them into her own practice. "The bottom line," she notes, "is that everyone is interested in seeing the growth of the profession." She recalls a time when she felt especially connected to the AATA: "The time when the membership voted and elected me to serve on the AATA Board of Directors, and then re-elected me." She was touched that "they showed faith and confidence that I would serve them well."



*"Untitled" by Gwendolyn Short, ATR-BC; Charlotte Boston, ATR-BC; and Cheryl Doby-Copeland, PhD, ATR-BC. Mixed media. 2016.*

When asked why art therapy is effective, Ms. Short explains how powerful it is for a client to not need to be skilled in art to express thoughts and feelings through art. She says, “Oftentimes, people are unaware of what they are projecting on the page; that is where the art therapist comes in.”

For the future of the profession, she hopes to see licensure in every state, greater accessibility to services, and wider recognition in the mental health and education communities. “I would like to see art therapy recognized as being on par with other peer mental health professions,” she says and adds, “I’d also like to see more educational institutions aware of the profession, whether or not they offer art therapy. Students should be guided on where they can go to study to pursue art therapy.” Topics that are especially important to Ms. Short include diversity and inclusion, social justice, and technology. “These are crucial when looking to the future.”

When communicating through times of tension, Short values open communication. Even in times of disagreement she believes that people should be able to openly express their views, respectfully, and say, “This is me, and this is my view.” While reflecting on her time in the Multicultural Committee, Short often found that, “When we think about multiculturalism, things often get reduced to black and white.” However, she has always welcomed people of any identity to share research and write about their histories in the field. She notes that “when we pool it all together, it’s not just black and white – hence, diversity.”

Ms. Short concludes, “Art therapy has served me well. I live it. And I promote it.”



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