



Conference Welcome Letter from the President of the American Art Therapy Association

*Donna Betts, PhD, ATR-BC, AATA President
November 9, 2017*



On behalf of the American Art Therapy Association's Board of Directors, welcome to the AATA's 48th Annual Conference in Albuquerque! While it's been over a year since we last convened, I hope you are as excited as I am to return to a fall schedule, and Albuquerque could not be more beautiful this time of year. The scenery of this Southwestern city will help to put you in the mindset of this year's theme, Art Therapy: Traversing Landscapes of the Heart & Mind. As art therapy uses an all-inclusive approach to wellness, this year's presenters provide a diverse platform to inspire attendees traveling from near and far to learn about the various inner landscapes that our profession serves to support.

The AATA's annual national conference is the premier art therapy event, so I hope you will take advantage of every opportunity to expand your knowledge by attending a variety of sessions, networking with the field's leading professionals, and reinvigorating your career through continuing education hours. We are pleased to present our feature keynote speaker Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who will lead Saturday's 11:30 a.m. closing plenary Why We Enjoy Making Art. Hungarian psychologist Dr. Csikszentmihalyi is renowned as Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Management and Founding Co-Director, Quality of Life Research Center at Claremont Graduate University, and the former head of the department of psychology at the University of Chicago and of the department of sociology and anthropology at Lake Forest College. Known for his research on the experience of flow, he introduced this concept in his best-selling book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Harper Perennial, 1990).

In honor of Veteran's Day, Saturday, November 11, two featured presentations will address the benefits of art therapy for military populations. I look forward to moderating a talented panel of presenters including Paula Howie, Girija Kaimal, Sara Kass, Bill O'Brien, and Melissa Walker during Friday's plenary keynote – Art Therapy with the Military: Working Across the Continuum. We will discuss historical perspectives, current practice throughout the United States, research initiatives and future directions for art therapy in working with military service members. Plan to also attend Friday's master class, *Transforming the Pain: Art Therapy with Military and Trauma Populations—An In-Depth Discussion of Advanced Interventions*, where moderator Paula Howie will lead a discussion with Doris Arrington, Amy Backos, Linda Gantt, Jacqueline Jones, and Eileen McKee. This master class aims to present the latest theoretical

underpinnings of working with traumatized individuals and interventions to aide you in thinking through complex cases.

Among the wide range of amazing sessions and presenters to invigorate your conference experience this year, perhaps the most important session to attend is Thursday morning's Annual Meeting of the Membership. All conference attendees are invited. This year, we will pilot a new format for the meeting that is intended to augment its relevance and provide an opportunity to learn about the Association's strategic direction, hear updates on the AATA's latest initiatives, and determine how you can become more involved. Following the Annual Meeting, please join the AATA Board of Directors for the Let's Talk! Member Forum: Sharing Ideas and Cultivating Foresight for Art Therapy. We encourage all attendees to come together in a conversation with us on topics important to AATA's mission and vitality, and crucial to the integrity of our values and commitment to equality and justice for all.

Also be on the lookout for opportunities to unwind and enjoy yourself! I hope you will join me at the conference kick-off event on Wednesday evening, the President's Opening Reception. Attendees who purchased a Full Conference Registration will have a ticket to the Opening Reception, the Saturday Breakfast Awards Plenary, and the Closing Event on Saturday evening. Economy package holders can inquire at the registration desk about purchasing tickets to these events, as tickets are not sold at the door.

As this will be my final conference serving as the AATA's President, I want to personally thank all the individuals who work to make this event such a success. Your diligent efforts are vital to this organization and the profession of art therapy.

Sincerely,

Donna Betts, PhD, ATR-BC
President, AATA Board of Directors



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