AOTA® The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 5, 2009

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NEARING CENTENNIAL, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROFESSION LAUNCHES NEW BRAND

Campaign to Educate Americans on Value of Occupational Therapy and Important Role it Plays Across All Ages

Bethesda, MD — The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) announced today a new nationwide initiative designed to help educate the public about the scope and value of what experts are predicting to be one of health care's most in-demand services in the coming decade.

Built around the phrase "Living Life To Its Fullest," the new branding platform underscores the role the occupational therapy profession plays in helping individuals achieve and maintain good health while maximize their potential to engage in all of life's activities. AOTA believes as Americans become more involved in their own health care decisions and seek ways to live longer and more fulfilling lives, occupational therapy's role in society will continue to grow.

"The focus of occupational therapy is on what is important to the person, helping them accomplish what they want and need to do in the everyday activities that make life worth living," said AOTA President Penelope Moyers Cleveland EdD, OTR/L, BCMH, FAOTA. "We believe it is time to tell that story in a way that enables people to fully understand how occupational therapy can positively impact their lives."

According to Cleveland, "Living Life To Its Fullest" embodies the essence of a profession that helps people of all ages promote health and prevent or live better with the effects of injury, illness or disability. "The science and evidence-based best practices which support our work focus on the physical, environmental, psychological and social needs of people. By using everyday activities as the means to enable people to get beyond disability or limitations, occupational therapy creates ways for individuals to live life to its fullest no matter what challenge they may confront," she said.

The initiative will include special Web site features, podcasts, advertisements, posters, direct mail, educational materials and the full use of social media tools to promote awareness of occupational therapy with consumers and within the health care community.

"Occupational therapy takes a body of knowledge that has evolved over a century and uses it to address very contemporary problems and issues," says Cleveland. "These include the effects of autism on children, adults and families, the safety of older drivers, the importance of full participation in life for residents in assisted living, the struggles in daily life of people with mental illness and the problems of workers with physically challenging jobs. Research has shown that all of these people can be helped through occupational therapy."

The timing for the launch of the new brand coincides with the growing trend of consumers engaging in more of their own health-related decisions, and comes at a time when the importance of addressing society's health care and social problems is at the top of the public agenda. Occupational therapy is provided in many different settings—private practice, community health centers, hospitals, schools and private homes—and most individuals are currently referred through a physician, discharge planner, social worker or school counselor. Most private insurance policies and public programs such as Medicare and Medicaid cover occupational therapy. As more and more consumers want to be empowered to make their own health care choices and live a healthier lifestyle, the use of occupational therapy is expected to grow significantly.

"A brand is much more than a logo or a slogan," says AOTA Executive Director Frederick P. Somers. "It is a promise, an expectation and ultimately an experience. Our goal is that our new brand platform helps to broaden the public's understanding of occupational therapy and differentiates us from the services of other professionals by crystallizing what we stand for and the positive impact occupational therapy can have on people's lives."

Founded in 1917, the **American Occupational Therapy Association** (AOTA) represents the interests and concerns of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, assistants and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA's major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, go to **www.aota.org**.

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