



**NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT**

100% PASS NPTE

The Class of 2023 was the first class in which all students took their board exam in July. One hundred percent of the class passed on the first attempt! In the past ten years, only three classes have achieved this. Eight of the ten classes have attained an ultimate pass rate of 100%. Most PTA programs require their students to complete a test prep class as part of the curriculum. The Northeast PTA program has never required this because of their exceptional pass rates.

NICK WEBER VISITS

Nick Weber, PT, DPT, OCS, FAAOMPT, recently visited the PTA program faculty and students. Nick is an assistant professor in the DPT program at Creighton



Nick Weber, photo credit Creighton University

University and serves as the president of the American Physical Therapy Association – Nebraska Chapter. Topics of discussion included benefits of belonging to APTA, current legislation surrounding physical therapy practice in the

state of Nebraska, reimbursement issues, and ways to be involved in advocacy at the state and national levels. Included in the topic of legislation and reimbursement was discussion of the decreased number of applicants to PT and PTA programs. Dr. Weber cited several factors having a trickling down effect on physical therapy education programs, including student debt following PT school and Medicare/insurance reimbursement. Students were encouraged to send an advocacy letter to their senator.

LSVT BIG GRANT/CERTIFICATION

The PTA program has been awarded an innovation mini grant to help offset the cost for PTA students to complete the LSVT BIG certification. The cost for each student is approximately \$325. No other PTA program in the state or surrounding states offers the LSVT certification during the program. According to a survey done by Tere Siedschlag, PTA program faculty, 82% of the rehabilitation directors and clinic

owners said they would hire, or consider hiring, a PTA who was LSVT certified over one who was not. Over half of the clinics surveyed indicated they currently have staff that are LSVT certified. Offering this certification to students will improve graduates' employability and draw in new applicants to the program.



Students will complete the two-day certification course in December after completing the fall 2023 semester. This will allow students to utilize their skills during clinicals if their site employs a PT who is LSVT certified. According to lsvtglobal.com, once students are certified in LSVT BIG, they can offer the treatment protocols to patients under the supervision of an LSVT Certified Clinical Instructor and in accordance with their state practice acts, professional regulations, and insurance regulations.

APPLIED SKILLS DAY

Students from the Class of 2024 recently had the opportunity to visit the Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Center at Faith Regional Health Services. Students toured the facility while learning about aerobic conditioning activities, strengthening exercise, and patient education topics for cardiac and pulmonary conditions commonly seen in physical therapy. It was a great way to close the learning loop from classroom to clinic.



Gerard Dunning, Brianna Aguilera, Autumn Dickmader, Mia Eickoff, Clay Patrick



Isaac Guenther, Kate Osterhaus, Becca McGinley, Lexi Schroder, Kennedy Settje, Alyson McFarland

Other areas our students tour at FRHS in the fall include the Diagnostic Imaging Department and the Advanced Wound Care Clinic. In the spring, they travel to Omaha and Lincoln to learn about aquatic therapy and treatment for patients with neurological disorders at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals, as well as treatment for amputees at Hanger Clinic: Physical Therapy and Prosthetics in Omaha.

GRADUATING 29TH CLASS

On August 7th, the PTA program graduated nine students and the Paramedic program graduated six in a full commencement ceremony. Ms. Stacey Aldag was the faculty speaker at the ceremony. Each graduate received a pin from their respective program to signify their graduation. The Class of 2023: Anna Bassler, Blair, NE; Madison Dye, Burwell, NE; Jade Koch, Norfolk, NE; Kayli Kocer, Wagner, SD; Erin Kujath, Fairbury, NE; Eli Knapp, Madison, NE; Brooklyn Moody, Aurora, NE; Mariah Richards, Milford, NE; Mariah Van Leer, Ord, NE. To date, the PTA program at Northeast has graduated 404 graduates.

FROM THE CLASS OF 2024

This semester has been very busy for our class. We just completed our first round of practicals and exams. We also recently completed two service-learning projects. We helped with the annual ALS walk hosted by ALS in the Heartland, as well as the Community PATCH Health Fair taking blood pressures and giving hand and upper back massages. These were great experiences that allowed us to give back to the community and promote physical therapy. We are taking four classes this semester: Orthopedic Assessment and Intervention 1, Clinical Pathophysiology, Physical Agents, and Clinical Management. We have our plates full, but we have been enjoying learning new things every single day. Our instructors make learning fun, and they do everything they can to set us up for success. We have 11 in our class. Being such a small class, we have become very close friends which makes this challenging program so much more enjoyable.

PTA CLUB'S ANNUAL MASSAGE DAY

This is the program's big fundraiser in the fall semester. Andrea Suhr, PTA program instructor and PTA Club Advisor, oversees this fundraiser. The students always enjoy this day and do such an excellent job impressing faculty, staff, friends, and family with their newly learned massage skills. This year the class raised \$1,050. This money is primarily used for students to attend continuing education at the Nebraska Chapter - APTA state meeting. Some of the funds are also used for scholarship donations and fun club activities that relieve stress and allow a little break from school.

SERVICE LEARNING

Saint Florian's Miracle Burn Camp Gala 2023 was held back in April. The first-year PTA students enrolled in Basic Physical Therapy Procedures sought out donations to support the silent auction. Our students raised \$625 in cash donations and an estimated \$1,700 in items to auction at the event. Four students and Andrea Suhr volunteered at the Gala in Sioux City, IA selling raffle tickets and help with the auction.



Alyson McFarland, Lexi Schroeder, Stevie Handsaker, Kate Osterhaus, Andrea Suhr

PTA students once again raised money and community awareness for ALS in the Heartland. The Class of 2024 raised \$1,290 and helped with the community walk on September 24, 2023. Through this experience, they got a chance to learn how patients and family members are affected by the disease, and why it is important to support organizations like this.

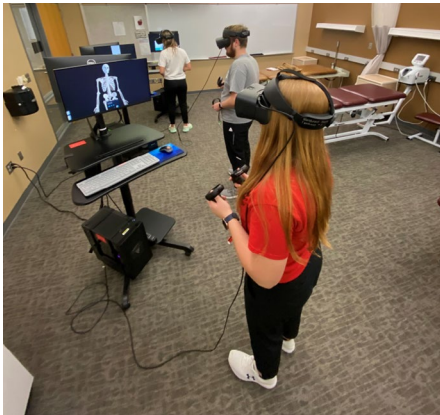


30TH ANNIVERSARY

The 2024-25 school year will be the 30th Anniversary of the PTA program at Northeast Community College. The PTA program had planned a 25th year anniversary celebration but plans were cancelled due to COVID. Planning for the 30th Anniversary will begin in the next couple of months. If you have ideas for the celebration, please contact the PTA program at PTA@northeast.edu.

VIRTUAL REALITY

The Health and Public Services Division, including the PTA Program, acquired five VR (Virtual Reality) headsets. Last year, gaming and training stations were purchased through the Northeast Innovation Mini-Grant. Currently, VR is being used in class as active learning experiences related to modulating pain, normal anatomy, abnormal pathologies, and building empathy as part of the DEI curriculum. There is reliable evidence that supports the use of VR in education, as well as in therapy clinics. The VR gaming stations are also used during recruitment days as Northeast has the only physical therapy program (PT and PTA) in Nebraska utilizing VR in classroom.



PTA students using VR while learning anatomy

JACQUE HOUSKA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Last year the Jacque Houska (Class of 1995) Memorial Scholarship was featured in the PTA newsletter. At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, the club officers asked for a motion to donate \$1,000 to Jacque Houska scholarship. We are just over halfway to our goal of fully funding the scholarship! The account still needs **\$12,405.18** with a goal of \$25,000 to reach permanent corpus. Reaching \$25,000 will allow a \$1,000 scholarship (depending on market changes) for a PTA student each year.

If you would like to support your PTA program and the memory of a fellow alum, you can visit <https://northeast.edu/giving/donate>. Click "other" in the Designation drop-down box and then type in Jacque Houska Memorial Scholarship.

PTA PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Program advisory committees are comprised of community representatives recognized in their own trade, business, or profession who assist Northeast staff in building and maintaining sound programs responsive to the needs of the workplace.

These committees are organized to advise instructional programs for a specific trade, occupation, or liberal arts specialty. Such committees typically have six to ten community members in addition to the program faculty and division dean. Committee membership should reflect geographical representation from the program's service area. This year's annual meeting will be held on November 15th.

The current members of the PTA Program's Advisory Committee include:

- Emily Afrank, DPT, Family Physical Therapy & Sports Center, Norfolk, NE
- Kristi Busch, PTA, CHI Health, Schuyler, NE
- Bridgette Christensen, PTA, Aegis Therapies, Omaha, NE
- Jami Doeke, OTR/L, CHT, Faith Regional Health Services, Norfolk, NE
- Ryan Gallagher, DPT, ATC, Overland Rehabilitation Services, Neligh, NE
- Angie Jackson, Northeast Community College, Norfolk, NE
- Dawn McKown, PT, ATC, CHI Health, Schuyler, NE
- Patrick Meuret, PT, DPT, Faith Regional Health Services, Norfolk, NE
- Katie Nohr, COTA/L, Premier Estates/Stanton Health Center, Stanton, NE
- Trisha VanDiest, PTA, Live Well Physical Therapy, Grand Island, NE
- Marci Woehler, PTA, Wayne Country View Care and Rehabilitation, Wayne, NE
- Jennifer Wrenholt, PTA, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, Lincoln, NE

HIMS PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

In March, the PTA students from the Class of 2023 presented an Ergonomics & Exercises session at the annual Health Information Management Systems (HIMS) continuing education. "Since a lot of the work in the HIM field is in an office setting, it was helpful to learn about computer ergonomics, correct posture, accessories to improve the ergonomics, and exercises," said Tina Mazuch, Program Director of the HIMS.

This was an awesome opportunity for the PTA students to showcase their knowledge about ergonomics and posture to a group of HIMS employees. At the end of the presentation, each student paired with attendees and educated them on proper sitting posture, strengthening, and stretching exercises. This was a great opportunity for our students to promote not only the profession of physical therapy, but the PTA program.



Mariah Van Leer, Class of 2023, presents during the HIMS continuing education day. Photo credit Tina Mazuch.

ANATOMAGE TABLE

Northeast Community College purchased an Anatomage Table for the science department and health programs. An Anatomage Table is a virtual 3D dissection featuring five photo realistic cadavers. Students can view, manipulate, and dissect a 3D cadaver. It also includes case studies, a 3D interactive simulation of childbirth, quizzes, a library of tens

of thousands of MRI and CT images, physiology simulation and pathway visualization, to integrate into lecture and lab. The table is about the size of an operating room table allowing several students to learn around it. Using your finger, you are able to make dissections of the cadaver and see the realistic anatomy. According to Anatomage, "anatomy is presented as a fully interactive, life-sized touchscreen experience in operatory bed form. The Anatomage Table allows for exploration and learning of human anatomy beyond what any cadaver could offer."

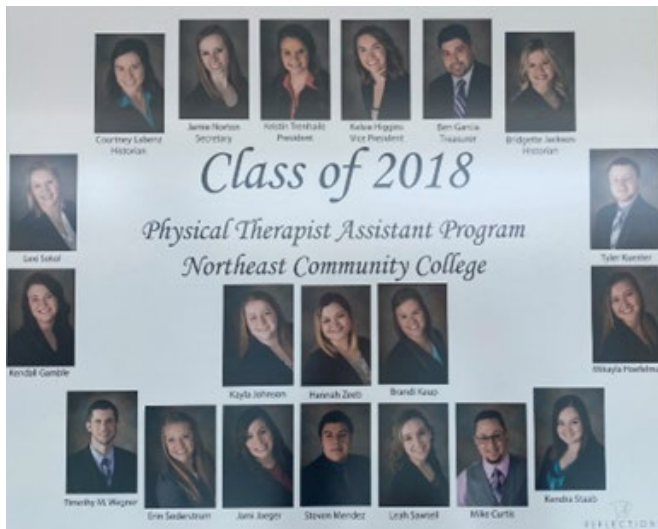
In the spring semester, Tere Siedschlag will use the table for teaching anatomy in Exercise Principles, and Laura Schwanebeck will use it to teach spinal tracts in Neurological Rehabilitation.



Tere Siedschlag, PTA faculty using the Anatomage Table to review muscles with PTA students.

MILESTONE GRADUATIONS

Five Years - Class of 2018



Ten Years - Class of 2013



Fifteen Years - Class of 2008



Twenty Years - Class of 2003



Twenty-Five Years - Class of 1998



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: ANDREA SUHR, PTA

Andrea Suhr has been a full-time PTA (Physical Therapist Assistant) faculty member since 2010. Currently, her teaching expertise includes professionalism, documentation, DEI, modalities, bed mobility, transfers, and medical terminology. After nine years of being the co-advisor of Phi Theta Kappa, she has given up the advisory role to pursue a more active role on campus by dedicating more time to committee work and serving on the Legislative Day Committee for the Nebraska Physical Therapy Association.

In her personal life, her husband of 15 years and children keep her busy. Ari is 11 years old and in 5th grade at Norfolk Middle School. Ahlee is 7 years old and in 1st grade at Bel Air Elementary. When they are not busy with kids' activities, they go trail riding on their side-by-side.

Saint Florian Burn Foundation has been a passion project for Andrea since participating in the program throughout her childhood and into adulthood as a burn survivor. She became an Executive Board member back in 2021. This foundation continues

to serve the burn survivor community in Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois. This summer she was co-director of Miracle 32 Burn Camp (MBC) and director of Family Burn Camp (FBC). MBC brings pediatric burn survivors ages 7-17 to Camp Foster in Spirit Lake, IA for 7 days of FUN! FBC is at the same location but at a different time of the year. This program allows burn survivors and their families to come together to provide support for each other as they process through their injury and recovery. If you know of a burn survivor or survivor family that could benefit from support, please reach out to Andrea at andreas@northeast.edu.



PROGRAM MARKETING

The PTA program continues to increase prospective students' awareness of our program. If you know of a high school student or a friend/family member looking to change careers and would be an awesome PTA... send them our way! We have an amazing program video that captures us well. Please share this [video](#) on your social media or with anyone who may be interested in the PTA Program at Northeast.

What's Happening with YOU?

We'd love to hear from you! Give us a shout out where you live, where you work, and any updates you'd like to share. We will feature this in future newsletters. You may email your updates to tsiedschlag@northeast.edu.

