

[Success Story](#)[Community Impact](#)[Community Support](#)[Gift Drive](#)[Donor Impact](#)[Donor Spotlight](#)[Where We Work](#)[Staff Achievements](#)[Staff Events](#)

## The Power of Showing Up: One Clinician's Impact on Youth in Foster Care

### Success Story

At OTTP-NorCal, many of the youth we serve, who are already navigating significant obstacles, are also in, or transitioning out of, the foster care system. For these young people, consistent, trusting relationships can make all the difference.

Despite the high need, fewer than one in four children in foster care receive mental health services within their first year in care. (*Children's Rights, 2023*)

Since 2021, Sarah Hui, OTD, OTR/L, Vocational Services Manager, has been that steady presence for two sibling clients in foster care. Sarah has walked alongside them through every major milestone and challenge, offering hands-on support and advocacy during a critical period of their lives.

Over the past three years, she has helped them:

- Secure safe housing
- Obtain jobs and internships
- Tour and enroll in college
- Attend medical appointments
- Connect with mental health providers
- Manage medications

When the siblings were placed in separate homes, Sarah made sure they maintained their relationship, driving them to activities like swimming, roller skating, and mall outings so



Sarah Hui, OTD, OTR/L, Vocational Services Manager

OTTP is rooted in helping youth build brighter futures for themselves, regardless of their background or life circumstances.

[Back to Top](#)

they could spend meaningful time together. Her consistency provided not just practical support, but emotional stability at a time when so much around them was uncertain.

This is the heart of OTTP's work: helping youth, including foster youth, build the skills, confidence, and connections they need to thrive.

## Supporting Healing Through Nourishment: boys team charity Provides Critical Meal Kits to OTTP Clients

### Community Impact

We're deeply grateful to the boys team charity, Hacienda Chapter in Moraga, for assembling more than 50 food kits for the youth and families we serve. Their thoughtful contribution offers meaningful support at a time when food insecurity continues to affect many in our community.

To gather the needed items, a team of 10-12 boys volunteered a total of 40-45 hours under the guidance of Dena Graf, Philanthropy Liaison, and Staci Kramer and Alicia Griffith, Vice Presidents of Philanthropy. Their efforts included organizing a neighborhood canned food drive, requesting non-perishable donations from the community, volunteering outside Safeway to invite shoppers to contribute, and sorting, bagging, and delivering food to OTTP. Student leaders Luke Griffith and Tyce Watenmaker, juniors at De La Salle High School, played key leadership roles behind the scenes, helping coordinate and oversee each phase of the project.

Thanks to their dedication, the team assembled three types of food kits: chicken noodle soup kits, vegetarian tortellini soup kits, and holiday meal kits (everything except the turkey).

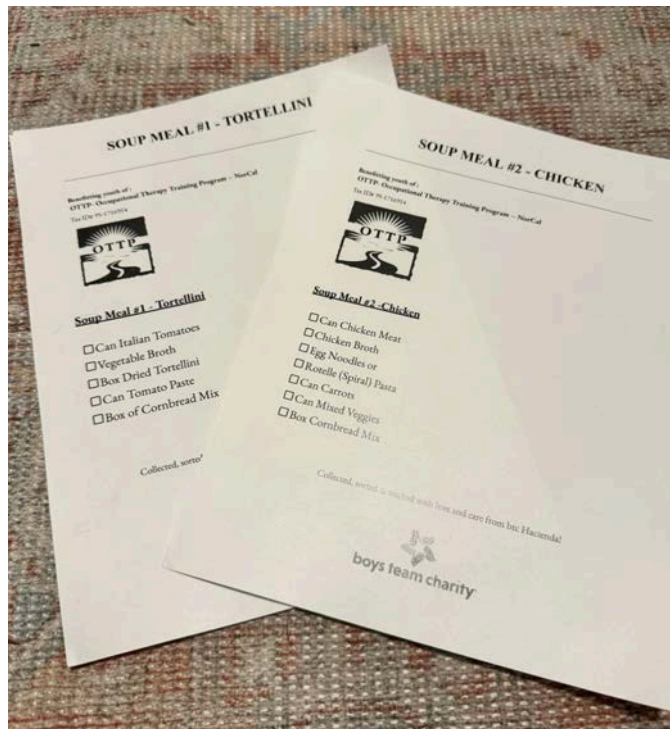
These food kits provide nourishment while also supporting therapeutic goals. They are designed to be used in cooking sessions with therapists or as recipes families can prepare together at home, reinforcing important life skills such as independence, social connection, and daily living, which are core areas of focus in occupational therapy. Just as importantly, they offer support in a way that honors dignity, without requiring families to disclose food insecurity.

The experience also fostered leadership, accountability, teamwork, and service-oriented thinking among the boys. Through hands-on involvement in planning, logistics, and execution, participants gained a deeper understanding of food insecurity and the impact of community care.

Reflecting on the partnership, Alicia Griffith shared:



Members of the boys team charity, Hacienda Chapter, came together to assemble over 50 food kits, turning hours of planning and volunteering into tangible support for youth and families facing food insecurity.



These thoughtfully assembled food kits do more than provide meals. They support cooking lessons, family connection, and essential life skills at the heart of occupational therapy.

[Back to Top](#)

*“The OTTP-NorCal team was collaborative, appreciative, and mission-driven. Their clear communication and purpose made the service experience meaningful and impactful for everyone involved.”*

She also spoke to the importance of this collaboration:

*“OTTP provides vital mental health services to youth ages 3–24, helping them overcome barriers created by racial and social injustice. With youth mental health challenges on the rise, access to this type of support is more important than ever. Partnering with OTTP aligns closely with boys team charity Hacienda’s mission to develop young men of character through service. This partnership teaches boys the importance of giving back, builds empathy, and helps them understand the real impact they can have in their community.”*

This partnership is a powerful reminder of how community collaboration can directly support the well-being, dignity, and growth of the youth and families we serve.



Through hands-on service, the boys team developed leadership, teamwork, and a deeper understanding of community impact.



## **Giving Back Together: Corporate Partners Make a Lasting Impact this Holiday Season**

[Back to Top](#)

## Community Support

This year, community spirit shone brightly as two incredible partner companies, The Kelly Crawford Team and VMware by Broadcom, joined us to wrap more than 150 gifts for our Holiday Gift Drive. Their time, care, and enthusiasm helped ensure that every youth we serve received a thoughtfully wrapped present to open during the holidays.

The Kelly Crawford Team, a Platinum Sponsor, visited our San Francisco office for the first time to learn more about our organization, tour the facilities where many of our clients participate in therapy sessions and interventions, and wrap gifts donated for the Holiday Gift Drive. Kelly Crawford, Realtor at Vanguard Properties, shared what inspired his team to get involved:

*“It was such a great opportunity to learn more about OTTP and the youth they serve, help out a bit with brightening their holidays, and get a chance to learn how we can do more. We make our living selling homes. Homes are in communities. Communities flourish when the people in and around them thrive.”*

We were also grateful to welcome back VMware by Broadcom for the fourth year in a row. Led by Sheeva Banisalam, Sales Leader and Regional Director, the team has wrapped an estimated 1,000 gifts for youth across our programs over the past four years. Their continued commitment ensures children and teens experience care, dignity, and joy during the holiday season. In their first year of volunteering, the team also took on a major behind-the-scenes project, transforming our San Francisco supply room by sorting and organizing arts and crafts materials and carefully arranging clothing by size, work that continues to benefit our therapists and youth today.

We also extend a heartfelt thanks to our sponsor, Proposition Chicken, for their generous sponsorship and support throughout the drive. As a business deeply rooted in community, their partnership helped ensure youth felt supported and seen this season. To learn more about their work or visit one of their Bay Area locations, visit [propositionchicken.com](https://propositionchicken.com).

Together, the support of these corporate partners is a powerful reminder of how collaboration and community care can make a meaningful difference in the lives of the young people we serve.



As a 2025 Platinum Sponsor, The Kelly Crawford Team champions the belief that supporting youth strengthens communities.



Kelly Crawford, Realtor at Vanguard Properties, brought his team together, showing how community support can make the season brighter.

[Back to Top](#)



As longtime supporters of OTTP, VMware has helped ensure our youth experience joy and care during the holidays, bringing gifts that brighten the season and show each client they are seen and valued.



Thanks to the incredible generosity and support of our sponsor, Proposition Chicken, spearheaded by Founder & CEO Ari Feingold (right), this year's gift drive ensured every youth received a gift that will make an impact far beyond the holiday season.

# Making The Holiday Season Brighter: Gift Drive Success

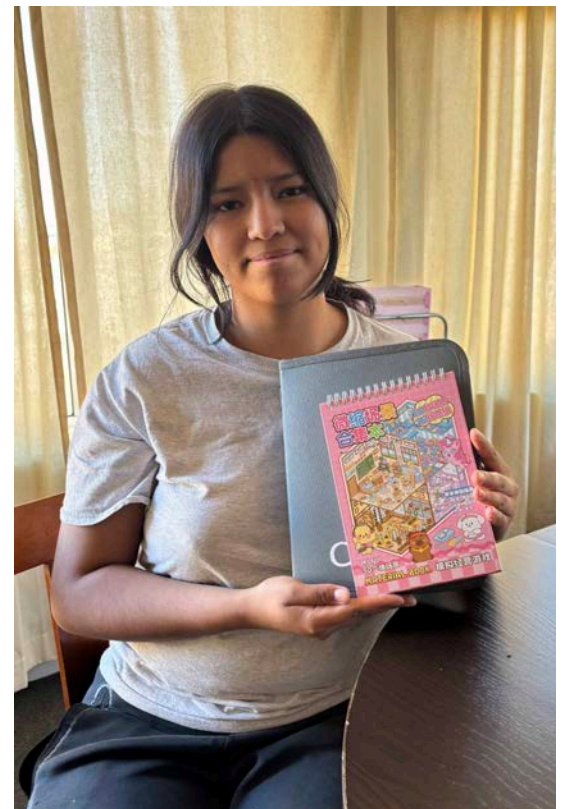
## Holiday Gift Drive

OTTP-NorCal wrapped up another successful Holiday Gift Drive this year, delivering gifts to over 150 youth! These gifts will not only brighten the holiday season, but will also support each young person's therapeutic journey by encouraging self-care, play, creativity, and self-expression.

For many of the youth we serve, this may be the only gift they receive this year, making your support especially meaningful.

This impact is possible because of our incredible community of volunteers and donors. Each year, we're inspired by the generosity and care shown by everyone who comes together to support our organization.

To share the real difference your support makes, Andrea Hernandez, OTR/L, Occupational Therapist and Vocational Specialist, shared how a safety box gifted to her client will support their growing independence as she prepares for the future:



*"As the youth transitions to independent living, the box will provide a secure way to organize and store important documents, supporting her as she onboards into new jobs and enrolls in academic programs that require access to identification and other essential paperwork."*

This client lit up with excitement as she opened her gifts! As a new parent, finding time for herself isn't easy, but these items help support her self-care and overall wellness, making a lasting impact on her daily life.



With a smile and eager hands, this client explored his gift and posed for a photo, excited to open it alongside his therapist.



Through occupational therapy, a gift like this safety box goes beyond the holiday season. It supports real-world readiness, helping this youth stay organized and confident as they navigate work, school, and growing independence.

## How Your Donation Helps Youth Reach Life-Changing Goals

### Donor Impact

At OTTP-NorCal, our Incentive Program is a donor-supported initiative designed to help youth move toward their goals by pairing encouragement with practical support. Funded entirely through donation dollars, the program provides meaningful incentives, such as a new pair of sneakers, a grocery or Target gift card for much-needed toiletries, or school-related items, that help reduce barriers and motivate progress. For many youth, these incentives serve as gentle but powerful nudges forward, reinforcing effort, resilience, and growth.

The Incentive Program is critical for supporting youth who are working toward goals while navigating significant challenge. Back to Top clients experience barriers such as transportation issues, family stress, housing instability, and mental health diagnoses including anxiety

and depression, conditions that can make even small steps feel overwhelming or impossible. Incentives help transform large, daunting goals into manageable steps, celebrate progress, and sustain motivation during moments of fear, fatigue, or discouragement. Research shows that pairing goal-setting with incentives can strengthen commitment and follow-through, turning aspirations into achievable milestones (Incentive Research Foundation).

This program is made possible thanks to generous supporters like you. To illustrate its impact, Meta Bodewes, LCSW, Psychotherapist, shared how she has used the Incentive Program with one of her clients:

*“This client has struggled to attend school because of anxiety, depression, and family challenges. They love boba but can’t afford it on their own. We were able to use the flexibility of the Incentive Program to adjust how they earned rewards during the second semester so the goals felt reachable and supportive of where they were at.”*

To support school engagement, particularly around \*IEP testing and end-of-year activities, Meta created a personalized reward system that met the client where they were. By attending school at least three days a week, the client could earn a weekly boba treat, as well as essential items needed to participate in their 8th-grade trip to Six Flags.

Meta shared that they are already planning ahead, using the Incentive Program to help the client enter high school with increased motivation, stability, and support.

*“Attending school is energizing for this client. It elevates their mood, reduces suicidal ideation and self-harm, and supports their ability to build skills and learn at grade level.”*

Stories like this demonstrate how donor support makes a tangible difference, helping youth build momentum, confidence, and hope for the future, one meaningful step at a time.

*\*IEP testing refers to the assessments and evaluations that are part of creating or updating an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a student with disabilities or learning/behavioral challenges.*



## Heather Davis: Inspiring Change Through Leadership

### Donor Spotlight

Since 2019, Heather Davis has been a devoted supporter of OTTP-NorCal and the youth we serve, with an impact that extends far beyond her generous financial contributions. Her involvement began with a desire to create long-term, meaningful change. As Heather shared, she felt compelled to support “something more long-term that would really make an ongoing impact on the lives of those we were serving.” That commitment has shaped every aspect of her partnership with OTTP.

Through her leadership and vision, Heather has consistently brought people together, mobilizing volunteers, coordinating resources, and helping ensure essential supports reach youth and families who need them most. In 2021, she led The Relief Society at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Moraga, uniting a group of women to support more than 500 clients and their families by expanding access to nourishing food and everyday essentials, including hundreds of dollars in grocery gift cards. She also guided the creation of 100 new-mother and newborn kits, 75 laundry kits (complete with quarters), and hundreds of arts and crafts kits, resources that foster dignity, creativity, and connection.

From mobilizing volunteers and securing critical funding to providing essential resources and meaningful holiday gifts, Heather's unwavering commitment has created lasting impact for the youth we serve and inspired others to give back to their community.

Heather's continued dedication is deeply rooted in her belief in OTTP's mission and the needs it meets. As she explains, once she truly understood the scope of OTTP's work, "it is hard to walk away... and even harder knowing that there are more needs that are going unfulfilled." She shared that if her time, effort, and resources can make a difference in even one child's life, it is worth the investment, and that, in the process, her connection to OTTP has made her a better person.

Heather has also been a driving force behind our Holiday Gift Drive, leading an LDS Young Women/Young Men's program that has wrapped gifts for our youth for two consecutive years. In addition to organizing volunteers, Heather and her husband personally purchase 5–20 gifts each year, helping ensure that every youth receives something meaningful during the holidays. Heather reflected that providing holiday gifts has been especially impactful, particularly through hearing stories from clinicians of youth receiving items like basketball shoes to build community through sports, warm clothing to feel included, or tools needed to maintain a job.

Her leadership has extended beyond direct giving and volunteer coordination. Heather played a critical role in securing a \$150,000 LDS grant, as well as volunteer interior decorating and painting support, helping transform our new Oakland building into a welcoming, therapeutic space where staff and clients can truly flourish.

When asked what inspires others in her network to get involved, Heather emphasizes connection and accessibility, inviting people to participate in ways that align with their skills, resources, and interests, and sharing the "why" behind the work. She believes that once people see the impact of their efforts, they are more likely to stay engaged, recognizing that these experiences can be life-altering not only for recipients, but for volunteers themselves.

At the heart of Heather's support is a deep belief in community care and giving back, values shaped by her own experiences of receiving kindness and support. Though she may never meet the youth whose lives she has helped touch, Heather hopes they know that someone is rooting for them. Through her generosity, leadership, and unwavering commitment, Heather continues to help ensure that OTTP youth experience care, dignity, and joy, year after year.

## Supporting Healing and Growth Inside the Juvenile Justice System

### Where We Work: Alameda County Probation Department

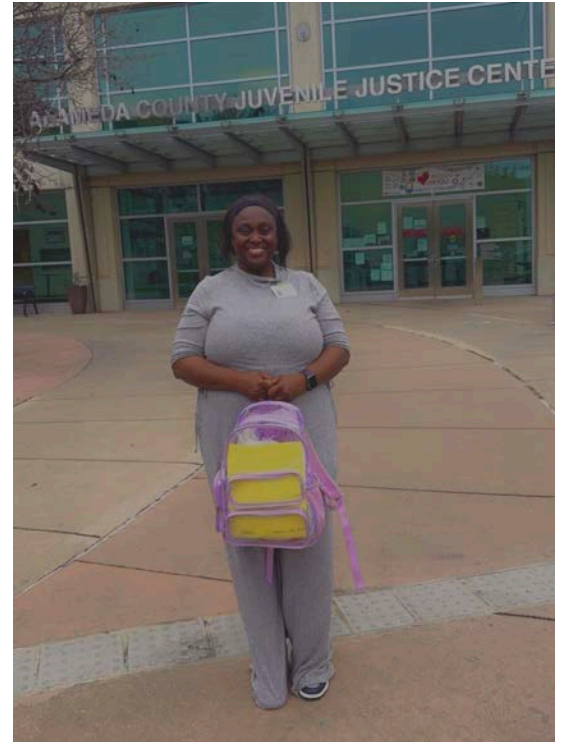
OTTP-NorCal clinicians support youth across more than 100 locations in Northern California, providing essential, trauma-informed mental health services. One of these sites is the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC), where, through a contract with the Alameda County Probation Department, OTTP therapists deliver weekly occupational therapy (OT) skill-building groups, individual sessions, and coordinated care for detained youth

[Back to Top](#)

and young adults. Services also extend to Camp Sweeney, a minimum-security residential program for adolescent males ages 15–21.

Research shows that youth in juvenile detention experience significantly higher rates of mental health challenges than their peers, making access to trauma-informed, skill-building support essential. (*Youth.gov*)

Occupational therapy in these settings is activity-based, client-centered, and culturally responsive. Sessions incorporate art, games, stress-management, and meal preparation to build self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, communication, and a positive sense of identity. These skills lay the foundation for youth to navigate challenges, pursue personal goals, and prepare for reintegration into their communities.



Tamica Edwards, OTD, supports youth in building regulation, confidence, and a belief in what's possible, through care rooted in both lived experience and clinical expertise.

Tamica Edwards, OTD, Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist, brings a deeply personal and academic perspective to her role at the JJC. Her path into this setting is rooted in her \*doctoral capstone, which examined *Trauma-Informed Care for Black or African American girls with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the impact on educational attainment*.

*“As an African American woman, I understand firsthand how childhood adversity can shape a person’s path,” she shared. “And I also know the power of having support, resources, and healing spaces. Those experiences helped me become the occupational therapist I am today.”*

Motivated by this lived understanding, Tamica is committed to bringing meaningful healing opportunities to youth in the justice system, especially Black youth, who are nearly six times more likely to be incarcerated than white youth. (*NPR, 2025*)

*“My goal is to show them that they are more than their offenses. They are unique, talented, special, and capable of becoming positive, thriving members of their communities. Every session is a chance to affirm their strengths, nurture their potential, and remind them that their story is still being written.”*

Together, the OTTP-NorCal team brings hope, dignity, and meaningful therapeutic connection to youth who need it most, proving that healing is possible, even in the most restrictive settings.

*\*Occupational therapy doctoral students complete a 500-hour capstone project that allows them to explore a specialized area of OT in depth. At OTTP-NorCal, students select topics based on their interests and input from clinicians, working closely with an on-site supervisor and faculty mentor. Their work culminates in a publishable paper and an oral presentation that highlights their research and its impact on the field.*

[Back to Top](#)

# Filling the Gaps in Care: Tenaya Jo's Advocacy Through Occupational Therapy

## Staff Achievements

We are proud to share that Tenaya Jo, OTR/L, was selected to present their poster at the Annual Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC) Conference. Tenaya presented on a deeply meaningful and clinically important topic: occupational therapy intervention following gender-affirming surgery.

This presentation grew out of Tenaya's doctoral capstone project, which combined research, direct care experience, and the creation of a comprehensive 70-page educational resource outlining how occupational therapists can support clients through preparation, recovery, and everyday functioning after gender-affirming procedures.

Tenaya shared the personal motivation behind this work:

*“As a transgender individual who has had gender-affirming surgery, I noticed a lot of gaps in my care once I was sent home. While in occupational therapy school, I realized that an occupational therapist would have been the perfect person to help me prepare for surgery and support my recovery. It is important to me to continue to support my trans community, and researching and creating this booklet felt like a meaningful way to do that.”*

Tenaya also offered this powerful message of care and solidarity:

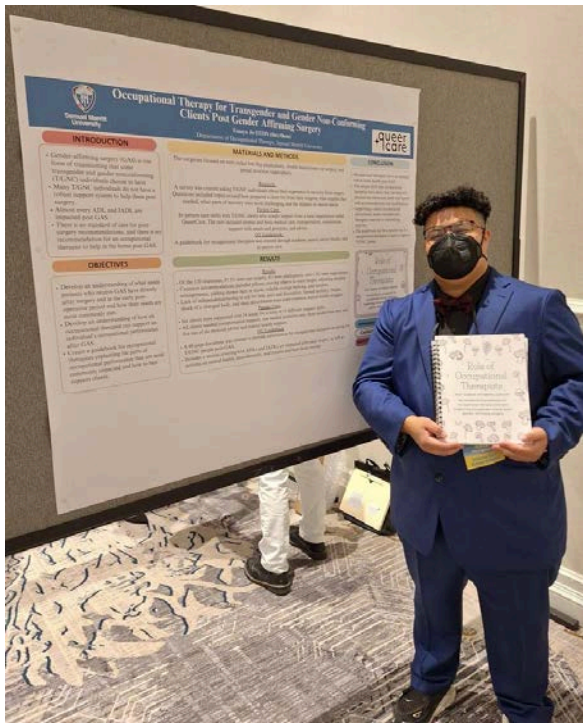
*“To every trans kid who thinks there is nothing more for them: Please stay. We are fighting for you to join us as adults. We will all stand together to fix what’s broken. We will protect you.*

*To every trans adult who did not get the care they needed after surgery: I hear you. Let’s fix it.”*

Tenaya plans to expand this resource by developing a website, lessons, and training materials to further support clinicians and community members. We look forward to sharing more updates as this important work continues.

At OTTP, every staff member brings unique life experiences that shape how we show up, for each other, for the community, and for the youth we serve.

[Back to Top](#)



Tenaya Jo, OTR/L, presenting their research on post-gender-affirming surgery care, inspired by their lived experience and commitment to uplifting the trans community.



5

Gender Affirming Care (GAC) encompasses medical care that supports trans and gender nonconforming clients in building authentic lives. GAC includes many types of lifesaving surgeries. GAC helps T/GNC people address their social, mental, and medical health needs and significantly improves their quality of life (Agarwal et al., 2018; Coleman et al., 2022; Hadj-Moussa et al., 2018; Park et al., 2022). There are many types of GAC, including hormone replacement therapy, social transitioning, voice training, puberty blockers, and gender-affirming surgery (GAS). About 50% of T/GNC people choose GAS as part of their transition. Although there are over 30 different types of surgeries that are commonly associated with GAS, many fall under traditional plastic surgery categories such as rhinoplasty or Botox. However, some surgeries are specific to gender-affirming care, including vaginoplasty/vulvoplasty, phalloplasty, and chest masculinization surgery (Coleman et al., 2022).


### Remember

Not every trans person wants surgery

Some surgeries are masculinizing and some are feminizing


Some surgeries are targeted for neutrality


Just like all surgeries, GAS can affect all aspects of someone's ADL's and occupations.



## Occupational Therapy for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Clients Post Gender Affirming Surgery

Tenaya Jo OTR/L (they/them)  
Department of Occupational Therapy, Samuel Merritt University



INTRODUCTION	MATERIALS AND METHODS	CONCLUSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender-affirming surgery (GAS) is one form of transitioning that some transgender and gender nonconforming (T/GNC) individuals choose to have</li> <li>Many T/GNC individuals do not have a robust support system to help them post surgery.</li> <li>Almost every ADL and IADL are impacted post GAS.</li> <li>There is no standard of care for post-surgery recommendations, and there is no recommendation for an occupational therapist to help in the home post GAS.</li> </ul>	<p>The surgeries focused on were radial free flap phalloplasty, double mastectomy top surgery, and penial inversion vaginoplasty.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Research:</u></p> <p>A survey was created asking T/GNC individuals about their experience in recovery from surgery. Questions included topics around how prepared a client felt from their surgeon, what supplies they needed, what parts of recovery were most challenging, and the impacts on mental health.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Patient Care:</u></p> <p>In-person care shifts with T/GNC clients who sought support from a local organization called QueerCare. The care included intense and basic medical care, transportation, socialization, support with meals and groceries, and advice.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OT Guidebook:</u></p> <p>A guidebook for occupational therapists was created through academic papers, survey results, and in-person care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupational therapists have an essential role in home health post GAS</li> <li>The unique skills that occupational therapists have mean they can help with physical and emotional needs and support with accommodations and modifications.</li> <li>Supporting a client's occupational performance makes occupational therapists essential to maximizing recovery.</li> <li>The guidebook can be a suitable way for occupational therapists to learn to support T/GNC clients.</li> </ul>
OBJECTIVES	RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an understanding of what needs patients who receive GAS have directly after surgery and in the early post-operative period and how their needs are most commonly met.</li> <li>Develop an understanding of how an occupational therapist can support an individual's occupational performance after GAS.</li> <li>Create a guidebook for occupational therapists explaining the parts of occupational performance that are most commonly impacted and how to best support clients.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Research:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of the 120 responses, 87.5% were top surgery, 4% were phalloplasty, and 1.2% were vaginoplasty.</li> <li>Common accommodations included pillows, moving objects to waist height, adjusting sleeping arrangements, adding shower bars or stools, rollable storage shelving, and teachers.</li> <li>Lack of independence/having to ask for help, pain and discomfort, limited mobility, fatigue, shock of a changed body, and sleep disturbances were some common mental health struggles.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Patient Care:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six clients were supported over 14 weeks for a total of 35 different support shifts.</li> <li>All clients needed transportation support, one needed intensive care, three needed basic care, and five out of six received advice and mental health support.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OT Guidebook:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 60-page document was created to provide information for occupational therapists on caring for T/GNC people post-GAS.</li> <li>Includes a section covering how ADLs and IADLs are impacted after each surgery, as well as sections on mental health, neurodiversity, and trauma and how those overlap.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #d1ecf1; border-radius: 5px; margin: 0;">References available upon request</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #d1ecf1; border-radius: 5px; margin: 0;">Contact: <a href="mailto:ot.tenayajo@gmail.com">ot.tenayajo@gmail.com</a></p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #d1ecf1; border-radius: 5px; margin: 0;">Special thanks to my T/GNC community</p>



Supporting youth mental health means making space for our own. Staff gatherings like these allow time to decompress, connect, and return to our work grounded and present.

## Holiday Party Brings Connection & Community for OTTP Staff

### Staff Events

OTTP-NorCal put on a Holiday Party at Sports Basement in the Presidio, bringing together staff and interns for a much-needed restorative gathering. Sports Basement generously donated the space for free, providing our clinicians with an opportunity to unwind and decompress from the vicarious stress that comes with mental health work.

#### Become a Basementeer & Support OTTP-NorCal!

Great News! OTTP-NorCal is a Sports Basement Basementeer Beneficiary! This means that when you shop at Sports Basement, you can use the code "OTTP" at checkout and 10% of your purchase will go directly towards supporting our organization and the youth we serve!

#### How to become a Basementeer (required to use our code):

1. Click [here](#).
2. Select "OTTP-NorCal" from the dropdown.
3. Add the membership to your bag and check out.
4. Pay the **one-time \$25** fee.
5. That's it, you're a member!

#### How to use your Basementeer Membership:

##### In-Store

[Back to Top](#)

Enter your phone number at checkout and your discount is automatically applied.

#### Online

- Log into your Basementeer account and shop.
- Check that OTTP-NorCal is selected in your account settings before checking out.

#### Want to Switch Your Basementeer Beneficiary?

If you've registered as a Basementeer but chose another organization before, no worries, you can easily change it!

1. Visit the [Basementeer Account Update page](#)
2. Complete the form with your personal details.
3. Select "OTTP-NorCal" from the dropdown list.
4. Click "Update me!" to save your changes.

If you have any questions, contact: [friends@sportsbasement.com](mailto:friends@sportsbasement.com).



Staff from OTTP's Employment Team shared a client success story from 2025.

From Left to Right: Sarah Hui, OTD, OTR/L (Vocational Services Manager) & Kimberly Ayala, MS, OTR/L (Vocational Specialist & Occupational Therapist)



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[Back to Top](#)