



Activity Professionals Association of Omaha

2025 ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

7:30am - 4:00pm

New Cassel Retirement Center 900 N 90th St. Omaha, NE 68814

7:30 - 8:25 Registration & Light Breakfast - Provided by ***New Cassel Retirement Center***

8:25 - 8:30 Welcome - Barb Skaff, APA President

8:30 - 9:30 **General Session: Power of Community – Sandy Spady**

LOCATION: Auditorium

Sandy Spady has over 35 years of experience in sales, building teams, media television, print and radio sales, and PR and nonprofits, Sandy is the Founder and CEO of Power Up Leadership Coaching & Consulting. Additionally, Sandy is the Founder of Women with Voices, a powerful networking group based in Omaha. Sandy is a dynamic and influential public speaker dedicated to inspiring positive change and empowering individuals. Sandy's outstanding contributions have been recognized through prestigious awards such as the 50/50 Award in 2021 and the Phenomenal Woman Inspiration Award 2023. Her expertise and impact have also been featured in notable publications such as Strictly Business Magazine, Sister Speaker Spotlight Feature, and The Daily Record. In her latest venture, Sandy has started a new talk show called Power Up KPAO. Through this show, she brings together community leaders and inspirational individuals making a significant impact.

9:30 - 9:40 Break/Raffle Prize

9:40 - 10:40 **Morning Breakout Sessions (Please Choose One)**

#1 The Impact of Life Enrichment on Quality Measures - Courtney Schmitz

LOCATION: Auditorium

Courtney Schmitz is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist who has served in the mental health population and senior living industry for the past 14 years. Courtney is currently the Director of Purposeful Living at Vetter Senior Living, and she strives to enhance Quality of Life for those in long term care, assisted living, and independent living communities. She also is a Certified Alzheimer disease Dementia Care Trainer, Certified Dementia Care Manager, and a Certified Dementia Practitioner with a passion for enhancing the quality of life for the elderly who suffer from dementia. Courtney is also the Instructor for the Nebraska Health Care Association Activity Director Training Course for Life Enrichment Professionals.

Courtney Schmitz, MS, CRTS, CADDCT, CDCM, CDP

#2 Strengthening APA Together: Building Connections, Growing Memberships – Ariel Rathjen and Theresia Dixon, Leaders in Senior Care & Champions of APA Omaha

LOCATION: Ryan Room

Ariel Rathjen & Theresia Dixon-Advocates for Senior Enrichment and APA Omaha

With over 30 years of combined experience in healthcare, Ariel and Theresia are passionate leaders in senior care and life enrichment.

Ariel, a CNA/CMA since high school, holds both a bachelor's and master's in healthcare management/admin and has spent the last decade as a Life Enrichment Director. She served as APA Omaha President in 2024, driving innovation and growth.

Theresia has 21 years of healthcare experience, including 14 years as a CNA/CMA and 7 years as a Services Coordinator. She also holds a bachelor's degree in healthcare management and is known for her compassionate leadership.

Together, they are committed to **keeping APA of Omaha alive and thriving**, united by their vision: **"Strengthening APA Together: Building Connections, Growing Memberships."**

10:40 - 10:50

Break/Raffle Prize

10:50 - 11:50

General Session: Clear Empathetic Communication - Auditorium

Jenni Herchenbach, Death Doula, Flourish Collaborative, Omaha Ne

Jenni Herchenbach is a death doula, end-of-life coach, and grief specialist. As an Occupational Therapist, Jenni learned to sit with patients and families in the tender spaces built by grief — grief that accompanies illness, disease, injury, and death. At the beginning of the pandemic, Jenni took a deeper dive into all things death, dying, and grief and received certifications as an end-of-life coach and sacred passage doula. Jenni founded Flourish Collaborative to normalize conversations about death.

By Jenni Herchenbach

11:50 - 12:30

Lunch - Networking & Raffle Prizes

12:30 - 1:15

General Session: Advocating your Roll and Your Words Matter - Gayle Resh, CTRS, Southlake Village Rehabilitation and Care Center, Lincoln, NE

Location: Auditorium

Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist/Dementia Practitioner/ Educator/ Advocate.

Gayle brings over 40 years of dedicated service, including 14 years to Southlake Village in Lincoln, NE Where she has championed the role of therapeutic recreation in long-term care. A CTRS, Gayle is also a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator, a Certified Dementia Practitioner, and a Certified Park and Recreation Professional, among other roles she plays in advocating for the Recreation profession. Her passion for education and advocacy is evident in her role as adjunct faculty at the University of Nebraska, where she teaches courses on recreation and aging. Gayle is a respected mentor, serving as both a clinical intern supervisor and a fieldwork supervisor for students pursuing careers in therapeutic recreation. Gayle's leadership extends beyond the classroom and her facility. She has served as president and board member for several professional organizations focused on advancing therapeutic recreation. In recognition of her contributions, she received the Distinguished Service Award from NePR in 2005. She will have a powerful session that explores the importance of professional identity, communication, and advocacy in the field of Recreation.

1:15 - 1:25

Break/Raffle Prize

1:25 - 2:25

Afternoon Breakout Sessions: (Please Choose One)

#1 Using AI in your Programming and Calendar Planning – Kelsey Manchester

Location: Ryan Room

Kelsey Manchester, Activity Director/DHH Professional. Kelsey is an Activity Director at Waterford communities in Lincoln, NE, which includes assisted living and memory Care. She brings creativity, energy, and compassion to programming that enriches the Lives of older adults. As a deaf and hard of hearing professional, Kelsey offers a unique Perspective and passion for making activities accessible, meaningful, and engaging. With a deep love for the aging population, Kelsey believes in creating opportunities that Foster connection, joy, and dignity at every stage of life. She is excited to lead a session Introducing the world of AI and ChatGPT to fellow activity professionals, showing how These tools can simplify planning, spark new ideas, and make daily life easier. Her Session will be interactive and open to questions, giving attendees practical ways to Bring technology and creativity together in your work.

#2 Social Drumming - Candice Nielsen, Life Enrichment Coord @ Lakeside Village

Location: Auditorium **Hands on Experience**

Candice Nielsen, strives to offer unique, meaningful, and enjoyable activities, outings, and events for our residents. She has been honored to serve the Independent, Assisted, and Memory Support residents of Lakeside since December of 2022. Thanks to Immanuel's dedication to professional development, she has completed certification as a Certified Dementia Practitioner (August 2023) and as a facilitator in Social Drumming (September 2023), TimeSlips (May 2024), and SingFit (February 2025). Having the ability to bridge her passion for music and providing top quality resident experiences, has been life-giving. However, one of her favorite aspects of working at Lakeside is seeing my soon-to-be 15-year-old son, Parker, thrive as a part-time server in both the Independent and Assisted Living Dining Rooms. In her spare time, she enjoys volunteering with her son's show choir, spending time with her grandma, and cheering for the Huskers!

2:25 - 2:35

Break/Raffle Prize

2:35 - 3:35

General Session: How Interdisciplinary teams can work together to make Activity Engagement more Successful – Danielle Abboud, OTD, OTRL

Location: Auditorium

Danielle Abboud, OTD, OTRL **Brookestone Home Health**

Danielle is a home health Occupational Therapist with Brookestone Home Health, specializing in fall prevention, home safety modifications, adaptive equipment training, and caregiver education. She is passionate about helping individuals maintain independence, safety, and quality of life as they age, both at home and in the community.

3:35 - 3:45

Closing Announcements - Evaluation - Dismissal

For those who are a **CTRS: In accordance with NCTRC Certification Standards Part III: Recertification and Reentry page 5. Continuing education does not have to be awarded as CEU credits.*

You will receive a document that includes sponsor information and attendance at the end of the conference.



Activity Professionals Association of Omaha

2025 Annual Fall Conference

Registration Form

Wednesday, October 22nd

7:30am – 4:00pm

***New Cassel Retirement Center
900 N 90th St. Omaha, NE 68814***

Name: _____

Employer: _____

Facility Type: ____Nursing Home ____Independent Living ____Assisted Living ____Memory Care ____Other

Address: _____

Title: _____

Phone #: Work _____ Personal _____

Preferred Email for future updates: _____

PLEASE WRITE LEGIBLY

Membership Status and Cost of Conference

- ☐ Member \$65.00
- ☐ Non-Member \$70.00

Break Out Sessions: Please Circle One Session Per Time Frame

9:40 – 10:40am	Session 1-A	The Impact of Life Enrichment on Quality Measures
	Session 1-B	Strengthening APA Together: Building Connections, Growing Membership
1:25 – 2:25pm	Session 2-A	Using AI for Programming and Calendar Planning
	Session 2-B	Drumming (Limited Participants)

Please Submit Payment and Completed Registration Form via Mail or Email or Venmo

MAIL Check to: Vicki Andress

****Make Check out to APA** Immanuel Communities
6803 North 68th Plaza
Omaha Nebraska, 68152

EMAIL & VENMO:

Vandress@immanuel.com = Registration Form

@Vicki-Andress = Payment

Registration deadline is Wednesday, October 15th

Questions about the conference? Please contact
Barb Skaff, Life Enrichment Coordinator, APA President

Work Phone: (402) 339-7700

Email: bskaff@yhsmail.com

*****Bring Resource List and Supplies for the SWAP Station. Information below.***

Miscellaneous Information



PARKING AND BUILDING INFORMATION

Please refer to the map above for details on parking and building access.

You may park in the designated lot marked with the **red square**. If that lot is full, additional parking is available in the lot on the left side of the map.

To access the auditorium, you do not need to enter through the main entrance. There is an auditorium entrance located near the designated parking area. This entrance is clearly marked with an “Auditorium” sign, as indicated by the **purple oval** on the map. Simply follow the sidewalk from the parking lot to reach the entrance.

****Sharing Opportunities**

Resource List Bring a list of resources you use to get fresh activity ideas, including but not limited to websites you use, Facebook pages you follow, and TikTok reels to follow.

Bring 50 copies to share

SupplySWAP Station Have extra supplies, games or puzzles you no longer use or aren't sure what to do with? Bring those things to Conference and place them at the SWAP Station for others to take with them. Maybe you'll find something you want to take with you...WIN-WIN.

Please bring items ***prepackaged!*** Please limit your puzzles to no more than 5. 😊

Ideas-yarn, material, craft supplies, wreaths, paint, single projects. Please label each package with its contents. See through bags are preferred.