

Hello Advocates!

Welcome to our 1st Newsletter! We are hoping to send out more communication to all of our members letting them know what we are up to as well as what and where our next events are.

Our mission is to support and promote the osteopathic profession. Our Advocate network is vast, ranging from physicians to family and friends. We cover the globe, creating a strong, close network of people who understand that osteopathic medicine isn't a trend or a passing fad, but the best type of medical care possible.

We are focusing on the importance of advocating for the osteopathic profession through each step of the journey from medical school to residency to being a physician in practice. Our theme also supports our organization's continued growth. We are respecting and learning from our 83 year history and are adapting to the ever-changing landscape of a national organization and all of the progress that has been made.

**AAOA Partnerships and Scholarships**

We have several steps to help us to advocate with action. We have made a commitment to our strategic plan and vision to provide resources and programs remotely for our membership and beyond. We have continued partnerships with the AOF and the AOA Physician Wellness taskforce. We have updated our website, increased our social media presence, and we continue to support SOMA and AAOA Special Projects with the sponsorships from our annual fun run at OMED.

Over the last few years we have strengthened our relationship with the AOF as we have partnered on both the Donna Jones Moritsugu Award and the Holiday Hug Award. The Moritsugu Award recognizes the spouses of graduating osteopathic medical students who have supported and been involved in their loved one's career throughout medical school. Last year 37 awards were given out.

The Holiday Hug Award was started a couple of years ago and gives 2 medical school or residency families the chance to have a better holiday by helping monetarily. This last year we received over 20 applications and awarded Holiday Hug to two fourth year medical school families. We are so thankful to have a more involved role in this award and are looking forward to continuing to grow our partnership with the AOF. This year, we will be increasing this award to 3 families! As an organization, we remain committed to finding ways to increase funding to our partners and expanding our reach of impact.



**Mental Health Awareness**

A highlight of our advocate work has been regarding mental health. Over the last year we expanded our focus to help support the mental health of our Osteopathic physicians and their families. We have been involved with the Yellow Ribbon program for 16 years and last year completed the Train the Trainers certification program. After receiving this training, the AAOA decided that we also wanted to delve further into what options there were for us to provide to the Osteopathic community. We expanded our committee and picked 3 mental health organizations we wanted to partner with. They are NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), Medical Minds Matter, and ADAA (Anxiety & Depression Association of America). In June, our mental health committee members attended the virtual NAMI conference and came away with a lot of information that we are actively working on implementing. We also developed partnership letters for these organizations with the help of the AOA and are excited to see how we can continue to focus on the mental health of DO physicians and students.

**Supporting Member Affiliate Groups**

We continue to focus on strengthening our relationship with state affiliates along with our SAA (Student Advocate Association) and IRAA (Intern & Resident Advocate Association) presidents. Last year, we held quarterly meetings for the National Council of State Advocate Leaders and for the National Council of Student and Resident Advocate Leaders and are continuing these efforts. The purpose of these meetings is to create a greater bond among the state and national boards. We network and find opportunities to work together and support one another, especially after the pandemic created a challenging few years for all of our membership groups. We are looking forward to continuing these meetings and growing our advocate family.



The AAOA continues to invest into the development of our SAA and IRAA groups. The last few years have been particularly challenging for our student advocate groups since they were not able to meet on campus or in person, so we have been working with them on rebuilding. Our SAA and IRAA liaisons have been great at fostering relationships with the boards of these organizations and offering the support and encouragement needed. We have added a couple of new SAA groups and are talking to other COMs about the importance of having a SAA on their campus. We have had a greater presence on social media, sent out surveys and held virtual gatherings throughout the year and felt like we were able to connect to these members better. We have been able to help address common struggles like finances, "medical marriage," burnout and having a family during training. We understand the importance of not feeling alone during medical school and residency, and have connections to be able to offer support, encouragement and advice. Our SAA and IRAA committee has been working on identifying more resident groups and residents that are wanting to be involved in advocacy. We had our first virtual IRAA meeting where residents joined from various locations across the country. We are hoping to continue these and pull in those who are in the gap period between SAA membership and when they join state organizations. Our SAA/IRAA event continues to be well attended during OMED and would not be possible without the support and partnership with the AACOF (Auxiliary to the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians).

**AAOA OMED Events**

Each year, during OMED, the AAOA hosts a number of events that physicians, students and their families are able to attend. This past OMED we did a family fun event where we took 45 people on a tour of Fenway Park. We also host our annual A.T. Still Fit for Life Fun Run, which took place in the Boston Commons. We were honored to have Dr. Garza and his wife, former AAOA President, Linda Kazen Garza as our honorary chairs. With your help and sponsorships we were able to raise \$19,500 that will go directly to SOMA scholarships and our Special Projects fund this year. With the generosity of our partners we were able to increase our Special Projects funding last year from \$9,000 to \$14,250. We were also able to give \$2,500 towards SOMA scholarships and \$1,000 towards our Holiday Hug award. As stated earlier, we are excited about finding ways to increase funding and scholarship opportunities and expanding our reach of impact and are looking forward to OMED in Orlando this year.



**AAOA Board**

Our board is composed of many young board members, several of whom are student and resident spouses. We also have three board members that are not spouses, but are family members, friends and colleagues of Osteopathic Physicians. The diversity speaks volumes to the commitment and passion that our board has for the AAOA and for osteopathic advocacy in general. It is exciting to watch the board grow and develop further. We, of course, could not do this without the support of our AOA liaison, Dr Kowalski and all of you. Thank you for always supporting what we DO.



The Board also just completed it's mid-year. Lori Hildebrand, our President, decided to have us all go on a 3 day cruise to the Bahamas. This time together strengthened our bonds but also allowed for us all to sit together and finalize the upcoming budget, merchandise to sell, mental health goals, and the strategic plan. This year our focus is on increasing membership from all levels and brand recognition. It's always great to get together and work towards our mission. We did miss the Board members who couldn't attend.



**Upcoming Events and Due Dates**

As a member, you are always welcome at any event and from time to time your vote will be needed!

April 2023- an email will be sent out to all members of the AAOA for you to vote on the 2023-2024 Budget. Your vote will be due by April 30, 2023.

May 3-6 - APOMA/POMA Annual Conference at Kalahari in the Poconos of Pennsylvania. If you live in the area, please stop by. There will be events and activities you can participate in and see some of our Board members.

May 15 – AAOA/AOF Moritsugu Award Application due

June 1- Special Projects Application Due

July 1 – All Affiliate reports are due

July 20-23 - AOA House of Delegates. The Board will be present and actively selling our merchandise, located on the website, having a Board meeting, and participating in events celebrating the new incoming AOA President.

August 1-15 - AAOA Board Nominations Applications

August 23 – AAOA Call to Meeting goes out for the AAOA House of Delegates

September 28 – AAOA/AOF Holiday Hug Applications Open

October 5-7 – OMED and AAOA House of Delegates and Events

November 15- All Holiday Hug Applications are due

The AAOA has continued to grow and evolve over the past several years. We are grounded in our roots and continue our mission: supporting and promoting the Osteopathic profession while creating a strong, close network of people who are passionate about advocating for it with action. We thank you for your continued membership and support. We are looking forward to continuing to grow and support our osteopathic family.

Advocates of the AOA Board of Directors



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