

# Out Toxicologists and Allies

Special Interest Group of SOT



Dear OTA Members,

Happy Pride Month! It's my great pleasure as the current President of the Out Toxicologists and Allies SIG to welcome you to our summer PRIDE 2023 newsletter which will highlight our recent accomplishments, current plans for the SIG, and our advocacy for the community within SOT and beyond. Our second annual reception at SOT was a fun affair with ~150 people, both members and allies, in attendance. At the meeting, we presented the second Postdoctoral Achievement Award (Congrats to Dr. Cody Schmidlin) and our first Mentoring Award (Congrats to Dr. Andrij Holian). We have been active behind the scenes advocating for the community and our inclusion and safety at SOT. We, led by our current Vice President, Dr. Jessica Plavicki, created a Safe Cities List for the SOT Council to consider for future meetings in states and municipalities that are legally safe for trans and nonbinary scientists and for pregnant people to attend the annual meeting. In our efforts to support the local LGBTQ+ community, especially in these days of legal and social oppression, we also raised \$500 for a Nashville LGBTQ+ youth organization, Just Us at OASIS (<https://oasiscenter.org/about/just-us>). If you have suggestions for LGBTQ+ organizations in Salt Lake City, please reach out to us. This year for the first time, SOT offered pronouns stickers for your badges, started collecting data on gender identity and sexual orientation to programmatic purposes, and revised the SOT biosketch form to include gender neutral pronouns (they/them) for SIGs, a result of 2+ years of advocacy by OTA. Please see below for opportunities to get more involved in OTA if you're interested. I hope you all take the time this month to celebrate the progress the LGBTQ+ community has made and reflect on how much work is left to be done. We will be calling on you as we advocate for safer cities and inclusive policies at SOT. See you next year in Salt Lake City!

Sincerely,

Troy Roepke  
President, OTA





# Spring 2023 Newsletter

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## Annual Meeting Recap

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting and ToxExpo was held from March 19-23, 2023 at the Music City Center in downtown Nashville, Tennessee. Continuing our return to in-person programming, the annual meeting featured over 85 scientific sessions and nearly 5,500 attendees. OTA kicked off the specialty section's receptions on Sunday evening at Martin's Bar B Que Joint with over 150 attendees who enjoyed Southern food delights and had an opportunity to pick up OTA pins. During the reception, our membership raised \$500 dollars to a local LGBTQ+ youth organization, Just Us Oasis (<https://oasiscenter.org/about/just-us>).

We would like to extend a special thank you to our reception sponsors: Gradient and ToxServices. Their generation sponsorship helped make the reception a fantastic success this past SOT Annual Meeting.



## OTA Awards

### Postdoctoral Fellow Achievement Award

At this year's SOT Annual Meeting, OTA awarded the Postdoctoral Achievement Award to Dr.



Cody Schmidlin (Eli Lilly). This award recognizes a SOT postdoctoral trainee who has demonstrated outstanding scientific achievement in toxicology as well as dedicated leadership and professional service. Cody joined the Society of Toxicology in 2018 and became a member of OTA upon its formation. He served as the inaugural Graduate Student Representative for OTA, and later continued to work with OTA as a representative to the Special Interest Groups Collaboration Group.

"I feel incredibly honored to have received this award," said Cody. "I am very grateful to be part of OTA, and am looking forward to future involvement in the organization."

Congratulations to Dr. Schmidlin!

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### Award for Excellence in Mentoring



OTA awarded our first excellence in mentoring award to Dr. Andrij Holian of the Center for Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Montana. An important objective of OTA is to celebrate those who have provided mentorship of early career LGBTQIA2S+ scientists as well as SOT members. The award is given to persons in academia, government, industry, or a related field who has been a major influence in the mentoring of LGBT+ scientists considering a career in toxicology, those entering the field of toxicology, and/or whose leadership and service have provided career development opportunities or encouraged LGBT+ toxicologists to achieve their professional goals. In Dr. Holian's honor, OTA made a \$250 donation to the Montana Two Spirit Society which works to build Healthy Native & Indigenous Two Spirit Communities.

Dr. Holian commented: "Receiving the 2023 Excellence in Mentoring Award is extremely humbling. One strives to do their best at what they love. My rewards are seeing students get excited about doing research, making discoveries, publishing, and succeeding in their career paths. The overall goal is to have my students turn into great mentors so that someone along the path makes the great discoveries to improve human health. My wife presented me with a beautiful gift a while ago of a painting of a drop in a pond producing a series of rings. That is the way I hope that my mentoring has a lasting effect. Receiving the mentoring award acknowledges that my mentees appreciate me for what I love to do."

Congratulations to Dr. Holian!

## PRIDE Month Celebration

Harkening back to the anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York in June 1969, we recognize June as Pride Month to acknowledge the importance of this and other similar events in our history as LGBTQ+ individuals. The visibility of individuals from our community working in science is important; it can encourage young LGBTQ+ individuals to pursue careers in science and can help individuals at all levels feel a sense of belonging and help combat imposter syndrome. For this Pride Month, we wanted to highlight the website [500 Queer Scientists](#), which currently features the stories of more than 1,700 LGBTQ+ scientists working across a wide range of STEM fields including members of OTA.

The website was developed by [Dr. Lauren Esposito](#), an arachnology professor, and [Sean Vidal Edgerton](#), an infectious disease biologist and science illustrator. The website was created in part in response to a paper in the Journal of Homosexuality (Yoder and Mattheis, 2016) which reported that in a survey of over 1,400 LGBTQ+ identifying scientists, more than 40% were not fully out in their workplace. According to the website, the group's goal is to: "ensure the next STEM generation has LGBTQ+ role models; help the current generation recognize they're not alone; create opportunities for community connections and greater visibility within STEM."

As of June 1, 2023, there were seven scientists listed with toxicology as their primary area of work, including our very own secretary-treasurer [Sarah Lacher](#) and president [Troy Roepke](#)! This scientists' database is open to the public and is now accepting submissions. On their website, you can share your experiences to highlight your achievements and area of expertise! We hope this resource can help encourage new stories to be heard and created, and new connections to be made moving forward.



[Contribute Your Story - 500 Queer Scientists](#)

## Subcommittee Updates

### Programming Committee: Planning for SOT 2024 and Beyond!

This committee is in charge of reviewing and scoring any proposals that want OTA's endorsements, providing feedback to the writers in an attempt to make them better. This year the committee reviewed and offered endorsement of two proposals for the 2024 annual meeting. This committee also develops webinars or mentoring activities throughout the year and is currently scheduling a trainee-focused event for September.

The programming committee is also beginning to plan for our SIG meeting and reception at the SOT 2024 meeting in Salt Lake City. If you have any great ideas for scientific programs or professional development sessions you would like to collaborate with OTA on please reach out to [OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com](mailto:OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com).



### Nominating Committee: Looking for possible awardees in 2024!

This committee oversees our awards process, setting out criteria for awards, seeking out potential applicants and reviewing award applications. We currently give two awards: one for postdoctoral achievement and one to individuals to recognize contributions in mentoring of LGBTQ+ scientists. If you know of individuals who would be good candidates for one of these awards, please reach out to us at [OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com](mailto:OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com). Let's work together to foster a positive and inclusive SOT community.

## Treasurer's Report

### 2022 Balance

\$ 4,900

### Incoming

\$1,900

### Expenses

\$5,547

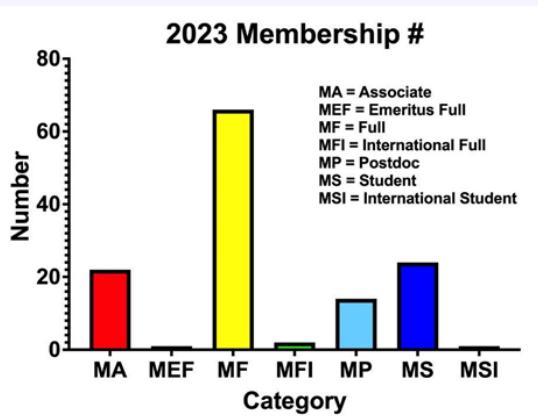
### Current Balance

\$1,253

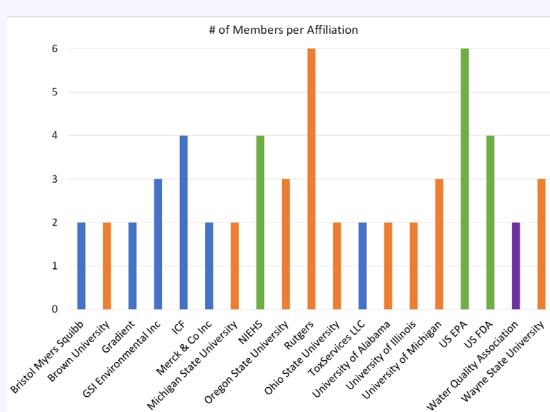
### Donate to OTA

- SOT has formed many special membership groups, including OTA, designed to connect like-minded toxicologists and help advance research and support in specific aspects of toxicology.
- SOT financial support for OTA isn't sufficient to cover our awards, fabulous receptions or special events. You can easily **donate directly to OTA** by check or credit card by filling out [this form](#). Donations are fully tax deductible. Thank you for your kind, unrestricted support!

## OTA Is Growing: Membership Stats Show International Participation



This year marks another year of growth for OTA as our group now has over 130 members, up from 100 last year. Members come from 3 different countries and 31 US states or territories. Current membership enrollment and SOT membership level are summarized in the infographics on the left.



### Keep In Touch: Send Your News to OTA Leadership for Distribution

Were you or your lab recently highlighted or recognized? Want to share information of interest with fellow OTA members? We want to highlight news and updates from our membership in the OTA website's [News and Media](#) section. Please send your updates to [OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com](mailto:OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com)!

## Member Spotlight

Contributed by Lauren Walker

### Patrick Allard, PhD Institute for Society & Genetics at UCLA



- Why is your research important to you?

Our research is important to me for two reasons. First, because we are trying to be agents of change by revealing how common environmental exposures can lead to long-term, generational effects. Second, at a more personal level, because it feeds my inherent curiosity to understand how the world works.

- What career advice would you give your younger self?

I would teach my younger self about imposter syndrome, a concept that was not around early in my career. At an academic level, I would advise him to develop his computational biology skills as much as possible!

### Meg Whittaker, PhD, MPH, CBiol, FRSB, ERT, DABT ToxServices, LLC



- Why is your research important to you?

As a leader at my consulting firm, leadership means making my staff the best toxicologists in the field by sharing with them everything I know, encouraging them to get involved in SOT and other professional organizations, and training them to be the trainer. It is a humbling experience because many of my staff now know much more than I do!

- What career advice would you give your younger self?

Think before making snap judgements and let others talk! My teenage son told me not to bulldoze a few years ago and let others talk. It took me many years to learn this.



## Officer Updates

### Outgoing Officers

Thank you to our outgoing officers for the great work you've done for our group and community. While sad to see them leave the OTA Executive Board we are all excited for their continued success! Let's send a huge OTA thank you to Daniella Pizzurro (Past-President), Elvis Ticiani (Postdoctoral Representative) and Phil Wages (Senior Councilor) for all of their great work.

### Incoming Officers

Please join us in welcoming our incoming officers for 2023!



Meg Whittaker



Tracie Baker

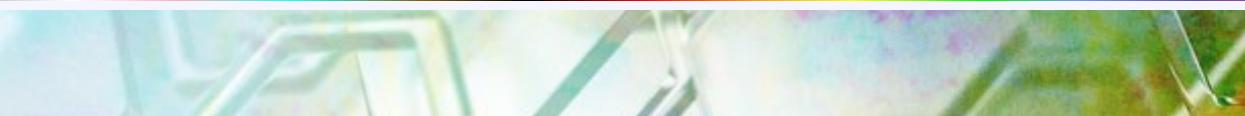


Lauren Walker

**Dr. Meg Whittaker** (she/her) is our new Vice President-Elect. Dr. Whittaker is the Managing Director and Chief Toxicologist of ToxServices LLC. One of the pioneers in the field of chemical alternatives assessments, she is a key contributor to advancing these methods around the world. Dr. Whittaker earned a PhD in Toxicology from The University of Maryland, Baltimore and an MPH in Environmental Health from The University of Michigan. In her spare time, she likes to collect signed books, papers, and letters from historically significant toxicologists (e.g., Robert Christison, Mathieu Orfila) and turn of the century lesbian writers (e.g., Radclyffe Hall, Marie Corelli)

**Dr. Tracie Baker** (she/her) is our new junior councilor. Dr. Baker is currently an associate professor at the University of Florida, Department of Environmental and Global Health. Dr. Baker received her Master of Science from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks in Marine Biology, specializing in toxins produced by marine organisms. She received her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine (2008) and PhD (2013) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her wife, kids, and their dog, participating in open water swim events and triathlons, traveling, and being outside as much as possible.

**Dr. Lauren Walker** (she/her) is our new postdoctoral representative. Dr. Walker received her PhD in Environmental Toxicology in 2019 from the University of California, Riverside. She was recently a Postdoctoral Fellow at Rutgers University and now is a toxicologist at Colgate, focusing on the placenta as a target of toxicants. Apart from science, Dr. Walker enjoys teaching herself to sew from vintage sewing patterns and exploring every botanical garden in the Northeastern US.



## Closing Remarks



Stay healthy and safe,

**The OTA Executive Board**

Troy A. Roepke, President

Jess Plavicki, Vice President

Meg Whittaker, Vice President-Elect

Sarah Lacher, Secretary-Treasurer

Samantha Snow, Past President

Tom Lewandowski, Senior Councilor

Tracie Baker, Junior Councilor

Lauren Walker, Postdoctoral Representative

Joanna Woo, Graduate Representative

If you are looking to join OTA, when [renewing your membership](#), add the Out Toxicologists and Allies Special Interest Group to your membership. We welcome you!



<https://www.toxicology.org/groups/sig/ota/>