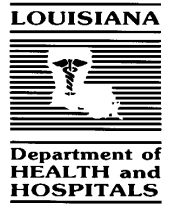




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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA HOSPITAL OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS  
PRESENT AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

MANDEVILLE – JUNE 1, 2009 – A recent presentation by Southeast Louisiana Hospital employees at a national conference has provided an inside look at a model being used at SELH to help calm and relieve stress for people with mental health challenges.

Employees Brenda Martin and Shantelle Suane gave the presentation at the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and Expo in Houston. The presentation, "A Sensory Room on Every Unit: Can It Work?" highlighted the successful use of 10 sensory rooms on the SELH campus.

Calming is the central theme of the rooms. The hope is that the people served at SELH will self-initiate the use of sensory strategies to adjust alertness levels. The rooms include calming items such as iPods, hand-held massagers, sound spas, stress balls, weighted blankets and kaleidoscopes. These items are used by adults and youth served at the hospital on an inpatient and outpatient basis.

Implementation of the sensory rooms began two years ago as part of a larger initiative called Project ERASE (Eliminate Restraint and Seclusion Events). The first room opened in May of 2007 along with four free-standing portable sensory units, called sensory carts, which were also employed as part of the project.

Employees who provide direct-care to clients receive sensory modulation training at orientation and on an annual basis, as well as when issues arise on the units. Training emphasizes the importance of maintaining a calm environment and employees are commended for modeling calming behaviors, supporting the project and promoting use of the rooms.

Start-up costs for the sensory rooms and carts were covered in part by a National Technical Assistance Center State Infrastructure Grant. The Thomas L. Young Auxiliary of SELH has also played an integral role in ensuring the longevity of the project through continuous fundraising.

The American Occupational Therapy Association is the national professional association which represents the interests and concerns of occupational therapy practitioners and students of occupational therapy and improves the quality of occupational therapy services. AOTA boasts 36,000 members throughout the nation and internationally.

Southeast Louisiana Hospital (SELH) is a state-operated mental health treatment facility which serves adults, adolescents, and children. To learn more about us, visit our Web site at [www.selh.org](http://www.selh.org).

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals serves to protect and promote health statewide and to ensure access to medical, preventive and rehabilitative services for all state citizens. To learn more about DHH, visit [www.dhh.louisiana.gov](http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov).

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### **PLEASE INSERT ATTACHED PHOTO**

*From left:* Shantelle Suane, MOT, LOTR and Brenda Martin, LOTR stand in front of their serenity room display at the AOTA Conference and Expo.