



November 24, 2020

APTA Honors and Awards Committee  
American Physical Therapy Association

Dear Committee Members:

It is my distinct honor to nominate **Susan Ropp (Chalcraft), PT, MS, DPT** for the Lucy Blair Service Award on behalf of the Washington Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association. It is my goal in this letter to tell Susan's story and provide the committee with both a broad and specific explanation of why we, as a chapter, feel that Susan is a worthy candidate to receive this prestigious award.

Outlined in the purpose of the Lucy Blair Service Award we see that it was created to *"acknowledge and honor physical therapist members of the association whose contributions to the association as a whole, at both the association level and the component level, like those of Lucy Blair, have been of exceptional value."* The depth and breadth of Susan's contributions to APTA Washington and APTA over her career thus far are a clear indication of this exceptional value and epitomizes the intent of this award.

Susan's story of service begins in 1982 as she graduated from the University of Washington with her Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Therapy and quickly emerged as a leader among her peers by joining our chapter's legislative committee in 1985. From this point forward, Susan's involvement and commitment to servant leadership blossomed and has taken on many diverse forms over the years.

In 1987 she volunteered as the public-school liaison for our chapter and also participated in the initial development of guidelines for physical therapy practice in public schools in Washington state in 1988. As a pediatric physical therapist working in the public schools, Susan brought the special comments and concerns of the public-school physical therapist to the attention of our legislative committee and in 1999, as the chair of this committee, Susan shared her understanding of the inequities of salary compensation with our state organization. This inequity had led to a lack of physical therapists willing to accept work in school environments and, under Susan's leadership, our association successfully lobbied for physical therapists in the public schools to be able to count some of their previous years of clinical experience toward their placement on the salary schedule.

Her unassuming and capable representation of pediatric physical therapists culminated in the creation of the Pediatric Special Interest Group (PSIG) within our chapter and, as a whole, our chapter continues to be the beneficiary of Susan's passion in this arena with numerous gifted leaders joining and emerging from this vibrant special interest group. Her early career service and leadership exemplifies her organizational skills, her tenacity, her focus, her ability to truly listen to all perspectives of an issue and build consensus, as well as her commitment to mentoring new committee members and potential leaders.

Susan's servant-leadership continued to grow over the years as legislative committee chair from 1999 to 2004, and she was instrumental in realizing or teeing up substantial legislative victories during her tenure as chair. After a seven-year campaign, Washington successfully implemented a revision of our Physical Therapist Practice Act with stronger protection of the terms physical therapy and PT, as well as specifying that sharp debridement and needle EMG testing were part of physical therapist scope of practice. She facilitated the initiative to license physical therapist assistants in Washington state, further improving accountability and consumer protection, and realized the passing of this hallmark legislation in a single legislative session.

Susan would be the first to clarify that many of the legislative success stories during her tenure were the result of "many hands working together to make lighter work." What she would humbly leave out though was that her leadership energized and engaged membership involvement in the legislative process through her own role modeling of being fully informed on an issue, respectfully dialoguing with both supportive and adversarial stakeholders, and maintaining a calm but firm demeanor in all interactions. Clear evidence of this was our chapter grew its annual attendance at Legislative Impact Day, located at the state capital campus in Olympia, from 50 participants to more than 650-750 participants under her leadership. Chapter member Steve Allen once described Susan as *"the quiet giant in the room, who is all about listening and gaining all perspectives, then weighing in with what is most often a logical expression that unites us toward consensus."*

Susan continues to be an active member of our Legislative Committee. She makes the annual 750 mile round-trip across Washington state to attend our legislative day in Olympia, during which she provides training to a bus full of students on the ride over and mentors newcomers on the visits to see legislators. She served until recently as a member of the Washington Physical Therapy Political Action Committee board from 2009-2020 and as a member or chair of our Nominating Committee from 2012 to 2018.

Where my path as a young physical therapist merged with Susan's developing legacy was during her tenure as President of the Washington chapter from 2007 to 2011. As a new member of the board, I observed Susan's innate leadership style that encompasses her gifts of efficient organization, reflective listening, mutual respect, engagement of all constituencies, with a baseline of appreciation and attitude of gratitude. Susan instituted a consent calendar for our board meetings that greatly

improved the efficiency of these quarterly gatherings. She created the expectation that all board members seek and represent the input of their constituents, and devoted time to emailed messages from members who could not be present at these meetings. As practice, legislative, and political challenges became more complex and controversial, Susan established the “mega issue” discussion as an integral part of our board meetings. She or another member would select the most timely topic, thoroughly research the background and multiple perspectives of the issue, write and distribute a “white paper” on the issue ahead of the quarterly meeting so that members could seek input from their constituents and prepare themselves for a lively, respectful discussion. She also established ground rules to ensure that all participants and perspectives would be received respectfully, and that everyone present would have the opportunity to speak once before others contributed a second time, ensuring against domination of a discussion by outspoken individuals.

Transitioning from the chapter to the national level, Susan has served as a delegate to the APTA House of Delegates from 1999-2000 and from 2007 to present and was recently elected to another two-year term. Her knowledge, experience, and the respect she has gained and demonstrated over the years place her in a unique position on the delegation to serve newer members as an honored teacher. She patiently guides new delegates through the often-complex waters of the RCs, parliamentary procedures, and caucus debates. Her compassionate tutelage is instrumental in developing new leaders in our organization, since many of our leaders credit the delegate experience as the “one that hooked them” into professional activism and advocacy.

You would think with such a distinguished career of service, one might stop here, but that does not fit into Susan’s story at all. With her forward focus for the profession and drive to be a part of the success of our association, she stepped forward into the national realm of service to the APTA where she is now currently serving. Being an active member of HPA The Catalyst for the majority of her career, Susan began as faculty of the LAMP management committee in 2015 and then quickly became chair of the committee in 2016 and most recently part of the HPA board of directors as the Director of LAMP program. She also currently serves as a community partner in the Education Leadership Partnership representing Health Systems Council.

Finally, bringing her story full circle, Susan’s hometown of Colville, a small rural Eastern Washington community, is also the beneficiary of her expertise and generous spirit. She is the manager of rehab services at Providence Mt Carmel Hospital and was a leader of the Get Fit Colville Team which developed community education programs about exercise and wellness for the community at large and with special populations. She also volunteers her time with the local Rotary Club of Colville, which has a think global, act local focus.

It is very fitting that when you look at what Susan has achieved over her stunning career, you see how much of it takes on the form of service to others both professionally and personally. She has been recognized for these inspirational

achievements, receiving our chapter's PT of the Year Award in 1999, the APTA State Legislative Leadership Award in 2005, and the Donna El Din Distinguished Service Award in 2012. She also received the Washington Society of Association Executives Volunteer in Association Management Award in 2012 and the University of Washington Rehabilitation Medicine Alumni and Friends 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Susan clearly epitomizes the values of Lucy Blair and the exceptional record of service honored by the award named in her memory. Susan's story exudes the essence of servant-leadership, encouraging those she serves to always strive to be the best version of themselves while always having a focus of helping and making wherever they are a better place for everyone. Susan's gifts of clear organization, patient leadership, quiet mentorship, engaging consensus building, and remarkable enthusiasm and passion for her profession, her patients, her colleagues and her friends render her most deserving of this honor. Please give your utmost consideration to **Susan Ropp** as a deserving recipient of the Lucy Blair Service Award.

Please contact me if you have any clarifying questions.

Sincerely,

Jim Shepherd, PT, DPT, OCS, CMPT, Cert. CMFA  
Vice President