SPEAKER:  
You are listening to the AOTA podcast. Here is your host, Matt Brandenburg.

OK. Today, we are joined by AOTA is executive director Sherry Keremidas and Amy Lamb. Amy is a past president of AOTA, a clinician academician and more recently, a career and professional coach who led the design and content development for LEAD 360 and will be our guide for much of the program today. Thank you both so much for being on the show.

Thank you.

Yes. Thank you

Absolutely. Amy could you get us started and introduce AOTA new LEAD 360 program?

Absolutely. So we're really excited about LEAD 360 and the opportunities that it's going to bring to the occupational therapy profession. We really wanted to create a dynamic, accessible leadership development program for all. Occupational therapy professionals, so that they could have access to these different skills and be able to grow as a leader when they decide it's the right time for them. And to be able to do that from wherever it works best for them.

So we're very excited about the opportunities that this provides to be able to connect with members and nonmembers and be able to help them, to be able to create the professional roles that they want to have. I love that I had the chance to briefly look over the LEAD 360 page on the(INAUDIBLE) dot and was intrigued. I had a follow up question for you. The why would you say leadership is so important for occupational therapy professionals? You know, it's a great question. I think that oftentimes, you know, when we are working in different settings and in occupational therapy is a wonderful profession because of our breath and scope of what we are equipped to be able to do. We also have this ability to be able to very quickly look at an environment, look at how people are accessing it, be able to determine needs and identify different ways of being able to meet those needs more effectively. And that's where the leadership comes in, is being able to help professionals have the skill set to not only be able to see different directions that their organization can go, to be able to achieve the goals that they have before them.

But also to be able to have occupational therapy professionals be able to step into leadership roles, to be able to take the organization there and to help them see different paths forward. So it's really a great opportunity for people in a variety of different settings who might be seeing things and saying, Why are we doing it this way? There's better ways that we can do it, and thinking about how they can facilitate that within their organization. I love that example and it sounds like leadership can be so valuable in increasing the scope of one's practice if someone is looking to do that. (UNKNOWN), can you talk to us a little bit about what leadership is today and how it has been evolving? (UNKNOWN), thank you for that question. It's a really important question and a (UNKNOWN) in addition to my role in in serving the occupational therapy profession in our members, every student of leadership and the changing nature of leadership. So this is a very important area for me. In the past, we looked as as leaders, as the top just telling us what to do.

Shaping our directions was more of a top down approach to leadership and in some sense a command and control. And we have lots of examples of this in the past. That's not what's needed today and is certainly not what's needed tomorrow. The concept of leadership is leading at every level, whether you are a new professional, your mid-career, your seasoned and very senior in your roles. It's about leading in your profession, your work setting, your community, even leading among your family and friends as well. And it's the idea of constantly looking at how we can do things better ourselves, but more importantly, how we bring out the best in others, how we help them manage to survive the rapid amount of change and sometimes chaos that we experience today, and making sure that when we work with groups of individuals, we leverage their strengths, come up with something that's even better than what we expected. So leadership is a continual evolution and learning journey. It is a constant tweaking of our abilities to lead.

It's a constant awareness of our environment. And we see that this is something that's going to probably continue into the future. Thank you so much. You know, we're only five minutes into this interview and it's already sounding like a leadership master class. I cannot wait to see what the LEAD 360 program looks like. (UNKNOWN), could you share with us a little bit more how you were able to incorporate your perspectives and experiences with leadership in employment and community settings into LEAD 360? Absolutely. And I think it's a great question, and I've had the opportunity to be a leader within the profession. And and I think something that's important to recognize is I've also, you know, in my experience, serving in leadership roles in other organizations. One of the things that has really jumped out is this need to think about the people who are within your organization. And I worked for an organization one time where their mission was to take care of people and money would follow.

And I thought it was such a wonderful mission and I really wanted to get behind that. But as many of us have experienced, you get into an organization and you're like, I'm not seeing that and I'm not feeling that. It didn't it felt more like the money was dictating where we needed to go. And I think that the really wonderful opportunity that is happening right now is that we're seeing a shift and people in the workforce are saying we want something better from our life. We don't want to work 60 hours a week. We want to have more equality. We want better personal and professional life satisfaction. How do we get that? And organizations are having to really rethink how they operate and what they do. And that's where I think some of these new ideas can come forward. And so one of the things that the LEAD 360 program is built upon is it's built upon a human centered leadership approach. It's putting people at the center and saying, if we take care of our people, that they will then be able to do the work of their organizations.

And so it's really working to help people develop those skills and bring out those human centered leadership skills, so they can have work environments that, provide opportunities for people to learn grow, take strategic risk, fail along the way, not be criticized for failures, but actually celebrated for them. Because we can learn from those. And how do we move that forward? And I think that those are some really key things that are important to us as we think about how do we continue to move forward? And why is this important right now? Many if we look at the ways that health care and education, the two largest places where you will find occupational therapy professionals, those systems are broken in many different ways and ready for new ways of doing and being. And I believe that occupational therapy professionals have a role in helping to reshape the futures of all of those systems. Thank you so much, I love that principle of human centered leadership. It sounds so similar to to client centered practice within occupational therapy.

And our OT practitioners and professionals should feel empowered and poised, really, to to begin to apply principles of of that type of leadership. So that's very encouraging. I wanted to ask more about this program. AOTA LEAD 360 is designed around some interesting approaches. Could you talk about these approaches and give us some more information on that? Yeah, I'll go ahead and I'll get started. One of the things that we really wanted to do with LEAD 360 was to create a platform that provided the opportunity for people to be able to learn when it worked for them and also be able to create different ways for them to be able to engage. So there are some the the different modules consist of different ways of learning. There will be short video clips, readings, opportunities for reflection, opportunities to share with your peers, there's leadership labs. If you wonna connect with people in real time, that you can plug into and come and just have a conversation about some of the topics that we're exploring in that module or different sorts of things along that way.

There's an optional add on package for a professional coach if people want to have some professional coaching to go alongside of this as they're working to grow their leadership skills. And so we really wanted to create different types of ways for people to be able to experience and grow as leaders. And also to make sure that they had the support along the way so that if they experienced obstacles or challenges, that they knew that they had a community that they could lean on and to be able to come back to and talk, talk with about things. And there's the richness that happens when we have people that we can go to and and dialogue about different experiences that we're having. And so we're excited that the platform is able to offer people so many different opportunities and ways to be able to not only engage but also learn. And I would add to (UNKNOWN) comments, the other things that we built into the program was the ability to gain insights into leadership and those outside the profession.

Because very often the kind of leadership that occupational therapy professionals will engage in, will require them to be successful, to engage with people out of the health care system. Technology people, marketing people, communication people, people in the business world, community planners, engineers, whoever they may be. So there's elements of exposure to understanding concepts and working with very diverse individuals from different backgrounds as part of your leadership journey. And we will continue to provide opportunities for the participants in this program to learn from others so that they gain those skill sets and they see the kind of leadership challenges and opportunities that are coming from all different sectors. Those all sound like wonderful aspects of of this program, and I love the emphasis on on building a community. I think meaningful and lasting change really takes a team and it takes a community. So I love that that's built into this program. I know there are a lot of leadership development programs that already exist and that you've already touched on and so much that is great.

About LEAD 360. What else would you say really makes LEAD 360 unique? You know, I do think that one of the things that really helps LEAD 360 stand out for the occupational therapy professional is the community that it does anchor our members and nonmembers, too. So leadership programs, there are many different kinds. You can find them in different venues and all over. But this particular program has brought together experts and concepts and ideas from many different sources, brought them together, made them applicable in a way that occupational therapy professionals will be able to engage with quickly. And also have that community of internal support to be able to say, these are the things I'm experiencing within my organization. This is where I'd like to go. What are some different strategies people have used to get there, and be able to take the information and anchor it to a familiar place with familiar people and to be able to have a really good dialogue about how that can help them move forward in their various organizations.

And so I do believe that that is something that sets this apart, is the community that it creates for people to come together and talk about some of the different challenges or opportunities that we might experience. In our various settings, and also as being OT professionals working to drive change, and be able to improve the systems that we work with and so that the people who are accessing them have the highest quality of service as possible. And I would add to those comments a couple of practical aspects as well. One, as was said earlier, this program is designed to work around the schedules of busy occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants. We know that you may not be able to take time off to go to a week long leadership development program. This is broken into modules that can be taken at your convenience but still connect you to a community. It's designed around modules so that these modules will build over time and we see this as a living program. It's not a one and done.

We will continue to add resources and information so that we develop very, very competent, able occupational therapy professional leaders as well. And I will also point out, having been involved with leadership development programs at several other organizations and academic business schools in particular, we trying to make this accessible from the price point as well. And that's really important. We want leaders at every level to participate in this program. I love that. And you mentioned that it's module based. What else can you tell us about how the program is is organized or how the progression of these modules and resources works? So the modules are organized very so they have a mix of opportunities for people to learn. People will have opportunities to learn with reading and short videos that they can watch. They will have the opportunity to do certain things, such as various assessments, which will give them data about strengths that they might have, or they'll be able to work through different opportunities and assessments to point out different leadership behaviors and skills that they may be demonstrating right now.

Then they'll have the opportunity to do some reflection with some of those, and that reflection will happen internally. But also they'll have the opportunity to share that with their peers who are taking who are enrolled at the same time. As well as being able to plug into some lives, (UNKNOWN) leadership lab sessions that we have where they can come and they can say, this is a concept that I'm really struggling with or this is something that really excites me. How do I move this forward? And so they can still get some live support in those as well. The the mapping, the journey is going to be facilitated. So there's there are facilitators who will be guiding the process for the participants. And one of the things that I'm really excited about is having a design thinking background. I used a design thinking process as coming, bringing this program to life. And so that means that we're going to put it out there and it's going to, as was said, continue to live and breathe and evolve as time goes on.

So we will see changes and additions and modifications and things to the program, which I think is going to be exciting to do. And also I think it's what's going to keep this relevant for people now and a year from now and three years from now, being able to really continue to connect with people around how leadership is going to continue to evolve as we move forward. But that's a little bit about how mapping the journey is is organized and what people can expect if they decide to come join us. I love that and I love that emphasis on it not being a one and done just like leadership isn't, you know, a one time thing. I love how this program can be something that people continue to use. And you mentioned that first module, mapping your journey, which will be available in just a few weeks now. Is there anything else that an OT professional should expect once they register for that module? One of the other things that is built into that is built into mapping the journey is there's additional learning opportunities.

If people want to plug in too, they certainly can. So for example, there will be a, we'll have a special master class on imposter syndrome and some different topics where they can explore a little bit more in depth. There's also going to be additional resources for some of the areas that we explore. So if they want to go further in-depth into some of these areas, they'll have resources ready at their fingertips to be able to access right there within the platform and allow them to be able to do that. So, it's really wanting to put knowledge and ideas and skills into the hands of practitioners and make it easily accessible to them in a way that they can just take it and be able to move it forward and also get some support along the way, whether it's from the facilitators or perhaps some of the coaches that they might decide to work with if they decide to take that option as well. I love that. Thank you so much. How you two recommend someone using the program approach, using the online resources to maximize their learning and their gaining of this skillset?

I think in terms of maximized mapping, the journey is divided into four modules and to maximize your use of it, I would encourage people to try and do one module a week and also to be able to explore some of the extra resources that go along with that module. I also think it's important for people to understand that we know that sometimes life happens and something goes on with your family or you have things going on at your kid's school or work takes on a life of its own, and maybe there's a week where you don't get to a module. We want people to know that that's OK. Those modules are going to be open for them for that entire month. And that means that if they need to do two modules in a week, that's OK. But I think in terms of like trying to really maximize the resources to the best, trying to space it out and give them some time for reflection and being able to do some thoughtful sharing with their with their peers during the process. I would I would recommend people take module a week to really be able to dive in and really reflect on some of the content.

And I think any makes really important points about taking time to reflect. Leadership is is not a theoretical area, it's a very applied area. So taking what you're learning in mapping your journey and then in the subsequent modules, looking at how it applies to what you're doing now, watch how you're applying it and returning to those areas later on, because I think as one grows in their leadership, as they grow in their role in your employment setting, you'll see that you need to make those refinements in your leadership approaches. So the materials that we're offering through this program, the resources, the experience that you will go through in this program, you'll be able to return to and make those refinements and adjustments as you continue along your career path, your career path and leadership journey. I love that. Those are excellent recommendations. And I want to ask you for more recommendations right now. Could you give some recommendations to our listeners to help them begin to apply principles of leadership into their daily practice?

I think one of the best places to start is really just doing some like observation. Where do you see when you look at your organization, what are some of the pain points of the people around you that you see, and how could you see it also being different? And what might occupational therapy be able to do to make some of those pain points a little less painful for the organization or for people within it? And the reason why I think that that's such an important place to start is that that's oftentimes where people are most amenable to change. And so as we think about trying to maybe explore new ways of doing things or new ways of being looking for some of those opportunities within your organization, maybe there's a teacher that you're working with who would really benefit from some executive functioning with classes for their kids in their classroom. And it's not just kids who are on caseload, but it's it's all the kids in the class. What might that look like? How could you offer some sort of executive functioning boot camp, those sorts of things, right.

Thinking outside of the box. And so I would encourage people to really just put on their their observation lens and don't judge the ideas and say, wow, that could never happen. Rather say, that's something that I wonna think about and come back to and then plug in to LEAD 360 and look for where there's opportunities to take some of the principles of leadership that we're learning about there to be able to help be able to make your organization be able to navigate the world a little differently. And I think (UNKNOWN) makes such an important point about using your observational skills, those skills that are so well developed in occupational therapy practitioners. But I love (UNKNOWN) that you're also talking about kind of flipping the situation. And rather than coming up with the solution, giving the room to really listen and understand what others are experiencing. And that's such an important aspect of, of leadership that the real listening, watching and observing and not jumping to conclusions is an immediate solution.

And that's something that I hope all of our participants will take from these programs and can apply to their occupational therapy practice. Those are wonderful recommendations. Thank you for highlighting those principles of this program. Where can our listeners find more information related to LEAD 360 and how can they register for the program. On the information about this program is available on the AOTA website and it can be located at wwwaota.org/ leaders. It contains a description of the program and all the information about registering for mapping the journey. Do you need to be a AOTA member to register? No. You don't need to be a AOTA member to register, but there is favorable pricing for our AOTA members. So how much would it cost for our listeners to register for the program? Mapping the journey is available at $99 for AOTA members and $175 for non-members. I just have one more question now. This is the Golden Nugget segment. I like to end every show with this question. If you could give one piece of advice to OT professionals, what would you say?

Wow, that's such a good question. Normally, I would be more prepared for it, I apologize. You know what I think I would say to people right now is don't let fear stop you. All too often, I think we we bear this pressure upon ourselves where we think that we have to have all the answers. It's gonna have to go perfect. I know that this is going to work. And, you know, there's very few situations where that's probably going to happen. And so I think really just telling people, you know, just because you can't predict the outcome doesn't mean it's not worth the attempt. And leaning into that fear and not letting it stop you just because you don't know how to do something, just because it sounds big and scary, it doesn't mean that you're not meant to be there in that place at that time. So I would just tell people, don't let the fear stop you and be willing to come learn new things and, I imagine that most people would reflect back on that a year later if they decide to to lean into the theory a little bit and say, Wow, I never really dreamt I could do that, but look at where I am today.

And so I think not letting fear stop you. And the only thing that I would add to that is leadership is a journey. It's quite appropriate that our first module is called mapping the Journey, because we begin in a leadership along the leadership pathway. Our pathway is going to change over time. There will be new opportunities to explore and our whole approach to leadership, the skills we bring forward are going to change. So don't expect that as you begin your leadership journey that you are this premiere leader that is going to lead massive organizations, that comes over time, and those skills you will develop over time and with good guidance. And those are powerful messages to end this interview on. Thank you both so much for your time. For developing a really powerful opportunity built for OT professionals, for our listeners, if you want to learn more about the program and register for mapping the journey, please visit the link that (UNKNOWN) mentioned earlier. Thank you for taking the time to chat with us today and to share the message about the new leadership development program that AOTA is offering.

And I think it's exciting and I think the timing is right and we're very much looking forward to being able to roll this out. And I would add, we are so excited about launching this program. We see so much benefit for the occupational therapy professional community and we really look forward to involving our occupational therapy practitioners and giving you a path to move forward and for you to help us to continue to grow and refine this program. So thank you, for hosting us today. It was my pleasure. And I myself am very excited to register for this program as well and can't wait to see where it goes. Thank you again so much for your time and it's been wonderful. Thanks for listening to the AOTA podcast. Tune in again next time.