



# *RT Month 2026 Advocacy Message*

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## **Your Voice as a Recreational Therapist Matters Now More Than Ever**

As we kick off International Recreational Therapy Month, this year's theme couldn't be more important to our work. **Waves of Connection: Turning the Tide on Loneliness Through Recreational Therapy** comes at a time when millions of people across the world, of all ages and abilities, are experiencing loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness has been declared a public health crisis by the U.S. Surgeon General and the World Health Organization. We know this is an issue, but **what the world needs to hear is that YOU as a recreational therapist are the expert in solving this issue.**

We know that social engagement, meaningful relationships, and participation in recreation and leisure activities decrease loneliness. This is part of our profession's unique expertise and we need to claim this as fact and shout it to the world. Every meaningful connection you facilitate in group sessions, each moment of joy and happiness you inspire with your clients, every community you build around common interests and experiences represents an intervention to reduce isolation and loneliness. **Others are just beginning to understand loneliness as a serious health concern, but as a recreational therapist you:**

- | Create belonging through purposeful interactions, play and recreation
- | Facilitate social networks and connections behind treatment sessions
- | Design and implement interventions that foster human connection
- | Evaluate outcomes that prove what you do reduces isolation and loneliness

**This is at the heart of what we do. We need to claim and share about the work we do as a profession that directly and significantly impacts isolation and loneliness. If we don't, someone else will.**

I encourage you to use RT Month to advocate and publicly claim your expertise. Share interventions, success stories, and outcomes so that your colleagues, clients and the public see your work. **By participating in this type of advocacy, you are demonstrating your value as a recreational therapist**, while also creating opportunities and elevating standards that ensure quality care across settings and populations. You are also establishing credibility among healthcare teams, organizations, the public, and policy makers.

This month take a step outside your comfort zone. **Reach out to your state or federal representatives and senators to tell them about the amazing work you do.** Check out ATRA's **RT Month 2026 Professional Advocacy Kit** for talking points, sample messages, social media graphics, details on how to connect with your legislators, and more! By making waves with legislators and demonstrating the value of what you do, we can create a powerful tide (maybe even a tsunami) to increase awareness of recreational therapy. **Let's celebrate what we do and show the world about how amazing recreational therapy is.**

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