



# NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF PAROLING AUTHORITIES INTERNATIONAL • SUMMER 2026

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## TO-DO IN 2026

Renew Membership

Serve on a Committee

Recruit Fellows to APAI

Make Plans to Attend the **2027 Annual Training Conference** in Denver, Colorado, April 25-28, 2027

## MEMBERSHIP FEES\*

Individual	\$65
Organizational	
Up to 8 Members	\$375
9 to 13 Members	\$475
14 to 20 Members	\$575
Alumni	\$40
Associate	\$40
Student	\$15

\*fees on a per year basis.



JONATHAN OGLETREE

## A Message from the President...

**As I have been reflecting on my time as your President, I am filled with immense gratitude for the progress our community has forged together.** From our executive collaborations with many organizations to global strategy alignments at the World Congress on Probation and Parole, our collective voice has never been stronger. I am looking forward to our continued work and progress on the Executive Committee, while serving as the Immediate Past President.

We have an excellent Executive Committee, who has done a great job and will continue to do great things in the future. Words can't express how thankful I am for all of the work of this team over these past four years. The work of the Executive Committee is important, can be tedious and deserves more praise than it is of-

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ten given. Thank you for all that each of you do!

Our time in New Orleans beautifully capped off this chapter, demonstrating that when paroling authorities collaborate, we maximize public safety and human potential. Thank you for your trust, your dedication, and your tireless work.

I am proud to welcome our next President: Kecia Rongen, who takes office on July 1, 2026. She brings a wealth of seasoned expertise to the presidency, not only from her time as the Chair of the Washington State Indeterminate Sentence Review Board, but also

from holding multiple roles within the association. No time has been wasted by her taking the opportunity to look at things that will move us forward.

Please continue to give her the support that you have given me in my time as President.

Best regards,



Jonathan Ogletree  
APAI President

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## KECIA RONGEN, M.A., APAI VICE-PRESIDENT & PRESIDENT-ELECT FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

### Greetings APAI Members, Partners and Supporters!

On behalf of APAI, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of the recent conference held in New Orleans, Louisiana. We are grateful to the presenters, panelists, sponsors, organizers and attendees whose engagement and expertise made the event both meaningful and impactful. From insightful conversations to valuable networking opportunities, the conference was truly a success and will be remembered for years to come.

As we move forward into this year and the beginning of my presidency in July, I would like to recognize Jonathan Ogletree for his leadership and dedication to APAI. Under Jonathan's leadership, APAI expanded our collaboration with other organizations and associations while successfully transitioning operations from Sam Houston State University to independent management with our Executive Committee and Ashley Koonce as our Executive Director.

Moving forward one of our top priorities will be strengthening communication and engagement with our membership. The survey in this newsletter provides an opportunity for you to share feedback regarding the conference, future training topics and the overall direction of the association. We welcome your

thoughts on what is working well and where improvements can be made.

Survey responses may remain anonymous, however if you are interested in volunteering or becoming more involved with APAI, please include your name and contact information. The continued success of our association depends on the involvement and support of our membership.

I had the opportunity to speak to many attendees during the conference and received valuable feedback regarding training interests and opportunities for growth within our organization. I invite you to join the Executive Committee and me as we continue to strengthen APAI for the future.

Please feel free to reach out at any time with questions, comments or suggestions.

Fondly,



Kecia Rongen, M.A.  
APAI President-Elect & Vice-President  
[president@apaintl.org](mailto:president@apaintl.org)

ASHLEY KOONCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, APAI

# 2026 ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE RECAP • MAY 4-7, 2026 • NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA



**The APAI 2026 Annual Training Conference in New Orleans was an outstanding success, bringing together professionals from across the world for a week of learning, collaboration, and connection.**

From the moment attendees arrived, the energy and enthusiasm were evident as members gathered to share experiences, exchange ideas, and strengthen the professional relationships that make our association so valuable.

The conference kicked off with a memorable Welcome Reception, featuring incredible local entertainment and hospitality organized by the Louisiana Host Committee. Their efforts showcased the unique culture and spirit of New Orleans and provided the perfect setting for attendees to kick off the week, while reconnecting with colleagues and making new connections.

One of the highlights of this year's conference were the Regional Breakout sessions. These sessions provided members with an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about the unique challenges and opportunities facing their respective regions. Feedback from attendees indicated that these sessions were among the most valuable additions to the conference experience, fostering dialogue and collaboration among professionals who share similar responsibilities and concerns. We are excited to explore expanded opportunities for this at future ATCs.

Conference evaluations reflected what many attendees experienced throughout the week, another exceptional conference! Overall satisfaction scores increased once again, continuing a positive trend that APAI has seen over the past several years. These results demonstrate the association's ongoing commitment to delivering a high-caliber educational and conference experience.

The sessions also received strong praise from attendees. Speakers once again earned exceptionally high marks for both the quality and relevance of their presentations. These outstanding evaluations are an illustration of the dedication and hard work of the Professional Development Committee, whose commitment to identifying timely topics and engaging presenters continues to elevate the conference year after year.

As always, beyond the educational sessions, one of the most significant benefits of the ATC remains the opportunity to network with fellow professionals who understand the unique nature of your work. APAI members are tasked with making difficult decisions that impact public safety, rehabilitation, accountability, and community well-being. The ability to learn from colleagues facing similar challenges, share best practices, and build lasting professional relationships is invaluable. The APAI ATC remains the only conference specifically designed for professionals who do this important work, making it a truly unique and essential experience for our members.

As we reflect on a tremendous week in New Orleans, we are grateful to our attendees, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, volunteers, committees, and host committee members whose contributions made the conference possible! Your commitment to excellence continues to strengthen APAI and the profession we serve.

The excitement is already building for next year as we look ahead to the APAI in Denver. We look forward to continuing the momentum, providing exceptional professional development opportunities, and bringing together the nation's leading decision-makers once again. We hope to see you there!

# ASHLEY KOONCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, APAI

## 2026 APAI AWARDS SUMMARY

### CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

**One of the highlights of the APAI conference is the opportunity to recognize the outstanding individuals and organizations whose dedication, innovation, and leadership continue to advance the field of parole.** This year, APAI received more nominations than ever before, reflecting the remarkable work being performed by professionals and community partners

across the country and around the world, as well as the long overdue recognition.

We extend our congratulations to all nominees and award recipients for their contributions to the field and to the communities they serve.

#### DR. KENNETH WALKER COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

*The Dr. Kenneth Walker Community Service Award recognizes an individual or organization that has made significant contributions to advancing the rehabilitative efforts of parole. Named in honor of Dr. Kenneth Walker, whose decades of service as a parole board member, educator, mentor, and community advocate exemplified an unwavering commitment to public service, this award celebrates those who continue his legacy of supporting successful reentry and strengthening communities.*

porting currently and formerly incarcerated individuals through advocacy, education, mentorship, and reentry assistance. Their work empowers individuals to successfully transition back into their communities while promoting positive change throughout the criminal justice system.

APAI proudly recognizes the Louisiana Parole Project for its dedication to rehabilitation, second chances, and community service, reflecting the values embodied by Dr. Kenneth Walker throughout his distinguished career.

#### RENÉE COLLETTE INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

*The Renée Collette International Excellence Award recognizes an individual or organization that has made significant contributions to advancing international criminal justice collaboration. Named in honor of Renée Collette, whose distinguished career and leadership helped establish APAI as a truly international association, the award celebrates those who foster cooperation, innovation, and shared learning across borders.*

The 2026 award was presented to **Jonathan Ogletree** in recognition of his longstanding commitment to international collaboration in parole, risk assessment, and evidence-based decision-making. His nomination highlighted the vital role he has played in building relationships among jurisdictions, promoting the exchange of knowledge and best practices,



Left to Right: Jonathan Ogletree, Andrew Hundley (recipient), Francis Abbott

The 2026 award was presented to the **Louisiana Parole Project** and accepted by Executive Director Andrew Hundley. The Louisiana Parole Project has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to sup-

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and advancing professional partnerships throughout North America and beyond. His contributions include strengthening collaboration between the United States and other countries, as well as sharing expertise with a global audience through presentations at multiple World Congresses on Probation and Parole. His extensive work with international partners, including cross-border collaborations with leading researchers and practitioners, has helped advance effective decision-making and foster greater understanding among criminal justice professionals worldwide.

APAI proudly recognizes Jonathan Ogletree for his dedication to international cooperation, professional excellence, and the advancement of criminal justice across jurisdictions, embodying the spirit and legacy of Renée Collette.

**VINCENT O’LEARY AWARD**

*The Vincent O’Leary Award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to APAI while demonstrating exceptional vision, leadership, and commitment to the field of parole. Named in honor of Vincent O’Leary, whose career was dedicated to advancing professional standards, training, research, and the preservation of parole, the award represents one of APAI’s highest honors.*

The 2026 APAI award was presented to **David J. Herring** and accepted on his behalf by Christopher Barnett. Throughout more than 30 years of public service, Mr. Herring has distinguished himself as a respected leader, advocate, and champion of parole. As

a member, Vice Chairman, and Chairman of the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles, he advanced evidence-informed decision-making, professional development, and collaboration across jurisdictions. A dedicated supporter of APAI, he has fostered innovation, knowledge-sharing, and international partnerships while helping strengthen the profession through training and leadership. His commitment to public service, people-centered leadership, and the advancement of parole exemplifies the values and legacy of Vincent O’Leary.

APAI proudly recognizes David J. Herring for his extraordinary service, leadership, and dedication to advancing the field of parole while strengthening the association’s mission and impact across jurisdictions.

**BEN BAER AWARD**

*The Ben Baer Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated significant service in the field of parole or community corrections. Named in honor of Benjamin F. Baer, whose distinguished career was defined by his commitment to fairness, accountability, public safety, and effective supervision, the award honors those who have made lasting contributions to the profession.*

The 2026 APAI award was presented to **Timothy McDonnell** of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Throughout more than 34 years of service, Mr. McDonnell has served in numerous leadership roles within the agency, culminating in his current position

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as Chief Operations Officer. His contributions have helped shape parole policy and practice in Texas, including the enhancement and validation of the state’s parole guidelines instrument and the implementation of graduated sanctions as effective alternatives to revocation. Known for his professionalism, institutional knowledge, and collaborative leadership, Mr. McDonnell has been a trusted advisor to agency leadership, legislators, staff, and stakeholders for decades.

APAI proudly recognizes Timothy McDonnell for his enduring commitment to excellence, his innovative contributions to parole decision-making, and his unwavering dedication to strengthening the effectiveness and integrity of the field of parole.

**PRESIDENT’S AWARD**

*The President’s Award is presented to an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to the field of parole or to APAI.*

At the 2026 APAI Annual Training Conference, President Jonathan Ogletree presented this honor to **Benita Murphy**, Chair of the West Virginia Parole Board, in recognition of her exceptional service, leadership, and continued dedication to the profession and the association.

Throughout an already distinguished career, Chair Murphy has remained committed to advancing the work of parole and supporting the mission of APAI. Known for her willingness to take on new initiatives and contribute wherever needed, she has earned the

respect of colleagues across the profession through her thoughtful leadership and collaborative approach. While often quiet and humble in her demeanor, her insights, knowledge, and innovative ideas consistently leave a lasting impact. Her forward-thinking perspective and commitment to excellence continue to strengthen both her agency and the broader parole community.

APAI proudly recognizes Benita Murphy for her outstanding contributions, steadfast leadership, and enduring commitment to the advancement of parole and the association.

A graphic with a blue and green gradient background featuring faint images of legal documents. The text "CALL FOR ARTICLES" is written in large, white, serif font. Below it, in a smaller white font, is the question "Do you have news, advice or a story of interest to the Paroling Profession?". Further down, it says "Submit your stories, photos and news to: Ashley Koonce at koonce@apaintl.org". At the bottom, it states "The APAI Newsletter is available year-round at www.apaintl.org".

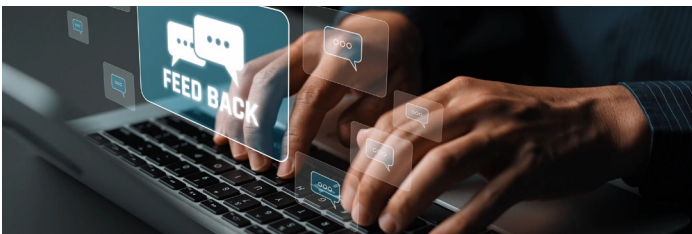
Photo Credit - Denver, Colorado by Devonshire on Unsplash



*2027 Annual*  
**TRAINING CONFERENCE**

April 25-28, 2027 • Denver, Colorado

• REGISTRATION OPENS LATE 2026 • VISIT [WWW.APAINTL.ORG](http://WWW.APAINTL.ORG) TO LEARN MORE •



**FEEDBACK WANTED!**  
 WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Your feedback is essential in helping APAI continue to grow and better serve its members. We invite you to take a few minutes to complete our Engagement and Membership Survey, which includes questions about the Annual Training Conference, association communications, member engagement, and future priorities. Your input will help guide APAI's planning and decision-making as we work to strengthen the value of membership and ensure the Association remains responsive to the needs of our profession. Thank you for sharing your perspective and helping shape APAI's future.

**Go to [www.apaintl.org/survey](http://www.apaintl.org/survey) to complete the survey today!**

**STAY UP TO DATE WITH APAI BIENNIAL REPORT**

We are pleased to share the Association's Biennial Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of our work, accomplishments, and financial activity over the past two fiscal years. This report highlights key initiatives, membership trends, and organizational milestones that reflect the continued growth and impact of the Association.

Members are encouraged to review the report to stay informed about our progress and the breadth of our collective efforts and reach out to Association leadership with any questions.

**FIND THE REPORT ONLINE AT [WWW.APAINTL.ORG/REPORT](http://WWW.APAINTL.ORG/REPORT)**



# APAI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

<p><b>President</b> Jonathan Ogletree Kansas</p>	<p><b>Past President</b> David Blumberg Maryland</p>	<p><b>Vice President</b> Kecia Rongen Washington</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b> Chris Barnett Georgia</p>
<p><b>Treasurer</b> Francis Abbott Louisiana</p>	<p><b>Northeastern USA</b> MaryJane Ainsworth Vermont</p>	<p><b>Western USA</b> John Bailey Oregon</p>	<p><b>Southern USA</b> Benita Murphy West Virginia</p>
<p><b>Central USA</b> Scott Widmer Ohio</p>	<p><b>International Section</b> Alistair Spierling New Zealand</p>	<p><b>International Section</b> Joanne Blanchard Canada</p>	



**FRONT ROW** – Joanne Blanchard, International VP; Ashley Koonce, Executive Director; MaryJane Ainsworth, Northeastern USA VP; John Bailey, Western USA VP; Scott Widmer, Central USA VP

**BACK ROW** – Chris Barnett, Secretary; Jonathan Ogletree, President; Kecia Rongen, Vice-President and President-Elect; Francis Abbott, Treasurer

## CONTACT APAI

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