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# SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

POST-CONFERENCE RECAP:  
50 YEARS OF TAMFT

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# TAMFT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CARLOS PEREZ, PHD, LPC, LMFT

To all TAMFT members:

It's Sunday morning as I write this, the day after our 50th conference. I made the 6-hour drive home last night, quite tired but still energized by the amazing experience of the week. My family isn't home from their weekend travels, so I've had a lot of alone time to think back on our time together. And I can't stop thinking about how good it was.

If you weren't able to attend our conference, *Celebrating 50 Years of TAMFT: Embracing the Past, Equipping the Present, Empowering the Future*, it was a spectacular event. We had chances to make new connections, reconnect with previous colleagues, and enjoy some great sessions and keynotes. We also saw some founding moments of our organization and recognized some people who paved the path for us today. It was truly awe-inspiring to see how far we've come in the last 50 years.

I always leave our conferences energized, even more so this time. There's something about being around everyone doing great work, passionate about what they do, and seeing how many of us love TAMFT that's fulfilling and motivating at the same time. But there's one moment I will carry with me from this past week, one moment that stands out above everything else: standing on the stage and looking out into the crowd to see you.

I get to stand in front of one of the best organizations, ever.

I wish you all can see what I see from my point of view. I look at our organization and I see one group, one people who are all passionate about what we do, who love and care about people, who fight for social justice, who want to advance our field. I see people who want to preserve memories, want to make new ones and cherish TAMFT. To be able to see so many of us in one place at one time...I don't know how else to describe it, but it's a blessing. It makes me proud to be a part of TAMFT.

I was asked several times this week how it feels to step into the president's role. And my answer is this: it's easy when you have such a great group of people. From the Board to the membership, to our staff, you all make us who we are. Fifty years of conferences is such a monumental moment for our organization. It's because of you that we're here.

I'm looking forward to seeing what the next chapter brings. I thank each of you for making our conference so special, and for paving the path for the next generation of therapists.

Cheers,

Carlos Perez, PhD, LPC, LMFT  
President, 2024 TAMFT Board of Directors



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

REBEKAH TORRES, LMFT ASSOCIATE, TAMFT ASSOCIATE REPRESENTATIVE

Hello TAMFT Members!

You are invited to celebrate 50 years of TAMFT with us! Our newsletter this quarter takes you on a trip of TAMFT's existence! Needless to say, the theme for this newsletter is "Change".



We recently had our TAMFT conference where members got together and celebrated in person while absorbing the information from our wonderful speakers and presenters! Within this newsletter, you will have an opportunity to experience the progress from former presidents to current presidents, get an insight into the Conference, and enjoy various resources that will help you in the profession. We also have study guides for the MFT exam.

Furthermore, we just completed a round of elections where Board Members were voted on to the Board of Directors while others are finishing their term. You will be hearing from our new president, Carlos Perez, and some past presidents to see how we've been able to maintain growth and momentum in the field!

If you are interested in supporting TAMFT and the marriage and family field in Texas, we can use your participation in our various committees. By participating in committees, you can learn and develop various leadership skills that can be used outside of your committee role.

Enjoy the rest of the newsletter.

Cordially,

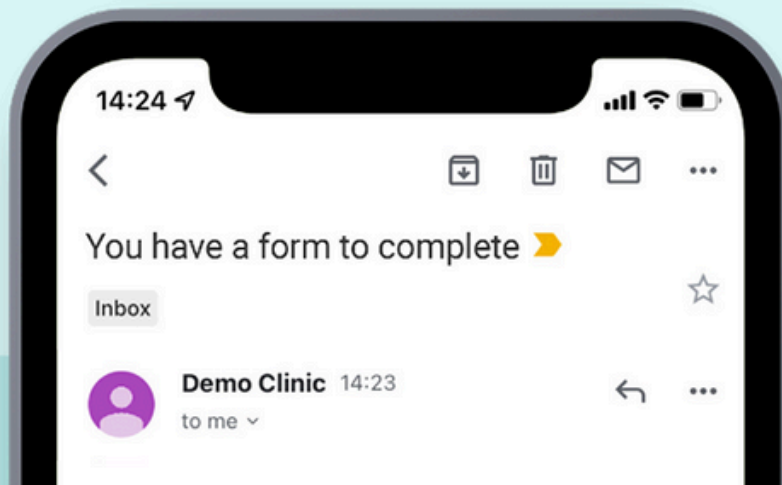
Rebekah Torres, LMFT Associate  
Supervised by Amy Birchill Lavergne, M.Ed., LMFT-S, LPC-S



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Can you share some key milestones or achievements during your tenure as president of TAMFT?

**Peter D. Bradley, Ph.D., LPC-S, LMFT-S**  
**President, 2014-2016**

When did you serve as TAMFT president?

President Elect - 2013-2014  
President - 2014-2016  
Past-President - 2016-2017

1. TAMFT won the legal challenge by the Texas Medical Association and retained its rights to diagnose in accordance with the DSM.
2. TAMFT had several financially successful conferences, which helped secure our finances.
3. TAMFT laid the groundwork to become an independent MFT association.

What was the climate like at the time (industry, the organization, etc.)?

At the time I was TAMFT President, we were faced with several significant issues and industry threats/changes. 1) The Texas Medical Association (TMA) was suing to remove diagnostic privileges for LMFTs within the state of Texas; 2) The American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy was dissolving AAMFT State Associations; 3) TAMFT was facing a financial crisis, which was impacting our sustainability.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced as president, and how did you address them?

The most challenging issues were the TMA lawsuit, our independence as an MFT association, and our financial stability. In true Texas spirit, we faced them front-on, with tenacity and a goal to be successful. We were able to rally support from legislators and our lobbyist and find a remedy for these issues that secured the foundation and future for MFT in Texas.

How did you foster collaboration and consensus among board members and membership during your presidency?

With all the challenges being faced at the time, it was impossible to avoid conflicting opinions on what was in the best interest of MFTs and TAMFT. As a board, we discussed all aspects of the issues and made decisions on how to proceed. At times we were criticized for our decisions by some members, but it was necessary that we maintain a course of action to resolve these issues. It was disappointing that those who were overtly critical when things were difficult did not show the same amount of positive support when our efforts were successful.

Looking back, what advice would you offer to future presidents or leaders within TAMFT as they assume their roles?

I have had the pleasure to serve on several State MFT boards in many different roles over the course of my career. While it can often be challenging, I would encourage involvement. My advice would be to make sure you are willing to dedicate the time and energy necessary. While involvement at this level is highly rewarding, it requires a great deal of time and energy. When board members join but are unable to fully engage, it weakens the experience and the association's ability to achieve its goals. So, in short, I strongly encourage everyone to serve as a TAMFT Board Member, however, join the board when you have the ability to commit.

How did you prioritize the needs and interests of TAMFT members while serving as president?

The most pressing need of TAMFT at the time was simply to survive as we were facing challenges on many fronts. This made the prioritization less complicated.

Can you discuss a particularly impactful initiative or project that you spearheaded during your term as president?

Winning the Texas Medical Board suit was an immense accomplishment and impactful for MFTs within Texas and around the country. If TMA had been successful, it is likely that similar suits would have emerged across the country, limiting the ability of LMFTs to practice in accordance with the DSM and further limiting the accessibility of mental health care to the public.

# “PRESENT” PRESIDENT PERSPECTIVE



**Jason Martin, Ph.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S**  
**President, 2022-2024**

What was the climate like at the time (industry, the organization, etc.)?

The climate was very optimistic. TAMFT had firmly established itself as a viable and growing association. We were doing good work, and we were eager to learn more about the opportunities we could provide to members and the mental health community at large.

How did you navigate any conflicts or disagreements that arose within the board or membership during your tenure?

We didn't have very many conflicts or disagreements, but on the rare occasions, we made a point to address them directly and with kindness. We've benefited from the fact that everyone involved has the best interest of the association at heart, even if we at times disagreed. We trusted each other and lean on that trust to work through disagreements.

Can you discuss a particularly impactful initiative or project that you spearheaded during your term as president?

A Sponsorship Task Force that I mention below comes to mind.

What motivated you to pursue leadership roles within TAMFT, and how did you prepare for the responsibilities of the presidency?

When you believe in a mission, you want to support it. When it came time for presidential nominations, not many people stepped forward. I wanted to see TAMFT continue to grow and thrive, and I thought I was in a good position to help that happen. In terms of preparation, I spent most of my year as President-Elect shadowing the previous President and learning from her and about the position by observing her.

How did you prioritize the needs and interests of TAMFT members while serving as president?

We were very deliberate about seeking input from members, putting out surveys, soliciting, direct feedback, and other efforts. We also took any complaint or comment very seriously, and intentionally tried to resolve any issue or concern that members brought up.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced as president, and how did you address them?

The biggest challenge was the budget. We had some unexpected expenses that came up, and we as an association had to figure out how to pay for them. I convened a task force to solicit more sponsorships for the conference, and that task force was successful, increasing our sponsorships more than five times over the previous year. Another challenge was a lack of LMFTs to testify before legislative committees in Austin. We needed licensees to go before committees with very little notice, and we were not prepared. In response, the legislative committee began a program to recruit volunteers to be ready to go to Austin at a moment's notice in preparation for the next session.

Can you share some key milestones or achievements during your tenure as president of TAMFT?

We surpassed 1000 members (and 1200 members). We also celebrated the 50th anniversary of TAMFT.

What lessons did you learn from your experience as president of TAMFT, and how do you believe it has shaped your professional journey?

I'm still determining the lessons I learned and how it will shape my professional journey, but I know that I benefited from leaning on experienced, competent, passionate people. One lesson that certainly played out was how no one can do this job alone. You need a group (i.e. the board of directors) to help you navigate the decisions in the best interest of the association. Going forward in my career, I will take those lessons into any other leadership position that I might occupy.

How did you foster collaboration and consensus among board members and membership during your presidency?

This is actually very simple task because everyone felt very aligned from the beginning during my term. There were some times when disagreements around budget priorities and publicly facing statements came about, but we were able to have a conversation around those issues and prioritize the mission and purpose of the association as our guiding principles. Ultimately, these issues helped make our collaboration and efforts stronger.

What strategies did you employ to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within TAMFT and the broader field of marriage and family therapy?

For one thing, we established a social justice task force, which was later absorbed into the ethics committee to form the ethics and social justice committee. This group was charged with looking at every aspect of the association, to assure that we were adequately, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. We made a point of seeking out diverse voices and perspectives from various marginalized populations.

Looking back, what advice would you offer to future presidents or leaders within TAMFT as they assume their roles?

Get to know the people you are working with. Lean on them and empower them. This will take much of your time, but it will be worth the relationships you build and the good that you were able to do for the association. Don't be afraid to ask questions or admit your mistakes, and seek out counsel from others, especially when you may be out of your area of expertise. There are a lot of other people who want you to succeed, so seek them out and work with them.



# “FUTURE” PRESIDENT PERSPECTIVE



**Carlos Perez, Ph.D., LMFT**  
**President, 2024-2026**

What are some key milestones or achievements you'd like to accomplish during your tenure as president of TAMFT?

Top on my list is license reciprocity. I know that might be several years away, but if we can get close to that within my tenure as president, I'd be happy. The pieces are in place to move that forward with conviction for our next legislative session, and I'm excited about that possibility.

Second on my list is to increase our membership. We have over 4000 LMFTs in Texas. We have grown considerably within the last few years, but I believe we can do more. Growing our membership means a more active Day at the Dome, larger conferences, and more benefits we can offer. But mainly, I want more LMFTs to be passionate about what TAMFT is doing for us.

I also want to have a larger social media presence. I hope to launch a TAMFT podcast soon, and I know other board members have talked about a TAMFT TikTok. There are more ways we can get the word out about our organization and what we're doing, and I want everyone to know about it. I want to reach as many people as possible, licensed, or not.

What motivated you to pursue leadership roles within TAMFT, and how did you prepare for the responsibilities of the presidency?

I've always been passionate about TAMFT and our field. I think our organization has done great things for our license over the past several years. From outstanding conferences to legislative battles, we've been amazing as a membership. Seeing what we've accomplished, I couldn't help but want to be a part of it.

Serving on the board for several years prepared me for presidency responsibilities. When I first joined, I chaired the Legislative Committee and that experience helped me understand how the board works, how legislation impacts our license, and the overall mindset towards our field. That experience gave me the chance to see our organization from a bird's eye view and all the moving parts that surround it. Because of that, I felt a little more confident about stepping into the president's role. Plus, we have the best board of directors. It's easy to step into this role with such a solid team behind you.

How do you plan to foster collaboration among board members and membership during your presidency?

Going back to the podcast idea: I'd love to talk to members on a podcast format. We can highlight what they're doing and working on, and we can share it in multiple ways. I also want the board to work with other MFT organizations, for example Austin MFT and the Hispanic AMFT, of which TAMFT members are a part of. We have other organizations outside ours that I'd love to collaborate with.

Do you have a particularly impactful initiative or project that you plan to spearhead during your term as president?

So far, the ones mentioned above: launching a TAMFT podcast, and collaborating with HAMFT and Austin MFT, and license reciprocity.

Tim White and the Legislative committee will be very active in that, but of course I want to help as much as possible.

Last year, Layla Scott proposed to the board a Mentorship program (more details on that to come). I want that to come to fruition next year. That would be a direct way for members and board members to collaborate with the next generation of therapists.

How will you prioritize the needs and interests of TAMFT members while serving as president?

The needs of TAMFT members are what drives the board of directors. It's part of our mission as a board: to serve the membership at large.

I would like to have more town halls, too. Those are great ways to keep in touch with members and to gauge their needs.

Going back to the podcast idea, hosting members is a great way to have their voice and needs heard in a public format.

What lessons do you hope to learn from your experience as president of TAMFT?

The biggest lesson I want to learn is that of collaboration. I feel like I'm already a good collaborator, but the collaboration I'm thinking about will be happening between organizations, larger groups of people, ones that will influence TAMFT; Austin AMFT, Hispanic AMFT, and AAMFT. I want to grow in the art of collaborating on larger scales like the ones I'm envisioning. I see a lot of potential in these partnerships, and I want to learn how to capitalize on our relationships.

What strategies will you employ to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within TAMFT and the broader field of marriage and family therapy?

With the Hispanic/Latin population being the fastest growing population in the state, collaborating with the HAMFT is top on my list.

I would like to see more Spanish-speaking therapists active in our conferences as well – sessions done 100% in Spanish, even having Spanish announcements on our webpage. And that's just the start. I want the organization to lean more into our efforts in inclusivity and justice. We just started an official Ethics and Justice committee, so their work will be very important in these tasks.

I want the board to have an official DEI/J statement on our website. We all are passionate about this, and I want that to be publicly displayed. I hope to have that accomplished very soon.

How do you plan to navigate any conflicts or disagreements that arise within the board or membership during your tenure?

I have confidence in our board and in our membership and our ability to handle conflict. Should disagreements or conflicts arise, I will do my best to approach them with compassion, courage, and calmness. I think showing up to any conflict with these in mind is the best I can do and model for everyone else. And if I ever approach conflict without those, I do want to be called on it.

In conflict, I think it's always important to listen, empathize, and validate. I want the board and the membership to let me know if I ever fail at that.



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# MEET THE 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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PRESIDENT



JASON MARTIN  
PAST PRESIDENT



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ASHLEY MONTEZ  
ASSOCIATE MEMBER



ELIZABETH "LIZEE" LOVE  
STUDENT MEMBER

# TAMFT NEEDS YOUR VOICE AT THE TEXAS CAPITOL!



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# COMMITTEE UPDATES

## LEGISLATIVE & PAC UPDATE

**Members:** *Carlos Perez, Board Liaison; Marion Vickerman, Board Liaison; Tim White, PAC Chairman; Jaida Pryor, Student Association Liaison; Hannah McKinnies; Tara Roper; Sommer Greer; Gabrielle Dean; Kristin Ross; Mercedes Burk; Andrea Beth Jackson (Rep for BHEC standardization only)*

At the most recent TAMFT board meeting, the board adopted its 2025 advocacy goal, which is to engage more members in the Austin areas and beyond to join our legislative efforts. The committee also wants to pursue license portability in the next session. This has been an important part of our efforts that will take center stage next year.



As you know, next year (2025) is a legislative year, with the legislative session running from January 14 - June 2, 2025. Our legislators are interested in what their constituents, us, think about topics. The importance of mental health has definitely grown in our society and culture but how that is implemented, how it is attained, and how it is nurtured, is largely misunderstood. We are the ones who understand this better than anyone. So what does that mean? We need LMFTs and Associates willing to go to the Hill to testify on bills we support.

Our plan is to recruit 60+ members who can be on-call for a few days mid-week in Austin. If a bill goes up for testimony the member can respond quickly and get to the Hill to testify. With this many volunteers, we should be able to easily cover the time we could potentially be called on. And don't worry, our lobbyist, Tris Castañeda, will work with the Legislative Committee and PAC to help prepare and brief any member testifying on a bill.

For those interested in coming to Austin to testify, please complete this form: <https://bit.ly/3W6h7Ea>  
Thanks in advance for helping advocate for our license!

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** *Angela Hayes, Chair; Carlos Perez; Jason Martin; Layla Scott; Joanna Mendez-Pounds, Elections Committee Chair*

The governance committee is diligently working on processing applications for committee volunteers. If you are interested in serving on a committee, it's not too late! We still have available spots on the membership, conference, legislative, and communications committees. Volunteering for a committee is a great way to get involved in causes that are important to you, network, get experience in various roles, and gain leadership experience. Please go to <https://tamft.memberclicks.net/committee-service> to apply!

## COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** *Rebekah Torres, Chair & Board Liaison; Misty Schmidt*

The first quarter is always a busy one for the Communications Committee. From awards to board elections to conference, there is always so much to talk about! By leveraging these platforms effectively, we aimed to provide valuable information to our members. And we think it worked - we saw very high engagement all around, including increased interest in board applications and higher-than-expected conference registrations. We are proud of the work we do and remain committed to optimizing our communication strategies to better serve the TAMFT community.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** *Joann Travis-Evans, co-Chair; Anna Thomison, co-Chair; Layla Scott, Board Liaison; Mi'cah Ducros; Hannah McKinnies; Heather Austin-Robillard; Heather Lucero*

The Membership Committee has had a busy first quarter! Since we have just completed the TAMFT annual awards, we are gearing up for our next membership survey. This survey will help us gather valuable feedback to enhance the membership experience. We are also excited to welcome our new committee members - your fresh perspectives and contributions will be invaluable as we continue to serve our TAMFT community!



Lastly, congratulations to those who won awards at this year's conference:

Master's Level Student Achievement Award: Lauren Godfrey

Master's Level Student Achievement Award: Sophia Synek

Distinguished Service to TAMFT: Hannah McKinnies

Distinguished Service to TAMFT: Kelsey Austin

Professor of the Year: Sofia Georgiadou

Lifetime Achievement Award: James Morris

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** *Kelsey Austin, co-Chair & Board Liaison; Emily Esail, co-Chair; Brandon Gardenhire*

The Conference Committee is incredibly excited to see a year's worth of planning come to fruition in San Antonio! Every last detail has come together to provide a conference that delivers celebration, continuing education, and authentic connection. The 2024 Annual Conference: Celebrating 50 Years of TAMFT: Embracing the Past, Enriching the Present, Empowering the Future is dedicated to the reflection of how far our profession has come and the continued evolution of our innovative field. Over 400 attendees registered, and we had a great time connecting and learning with our members. We love seeing our events come to life, and we always grieve the end of another annual conference. However, we're already looking forward to next year's annual conference in Austin!



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## ETHICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

**Members:** Ty Leonard, Chair; Layla Scott, Board Liaison; Michael (Charles) Flynn; Lisa Salazar; Paula Boros; Brianna Tran

The ESJ Committee has been working to identify potential stakeholders for ESJ programs and brainstorming ideas of how to best serve and support our members. Keep an eye out for the upcoming TAMFT Member Forum Ethics and Social Justice Channel, where you can post your ethics and social justice-related questions, and the committee will reply to at least one a month. We are planning to host an Ethics-Social Justice Essay competition in the fall. We are also planning an annual DEIJ for Organizations training for all TAMFT volunteers to ensure everyone has the tools they need to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in our volunteer work and our committees. We hope to make this training available through our website training platform for members to utilize in your organizations as well. If you have ideas for a program or an Ethics and Social Justice related resource send it to [info@tamft.org](mailto:info@tamft.org)!

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Nelliana Acuna, co-Chair; Leila Anderson, Co-Chair; Robyn Flores, Secretary; Dr. Wen-Mei Chou, Board Liaison; Benita Madison; Hannah McKinnies; Baldemar Menchaca; Jose Mata; Christina Watts-Figueroa

The Education Committee is committed to delivering valuable monthly education to our members for a total of 26 CEUs every two years. Regardless of the need for hours, attending training is a great way to continue education, learn from colleagues, and feel connected to the field.

The Education Committee is preparing webinars for the 2024 calendar year. Upcoming topics include discussions on chronic trauma, telehealth, LGBTQ issues, and supervision. Be on the lookout for more details about each webinar in the coming months!

New members will be joining the Education Committee this month, so please wish them luck and congratulations on their service to TAMFT!



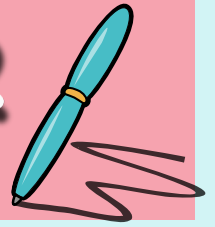
## Marriage and Family Therapy National Exam Prep

TAMFT has put together a suite of resources to help students prepare for the national licensure exam, including recordings of our Exam Prep Workshop, a Practice Exam & Answer Explanations, and an MFT Terms Glossary.



**SIGN UP TODAY**

# STUDENT CORNER



## TSAMFT BOARD UPDATE

**Members:** Lizee Love, President; JoAngeli Kasper, President-Elect; Emily Saldivar, Secretary; Justin Rivas, Treasurer; Rae Morris, Social Media Manager; Cheryl Nichols, Outreach Manager; Kate Bevel, Outreach Manager-Elect

I want to thank everyone who attended the TSAMFT officer elections at the conference recently. It was great meeting everyone in person, and we are excited to start the new officer term. A big thank you also to our retiring officers!

For this upcoming year, we plan on increasing engagement among MFT students. Part of this involves continuing the Peer-to-Peer meetings, and we want to hear your needs in how MFTs can recognize and advocate for our needs as students.

Please welcome our incoming 2024-25 officers!

President: Lizee Love

President-Elect: JoAngeli Kasper

Secretary: Emily Saldivar

Treasurer: Justin Rivas

Social Media Representative: Rae Morris

Outreach Chair: Cheryl Nichols

Outreach Elect Chair: Kate Bevel

Our student meetings will happen bimonthly via Zoom, so feel free to email me at [thatlizeechick@gmail.com](mailto:thatlizeechick@gmail.com) to join us!



# Grow Your Impact in Others' Lives



It's great to find a job that can help others, and it's even better to advance enough to gain more autonomy and a better salary. Marriage and family therapists answer the call to help families, individuals, and couples, and are needed in today's climate more than ever.

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*The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) is the accrediting body for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). National University's Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy and Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy Programs are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. National University's Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy, and Doctorate of Marriage and Family Therapy Programs are also accredited by the International Accreditation Commission for Systemic Therapy Education (IACSTE).*

# 2024 TAMFT Conference

We had a great time at the 2024 TAMFT Annual Conference: *50 Years of TAMFT: Embracing the Past, Enriching the Present, Empowering the Future!* Take a look back at the teachings we learned and the memories we made on the San Antonio River Walk!

We look forward to seeing you in Austin in 2025!

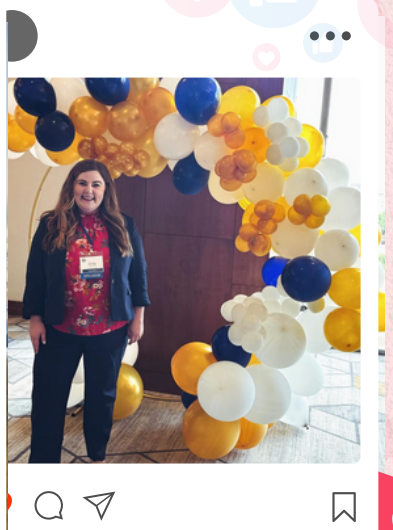
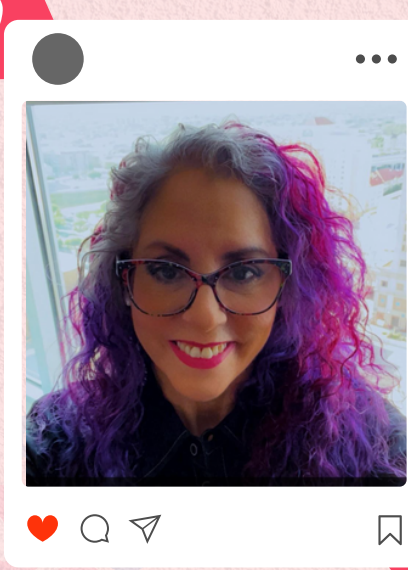


# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS & EXHIBITORS!





# #TAMFT2024



Gained so much experience and had a blast with these amazing women. #tamft2024



Federico Mendez-Betancourt is [posting](#) eating dinner at Yard House on the Riverwalk.  
April 12 at 10:59 PM · San Antonio, TX · [🌐](#)  
[tamft2024](#)  
Texas Woman's University. Ready for the next conference!!



27 4 comments





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