



OAC  
Community

# Perspectives

## Then, Now and Tomorrow: OAC Through the Eyes of Past Leaders

by OAC Staff

The OAC has written many exciting chapters in our story over the past 20 years. Along the way, we've been fortunate to have inspiring leaders—especially our Board of Directors Chairs—who have helped shape our journey. Each Chair has brought a bold vision, distinct goals and a deep personal connection to improving the lives of people affected by obesity.

As we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we wanted to take a moment to sit down with a few of these leaders to reflect on the OAC's journey and what lies ahead. Here are the three questions we asked each Board Chair, both former and current:

### Board Chair Q&A



**Jaime Fivecoat,  
MBA**

#### **What were your mission and priorities during your term?**

As the first Chair of the Board, my term focused on establishing the foundation for the OAC. This included creating bylaws with term limits, setting up weekly meetings with the President and CEO, and developing the structure for Board meetings. We spent much of the time spreading the word that we existed.

#### **How has the OAC changed since your time as Chair?**

We went from a few thousand members to more than 80,000. We started the annual conferences and achieved many successes in access to care. In the beginning, we had a big focus on surgical interventions, but we've evolved to also see success in medical and pharmacological treatments. We've also grown from a staff of three to today's much larger team.

## What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

I hope that we continue to grow and be a strong influence on all aspects of obesity and weight bias, and that we also participate in more obesity research projects by providing patient experts.



**Ted Kyle,  
RPh, MBA**

## What were your priorities during your term?

It's incredible to reflect on how much the world's perspective on obesity has evolved since I became Chair of the OAC over a decade ago. Despite these changes, our mission has remained steadfast. My top priority, both then and now, has always been to amplify and support the voices of people living with obesity by working tirelessly to end weight bias and stigma. Addressing stigma is essential because it directly impacts another critical priority—ensuring people have access to comprehensive obesity care in all its forms.

## How has the OAC changed since you've been Chair?

The core strengths of the OAC—tireless advocacy, a vibrant community, and a steadfast commitment to serving people living with obesity—have remained constant. However, the organization has grown immensely in its visibility and effectiveness, evolving into an even stronger, more influential voice for this important cause.

## What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

My greatest hope for the OAC is that it will continue to expand its reach and lead the way toward a future where individuals living with obesity can enjoy full, thriving lives. This means having equitable access to the care they need while living free from the historical stigma that has long been associated with obesity.



**Amber  
Huett-Garcia**

## What were your mission and priorities during your term?

During my time as Chair, I led a comprehensive five-year strategic planning process that set the goals for 2017–2021.

## How has the OAC changed since your time as Chair?

The OAC has nearly doubled its membership since I was Chair, in part by making it free to join but also through its quest to improve education, support and advocacy while staying focused on our mission. The OAC has grown its coalition of people fighting weight bias and stigma, increased its global presence and significantly contributed to the momentum for comprehensive coverage—such as the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA) and state-level victories on coverage.

## What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

I hope the OAC moves the country and world toward a future with comprehensive coverage and access to obesity care, where bias and stigma stories from people living with obesity feel like lore. I hope the OAC Community continues to grow through membership and partners who strengthen that sense of community we bring now—so we all feel less alone in this fight.



**Pam Davis**

## What were your mission and priorities during your term?

When I was Chair, we focused on becoming THE source of evidence-based information for people with obesity. We decided the best way to share this information was through an annual convention. That first year, we thought we'd be thrilled to have 75 people attend—but we had far more! At our Board retreat, we dreamed of one day having a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on T.V. and finding a celebrity spokesperson.

## How has the OAC changed since your time as Chair?

The National Convention has grown into an event with a mix of first-time attendees and those who wouldn't dare miss it. In 2024, Regional Events across the country allowed even more people to get education and support.

With the growth in new treatment options, we've seen growth in membership, sponsors and real conversations about obesity as a disease. Our PSA dreams came true! We now have OAC TV, regional education programs, an expanded magazine, and have taken countless people to Washington, D.C., to meet members of Congress. The OAC has even met Michelle Obama, Brendan Fraser and Queen Latifah!

## What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

My hope is for the OAC to grow until it no longer needs to exist—when obesity is truly treated as a disease and people with obesity are respected and offered care without stigma or having to prove the 'return on investment' of treatment. To get there, we need to continue growing our membership, advocacy and support.



**Michelle  
"Shelly" Vicari**

## What were your mission and priorities during your term?

During my term, my mission was to significantly increase member engagement and empower individuals to take meaningful action. A major priority was launching the OAC Action Center, which offers immediate ways to get involved and answers the common question, 'How can I help?' By encouraging member involvement, we created a platform for individuals to directly contribute to advocacy and awareness.

## How has the OAC changed since your time as Chair?

The OAC has seen remarkable growth, expanding membership by more than 30,000. Many members are now actively involved in advocacy efforts. We've made significant strides in fighting for affordable obesity care and improving understanding of obesity science. These advancements have reduced stigma and built a more supportive environment for individuals affected by obesity.

## What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

My hope is for more people to learn about and join the OAC. As awareness grows, I want the OAC to continue being the driving force in changes to public policy, access to care and society's attitudes about obesity. With more people taking #OACAction, we can do more to reduce stigma, promote a science-based understanding of obesity and advocate for equitable treatment options.



**Patty Nece, JD**

## What were your priorities during your term?

Shortly before my term as Chair began, the world was struck by the first pandemic in our lifetimes. It was a challenging time for OAC, and many of our programs had to be adjusted. "Pivot" became our new watchword: How could we pivot our programs and advocacy efforts to continue supporting people affected by obesity in a pandemic environment? To meet these needs, we turned to technology and launched our first multi-day Virtual Convention, offering excellent education and fun activities—all online. Approximately 2,000 people registered, including people from several foreign countries. We also continued our fight against weight bias, stigma and discrimination through webinars and interviews, including addressing arguments that people with obesity should not be given priority access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Additionally, we relaunched our in-person National Convention with a small gathering in Las Vegas.

### How has the OAC changed since your time as Chair?

The OAC emerged from the pandemic stronger than ever. Our membership and staff have grown, as have our programs and policy advocacy efforts. Our message—that people with obesity deserve access to a full range of treatments—is finally being recognized by key policymakers, including members of Congress and Federal agencies.

### What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

I hope OAC continues to grow to change the world for people affected by obesity. There are still many battles to fight. Ultimately, though, my dream is for OAC to no longer need to exist because we've created a world where people with obesity are treated with dignity and respect, receive compassion and understanding, and have full access to science-based care.



**Kristal Hartman**

### What were your mission and priorities during your term?

My mission during my term has been to:

- Support the launch of our childhood obesity initiatives and teen/caregiver support group.
- Support the revamp of the way we provide education, including in-person and virtual programs, such as OAC Regional Events.
- Plan and execute special activities for OAC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.
- Support the evolution of OAC's leadership and staff structure to better serve our community.
- Expand OAC advocacy efforts at local, state, and federal levels, particularly around TROA and our progress in 2023 and 2024.

### How has the OAC changed since your time as Chair?

As the current Chair, I've been floored by the sheer increase in advocacy efforts from our small but mighty team. We're now operating at a level we only dreamed of 20 years ago, making a huge difference in advocating for access to care! Additionally, I am so proud that OAC has become THE expert in representing the patient voice and experience for individuals living with obesity. We are the resource the world reaches out to. Finally, the amount of education and programming offered across all platforms has reached a level I couldn't have imagined! We've truly achieved and embraced our goal of providing top-notch education to our Community.

### What is your hope for the future of the OAC?

My hope is that all people affected by obesity know about the OAC and become part of this vital community of people all working toward the same goals—access to care, quality education and a supportive community where everyone feels safe to be themselves at whatever part of their health journey they are at. As a person living with the chronic disease of obesity, the OAC has been, is and always will be an essential part of my life!

## Leading the Way Forward

The OAC wouldn't be where it is today without the leadership and vision of those who have guided our path. 20 years in, they remind us that every step forward matters—and there's a lot more exciting things on the horizon!

As we look to the future, we're thrilled to welcome our incoming Board Chair, Nikki Massie, MA, who will lead the OAC in its next chapter. Nikki brings with her a personal experience of being affected by obesity and an impressive career in nonprofit fundraising and communications. She also most recently co-chaired the OAC's Membership Committee. We are honored to have her as our new Board Chair and look forward to the incredible impact she will make!







# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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