This cannot be an ordinary book review because this is not an ordinary book. This text was not so much written as it was CRAFTED. It drew from the hearts of the writers as well as their formidable knowledge of the field. Currently, I am reading a book entitled *The Secret Teachings of Plants* which posits that the heart is an organ of knowledge for humans; this book demands participation from your heart as well as your intellect. The book calls for a significant and exciting change in the thinking and practice of practitioners, educators, students, and our therapeutic recreation (TR) participants (formerly called clients, patients, customers, consumers). The book is based on the Strengths Approach, which is a new paradigm based on positive science. This new way of thinking is blossoming in many disciplines from counseling to coaching. This new book also demands time for reflection and time for integration into one’s previously held patterns of conceptualizing the field of therapeutic recreation/recreation therapy. It therefore also requires a change in our habits of performing TR practice and in teaching the many aspects of Therapeutic Recreation to students of the field. Terms like “sea change,” “avalanche,” “transformative journey,” and “empowerment” are used to describe what the effect of this new paradigm will have on the field; the reader is primed and supported to make personal/professional changes throughout the textbook. It is a must read for all involved in therapeutic recreation/recreation therapy—educators, practitioners, students.

Let’s begin with looking at the format of this new text. The book has 16 logical chapters, which are separated into three sections: a Foundation’s section encompasses seven of the chapters; a TR Process section with Chapters eight through 12; and a Professionalism section that includes Chapters 14 through 16.

Throughout the text the layout is visually appealing. With drawings, highlighted information in text boxes, stories, tables to emphasize selected content, poems and sayings; the reader is
drawn into the information presented. Each chapter has the same structure: first, an overview, and then chapter focus questions. Presented next is the main chapter content, followed by a summary of main points. Lastly each chapter has questions and exercises to self-assess understanding (this is very helpful to everyone, especially students). All chapters end with resources and references.

To help with the personal transformation in thinking, many of the tables compare and contrast old ideas to new ideas. Other tables across the book emphasize the cultural aspects of the chapter information. Many familiar ideas and concepts of the therapeutic recreation profession are reviewed and recast through the viewfinder of the new paradigm. Another important feature is the range of life stories and supportive research that builds evidence-based understanding for the reader. Interwoven throughout the new paradigm are holistic and ecological conceptualizations.

To review the potential impact of the book requires a closer look at the topics covered in the various chapters. The first few chapters provide the initial information to move from a problem based approach to a strengths based approach. This includes reviewing changes in health and human services, and reviewing theories and research such as the amazing new knowledge emanating from brain research. Also included is a chapter on principles to guide a therapeutic recreation practice based on the Strengths Based Approach. This chapter (seven) provides eight guidelines for providing TR services within this new paradigm. The authors then ask the reader to consider the field of TR in this new light of understanding, reviewing many models, but focusing on the Leisure and Well-Being Model for Therapeutic Recreation by Carruthers and Hood and Hood and Carruthers (2007). Their expansion of the Carruthers and Hood model, the “Flourishing through Leisure Model: An Ecological Extension of the Well-Being Model,” is then fully described in a separate chapter (four). The authors have their thought-provoking new model presented in great detail that includes the domains of behavior, as well as ecological and environmental considerations. We are asked to not only seriously consider, but to put in the forefront, concepts like dreams, happiness, optimism, aspirations, and even hope. They encourage us to embrace the knowledge of and value of play. For most in the profession, we have worked hard at avoiding any mention of these terms and ideas when practicing, although they are concepts we have buried deeply and hold on to dearly. These ideas are often seen as being not as important or as tangential to the existence of a helping profession in medical settings. In many settings we are dealing with insurance companies, accrediting bodies and often our co-workers, who may already have questionable support for our field. The authors realize the enormity of what they are asking the reader. They realize this at the beginning of this section when encouraging the reader to embrace the strengths approach, and state; “Our hope is that the book will provide a healthy corrective to the entrenchment of our profession, and our society as a whole, in the ubiquitous problem-oriented approach we use almost without thinking” (p. 4). In these first chapters the authors, in effect, hold our hand as initially we tip toe through those very familiar yet buried beliefs as to what makes our field essential. Our foundational beliefs are revisited with new scientific research and information, allowing us to finally promote and bring into the light the always-known reasons that support each of us to come back day after day to our positions. Dreams, aspirations, hope, happiness, are the positive effects of our profession and we witness this on a daily basis. Thus Part I of this text provides the reader with the scientific research, language and theoretical framework to reframe our professional concepts.

After presenting foundational concepts in Part I, the authors revisit the steps of the TR process of Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation and rename them with fur-
The concept building to be Discover; Dream/Design; Deliver; and Deliberate in Part II of the text. This middle section of the text thoroughly explains the renewed steps of the TR process in workable and supportive language. For example in the Assessment (Discover) step (Chapter 9), familiar concepts are presented and new ideas covering authentic assessment and ecological assessment are also included. The Planning chapter (10) (Dream/Design) presents a useful and teachable review of the process of writing goals and objectives according to the strengths approach. This second section also has chapters about aspects of our field that are often overlooked or thinly covered, such as a chapter about working on teams and the role of collaboration (Chapter 8). There is also a chapter on inclusion and transition (Chapter 10), providing a thorough discussion of how these aspects of our profession have their place within the new paradigm. In this Inclusion chapter, lots of stories are presented that illustrate the individual nature of this process for a participant. Interesting points in this section are the person centered approach to assessment and ideas of empowering families and incorporating spiritual strengths. The Implementation Chapter (Deliver) (11) highlights “Wraparound Services” which incorporate sustainable community living, and provides a revamping of the activity analysis process. The evaluation chapter (13) covers both individual and program evaluation as seen through the lens of the strengths-based service paradigm. The authors clarify when evaluation is done for accountability purposes and when it is done for client improvement, two helpful ways to categorize evaluation’s purpose. The cooperative nature of the helping relationship underpins the entire TR process within the new strengths approach. Language within the text reflects a positive tone (true to the paradigm), for example using the phrase “cultural relevance” rather than “cultural diversity,” or the phrase “challenging behavior” rather than “behavior problem.”

In the last section of three chapters (14-16), strategies are provided to start to incorporate the new thinking (strength-based approach) into one’s daily practice, whether the reader is a student who is visiting these ideas for the first time, or is an educator or practitioner, who may be reworking their own previously held ideas. Every stakeholder in our profession benefits from this closing section. Ideas that are thoroughly discussed include the many types of advocacy (Chapter 14). Continuing their building on previous familiar ideas, the authors also bring in other aspects related to advocacy, not presented in previous books: Like being a “Play Expert,” or “Balancing Advocacy” and something we all know—that change always does “start with you.” The social system is considered part of the focus for change. Clinical Supervision is addressed as well (Chapter 15). The last chapter is especially useful and supportive-this chapter will be immensely helpful in the classroom as students envision their professional place in the TR world. The last chapter has several exercises, stories and worksheets that encourage reflection on developing one’s own practice, considering professional growth directions and reviewing personal strengths and life concerns.

This book encourages critical thinking by the reader, it encourages changing concepts to fit within a new paradigm and within our professional practice. It encourages openly embracing Leisure as one of the most important “great areas present in a person’s life.” This book encourages us to NOT emphasize the medical model at the “expense of the leisure experience.”

So what are we left with after reading this book? We have a new definition of therapeutic recreation; we have a new model for practice (which I believe we can actually use as a way to program—a problem with many of our models of service in this reviewer’s opinion). We are introduced to a newly designed TR process. We have new research and writings that underpin and encompass our connections to health and human services as well as our connections to leisure and to the parks and recreation field. New expanded ideas of advocacy and collaboration are
shared. And we have volumes of reasons to make our services in therapeutic recreation/recre-ation therapy ecological and truly participant driven.

How do educators teach from this text? I believe educators may be using the text best if we allow students adequate time for reflection and discussion. Because there are so many ideas (only a few are presented in this review) in the book, this may require the use of the text over two courses such as programming and foundations instead of just one. It most definitely is a textbook to retain, as the concepts will be revisited as a professional goes through the process of incorporating the many different ideas into their practice.

In summary, this book most certainly will be a leading force in helping the therapeutic recreation field as it joins other disciplines to be in the forefront for change. Thank you, Lynn and Linda, for being our most careful and enthusiastic guides as we all embark on this transformation.

References

