

NATA News



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Davis described the new NATA headquarters as the "the cornerstone of our planning for the 21st century."

Headquarters Set to Open by June; ATC Sought for 'Coordinator' Post

Renovations began in February to convert retail space into offices and meeting rooms at the NATA's new national headquarters in Dallas. NATA Executive Director Otho Davis, who closed the deal on purchase of the building in December, said the new home office will be up and running in time for the association's 40th annual clinical symposium this June.

Mid-year Meeting Report

In related activities discussed at their annual mid-year meeting, the NATA Board of Directors voted to bestow the highest honor upon the man who has led the NATA through the past two decades. The Board announced that the 22,000-square-foot headquarters would be named this June in honor of Davis, a native of Elgin, Texas.

The Board also decided that the new building's library would be named "The William E. Newell Memorial Library," in honor of the man who served as Executive Secretary to the NATA from 1955-1968. Mr. Newell, who worked at Purdue University from 1949 until his death in 1984, is commonly acclaimed as the "father of modern-day athletic training."

Davis, 55, who has directed NATA operations since 1971 while serving most of that time as head athletic trainer for the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, led the 2-year search to relocate NATA headquarters. The NATA has been based in Greenville, N.C. since 1979.

Dedication of the new building is scheduled just prior to the start of the

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Women Aim to Improve ATCs' Quality of Life

By John LeGear

NATA membership increased 45 percent during the past four years, from 8,400 to 12,200. The lion's share of that growth is attributed to the rapid infusion of women into athletic training, who now account for one-third of all NATA certified members and 37 percent of the association overall.

But gender balance and the NATA's steady growth are only window dressing, according to women we interviewed, unless new members can help improve athletic trainers' stature and sense of self-esteem. Furthermore, they said, ATCs must assert themselves on the job, and take more control over their personal lives, or face hard times ahead.

While the association has prospered this decade, most women we spoke with said changes to improve working conditions for female trainers have been slow in coming. The consensus was that many of the issues confronting the NATA per-

sist: salaries remain relatively low when measured against the educational requirements and time demands; discrimination, in its many forms, perseveres; upward mobility is limited for head trainers; and athletic trainers are subordinate to "too many bosses," ranging from principals to coaches, department chairpersons to athletic directors.

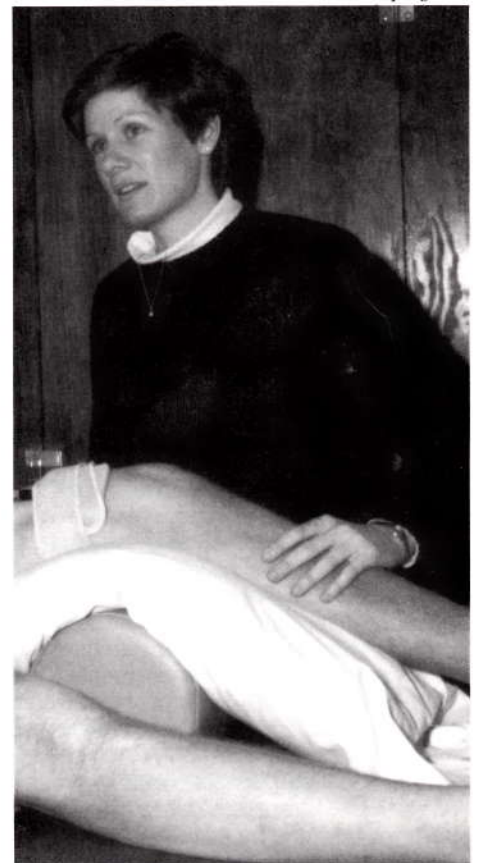
Although women appear to have given athletic training a face-lift in the 1980s, those we spoke with said the profession will need a strength program and a more confident, positive mental attitude to succeed in the 1990s.

For the love of it

"I love what I'm doing," said Wittenberg University head trainer Diane Stephenson, "but sometimes I hate the job."

That paradox captures the frustration many women expressed, and it points to one reason some trainers are considering new careers that offer more "balance."

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Upward mobility is limited for someone like Terri Woods, head trainer since 1984 at a small school, Concordia College in Illinois.

Women See Room For Improvement in Training

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"We're in this profession because we like caring for athletes," Stephenson said. "But athletic trainers are still spending most of their waking hours at work. There's more to life than that. People need to spend time with family, friends and get some exercise for their physical and mental well-being. That's almost impossible for most trainers."

Hazel Ando said athletic training is fulfilling and worthwhile work, but she's afraid she's "burning out." Ando cut her work schedule from 70 hours to about 55 hours a week. She tries to see more of her friends now, and works to pursue interests outside athletic training. Even so, as she nears the end of her sixth year at the University of California at Irvine, Ando is constantly asking herself if it's all worth it.

"I started working full-time hours for a part-time salary," said Ando, an assistant trainer. "During my third year, I finally received the equivalent of a full-time assistant coach's salary. I still can't afford to pay rent so I live at home. I know there are other things I can do. I love athletic training, but I don't know if I can stay with it much longer."

"I've been doing a lot of soul searching," admitted Beth Schmucker, coordinator of sports medicine and head trainer at the University of Detroit



Beth Schmucker

since 1983. "I've spoken with a lot of other trainers and we know we're not getting a fair return for our investment of time. Most of us do this because we love it, but I'm trying to reduce the number of hours I put in right now. I need to get more out of life."

Is the work fulfilling?

"Depends what day it is," Schmucker replied.

Is it the money?

"That's part of it," she said, "but mostly it's the time required to do the job right."

Gender a "non-issue"

The most successful, if not enduring, women in athletic training share a commonality with their male counterparts. They became interested in the field because they wanted to work with and rehabilitate athletes. None entered the field for financial wealth, but they resent the idea of slave labor at plantation prices. And women recognize what it takes to get ahead.

"When asked how to succeed in athletic training, I tell people 'hard work and a physical therapy degree,'" said Sue Hillman, the highly respected head trainer at the University of Arizona. "That's what (former NATA executive secretary) Pinky Newell told me when I was at Purdue, and I haven't seen a better way to do it."



Sue Hillman

Hillman, who has been Arizona's head trainer since 1983, scoffed at those who feel she's special because she has been successful at a high-profile Division I university.

"I don't have any more pressure on me than anyone else," she said. "The administration doesn't expect any more or less from me than they would a male. My salary compares with any other ATC/RPT in the nation. In fact, it's probably better than most."

"And it amazes me, frankly, that some people still compare female trainers to males," Hillman said. "It's a non-issue."

"Let's quit beating the gender issue to death," added Gail Weldon, president and owner of Women's Training Room and Conditioning Center (TRACC), the successful sports medicine center in Los Angeles.

"Being a woman in our society means going the extra mile to prove you can handle particularly stressful situations. Women trainers are no different from women in other professions. They're expected to be super moms at home, super executives at the office. It comes with the territory."

Weldon, who directed athletic training services for the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, said the growing number of women in the field is meaningless unless they can help make changes to improve the profession.

"It's all very well that more women are coming in, but the important thing is that they participate in governing the NATA, work with NATA committees and assist on special projects," she said. "It isn't enough to stand on the outside complaining about lack of fairness or inequality. Women must work together with men to make athletic training better for everyone."

In Transition

Since becoming head trainer at Illinois' Augustana College in 1985, Rochel Rittgers has been part of two Division III national football championships. The 29-year-old instructor-trainer said women have been content up to now to "ride in the back seat."

"Most women have only just entered athletic training in the last 10 years," Rittgers said. "We're the new people on the block, and we've needed time to show we are up to the task. I think most of us felt that if we made waves, we'd be run out. We didn't want to burn bridges."

"I admit being among the passive people. I've been waiting for the door to open rather than breaking it open myself. Maybe that strategy has been wrong, or maybe it's just a matter of waiting for the right time to progress to the next step. In either case, I think we're about to take that next step now."

Rittgers expressed hope that the

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Student trainer Vicki Steiner (left) receives direction from curriculum coordinator Pat Troesch.

Women Changing Public Perception

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NATA would establish clear goals and objectives that would serve as a beacon for all NATA members to follow.

"It's not enough to tell us to get involved," Rittgers said. "By setting goals, the NATA can show us how to get involved, how we can help advance the profession. That's not to place blame on the NATA. It's still women's responsibility to carry their share of the load, but the NATA can come halfway by showing the way."

Challenges Ahead

The NATA Board of Directors, which includes one woman, Janice Daniels from Sacramento, Calif., has done a commendable job of addressing important issues confronting athletic training. Due in part to wise policy-making, the NATA's net worth has doubled in the past four years, public recognition of the profession is increasing, new career opportunities abound and new NATA headquarters are being readied for opening by June.

But several women predict the NATA will face more complex issues in the 1990s. They say one critical need will be to reshape employers' perception of the athletic training profession. To do that, these women feel ATCs will have to draft their own Bill of Rights.

"Why does it seem all of us work extraordinarily long hours, for low pay, and with little respect," said Wittenberg's Stephenson. "We need to do more than just look out for women, we have to look out for the profession. We're still growing up, we're still maturing, and we haven't done a very good job up to now of educating employers about why we're important."

Leah Wollenburg, the head women's trainer at the University of Minnesota since 1978, said it's time athletic trainers take stock in themselves and stand



Leah Wollenburg

up for what's right. She said ATCs have to go one-on-one with their administrators to earn respect.

"We get caught up helping everyone around us, meeting everyone's needs, doing all the little things," Wollenburg said, "but we lose sight of the big picture. To progress,

we must establish ourselves as true health care professionals, true managers and good administrators in our own right.

"Athletic directors aren't interested in how well we tape or how many 14-hour days we work," Wollenburg added. "Administrators need to understand that we



Karen Toburen, flanked by District 4 Director Dennis Miller (left) and incoming director John Schrader, makes her presence felt during a panel discussion at the district meeting in March. Toburen worked in Seoul last summer as head trainer for the Gold medal-winning U.S. Women's Basketball Team. Toburen spends most of her time at the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse, where she serves as coordinator of the athletic training curriculum program.

can manage people, manage a budget, design an effective drug education program or develop new relationships with community groups. It is essential that we bring in new ideas. We have to command respect, and we all have to work at it, or things will remain as they are. That's not going to be good enough."



Getting Involved: Kathy Hensley, who worked with the men's and women's gymnastics teams in the 1988 Summer Olympics, conducted a workshop at District 7 on "Evaluation and Treatment of the Brachial Plexus in Sports."

Career and Family

Women have brought a new look to a profession that has struggled for decades to shake the tired image of a limnient-soaked rube-down man. They've also introduced a new element that is sure to alter employers' perception of athletic trainers in the 1990s: motherhood.

"Administrators and other employers look upon women differently because of our ability to bear children," said Daphne Benas, head trainer at Yale University since 1978. "I think some of them regard women as less dependable, or perhaps more disposable. It's as if child bearing is a cross we have to bear, or a cross that must be carried by those who judge us."

Said Wollenburg: "It's a factor that becomes much more significant as women continue to make up a higher percentage of the membership. As things stand now, there is no way women can maintain a happy marriage, raise children and work the long hours we're expected to work."

Pat Troesch is one ATC who found an administration willing to compromise in order to keep her. The former District Four Secretary has worked 9 years at Miami University and currently serves as director of a successful athletic training curriculum program. Troesch postponed having her first child until 2 years ago but, with a little help from her department chairman, she's managed to find a balance of family and career.

"Stress is a problem, a universal problem in our business, but especially when you have a new child," Troesch said. "I often feel like I'm being pulled in 10 different directions."

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Negotiate Benefits Before Taking Job

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- Ask how many hours per week, or month, you'll be expected to work. How much vacation time will you receive? What about pension plans?
6. A fulfilling career requires ATCs to have time for other activities to balance their lives—time for family, friends and time to relax and exercise. When we use a disproportionate amount of time to care for others, Phills warned, we tend to neglect ourselves. Athletic trainers are especially prone to this tendency.
 7. Determine what setting best suits your career goals. Form a vision of what you want from your career and paint a picture of where you want to be in five years. Recognize the advantages, benefits and trade-offs of working in one setting compared to another (as in a traditional training room compared to a private clinic).
 8. Develop personal contacts to enhance career opportunities. Ingols said 60 to 80 percent of jobs in all professions are the result of personal contacts.
 9. Be persistent. Expect setbacks, but keep in mind that all good things are worth waiting and working for. Be confident that you will reach your goals because, with confidence and persistence, you will.

NATA members who reside in Districts 3, 6, 8 and 9 will have the opportunity to hear Ingols or Phills speak at their district meetings in the months ahead.

Motherhood Comes to Training Room

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Another concern, Troesch said, is that some women are willing to accept less salary to work in college, perhaps because they are anxious to prove they can succeed at that level.

"Personally, I would hate to work in a clinic, and I don't want to go to a high school," Troesch said. "And although I could earn more elsewhere, I like college, and because I like it, I stay. That's the Catch-22, which makes me part of the problem."

Schmucker, who has been at Detroit since 1983, said she plans to get married. Like many women, she said, marriage and children will change her perspective.

"I'm 28, and I think about having children," Schmucker said. "I don't want to drop them off at a day care center on my way to the training room every day. I want to watch them grow up, and that's not possible with all I have to do here."

The Salary Situation

Recent surveys indicate starting salaries for ATCs are finally getting in step with those of school teachers—a watershed the NATA has been aiming at for some time—ranging from \$18,000 to \$28,000 annually, depending on geographic region.

But as the NATA adds from 700 to 900 young certified trainers to its ranks every year, there is concern that the youth movement will compromise the bargaining power of more experienced

ATCs. Considering there are only 7,000 certified trainers actively working in the U.S., steady immigration of young ATCs is expected to place downward pressure on salaries across the board.

That problem is exacerbated, said Miami's Troesch, when young trainers who are determined to prove they can succeed take full-time positions for as little as \$12,000 to \$14,000. She said the scenario happened "yet again" in her part of the country earlier this year.

"It made me furious," Troesch said. "When people talk about the feminization of athletic training, they're expressing concern that women will accept lower salaries than men for doing the same work. I'd like to think so-called feminization will make athletic training a better profession. It can, but not if we sell ourselves short."

Women working in athletic training, at least those we interviewed, were intent on reminding their colleagues that the profession's fight for respect begins with each individual's self respect. They echoed what NATA presidents have been saying for many years now: employers will not appreciate athletic training until ATCs respect themselves.

The women we spoke with don't want to change the complexion of athletic training, they want to change its chemistry. They want to revive its spirit and give it a new sense of purpose. They want athletic trainers to have a stronger sense of self-esteem. And they want to change things for the better now.

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