

## **Getting Their Due**

### **March is National Athletic Training Month**

March is National Athletic Training Month honoring certified athletic trainers across the United States. Certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are health care professionals who specialize in the prevention, evaluation and rehabilitation of injuries to athletes and those engaged in physical activities.

ATCs are the first aid for people who lead lives filled with physical activity – which consist of athletic, recreational activities that require physical skills and utilize strength, power, endurance, speed flexibility, range of motion or agility.

The National Athletic Trainers' Association is the largest organization for ATCs and offers its members a broad range of services, including ongoing education and public relations support. The NATA was founded in 1950 when a core group of about 2,000 athletic trainers met in Kansas City.

Today, the organization membership spans the globe and included more than 27,000 allied health care professionals including nearly 275 in the state of Nebraska.

ATCs are well-trained professionals who deal with individuals, either healthy or injured, to make sure that they don't get hurt or to get them back to participation as soon as possible if they do.

ATCs hold at least a bachelor's degree and must pass an extensive three-part test to become certified.

Once the credential is earned, it must be maintained through yearly continuing education requirements.

Prior to 1999, the physically active public in Nebraska didn't have access to ATCs. The athletic trainers only worked in the more traditional settings of professional, collegiate and prep programs.

Now, anyone who is physically active may be referred to an ATC by a physician. Many ATCs in Nebraska currently work in a private practice or a clinic.

Those ATCs who work in the clinical setting have the same background and education that those who work for professional organizations and the high-profile athlete.

Three ATCs from the University of Nebraska – George Sullivan, Duke LaRue and the late Paul Schneider – have been honored nationally as NATA Hall of Fame members.

Wayne Wagner, a long time athletic trainer at Creighton University and the University of Nebraska – Omaha and Kathy English of the University of Nebraska – Kearney are members of the NATA's District V Hall of Fame.

The total number of ATCs in Nebraska has grown by nearly 38 percent since 1999. And with the advances in education and the development of more private practices, the number of ATCs in the state will continue to increase in the coming years.

Whether you're a professional athlete or a professional who participates in athletics, the ATC can help keep you performing at your best.

- Tony Boone, *Nebraska Sports Magazine*, March, 2002.