

# THE Making OF NATIONAL ATHLETIC TRAINING MONTH

## Delving inside the story and growth of the main event that celebrates the athletic trainer

By Lydia Hicks

Since 2001, National Athletic Training Month has been an essential part of NATA's unique advocacy efforts to advance the profession.

Through its publications, blogs, social media, community events, legislative efforts and more, NATA has collaborated with all stakeholders in the profession to celebrate NATM and expand the reach and influence of the athletic trainer.

### THE ORIGINS OF NATM

According to the inaugural NATM article in the March 2001 *NATA News*, NATA developed NATM as an opportunity for members to highlight athletic training in their communities in response to extensive requests for such an event. It was the "perfect chance for grassroots progress in educating the public about the role and importance of [athletic trainers]," the article stated.

With this kick off commenced the first NATM event. NATA promoted the initiative with logos for use in posters, magnets and publications. NATM-branded marketing materials, presentation slides, AT videos, media kits, member PR kits and public service announcements were also available on the NATA website.

In 2002, the then four-year-old annual public relations contest was incorporated into NATM. Former NATA Public Relations Committee Chair Al Green, MS, ATC, EMT, said the committee took this step to further encourage active member participation in the nationwide annual athletic training awareness month.

"National Athletic Training Month is one of our most visible opportunities to spread the NATA key messages and educate people about certified athletic trainers," he said at the time. "We want to reward the efforts of those who answer that call, and we want to make sure every member takes part in National Athletic Training Month."

### MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Every year since its establishment, NATM has utilized themes to evoke a sense of unified empowerment and celebration of athletic trainers. (See the side bar on the following page for a complete list of themes.)

As a multifaceted program, member participation has helped the event expand further.

The following examples are some of the impactful ways NATA members have contributed to the growth of this annual celebration of athletic training.

### NATM 2002: "Prevention: Avoid Injury – Stay Active"

The Athletic Trainers' Society of New Jersey celebrated NATM, along with Athletic Trainer Recognition Week, by holding its 16th annual Sports Medicine Conference. The successful event was the largest conference at that time, due to the efforts of David Middlemas, EdD, ATC, and his committee. Highlights of the day included the reading of New Jersey Gov. Jim McGreevey's proclamation of Athletic Trainer Recognition Week in New Jersey by Sen. John Adler's legislative aide, Vince Becker. District Two Director Joe Iezzi, ATC, also read a statement on behalf of former NATA Executive Director Eve Becker-Doyle and NATA in recognition of the month.

### NATM 2011: "Not All Athletes Wear Jerseys"

The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society Public Relations Committee members developed the slogan, "PATS: The Keystone to a Healthy and Physically Active Life." A poster campaign that spanned the next six years was developed to illustrate different work settings.

PATS also sponsored the Northeast Pennsylvania Athletic Training 5K/1 Mile Walk, gave a \$2,000 scholarship to a deserving student from one of the region's four schools with an athletic training program and participated in the annual Hike to Harrisburg. Members met with and/or distributed information to approximately 40 legislators and staff at the State Capitol Building. Blood pressure screenings, body fat tests and BMI measurements were performed, and educational materials and logo merchandise were distributed to the public. The Pennsylvania governor, House of Representatives and Senate recognized March as Athletic Training Month.

Each athletic training program in the state also received a stipend to encourage and support students in their plans to promote the profession during NATM.



**NATM 2015: “We Prepare – You Perform”**

Several athletic trainers and students from the University of Michigan (UM) Athletic Medicine program designed a public relations campaign that promoted the profession and increased public awareness. The Wolverine ATs and students created a series of videos that highlighted six athletic trainers at UM and their roles. The videos were played before home competitions, along with a thank-you message to the home and visiting AT staff and students. It was also shared with the public.

UM also recognized the Michigan Athletic Medicine staff by creating billboards across campus that promoted NATM 2015. The Michigan Athletic Training Student Organization painted “The Rock” on campus, along with the NATM theme, to spread awareness to the general student population.

**NATM 2017: “Your Protection is Our Priority”**

Iowa State University athletic training students, under the guidance of assistant athletic trainer Amanda Brown, ATC, held a community outreach event at a restaurant local to the university. During the outreach effort, students interacted with patrons waiting in line to pick

## National Athletic Training Month Themes through the Years

- 2002 “Prevention: Avoid Injury – Stay Active”
- 2003 “Injury Assessment: The First Step in Treatment & Recovery”
- 2004 “Injury Treatment: Early Care Speeds Recovery”
- 2005 “Rehabilitation: Accelerated Return to Activity
- 2006 “Be Active – Stay Healthy”
- 2007 “Quality Health Care and Wellness”
- 2008 “Who’s Taking Care of Your Kids”
- 2009 “Health Care for Life & Sport”
- 2010 “Sports Safety is a Team Effort”
- 2011 “Not All Athletes Wear Jerseys”
- 2012 “Athletic Trainers Save Lives”
- 2013 “Every Body Needs An Athletic Trainer”
- 2014 “We’ve Got Your Back”
- 2015 “We Prepare – You Perform”
- 2016 “A Safer Approach to Work, Life and Sport”
- 2017 “Your Protection is Our Priority”
- 2018 “Compassionate Care for All”
- 2019 “ATs Are Health Care”
- 2020 “ATs Impact Health Care Through Action”
- 2021 “Essential to Health Care”
- 2022 “Providing Health Care Everywhere”
- 2023 “There’s an AT for That”

up food. They discussed a variety of topics that focused on educating the public on who athletic trainers are, NATM, managing risk and At Your Own Risk. Patrons were asked to complete an At Your Own Risk survey about sports safety and risk. They had a large turnout for the event and successfully raised awareness about sports safety and the athletic training profession. See more at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nszZiytkTDQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nszZiytkTDQ).



**NATM 2019: “ATs Are Health Care”**

The North Carolina Athletic Trainers’ Association (NCATA) curated a public art display of original photographs and illustrations, which showcased patient care and athletic training equipment. From the end of February through the end of April, the photos of a ballerina posing with equipment found in the athletic training facility and illustrations of patient and AT interactions



were on display at ClearWater Artist Studios in Concord, North Carolina, a gallery opened to the public.

All of these pieces were accompanied by videos featuring athletic trainers, doctors and student athletes discussing various aspects of catastrophic injury prevention. The videos were made accessible by QR codes placed underneath each piece and each video correlated with the action depicted in the art.

For more information on the NCATA art exhibition, read the May 2019 *NATA News*.

**NATA EFFORTS AND RESULTS**

NATA has bolstered the athletic training profession through this advocacy event, thereby increasing awareness of athletic training. From providing collateral materials to guiding members with tips to celebrate the profession, NATA has championed athletic training and grown NATM into one of the most celebrated months in sports medicine.

Below are examples of how NATM has evolved with milestones and big wins over the years.

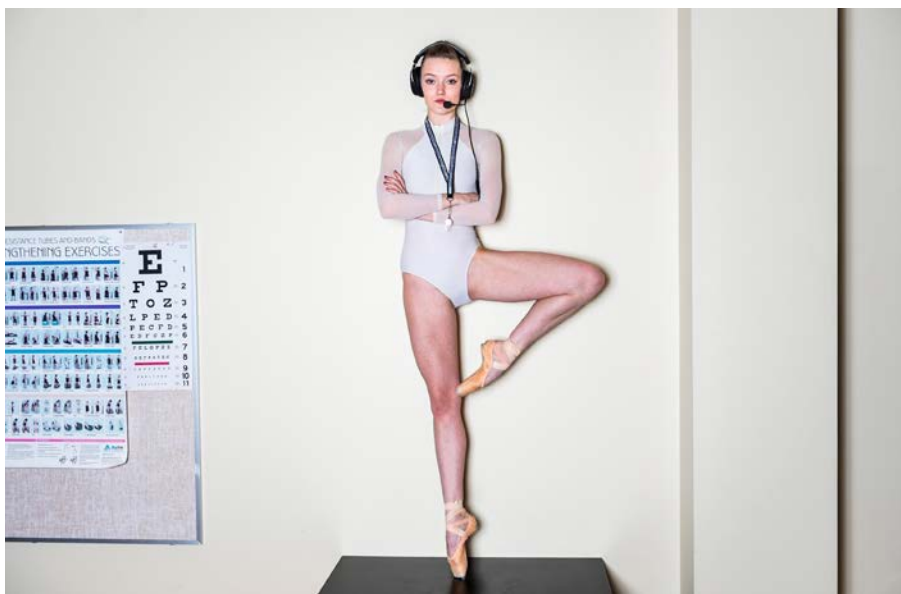
**NATM 2014: “We’ve Got Your Back”**

- Reached more than 1.5 million people on Twitter
- Garnered more than 400 entries to the #NATM2014 social media contest
- Generated 150 stories from an NATM “We’ve Got Your Back” themed press release on back health, including online news outlets for U.S. News, MSN and Yahoo and other major outlets. Additional NATM-related efforts resulted in coverage throughout the month, including the *New York Times*, ESPNW, *Family Circle* and Yahoo Health.

**NATM 2018: “Compassionate Care for All”**

NATA encouraged external stakeholders to participate in the NATM #ATShoutout campaign. Through the campaign, external groups, such as employers, athletic conferences, corporate partners, etc., were sent targeted information about athletic trainers and inspired to spread the word about the great work of their athletic trainers. The #ATShoutout campaign produced:

- 4,552 tweets using the #ATShoutout hashtag



**TOP LEFT:** The North Carolina Athletic Trainers’ Association A curated an art exhibit to celebrate National Athletic Training Month in 2019. **MIDDLE LEFT:** The photos of a ballerina posing with an automated external defibrillator and illustrations of patient-AT interactions were present at the NCATA art exhibition. **BOTTOM:** Dancer with Headset.

- 7,137,858 #ATShoutout hashtag impressions
- 3,349,270 reach of the #ATShoutout hashtag

### NATA 2020: “ATs Impact Health Care through Action”

- NATA created the NATM Action Challenge with 10 challenges to complete. ATs would then share on social media using the hashtag #NATM2020Challenge and tag NATA to be entered into a drawing for prizes. The action challenge garnered around 300 tweets from athletic trainers participating in the challenge.
- More than 28,371 tweets using the #NATM2020 hashtag reached more than 12 million users.
- The hashtag #HealthCareThroughAction was tweeted about 7,874 times, reaching more than 3 million.
- At Your Own Risk conducted external efforts in March through print, digital and social marketing targeted toward the public, parents, school administrators, community leaders, coaches and athletic directors. Additionally, At Your Own Risk filled Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest with more than 200 posts throughout the month, including stories, traditional posts and tweets – an increase from 2019’s 73 posts on At Your Own Risk’s social media channels.
- With At Your Own Risk’s social media, NATM reached nearly 650,000 people through a total of 40,155 engagements. The average engagement rate per post in the nonprofit industry is around 0.55%; however, At Your Own Risk saw a 6.18% engagement rate per post during NATM. In total, At Your Own Risk saw a 9% increase in social growth in just that month.
- The NATA Now blog curated a twice-weekly blog series throughout the month that showcased how ATs use the five domains of athletic training to improve the health and well-being of their patients. Topics included how ATs can prepare for crises, the importance of volunteering in the community and how rural areas provide the highest standard of care. Visit [www.nata.org/taxonomy/term/2906](http://www.nata.org/taxonomy/term/2906) to read the complete blog series.

### NATM 2022: “Providing Health Care Everywhere”

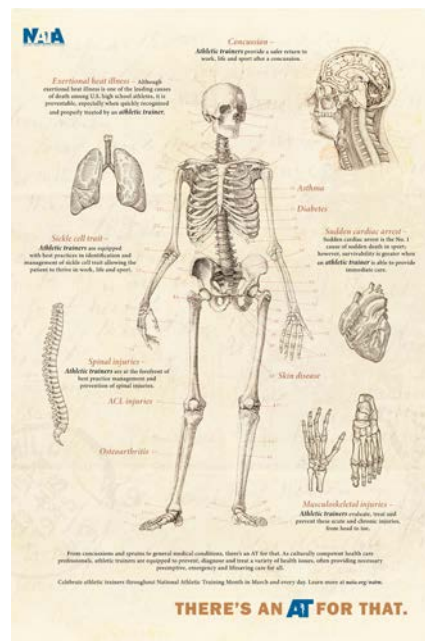
- On the NATA Now blog, a five-part NATM blog series highlighted athletic trainers in a variety of settings as well as what they’re doing to increase the public’s understanding of the profession. Read the blog series in its entirety at [www.nata.org/taxonomy/term/3167](http://www.nata.org/taxonomy/term/3167).
- On social media, NATA’s NATM campaign generated 222,700 impressions on Twitter and had a reach of more than 138,390 on Facebook and more than 15,300 on Instagram. For the entire month, the hashtag #NATM2022 was included in 19,207 tweets and more than 1,800 Instagram posts, reaching more than 12 million on both social media platforms.
- At Your Own Risk also utilized social media to connect to external stakeholders and celebrate NATM. Its efforts on Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn reached more than 657,000 members of the public.
- Regional and national companies and organizations, such as DICK’S Sporting Goods, QuikTrip, NFHS and USA Cheer, among others, also celebrated athletic trainers with shout-outs on social media.
- In the media, NATM was highlighted in more than 200 articles, broadcasts, online news mentions and podcasts in March, resulting in a total readership of more than 605 million.

### WHAT TO EXPECT DURING NATM 2023

During NATM 2023, members are encouraged to participate with this year’s theme, “There’s an AT for That,” using any or all of the following prompts on their respective social media platforms. Don’t forget to tag us and use the hashtags: #NATM, #TheresanATforThat and #AT4Me.

- Show us how you’re celebrating NATM.
- Tell us what you love about athletic training/why you’re an athletic trainer.
- We want to hear from you! Fill in the blank with your favorite setting, skill set or health care topic: “There’s an AT for \_\_\_\_\_.”

Furthermore, tune into NATA Chats on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/NATA1950/videos](http://www.facebook.com/NATA1950/videos), and watch as some of the ATs featured in the p. 9 article, “The



Settings and the ATs Who Make Them,” share what a day in their AT life looks like and discuss further insight into their settings, along with their vast and varied skill set.

Throughout NATM, NATA will provide resources and content for members to aid in their celebration – including logos, social media images, sample press releases and sample proclamations – at [www.nata.org/natm](http://www.nata.org/natm).

NATA will also reach out to external stakeholders to publish a newsletter, social media posts and a blog. These elements can be accessed in the following ways:

- Newsletter: [signup.e2ma.net/signup/1950426/1885471](http://signup.e2ma.net/signup/1950426/1885471)
- Facebook: @ASaferApproach
- Twitter: @ASaferApproach
- Instagram: @ASaferApproach
- Blog: [www.atyourownrisk.org/articles](http://www.atyourownrisk.org/articles)

Refer to the “Your National Athletic Training Month 2023 Checklist” article on p. 14 for more tips to celebrate the profession this year. Learn more about NATM 2023 at [www.nata.org/natm](http://www.nata.org/natm) and be sure to follow NATA on all its social media platforms:

- Twitter: @NATA1950
- Facebook: @NATA1950
- LinkedIn: @NATA1950
- Instagram: @NATA1950
- YouTube: @NATA1950
- Vimeo: @NATA1950