



Dedication, Diversity and Doritos:

AT discusses her experience caring for industrial athletes at a potato chip factory

By Jaimie Siegle

AMI ADAMS, MS, ATC, LAT, CES

AGE: 30

ALMA MATERS(S): B.S., MIAMI UNIVERSITY (OHIO);

M.S., UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

HOBBIES/ACTIVITIES: COOKING, YOGA, BIKING, RUNNING WITH MY DOGS, TRAVELING AND SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

You may remember Ami Adams' photo from our #ATsAre contest a few months ago, a smiling woman holding up the word "versatile" in front of a factory machine. A member of NATA's ethnic diversity advisory committee (EDAC) and head AT for a Frito-Lay potato chip plant in Connecticut – Doritos potato chips, specifically – Adams is responsible for approximately 800 factory employees who keep the operation running 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in order to supply the surrounding Northeast region with potato chips. "It has to run 24/7; It's amazing how many chips are eaten in this country," she said, joking that she's lucky she wasn't contracted to work in a Cheetos plant – a favorite snack of hers.

After selecting Miami University (Ohio) for its athletic training program and proximity to her host family, Adams moved to Florida to pursue a master's degree from the University of Florida, where she gained experience in the occupational setting treating city attorneys, bus drivers and other government-employed workers.

She discovered Onsite Innovations, Inc., a company that provides contracted medical

services for clients like Pepsi and Frito-Lay, while browsing opportunities within the occupational setting in the NATA Career Center. The original listing was for a position at a poultry butchering facility, a site that sounded less than appealing to Adams. Although she ended up taking an internship at the University of South Carolina, Onsite Innovations' CEO, Dr. Larry Goren, kept her skillset in mind for future openings.

Six months later, Adams received a call from Goren asking if she'd be willing to move to Connecticut to oversee roughly 800 employees working in a Doritos plant. According to Goren, factory management had been using one nurse to provide health care and treatment for injuries and was looking for a different solution.

"A lot of factory sites have physical therapists or occupational therapists coming

in two to four times a week – if that – or one nurse who was available maybe five days a week, but it wasn't helping with what they needed help with, which was the musculoskeletal injuries," Adams said.

Goren suggested hiring an athletic trainer instead due to their niche in onsite injury treatment and prevention, and already had Adams in mind for the job.

Before Adams arrived, the plant reported 56 serious injuries to OSHA for the year; now in her third year, the number has decreased significantly. Most of the daily injuries are minor bruises or scratches that can be treated with heat, massage or cold therapy. "Other than slips or falls, a lot of the work I do is postural – talking to them about weight loss for knee pain, shoulder pain from bad posture."

“A lot of the work I do is postural – talking to them about weight loss for knee pain, shoulder pain from bad posture.”



OPPOSITE PAGE: Adams' submission to the NATA #ATsAre contest featured the word "Versatile" and clues to her unique setting caring for factory employees. THIS PAGE: Newlywed Ami Adams (formerly Ami Matsumoto) poses with her husband during their trip to Japan.



At other factories, however, such as the Stacy's Pita Chips plant located an hour from the Doritos plant, injury reports and trends may be different than what Adams encounters at her factory because the workers might be doing different types of labor at different food plants, depending on machinery. "There are differences when it comes to the machinery, but every site is unique in regards to when it was built," Adams said. Employees at the other factory work in what used to be an old warehouse with machines that require more manual attention. Due to the lack of automation, the head athletic trainer at the Stacy's plant tends to see a higher percentage of hand and wrist injuries, according to Adams.

Adams' passion for athletic training began when she moved from Asia to the Midwestern U.S. as a foreign exchange student at an Ohio high school. It was her host mother who showed Adams the power of conditioning for injury prevention and the concept of body awareness, which eventually

put her on track to pursue an athletic training career. "My host brother [who was on our high school football team] had done ballet since he was two," Adams explained. "He had bumps and bruises, but he'd never had a major injuries because of his core stabilization muscles [from doing ballet], and he was a 250 lb. lineman."

"When I was living with my host mom, it was close to a Honda plant in Ohio, and lots of Japanese families had moved there temporarily so their husbands could work at the plant," Adams recalled. "I remember as a high school student tutoring some of the families [in English] and helping them with their homework, thinking how intimidating [it must be] for the kids and mothers [who couldn't speak English]."

Adams remains close to her host mother today, who has continued to host foreign exchange students since Adams graduated years ago. The families from Japan are still living near her host family, and Adams will assist the parents with the language barrier

when signing up their kids up for ballet. "Dance is a universal act; anyone can do it, and I didn't want a mom to not sign up her daughter because she couldn't communicate," she said. "That feeling is very rewarding for me."

It was her experience bridging cultural barriers like these that brought Adams to her EDAC involvement at NATA, and she attributes her multicultural background to her sensitivity to different cultures throughout her life. "Diversity is a part of me," said Ami, who attended international schools in Thailand and Japan before coming to the United States for high school. "I was lucky my parents were adventurous and traveled, but even my extended family is scattered all over the world," she said. "Sometimes you have to veer a little bit off course to be able get where you want to go."

Know an AT student or athletic trainer who deserves to be featured in the magazine? Send us your suggestions by emailing Editor-in-Chief Jordan Grantham at jordang@nata.org.