



Photo by Elizabeth Shrier

COURTSIDE

Choreography

AT creates program to care for Knicks Entertainment teams

Story and Photos By Jaimie Siegle



As head athletic trainer for the Madison Square Garden Entertainment teams, Monica Lorenzo, MS, ATC, oversees injury prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for the Knicks City Dancers, the Knicks City Kids, the Dunk Crew, the acrobat tumblers and the 7th Ave. Spirit Squad. Growing up in Queens, N.Y., Lorenzo was a dancer throughout her childhood but was never exposed to an athletic trainer.

"I never grew up with an AT, so I never knew what one was," Lorenzo said. It wasn't until she met an influential athletic trainer while interning at a physical therapy clinic that she found her calling. "I knew I wanted to provide this care for performers because I never had it," said Lorenzo, who intended to study physical therapy but quickly switched her major to athletic training. She worked as an AT for the Radio City Rockettes, where she became close with Rockettes Head Athletic Trainer Elaine Winslow-Redmond, MS, ATC, EMT. Winslow recommended Lorenzo as a good fit for the Knicks entertainment team AT position due to her dance background and experience working with the dancers at Radio City Music Hall.

With help from Winslow, Lorenzo structured a sports medicine program based on the one already in place at Radio City, which Winslow helped initiate a few years prior. The Knicks program launched in October 2009.

"It was taking the base of the program and tweaking it and twisting it and making it just right for these types of dancers," Lorenzo said, explaining how their hip hop style of dance is a sharp contrast to the Rockettes' style, creating a need for a program that addressed the Knicks dancers' unique injuries that may occur from multiple shoe and costume changes to issues resulting from dancing on the basketball court. MSG Entertainment saw the value she could provide, and Lorenzo became the first athletic trainer dedicated to NBA entertainment teams.

To identify the team's most vulnerable areas, Lorenzo recorded injury statistics and compared them to previous years. "We found that the dancers' injuries were lingering a little too long because consistency of care wasn't there," she explained. Since she started working with the program on a

more regular basis, the rate of new injuries decreased by 46 percent.

"We started off with just game day coverage, and I was based out of the bathroom, in a shower stall in [the girls'] locker room," Lorenzo laughed. Fortunately, Lorenzo eventually moved from the shower stall to just outside the bathroom — still not great, but a definite improvement. With data to demonstrate a decrease in injuries, she's been able to offer more to the Knicks entertainment teams.

"Now I've been able to have more ATs on staff, and instead of just getting game time coverage, there's treatment and group strengthening and conditioning twice a week, and AT coverage starting two hours prior to each game," Lorenzo said.

For those looking to break into the performing arts or dance setting, Lorenzo recommends gauging interest from local dance studios, traveling dance competitions, cheer squads and similar youth leagues/organizations. "The best thing is to build a basic business plan, present it to the organization or team in need, and do your research to learn the best person to contact," Lorenzo said. "[The business plan] is about proving that you would be able to help prevent injuries and that you would be available for rehearsals and performances — even just a few hours a week is a good start."

Asked what she enjoys the most about working with dancers, Lorenzo said, "They're so appreciative of what we provide for them. These are performers who grew up without ever having had any care, some have been professional for years and some have just never had any kind of care."



Learn more about the performing arts setting and this unique program by visiting <http://www.nata.org/athletic-training/job-settings/performing-arts-setting>