

REMEMBERING RACHAEL OATS



NATA ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LEAVES LASTING LEGACY ON THE ATHLETIC TRAINING PROFESSION

NATA Associate Executive Director Rachael Oats, CAE, our beloved friend and colleague, passed away, November, 2019, after fighting a tough battle with cancer. Although she had small victories throughout her battle, her condition worsened, and she passed away peacefully in hospice.

The news was difficult for NATA and the entire athletic training profession as Rachael was a staple of NATA for more than 20 years, working in many different capacities. Through the years, she was always dedicated to making the athletic training profession better any way she could.

Rachael began her career with NATA in 1997 as a continuing education assistant, processing thousands of “green reporting forms” and entering data. Her talent quickly shined through, prompting the creation of a new position for her as a special projects coordinator in 2001. Throughout her 22 years at NATA, Rachael held positions at virtually every level of the association, including special projects volunteer and engagement manager, NATA Research & Education Foundation director and NATA associate executive director. As associate executive director, a role she earned in 2013, Rachael led and oversaw strategic initiatives as well as several departments, including Membership/Business Development, Marketing/Communications/Public Relations and Knowledge Initiatives.

“Losing Rachael Oats is a terrible tragedy,” said NATA Executive Director David Saddler. “She was a great friend, outstanding executive and leader. She has been fighting with great strength for some time, but now she has peace. Her legacy with NATA and the athletic training profession is vast and unquestioned. As difficult as it will be, we will continue to advance the mission of the association and profession she loved so dearly with her legacy and spirit helping to guide us.”

Constantly finding ways to give back to the profession she cared so much about, Rachael became a member of the NATA Foundation’s Shoe Box Society for Planned Giving in 2015. In 2016, Rachael received the Korey Stringer Institute’s Lifesaving Service Award for taking the lead on youth sports safety programs with the NFL and KSI. This work included national and NFL club AT programs as well as Collaborative Solutions for Safety in Sport and National Youth Sports Governing Bodies meetings. In October, after years of dedication to improving and advancing the athletic training profession, NATA named Rachael an honorary member.

“With her thumbprints on a countless number of projects, it would be close to impossible to measure the positive impact Rachael Oats has had on the profession of athletic training,” said NATA President Tory Lindley, MA, ATC. “For that, we are all eternally grateful. We now share in the responsibility to carry Rachael’s enthusiastic spirit forward.”

While we are all grieving, knowing Rachael, she would much rather us share stories and celebrate the successes we have had together, especially the humorous memories. Rachael was an advocate, ally and friend of the athletic training profession. Rachael’s influence is evident in the progress she pioneered during her time with NATA. Rachael’s impact, however, is felt most deeply at the individual level. We know Rachael touched many people during her life, and we want to do our best to encapsulate her legacy with NATA.