



**Introducing: Rick Zappala, ATC, Paul D Schreiber High School, Port Washington NY**

Rick Zappala is a certified athletic trainer at Paul D. Schreiber High School in Port Washington, NY, where he provides injury care for approximately 660 athletes that compete on 44 athletic teams. Additionally, Rick serves on the District Safety committee and the Building Crisis Response Team. In addition to managing the athletic AEDs, he also manages the AEDs in all the district buildings.

In addition to his athletic training career, Rick has been very involved in NYSATA. He started out on the membership committee in the 1980s, before being elected President Elect in 1986, where he served six years on the NYSATA Executive Board, as well as six years serving on the Eastern Athletic Trainers' Association (EATA) Executive Board after being elected as EATA president in 1995. In 2005, Rick was inducted into the NYSATA Hall of Fame and was honored by the National Athletic Trainers' Association with the Most Distinguished Athletic Trainer Award. He was inducted into the EATA '49 Club in 2018.

After 44 amazing years as an athletic trainer, Rick will be retiring. He looks back at his career fondly, with his favorite memory being on the Olympic Team Medical Staff in 1992. "The entire process to be selected was an awesome experience! I am still friends with many of those I met in the Olympic sports medicine program. But the total experience is so awesome, it is hard to explain it all. But, if you ever get a chance, DO IT! It is so worth it," he said.

Rick became ATC certified through an internship route, which is no longer available. The internship required a set curriculum of course work and 1,800 hours of clinical experience. Although he has a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and History, and a master's degree in physical education, athletic training curriculums were few and far between when he was in school. By the time Rick took his certification exam in 1980, he had more than 2,400 hours of clinical experience.

Originally planning to go the teaching route, Rick was influenced by Randy Shroul, the supervising athletic trainer at Boston College in 1977. He suggested that Rick consider athletic training as he was "pretty good at it." After reflecting on his 45 years after that, he states that Randy certainly changed his life. "I always think about that when I'm interacting with students. Some have come back to me and said they pursued a health care career because of me. That is very moving," he said.

When asked if he had any advice for aspiring ATs, he recalls something his mother always told him, "There's always room for a good one, and anything worth doing is worth doing well." With that advice, Rick says, "I have always tried to do the best I could, sometimes with failure, but always striving to do it best. And, if you prove your worth, and your good, there's a spot for you somewhere. I think that was great advice."

Rick signs off with a message about his career, stating "Athletic training has been a wonderful career. The people I have met, the friendships I have made, and the experience it has provided me



with are invaluable. I have loved being an athletic trainer for over 44 years. I feel that I have been blessed by all of it.”