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New York State Athletic Trainers' Association Member Works to Advance Diversity and Inclusion Throughout the Profession

(Long Island, NY) – LaTonja Lee, the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee chair for the New York State Athletic Trainers' Association (NYSATA), is using her personal and professional experiences to implement new initiatives, outreach, and opportunities for minority communities to become involved in the athletic training profession.

“My passion for the profession of athletic training has been profound but advocating and promoting diversity in the profession is personal,” said LaTonja Lee, Diversity and Inclusion Committee chair. “As far back as I can remember I have been one of the only, or singularly the first and only person of color, in any sports, club activities, jobs, or organizations of which I have been a part. These experiences fueled my desire to become more involved by facilitating mentorships and providing a gateway for future athletic trainers of color by cultivating initiatives through community outreach.

As committee chair, Lee aspires to cultivate initiatives to encourage community service and outreach, facilitate mentorship, and execute forward progress while introducing students to the profession. This has been achieved through workshops and fitness education programs, social media campaigns to increase awareness of cultural competency and ethnic representation in the sports realm and creating educational marketing materials.

In addition to NYSATA initiatives, Lee is asked to talk at different events to speak her truth and tell her own story. She shares how being the only minority in the room is a privilege that also comes with immense pressure. It is a privilege because she can represent her culture and educate others on concepts that may be foreign to them. The pressure comes from feeling like she must be perfect, to not make a bad impression on behalf of her race. Knowing how important it is for young people to see someone who looks like them, Lee dedicates herself to spreading these messages and encouraging others to be assertive, because their voices matter.

Lee is especially passionate about diversity in the athletic training profession because at its core, athletic training is about health care for physically active individuals. Unfortunately, many persons of color receive disproportionate healthcare due to lack of cultural competence, language barriers, bias, and inadequate resources. By educating current athletic trainers and increasing diversity within the profession, athletic trainers can ensure people of color receive the utmost care in their hands.

“Having diverse members of a sports medicine staff fosters inclusion, compassion, empathy, and respectful interaction with different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, genders, identity, sexual orientation, and nationality,” said Lee. “It enhances culture and creates innovation, allowing people to be recognized individually and represented as whole.”

To interview LaTonja, or to learn more about this topic, please contact Susan Bardack at susan@buzzmediasolutions.com or 518.867.7940.



ABOUT NEW YORK STATE ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION

NYSATA, founded in 1976 and incorporated in 1989, stands to advance the profession of athletic training for the purpose of enhancing the quality of healthcare for the physically active in New York State. Comprised of over 1,500 Certified Athletic Trainers, NYSATA (www.go2nysata.org) is the statewide affiliate of the regional Eastern Athletic Trainers' Association (EATA) and District Two of the [National Athletic Trainers' Association \(NATA\)](#).