

# MoATA Hall of Fame Spotlight

December 2019

## John R. Donnell

*Hall of Fame Inductee 2003*

*By Michael Schwarzer, MSED, ATC*

### **Career Beginnings**

John received a bachelor's degree in health and physical education with a minor in social studies and driver's education. He took a variety of jobs in these fields up until 1975 when John decided to get his master's degree while teaching physical education and coaching at Smith-Hale High School. He was planning on attending Central Missouri University and his advisor happened to be Ron Van Dam. Ron was just starting the athletic training program and trying to recruit students so he could increase numbers. John decided to give it a try and a great athletic training career was born. After completing his master's degree, John still needed 400 additional hours of experience to take the BOC exam, so he volunteered at Mid-America Nazarene University while still working full time as a coach and teacher at Ruskin High School. In 1981 John passed his BOC exam and became a certified athletic trainer. After certification, John worked in several settings which included the clinic, semi-professional, collegiate, and secondary school settings around Kansas City. John spent most of his career as an athletic trainer/teacher in the secondary school setting, where he was very instrumental in promoting the importance of each high school having a full-time athletic trainer.

### **Mentors**

John has had the pleasure of working with several great athletic trainers who have influenced and shaped his career. He credits Ron Van Dam at Central Missouri for introducing him to athletic



### *Advice for Young Professionals*

*"It goes beyond athletics, you do it to help the athlete, not for any other reason!"*

*"Follow your heart!"*

*"Be open minded!"*

*"Do it for enjoyment. Not money or prestige!"*

*"PASSION!"*

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training. John always admired Ron Dunn for his class and professionalism and the way he fostered the relationship between the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) and MoATA. This relationship helped with state licensure and led to athletic trainers helping cover all MSHSAA Championships. John also recalls all the times he worked alongside Eric McDonnell while volunteering at the Show-Me State Games and Pat Forbis while serving on the Athletic Training Advisory Committee for the Missouri Board of Healing Arts. He also fostered great relationships with many athletic trainers across the state while working at numerous MSHSAA state championships events, sharing and learning new techniques and ideas.

### **Memorable Moments**

John recalls many memorable moments during his career, but there are a few that stick out to him. During his time at Blue Springs High School, John treated an athlete with a compound leg fracture. While treating the athlete both coaches fainted, making the situation even more difficult to manage. Then while at Lee's Summit High School he had an athlete that sustained a meniscus injury. John was able to work with this young man so he could get back on the field to showcase his talents, ultimately earning him a scholarship and making him the 1<sup>st</sup> person in his family to go to college. Another memorable moment for John was working with a track athlete that sustained a stress fracture early in the season. John was able to rehabilitate this athlete, who returned to competition at districts and

ultimately was able to take first and second in the low and high hurdles, respectively. John loved helping the kids, it didn't matter if they were a superstar or not, getting to see that expression across their face, pure JOY!

### **Contributions to the Profession**

John has been a key contributor in the advancement of the athletic training profession. He is proudest of what he was able to accomplish while chairing and serving on the Secondary School Athletic Trainers' Committee for MoATA, MAATA and NATA. While serving on the Secondary School Athletic Trainer's Committee for NATA John helped with the creation of two position statements that assisted the advancement and improvement of athletic trainer services in the secondary school setting. He also served as a certified examiner for the Board of Certification (BOC) practical exam. At the state and local level John has served on the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee for MSHSAA for the past 27 years and the Athletic Training Advisory Committee for the Missouri Board of Healing Arts, current chair. He has also volunteered countless hours to help ensure athlete safety at the Olympic Training Center, MSHSAA championship events and local Big Brothers/Big Sisters Missouri vs Kansas football games.



Are you a Young Professional Athletic Trainer in Missouri? Join our Facebook Group at [MoATA Young Professional Athletic Trainers](#) to engage with peers about the transition to practice and professional socialization. Also follow us on Twitter [@MoATA\\_YP](#) for information on upcoming events and relevant news!