

PodCAST Episode Kathy Schniedwind

Kara Snyder

Kara, hello and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum or friend of the college, and today, we have a chance to talk to Kathy Snyder. Kathy was the first female athletic trainer at Illinois State University. She retired from ISU in 2006. Welcome and thank you for being here.

Kathy Schniedwind

Thank you, Kara. It's so exciting to talk to you, and very humbled by the award that I'm going to receive.

Kara Snyder

Yeah, we're so excited to induct you into our Hall of Fame this fall, and I'm really excited to talk about your story today. So let's start at the beginning. How did you first become interested in athletic training?

Kathy Schniedwind

Interesting question with that I get asked a lot. I, since fourth grade, was very interested in medicine and wanted to be a physician, so I actually met with our personal physician, and he talked to me a little bit about stuff, and he gave me a book, and it was very thick and something I could not even begin to understand. But I've always loved medicine, and I've always loved sports, so becoming an athletic trainer was a perfect fit for me, as opposed to just being a physician.

Kara Snyder

So you decide to be an athletic trainer. I'm curious then, how did you end up at Illinois State University? What brought you here? And then, maybe even more importantly, what kept you here for your career?

Kathy Schniedwind

Great question again, I went to West Chester University in my undergrad, and I had a bachelor in Health and Physical Education, thinking I wanted to teach and coach, but when I graduated, I taught one year in a junior, senior private church school and coached. And after that year, I loved the students, but I thought this is not what I want to do. I learned about athletic training and sports medicine from a high school teacher and physical education teacher and a coach about Indiana University and sports medicine. So I end up in going back to school after that one year out of undergrad and doing sports medicine at Indiana University, and went straight from there to Illinois State University and never left. I did 30 years here, different changes in my career and what I did, but it was fantastic.

Kara Snyder

And I think you're not the only person to say that, right? You know, people come to ISU, and they might plan on staying for a handful of years, and all of a sudden, it's 2530 years later, and they've had a magnificent career. Can you speak a little bit about why you chose to stay here and what it's like to be loyal to an organization for that long?

Kathy Schniedwind

Absolutely, Kara, Illinois State is like a family, and it was to me especially, and people welcomed us. You know, as rookies as I if I can say that two people, especially Jill Hutchison and Linda Herman are both legends at Illinois State. They mentored me and many others that first came in on this faculty that was women's athletics only at the time, and men's athletics was separate, which was true all over the country. So they became great friends, and still are to this day, and so many other people that make this place special and care about you. They want you to be successful. My family was east coast, so to be in the Midwest, I was like a nomad here, but that's kind of and why I stayed. I mean, I changed Kara. I came in as the first women's head athletic trainer. Then we merged departments in about 8019 82 and Bob Keefe and I became co head athletic trainers, and then in 1989 I became the head athletic trainer over men's and women's sports. So my career changed past many times, which honestly helped me stay refreshed and not get stale, in my opinion. So it's a great place. It still is. I bleed red and white.

Kara Snyder

I love to hear that, and your story transitions right into my next question is, you know, I wanted to talk to you about being a woman in a male dominated field, and I know it has improved, but athletic training is still considered to be a male dominated field today, and when you were beginning your career, that was very much the case. Can you tell us a little bit about what that experience was like for you

Kathy Schniedwind

before I became the head athletic trainer over all the sports in 1989 I helped with a lot of the men's sports where, you know, I might have done treatments. I might have helped cover a practice with Bob Keith, or, you know, was on the sidelines sometimes for football, so I kind of was dealing with the men's sports already, but when I became the head over everything, football was probably the biggest challenge, because I'm five one, I'm a female and that was my first exposure to being in charge of that sport, which is a lot. Of athletes, but I told my students, and I still to this day say, I don't care if you're a male or a female. When you're dealing with a new coach, you have to prove yourself all the time, and it shouldn't matter if you're male or female. They have to trust you for what you know, not whether you're female or male. So that was interesting, but I felt like that. I got the respect from our coaches, you know, for football that I worked with directly, and I felt like I had the respect of the other coaches as well. And so it worked over time. Now, there were some bumps along the road. I always felt like in football that I did not have to be in the locker room, but I on road trips that I tried to be in the back where I was not, you know, interfering with the men. I feel the same way about a female on a male or a male on a female sport. So we work those things out. But I feel very overall my rapport with the coaches and the

administrators really helped me, and they accepted me, and I felt like it only got better. And obviously, as I went through several years of dealing with the men's sports all the time that you know, we did fine. So it was a great experience, you know. And I love when the alums all come back and you get to see a men and women and even our coaches that are no longer here. So again, I love the 30 years that I was here.

Kara Snyder

So tell me, what advice do you have for people who are considering a career in a space where they might be the only one in the room, where they might not have anyone that looks like them? What advice would you have for someone in that situation?

Kathy Schniedwind

I think the first thing I would say is be confident in what you know and what you can do without looking at experience, color, whatever sex, be confident in yourself. The other thing I would say is find a mentor, or find someone that has done what you're doing and it looks like you potentially and ask questions. Don't be afraid to say, hey, I don't have the answer for this. Can you help me? But the biggest thing is the confidence in yourself and prove that you deserve that job no matter what, listen, be patient, and don't always have to talk right away. Listening to me is huge, you know, and especially in our profession of athletic training, your first job is to the athletes. So keep that in mind.

Kara Snyder

That's great advice. Thank you. You're welcome. And as you reflect over your career, how would you describe your leadership style?

Kathy Schniedwind

I am a team player. I'm not autocratic, and by any means I like to share. When I have a staff, I present something, and I said, I want to hear your input. Some people won't say anything, some will always say something. Some will only argue. And I said, you have to agree to disagree. I want to hear your opinion, and we're going to look to what's the right answer. And I did that a lot when I had staff meetings or when I was trying to hire a new graduate student or a new staff member. I want them to give me input. Will I always use it, not necessarily, but I want you to speak up. So again, that confidence level, you know, some people are afraid to say something to the boss. I wanted their feedback. So that's how we get better. You know, they say the old saying, hire people that are smarter than you are. I tried to do that a little bit. If you hire everybody that feels just like you do, you're not going to be very good. You're never going to get any pushback that says, Well, what about this? So that's kind of how I function,

Kara Snyder

and I know that, aside from ISU, you have also been very involved in the community. So talk to us about the importance of giving back and how you were able to make time for that

Kathy Schniedwind

another great question. I had a high school coach and physical education teacher that always said, You need to be a role model and you need to give back for what you got out of your sport career. Because I was an athlete through high school and college, and that was great advice. My parents said the same thing, give back so I love to be involved in the community. You know, as I retired, I had a lot more time to do that, but I think that's important, and you get to know your community better if you are involved. So I am extremely involved with Special Olympics Illinois. I'm on the board of directors, and I'm now, right now the board chair, which has been phenomenal. That's my number one passion. I've loved working with people with intellectual disabilities, and I've been involved with Special Olympics since 1978 so that's probably number one. I'm also very involved in the local humane society, helping, kind of with events and a huge garage sale that we do in September. I'm co chairing that the other one is senior professionals, you would be familiar, but it's people all over the community, from all walks of life and expertise that work. We work with students at ISU, both in mentoring, in resume review, mock interviews. We give some scholarships to students and, you know, clubs at the university. Me, I love that too. And other than that, there's a lot of other little things that I would do, seasonally or whatever, but I like to, I like to give back. That's like helping people. That's my personality.

Kara Snyder

Well, I love that. Thank you for sharing. You're very welcome. Kathy, we are going to finish with a speed round, so just go with your first instinct on these questions, we'll get to know you a little bit better. Do you consider yourself to be a morning person or a night owl? Morning? What's your favorite thing to have for breakfast? My favorite thing

Kathy Schniedwind

for breakfast, whether, if I'm trying not to lose weight and be healthy, would be scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast. But I don't do that hardly ever. So I would say cold syrup with fruit and nuts, or old male with the same that's what I usually

Kara Snyder

eat. It's important to have a balance. Every

Kathy Schniedwind

now and then I have to do that bigger breakfast. Absolutely.

Kara Snyder

Do you consider yourself to be an introvert or an extrovert? And why?

Kathy Schniedwind

Okay, that's a great question. If I was asked that question as I was younger, I would have said, I'm an introvert. Athletics and sports through my growing up and high school and college made me become

more of an extrovert, but really, I taught myself to not be an introvert and not be shy, and people laugh when I say that they're like, what? So now I would say I'm more of an extrovert, but I'm still quiet in a lot of different situations. So it's not 100% one way or the other, but I don't I'm not an introvert,

Kara Snyder

a self made extrovert. Maybe, there you go.

Kathy Schniedwind

I worked at it for a long time.

Kara Snyder

What's the best trip you've ever taken?

Kathy Schniedwind

Oh my God, when I read this, when you gave me the stuff ahead of time, I'm like, Oh my God, I've taken so many fun trips. I would have to say, my experience being on the US medical staff for the 88 Summer Olympics in Seoul, Korea. Great answer. We traveled. I had women's team handball, and we traveled for five weeks before Seoul, and went all over. We went to Hungary, Russia, and Oslo Norway, and then we went, we were a month in Seoul, Korea, and it was an unbelievable experience. So I think that's has to be probably my biggest honor, to be selected for that, and just what we got to see and just the whole experience,

Kara Snyder

that's a fantastic answer. Thank you. And then I ask everybody who comes on the podcast Avantis gondola or pub, two cheese balls?

Kathy Schniedwind

That was a hard one, too. I like them both, but I'd have to say

Kara Snyder

cheese balls. And I have one last question for you. If you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

Kathy Schniedwind

Be patient. You're not going to get your dream job typically right out of school. Listen, don't be afraid to ask people for advice. It doesn't mean that you're not good for the job. It's just you're trying to learn. Thank the people that came before you, because somebody probably helped you in some way to get where you are. Don't forget about those that were the pioneers ahead of you, because the one of the thing I say to them is, how does it make you feel when someone compliments you about something you didn't take this job to get compliments every day. But how does it make you feel? I'd be willing to bet that you

skip and jump privately to say, oh my god, somebody told me I did a good job. So do that to other people and thank them every now and then. Thank your mentors. You know, your high school teachers. That made a difference. I tried very hard to do that. And you know, be a team player. You don't come right out of college getting your first job to know all the answers. So I have lots of advice. We can talk all day long, and a lot of it comes from my personal experiences.

Kara Snyder

Well, that is great. Thank you so much for sharing, and thanks again for being here. Kathy

Kathy Schniedwind

Kara, thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to seeing you for the cast Hall of Fame events and again, thank you to Noel for nominating me and for all of you on the staff and I'm excited about the event, continue to do the great job you're doing.

Kara Snyder

Well, thanks. We're going to have a great time. And that was Kathy Snyder, the first female athletic trainer at Illinois State University. Join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast, alumni and friends, foreign.