

Chisolm Leaves Legacy Of Education, Excellence

For years, he toiled day and night at Brooklyn College to help athletes and student athletic trainers alike, always urging them to think bigger, try harder, do more. Now, an award named in his honor lauds those qualities in others.

By Valerie Hunt
NATA News

Bill Chisolm left an indelible mark on his students, who recall the late athletic trainer with warm words and vivid memories.

He was a father figure, they say, a role model and a true mentor.

They strive to emulate those qualities, and it is in those students – now teachers – that Bill Chisolm's legacy resides.

"His students have gone on to do very, very well," said Rene Shingles, MS, ATC, chair of the Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council. "His legacy is the mentoring he did for future certified athletic trainers and leaders within the NATA."

Several years ago, the EDAC chose to honor Bill Chisolm by naming an award after him. The recipient of the annual Bill Chisolm Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council Award is chosen based upon the extent to which s/he reflects Chisolm's qualities of service to the profession and dedication to

students and athletes, Shingles said.

"We try to honor a professional who has continued to mentor ethnically diverse certified athletic trainers as well as provide services for ethnically diverse athletes," she said. "It's not just people of color who can be nominated or honored with this award; it's anyone who reflects the mentoring aspect Bill brought to the profession."

Chisolm the Educator

Former Chisolm student Frank Walters, PhD, ATC, said his professor always emphasized education in a unique and personal way.

"Bill had a very genuine way of reaching out to students and getting them to believe that whatever it was they wanted to do, they could do," said Walters, who was Chisolm's first student to earn a doctorate. "His whole concept was you never know what a person is going to be; you've got to give them a chance. That was really what he was all about."

Kathleen Laquale, PhD,

ATC, met Chisolm in 1974, when she was an undergraduate student.

Attending one of her first NATA meetings, Laquale felt drawn to Chisolm, who gave generously of his time and advice.

"Back then, there weren't many women in the profession," Laquale said. "He just kept encouraging me to challenge myself."

"His phrase was, 'What have you got to lose?' and he would tell me to just keep going forward."

Chisolm product Roger Hinds, ATC, now the head athletic trainer for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, recalls a similar persistent encouragement from his mentor.

"When I took my first job in college he kept pushing me to get my PhD so I could get tenure and be entrenched," Hinds said. "When I saw him a few months before he passed, I walked into his house, and I'm looking at this man who had suffered a stroke and was a shadow of the hero I knew, and the first thing he said to me was, 'When are you going

Bill Chisolm



to get that PhD?"

"Even at that moment, it brought tears to my eyes," Hinds recalled. "He gave so much to his students and his profession.

"Those of us who were his students try to honor him by taking care of people the way he took care of others."

Another characteristic Chisolm imparted to his students was foresight, Hinds said.

"He stayed on us about all kinds of things," he said. "He was always pushing us to get our credentials and do everything we could. He had so many visions of what certified athletic trainers could do, even before the NATA started focusing on other settings."

Chisolm himself, a Charleston native and Xavier graduate, learned from a forward-thinking individual in his mentor Ted Chiles, PhD, PT.

"Ted was always about individuals improving themselves, and he clearly impressed Bill this way," Walters said. "He encouraged Bill to consider athletic training."

Chisolm the Advisor

Even as he taught physical education courses, ran the athletic training room, organized a club football team and volunteered for every athletic event in New York City, Chisolm maintained an ability to make time for every person who asked.

As a result, his attention was sought by many, if not most, people who knew him.

"I can remember traveling with Bill, walking a walk that on your own could take five minutes," Walters said. "With Bill, it would take 50 minutes. He knew everyone."

Chisolm also had a gift of giving each person his complete attention, sometimes to an uncanny degree.

"I was absolutely mesmerized by him," Walters said. "I thought I was

an athlete, but I wasn't. I broke my ankle, and my wife told me to go see the athletic trainer. I walked in, and Bill started asking a whole lot of things about who I was, what I was interested in.

"He would ask you a lot about yourself and then somewhere along the line ask you a question about yourself or your goals that you may not know the answer to," Walters

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Head athletic trainer,
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former Chisolm student

continued. "He really got you to examine yourself."

Master's degree work in counseling helped Chisolm gain insight to his students and athletes alike.

"He was like a father to all of us," Hinds said. "He sparked my interest in athletic training, and he took me under his wing."

Hinds recalls in detail how Chisolm helped him at a difficult crossroads in life.

"When I was leaving for college [after a summer break], my parents split up," Hinds said. "I have five other siblings, and I felt like I should

stay home and help my mom. She didn't want me to do that, so she invited Bill over to our house for dinner.

"After dinner the two of them told me I had to do what I had to do with my life.

"He was just like that," Hinds added. "He just guided people when they needed it."

One after another – Walters, Hinds, the Chicago Cubs' Steve Melendez, ATC; Steve Valenti, ATC; and on and on – Chisolm's students took up their duties as certified athletic trainers and members of a profession.

To Chisolm, being part of a profession meant serving in whatever way one could.

"We just were taught to become active in the association," Walters said. "Bill worked on many levels and went to the meetings and stayed involved."

But that very dedication to so many others taught Chisolm's students another, more somber, lesson, one of caution and balance.

"Bill's one regret that he expressed to me was that he didn't spend as much time with his family as he should have," Walters said.

"His commitment to athletes in New York City was huge – but it took a toll on his personal life that he didn't want any of his students to endure.

"He sacrificed his own concerns, even his own health, for his career.

"In the end, he didn't want us to do that," Walters continued. "He wanted us to be everything we could be in all aspects of our lives. He was just an incredible man." ■

Nominations for the Bill Chisolm Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council Award will be accepted until Jan. 3. Nomination forms are available on-line at <www.nata.org> or by calling Barbara Niland at (800) 879-6282, ext. 121.