

---

# ATHLETES FOR AMERICA Partners with Vanderbilt University to Host AED and CPR Training Day for Athletes

*Group hopes athletic trainers will conduct similar events in honor of National Athletic Training Month in March.*

Text **Jordan Grantham**

Images **Susan Urmey**

When ATHLETES FOR AMERICA founder Billy McGehee came up with the idea to create a training day to teach athletes how to use AEDs and how to perform CPR, he reached out to Vanderbilt University to see if they would be willing to help. Vanderbilt's Shannon Gordon, MS, ATC, seized the opportunity and organized a hugely successful event they hope will create a guideline for other athletic trainers who would like to recreate the training day at their institutions.

More than 300 collegiate, high school and professional athletes were trained in CPR and AED use at Vanderbilt on Sept. 10, 2011, thanks to the efforts of Gordon and McGehee. Gordon worked tirelessly to navigate the many approvals needed at the school and created an event that brought together many organizations, including the Vanderbilt Medical Center, Vanderbilt Sports Medicine, Nashville American Heart Association, Vanderbilt Resuscitation Program, Nashville Fire Department, the NFL Retired Players Association, Iona-McGregor Fire and Rescue District, Pocket CPR and NATA.

"Shannon Gordon created one of the greatest training days in ATHLETES FOR AMERICA history," McGehee said. "This is an attempt to create a cultural shift in the mindset of our youth that we have a responsibility to take care of people beyond playing ball."

This event supports the overall mission of



ATHLETES FOR AMERICA, which was founded in 2001 after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. AFA is a network of athletes, sports teams and sports organizations committed to promoting and participating in emergency preparedness training programs so that the U.S. will be better prepared for any type of natural, manmade or day-to-day disaster.

After the event's success, Gordon and McGehee are hoping for a trickle-down effect. "College sports has a bit of a black eye right now, and with the right approach I think we can get a lot of universities to embrace this," Gordon said. "It's a great message. The athletic trainers are the ones who get it done, bridge the gaps, do the work. It can really promote both

athletic training and the mission of AFA."

When pitching the event to the officials at Vanderbilt, Gordon touched on the fact that the athletic department is always looking for community projects. He got Vanderbilt to pay for the use of the basketball gym, chairs, stage and labor. AFA covered the cost of barrier face shields and the certification cards. Each group that was part of the event stepped up and contributed equipment to make the event go off without a hitch. There were 44 instructors, including three athletic trainers, who worked collaboratively to provide certified training to the large crowd.

Gordon believes the event can be conducted on a much smaller scale at universities and high

schools across the country, and he thinks it would be a great way to raise awareness of the athletic training profession during NATM this March. He already has plans to challenge the Southeastern Conference to do this at every school as part of the conference's community service efforts.

"A lot of the planning I had to do was because it was such a large event," Gordon explained. "I think it would be easier to do it team by team, training up to 50 people at a time." He envisions it as a three-hour event in a small classroom set up.

If you're interested in hosting an event like this at your school, you can register using the NATA link on the navigational toolbar on the AFA website at [www.athletesforamerica.com](http://www.athletesforamerica.com). Upon registering, you will receive a link for training guidelines to help you plan a training day at your institution. Be prepared to include the following information: date, time, location, participants (high school, college, professional) and number of participants.



# Take pride in your work.

Support the athletic training profession this March during National Athletic Training Month.

[www.nata.org/national-athletic-training-month](http://www.nata.org/national-athletic-training-month)