

Kylie Steffen, Berthoud High School athletic trainer

By Angie Purdy
The Surveyor

A day in the life of Berthoud High School's (BHS) athletic trainer, Kylie Steffen, is anything but normal. She begins her day with practice or a contest with the Junior Eagles at the NoCo Ice Center before going to BHS in the afternoon.

She arrives about 2:30 p.m. and checks in with the BHS office staff to see which students were out sick and who has doctors' notes. Her day is never dull and never the same, but rewarding.

Berthoud is the first school after graduation where Steffen has worked, and she's loved every day.

"I was very fortunate that way," Steffen said.

When she spoke of the relationship she has with the student athletes, she beamed with joy, and an instant smile came across her face. Working with the student athletes, there's a symbiotic relationship that comes with the territory.

"Having [Steffen] as my athletic trainer for the past three years has given me peace of mind that I am being taken care of by the best," said BHS senior Jamie Gray. "With [Steffen] the stigma of athletic trainers trying to hold you back from playing is completely false. She will work as hard as she can to make sure you return to your sport healthy and as quickly as possible."

Most BHS athletes participate in

multiple sports; therefore, Steffen forms a relationship with the athletes that trainers at larger schools may not experience. It's that relationship that makes her job easier.

"It's a lot easier to approach an athlete if you know them on a personal level," Steffen said. "If they're screaming in the middle of the field because of an injury, I'm a comforting face rather than a stranger. I prefer to be close to them."

The athletes feel just as close to Steffen, too. Three-year student athlete Karsten Bump said Steffen isn't only the athletic trainer, but a great friend to have on and off the court or field.

"She strives to make any pain or discomfort a thing of the past," Bump said. "Not only that, but she has an amazing spirit and has a willingness to mend the broken and heal the injured."

Steffen is three years out of college but has been in training since she was a junior in high school.

She became interested in the field during her senior year in high school after speaking with her trainer about what it actually takes to get certified. Steffen's athletic trainer inspired a lot of her classmates to become athletic trainers. A class was offered once a week, where the students learned some of the basics in terms of taping, when to ice an injury, when to heat an injury. The other part of the classroom hours were actually spent

after school, helping her in the training room to make sure all the athletes were getting their practices and rehab in. Steffen started her career by assisting for two years.

When school is not in session Steffen's position is unique because she is partnered with Orthopedic & Spine Center of the Rockies (OCR), which provides the athletic trainers to the high schools throughout the Thompson School District. All of the trainers have different roles as far as what they do outside of high school time. Thompson School District pays for 25 hours of athletic trainer services per week, so it's not a full-time position. Steffen spends her additional hours with a youth outreach program that has agreed to work with OCR. That program includes everything from summer league baseball to the junior-level hockey team at NoCo Ice Center. It's a diverse situation with some athletic trainers doing physical therapy and then going to their respective high schools in the afternoon. Steffen prefers to be out in the community at the events with the athletes.

She is a constant presence at the high school; well over the paid time OCR contracts for her. She cannot help but establish personal relationships with the student athletes, which is evident by the student athletes congregating in her training room after school. It is not only a place to get help from Steffen, but a place to talk about the day.

Steffen said cultivating those relationships and understanding the athletes' personal issues can be difficult, but helps in her profession.

"I think there's a fine line because I need them to still respect what I am saying about injuries — in terms of rehab," she said.

Sometimes outside circumstances get in the way of the rehab. Understanding those situations can make her job effective.

"If you're in a rehab with me and that is your situation, you're not going to be focused on what we're doing," Steffen said. "And if you're not focusing on rehab, it's wasting both of our time."

So, to an extent, being able to understand the students on a personal level helps a lot in this profession. However, Steffen isn't one to remain business only.

"I think, being in this community, it's nearly impossible to just say that I'm going to know you on the business side of things and that's it," Steffen



Photos by Angie Purdy

BHS athletes congregate in the training room after school and talk while trainer Kylie Steffen rehabs a student's leg.

said.

Steffen's personal investment in her position is evident when she speaks of 2015 BHS graduate Micol Woodiel, who was killed in a car accident last fall. Steffen got to know Woodiel during his last two years at BHS. And she was able to comfort some of the students because of her connection with them.

"The personal side was very apparent when we lost Micol, because those kids just wanted hugs at that point, and I feel like there's a time where that has to be me — and that's ok," Steffen said.

That doesn't take away from the professional side of it, she said, because she knew Micol too.

"I knew why they were sad, and sometimes it's easier to confide in people who aren't parents," Steffen said.

Steffen is more than an athletic trainer; she's a friend, a confidant, and an ear to many student athletes. She puts in long hours and her time is immeasurable, but it's a profession she loves.

BHS youth camps registration now open

Registration for Berthoud High School Youth Athletic Summer Camps is now open. Camps include basketball, track, volleyball and soccer. The camps will be held June 6-9 and June 13-16 and cost \$65 per camp. Funds go to support Berthoud athletics. All camps are for boys and girls. Each camper who registers before the May 15 deadline will receive a free shirt.

For more information, contact Berthoud High School Athletic Director Pete Scheck by email at pete.scheck@thompsonschools.org. Registration forms can be found at berthoudhighschool.com.



Kylie Steffen (right) is giving instructions to senior Whitley Porter, who is a track and field athlete.



Jim Plumb, state motocross trials champion

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