

# LEADING FROM THE HEART

**T**erry Zeigler is one of athletic training's female pioneers and director of VU's prestigious athletic training education program.

She's also the brave adoptive mother of three children rescued by protective services from abusive situations, now being raised by Terry and her husband along with their biological daughter.

"I've got a passion for helping kids," Zeigler says. "My husband and I have been called to walk beside these young people, and we're doing the same thing at home as I do at Vanguard."

Zeigler reached the height of her career last year when she helped VU become one of the first five universities in California to receive national accreditation under new athletic training standards which have revolutionized the field.

It's a field some people don't quite understand. Athletic trainers are the ones who run onto the playing field when an athlete is injured and assess the level of medical care needed. That, Zeigler says, is her favorite part of the job.

"It's stressful because they're screaming and rolling around," she says. "You have to figure out what's wrong by asking the right questions, and you have to do it without scaring the athlete."

That's a big part of athletic training — splinting a limb or stabilizing a neck and calling an ambulance — but preventative training begins much earlier. And when an injury occurs, Zeigler takes injured athletes through rehabilitation.



*Athletic training director Terry Zeigler cares for students as for her own children: "I hold their hands and say, 'God will take you through this, and I'll be here, too.'"*

"We get very close to the kids, probably more so than other programs on campus," she says. "You're there when they're devastated from injury. You encourage them through depression when they don't want to do another exercise. You get them back on the field and see the triumph. You're a counselor, trainer and

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*Terry Zeigler, continued from page 5*

paramedic rolled into one.” For years athletic training was considered a quasi-profession, but recently the American Medical Association set new, strict standards. That meant that by 2004 only graduates of colleges accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Allied Health Education Programs would be allowed to take the national board exam, making many universities’ athletic training programs obsolete.

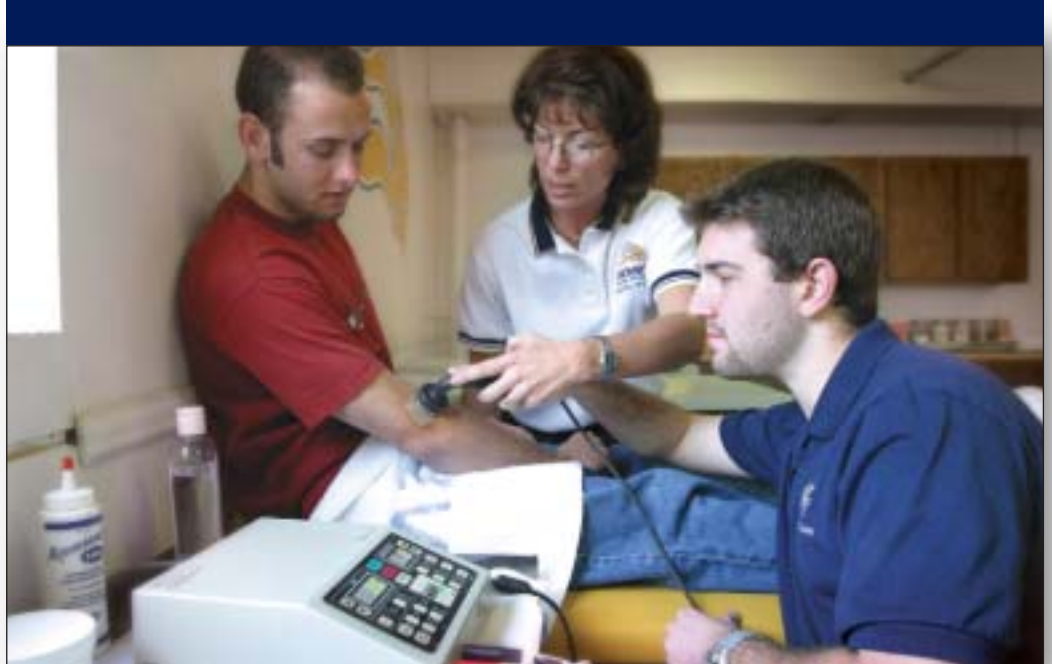
But Zeigler had anticipated and been working toward new standards for four years.

“We had a good curriculum, but needed the clinical training,” she says. “[The redesign] was so huge that I wasn’t sure we could do it. Seventy-five percent of schools we compete with aren’t trying to get accreditation because it’s too hard. But we pursued it and had faith that God would bless it. We got everything in place and when the accreditation team came, they found we had no deficiencies.”

VU became the first private university in the state to be accredited, the highlight of Zeigler’s career. Now the athletic training program is one of VU’s most unique offerings. Students apply during their freshman year and a select group of ten are accepted as sophomores. On top of their normal academic workload they train at hospitals, doctors’ offices and on the sidelines.

Zeigler sees her job as providing a spiritual dimension to VU students’ education. She prays with students when they’re hurt and waiting for an ambulance. She starts every class period by asking for prayer requests. Whether it’s an injured athlete or a troubled student, “I hold their hands and say, ‘God will take you through this, and I’ll be here, too,’” she says.

Zeigler plays a similar role at home where she and husband Donald (‘84) adopted three foster children, rescuing them from life-threatening situations. Two of the boys had serious injuries from abuse and couldn’t speak, and it’s taken years of physical and speech therapy to get them on track.



*Tough new standards raised the bar on athletic training education programs, and put VU ahead of the pack.*

The decision to adopt came hard, even though they had experiences as foster parents. Terry struggled with it until God spoke to her heart, “I have not called you to an easy life.” That was also in the middle of accreditation, but she knew what her decision would be.

“Adoptions like this are not an easy road,” she says.

“It’s taken a long time for the children to trust us, to let us hold them and hug them. But we’ve stuck with them. We’re on this planet to do God’s call and we feel this is His purpose for us.” She adds that 3,500 kids in Orange County need homes. And she’s proud that “you’d never know our kids had the kinds of problem they had before.”

Caring for troubled kids has also meant the Zeiglers have opened their home to students over the years, walking through trials with them, from alcohol and drug abuse to abortions, pregnancy and a student’s suicide attempt in the Zeiglers’ home. (That student graduated and is now happily married with two children.)

Helping kids — whether students or her own children — recover from injuries and emerge victorious is what Zeigler’s life is about.

“God has called me to Vanguard to love and support these kids through their journey,” she says. “It’s all about spreading the love.” 🙌