

# Here's to the Heroes



From the Greek, the word hero means to watch over, to protect. Though we usually think of a hero as one person, groups of people working together can also be termed “heroes” for their selfless acts of generosity and courage. Thanks to the following individuals and heroic organizations, thousands of people all over the world have been and will be able to reclaim their lives with dignity after amputation.

by Nancy Carroll

## **The Landmine Survivors Network (LSN)**

Created by and for landmine survivors, the Washington, D.C.-based Landmine Survivors Network links victims in mine-affected countries to a range of rehabilitative services, provides peer counseling and direct assistance, and promotes social and economic reintegration.

Since 1997, LSN has established amputee peer support offices in Bosnia-Herzegovina, El Salvador, Jordan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Mozambique and plans to open a new network in Vietnam this year. The organization conducts hospital and home visits to assess needs, offers psychological and social support, and educates amputees and their families about limb loss. LSN's *Surviving Limb Loss* pamphlets, which are available in six languages, are used worldwide.

Co-founded and directed by former ACA board member Jerry White, the LSN is a leading member of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The ACA joined the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1999 and works closely with LSN to educate American amputees and others about this modern-day plague.

*For additional information about landmine issues, please contact:*

### **Landmine Survivors Network**

1420 K Street, NW, Suite 650

Washington, D.C. 20005

Phone: 202/464-0007

[www.landminesurvivors.org](http://www.landminesurvivors.org)

### **U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines**

C/o Coordinator: Physicians for Human Rights

100 Boylston Street, Suite 702

Boston, MA 02116

Phone: 617/695-0041

[www.banminesusa.org](http://www.banminesusa.org)

### **Adopt-A-Minefield Campaign**

Established by the United National Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the campaign has raised several million dollars for landmine clearance and survivor assistance programs. A favorite cause of Heather Mills, a crusader against landmines and an outspoken advocate for people with disabilities, the campaign has benefited from her efforts in numerous fundraising events.

Mills also founded the Heather Mills Trust, a registered charitable grant-making trust that provides artificial limbs to amputees, supplies amputee clinics in mine-affected countries with technical and in-kind assistance, and supports efforts to remove landmines.

*For more information on the work of Heather Mills, go to:*

[www.heathermills.org](http://www.heathermills.org) and [www.landmines.org](http://www.landmines.org)

### **The Barr Foundation**

The Barr Foundation, a nonprofit organization, has been assisting U.S. amputees who don't have funding to obtain prostheses since 1978. The Foundation is now extending its arm of help internationally, providing aid to amputees in Honduras, Guyana, Latin America and other parts of the world.

In 1995, the Barr United Amputee Assistance Fund was established, making it possible for over 600 amputees in 38 states and six foreign countries to become whole again. The Fund pays for materials and fitting of a new prosthesis after financial need has been established by prosthetists. To establish that need, the amputee and prosthetist have to show there are no other sources of funding available. To apply for the funding, the prosthetist and amputee must complete application forms, which are then reviewed and verified by a committee of professionals. In most cases, the amputee will have an answer regarding eligibility within two weeks.

Anthony T. Barr, president of the Foundation, credits the many prosthetists who have donated their expertise, facility, money and labor to help amputees at home and abroad. He also salutes the generosity of many manufacturers and prosthetists who have discounted and/or donated an inventory of prosthetic components to be used exclusively for outside the U.S.

*For more information on the Barr United Amputee Assistance Fund, or to request an application for funding, contact the United Amputee Services Association at 407/359-5500 or visit the Barr Foundation Web site: [www.oandp.com/barr](http://www.oandp.com/barr)*

### **Miloserdie Society**

In Estonia, a small country near St. Petersburg, Russia, an organization was founded in 1989 by Nikolai Dezhin to help people with disabilities. The Miloserdie Society schedules monthly prosthetist and doctor visits for people with disabilities and also locates and distributes wheelchairs and canes to those in need, many of whom are amputees.

Dezhin, chairman of the Society, says there is no rehabilitation center where people with disabilities can get physical therapy to help them walk on prostheses. "We would love to see such a center open in our region," he says.

There are currently 400 members in the Society, 70 of whom are children. Dezhin is missing toes on his left foot, and his right pelvic joint is not functioning – injuries he sustained while serving in the Soviet Army.

*For more information about the Miloserdie Society, you may write NTU, Miloserdie, Veski 4-42, 40231 Sillamae, Ida Vizu, Estonia; e-mail [dezhin@yahoo.com](mailto:dezhin@yahoo.com) or call 8+37239+74291.*

### **Let Them Walk Again Hike for Women and Child Amputees in Vietnam**

Peter Springs, an O&P student at the University of Washington, has organized a 2,650-mile hike this summer along the Pacific Crest Train (from Canada to Mexico) to raise money for women and child amputees in Vietnam. Though he is not an amputee, Springs' O&P studies have made him keenly aware of the plight of people in Third World countries, and he decided to do something about it.

All money raised will be routed through the Prosthetics Outreach Foundation, and Springs' goal is to secure enough funds to help one woman or child for every mile he walks. "These women and children, especially those living in remote rural areas, need our help," he says. "They have lost their limbs through war, landmines and other misfortunes and have no access to quality prosthetic care."

The cost to give a child or adult a new leg is approximately \$300 – a small price to pay to become whole again, return to work, provide for your family or go to school – yet, an impossible amount for people living in poverty-stricken countries.

*To learn more about the Let Them Walk Again hike or to help Peter Springs reach his goal, contact the Prosthetics Outreach Foundation at 206/726-1636 or via e-mail at [pofsea@pofsea.org](mailto:pofsea@pofsea.org)*

### **New Beginnings Prosthetic Foundation**

New Beginnings Prosthetic Foundation is a charitable nonprofit organization that provides artificial limbs, rehabilitation and counseling services to children and young adults, up to age 25. The focus of New Beginnings is the complete restoration of body, mind and spirit, while empowering the amputee with hope, dignity and independence.

According to 1999 Census Bureau figures, there are approximately 19,750 cases of pediatric limb loss each year, with 3,041 children becoming amputees

without insurance coverage. Many insurance companies do not appropriately cover the cost of prosthetic limbs, and others cover only one artificial limb per lifetime, which is grossly inadequate for a growing child. New Beginnings stands in the gap between the insurance companies and families with insufficient funding, providing free prosthetic limbs to children or young adults.

*For more information about New Beginnings, write to 1280 Bison, Suites B9-19, Newport Beach, California, 92660, or call 949/706-2594.*

### **Generation Hope**

After losing his leg following a car accident 13 years ago, Denny Chipollini has been a man on a multifaceted mission. Told by his doctor that he would never walk again, Chipollini not only began to walk again, he began to run competitively. In the past two years, he has competed in three marathons, including the New York City Marathon in November 2001.

Another part of his mission has been to raise awareness among children about the detrimental effects of teasing, which his son, Nicholas, experienced from classmates in the fourth grade. Nicholas, now 12, was diagnosed at age 7 with neurofibromatosis (NF), an incurable genetic disorder that causes tumors to grow on nerve endings throughout the body. Symptoms of the disorder include tan spots, freckling and skin tumors. Chipollini became disturbed by the negative effect that teasing had on his son.

Last year, Chipollini, who works for United Parcel Service, founded Generation Hope, a nonprofit organization formed to educate children about adversity caused by childhood disabilities or chronic illness. He says many children tell him after his speeches that they are moved by his positive message.

In May 2002, he participated in the "Bike and Hike" trek from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia and plans a more ambitious cross-country trip for next year. He hopes to attract corporate sponsors and is busy readying his mind and his body for the trip. During the more than 3,000-mile trip, he plans to visit schools and hospitals and

raise money for incurable children's diseases and disorders. He wants to talk to kids facing amputation and their parents and assure them that it's not the end of the world. He calls it the "good information tour."

*To learn more about Generation Hope or to help sponsor Chipollini's "Bike & Hike" across America, go to [www.genhope.org](http://www.genhope.org) or contact Rick Bowers at the Amputee Coalition of America, 1-888/AMP-KNOW, extension 8108.*

### **Conquering the PanMass Challenge**

Mike Welsch's accomplishments include running in the Mobility Impaired Division of the Boston Marathon seven times, swimming the Boston Light Swim six times, and even tackling the Monster Triathlon in Boston. The remarkable thing about Welsch is that he's done all these things after having the lower half of his left leg amputated. Mike is also on the Governor's Committee of Physical Fitness and Sports.

His favorite charity, however, is the PanMass Challenge, a cycling event in which more than 3,000 cycling enthusiasts hop onto their two-wheelers to tackle 192-plus miles.

This August, Welsch will be entering the event for the 10<sup>th</sup> time. He has personally raised more than \$15,000 for cancer research.

Welsch's first PanMass Challenge was in 1986, but when his mother, Nellie, died of cancer in 1993 at the age of 57, he decided to make it an annual occurrence. All of the money goes to the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, and in 23 years, the PanMass has raised more than \$48 million for cancer research.

"I couldn't do it without the help of my prosthetist, Nick Grigorieff, CP, of Concord O&P," Welsch says. "I owe him a lot. He's been doing my legs for over 10 years now."

*For more information about the PanMass Challenge, e-mail Welsch at [Cooki394@RCN.com](mailto:Cooki394@RCN.com) or write to 7 Prouty Road, Burlington, MA 01803.*

### **Limbs for Life Foundation**

Now in its third year, the annual Project 50 bike ride consists of above-knee amputees who are members of the Limbs for Life Foundation, a nonprofit organization that covers the prosthetic costs for 50 amputees nationwide who can't otherwise afford rehab care and devices. Founded by Craig Gavras, a former Dallas police officer, the organization's secondary goal is to raise public awareness of the abilities and accomplishments of people who overcome a physical disability.

Research indicates that every seven days, 2,996 people lose an arm or leg in the U.S. With the help of Limbs For Life, recipients of the limbs can return to an active and fruitful life.

*For more information on Limbs for Life, call 405/235-5462 or visit the Web site: [www.limbsforlife.org](http://www.limbsforlife.org)*

## **Wheels for the World**

Donated wheelchairs are sending help and hope to people with disabilities around the world, thanks to two women from Farmington Hills, Michigan. To date, over 7,000 people in need, who would never in a lifetime have had a chance to obtain this gift of mobility and freedom, have received wheelchairs.

In Ghana, West Africa, for example, people in the village wore flip-flops on their hands to drag themselves around, says Dorothy Pitsch, who worked with Jan Glovak on the drive.

The missionaries who delivered the wheelchairs in Ghana returned with heart-wrenching stories of people living in horrific poverty and the outpouring of gratitude they expressed when given a wheelchair, says Glovak.

“Many of these people wait for years and possibly a lifetime for a chance to receive one of these wheelchairs,” Pitsch says. “We in this country take a wheelchair for granted and often dispose of them when they are no longer needed for personal use.”

*If you have a wheelchair you no longer need, call Pitsch at 248/661-3317 or Glovak at 248/661-0964.*

## **Amputees Across America**

Every year, members of Amputees Across America bike and sky dive across the U.S. to celebrate what amputees can accomplish and to help amputee support groups raise funds for their local programs.

This year the three participants are: Joe Sapere, a retired Air Force colonel and below-knee amputee since 2000; Jerry Suggs, a retired Navy chief petty officer and below-knee amputee since 1987, and John Keating, a below-knee and above-elbow amputee since 1981.

The group left Los Angeles, California, on June 8, taking the southern route, stopping at rehabilitation hospitals and visiting amputee groups in California, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, before ending the trip on July 21 in Jamestown Island, Virginia.

Pledges can be made to various amputee support groups via the Amputees Across America organization or in support of Amputees Across America itself, which can help defray the living and transportation costs of the three riders.

Sponsors of this year's trip include Ohio Willow Wood, HealthSouth, Progressive Prosthetic & Orthopedic Services, Williamsburg Orthotics & Prosthetics, Alabama Artificial Limb Co., Inc., and Orthopedic Service Co., Inc.

*For more information about this ride across America or to receive pledge forms, visit [www.amputees-across-america.com](http://www.amputees-across-america.com)*

## **Missions to Mexico**

For the past 10 years, CPO David Puckett has been collecting donated limbs, braces and orthopedic shoes to take to the people of Yucatan, Mexico. He estimates he has enough components for about 100 prostheses and over 100 braces.

Though the idea of collecting used prostheses may not seem like an act of philanthropy, that's exactly what David Puckett's

missions to Mexico are: incredible acts of charity.

Puckett is one of those increasingly rare people who truly wants to help others and is willing to give his time, energy and money to do it.

“I always knew I wanted to help and improve people's lives,” explains Puckett. “I just didn't know how . . . then when I was 19, I was invited to go and build a church in Mexico. It was the first time I'd ever really seen need and poverty. It so impressed me that I continued thinking about it, praying about it.”

Puckett is president of Positive Image Prosthetics and Orthotics in Savannah, Georgia. As his own boss, he makes time for a Mexico mission every six to eight weeks. Since the missions began in November 2000, he has completed eight trips.

*To learn more about Missions to Mexico or to donate your used or outgrown limbs and braces, contact David Puckett at 912/354-7500 or go online at [www.pipoinc.com](http://www.pipoinc.com)*

## **Rotary Clubs**

Working together, service clubs from Madison and Jefferson County Rotary Clubs in Georgia recently completed their 133<sup>rd</sup> wheelchair ramp for a neighbor who had become an amputee. Jefferson Rotary Club provided the materials and the Madison Rotary Club the labor and expertise.

The Madison ramp crew usually consists of 10 local businessmen volunteering their time. Each ramp takes approximately two to three hours and costs on average about \$400. The longest ramp constructed by the Madison Rotary Club was 48 feet.

The Madison Rotary Club started building wheelchair ramps through delivering Meals on Wheels when they took food to a man who had polio. “We noticed that he was crawling on his knees to his pickup truck, and it looked awfully hard, so we decided to build him a ramp,” recalls Roy Gandy, president and project chairman.

After that, the club found its calling and began to get calls for help. “Most of the people we serve are elderly,” Gandy adds. “We don't charge anything. We just look at the need.”

## **Shriners Hospitals for Children**

This network of 22 hospitals nationwide provides expert, no-cost orthopaedic and burn care to children under 18.

*If you know a child Shriners Hospitals might be able to help, call 1-800/237-5055 (in U.S.) or 1-800/361-7256 (in Canada).*

*Visit the Shriners Web site: [www.shriners.com](http://www.shriners.com)*

## **Texas Scottish Rite Hospital**

Since the early 1920s, the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital has been helping children regardless of their ability to pay. It is a place that provides some of the finest medical care in a child-friendly environment, while putting the child's medical needs above all else. Since its inception, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital has treated more than 130,000 children and today provides ongoing care for 13,000 children.

*For more information, go to Web site: [www.tsrhc.com](http://www.tsrhc.com)*

## St. Jude Hospital

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is the single largest center in the United States for the treatment and research of pediatric cancer and other catastrophic childhood diseases. It is the first and only institution established for the sole purpose of conducting basic and clinical research into catastrophic diseases. Once a patient is accepted, St. Jude covers all medical costs beyond those covered by insurance. Families without insurance are never asked to pay. St. Jude Hospital also provides transportation, lodging and meals for one parent and child.

*Write to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 332 N. Lauderdale St., Memphis, TN 38105, call 901/495-3300 or visit the Web site: [www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org)*

## Community Efforts

Often you read in a newspaper about a group of caring people in a community who got together to raise money to help

one of their own get through a life crisis.

For example, when Marion Cedrone, of West Quincy, Massachusetts, lost both of her legs due to complications of vascular disease, her friends, family and community rallied around her and raised more than \$30,000 to help her buy a van so she can go wherever she chooses.

After a long recovery process and learning to walk on two prostheses, she gets around and still loves to cook, thanks to her newfound skill of maneuvering a wheelchair. She longed to buy a specially equipped van and learn to drive it – a dream that seemed beyond her means until her friends and neighbors in her community made her dream come true.

More than 500 friends of Cedrone showed up for a benefit dance, and absolutely everything, including the hall, the caterers and the disc jockey, was donated. This is a great example of people living and working in a community coming together for the benefit of one another.

## Amputee Support Groups

There are hundreds of amputee support groups across the country whose members are dedicated to helping those adjusting to life after amputation by sharing their own experience, strength and hope. There is a great satisfaction in reaching out to others, and to all the people who work tirelessly to help other amputees, we salute you.

*If you know any heroes, contact [inMotion at editor@amputee-coalition.org](mailto:inMotion@amputee-coalition.org), and we may feature them in a future issue.*

