



amputee
coalition™

Case for Support



SUPPORT. EDUCATE. ADVOCATE.

“Living is what counts — the leg wasn’t that critical after all,” said Tom Coakley as he spoke to a group of students about his Vietnam War experience in 2020. Tom joined the Army in 1968 and, after his platoon was caught in an enemy ambush, became a below-knee amputee with limited use of his left arm. When Tom returned to the United States, he recovered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (National Military Medical Center today) on the orthopedic ward. His head nurse, Captain Nellie Harness, had also served in Vietnam. A year later, Nellie was instrumental in getting Tom to return to Walter Reed to have his limb revised. The two bonded during Tom’s recovery journey, and their shared Vietnam experience, eventually marrying. Today, Tom and Nellie are dedicated to helping those with limb loss and limb difference thrive like them. They embody the mission of the Amputee Coalition. Nellie spent her career as a war trauma counselor specializing in veterans, and Tom works with the Amputee Coalition and prosthetic organizations. They are just two of the countless members making our community stronger every day.

Just like Tom, there are over 2.1 million people in the United States living with limb loss or limb difference. Another 28 million people in our country are at risk for amputation. Every day, more than 500 people in the U.S. lose a limb, and it is estimated that, by 2050, the number of people living with limb loss will nearly double. **The Amputee Coalition is the only national nonprofit that serves all individuals who experience limb loss or limb difference.**

Limb loss affects people of all ages, income levels, and backgrounds. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for connection and support has only increased within the limb loss community. The Amputee Coalition is working diligently to fight against social isolation through virtual programming and increased digital engagement to reach our members where they are in their journey. Social isolation leads to measurable mental health issues. In fact, one in three people living with limb loss experience depression. In addition to mental health impacts, limb loss and limb difference has an economic component. Lifetime healthcare costs for people with limb loss average

\$507,275, compared to \$361,200 for people without limb loss.

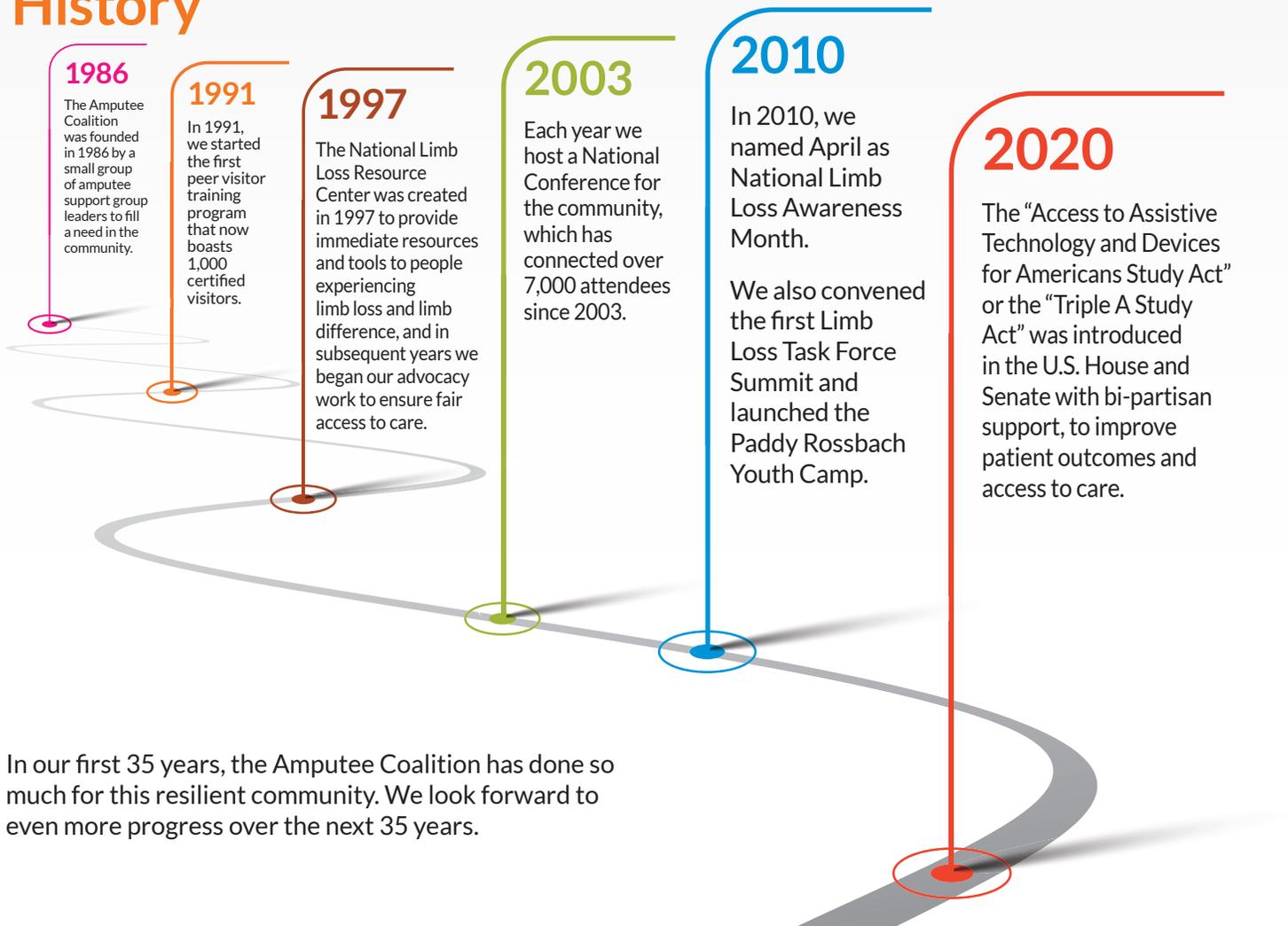
We raise awareness and increase practices to prevent limb loss, help amputees feel supported through pre- and post- amputation and recovery, and improve outcomes so that amputees and their families live life to the fullest. Through our pillars of support, education, and advocacy, we help individuals living with limb loss and limb difference *thrive*.

Our Mission

Our mission is to reach out and empower people affected by limb loss to achieve their full potential through support, education, advocacy, and prevention.

The Amputee Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that no one faces limb loss alone. We work to provide vital resources to people with limb loss and limb difference, as well as their families and caregivers. With these resources, they can recover, readjust, and live the life they most want to live.

History



In our first 35 years, the Amputee Coalition has done so much for this resilient community. We look forward to even more progress over the next 35 years.

SUPPORT

Support is personal. Everyone needs to connect in a direct and impactful way with others to move through their own stages of recovery. We offer peer support through individual and group interactions, as well as institutional support through partnerships with hospitals across the country.

Our national **Support Group Network** provides a place for people with limb loss and limb difference and their families to connect with others who have overcome similar challenges in a safe and supportive environment. We have over 400 registered support groups across the country including weekly virtual support groups. Our accredited **Certified Peer Visitor Program** allows over 1,000 Certified Peer Visitors to meet with amputees and family members in times of need, virtually or in-person.

In addition to serving as a Director on the Board of the Amputee Coalition, Tom serves as volunteer Certified Peer Visitor. It is his goal, and the Amputee Coalition's goal, to have a peer support visitor available to any amputee or patient awaiting amputation upon request.

To support young people living with limb loss and limb difference, we host The **Paddy Rossbach Youth Camp** each summer to provide an opportunity for kids (ages 10-17) living with limb loss or limb difference to connect with one another in a traditional camp environment full of fun, interactive activities to promote independence and team building. Camp is completely free to participants.

In our **Hospital/Rehab Facility Partner Program**, we team up with hospitals and rehabilitation facilities across the country to disseminate our expertise, training curriculum, and patient education materials. Currently, we have **over 60** registered hospital partners across the country, and we are rapidly growing this program because it is one of the best ways to reach new amputees.



EDUCATE

Education is about informing and empowering individuals, so they have the resources necessary to thrive on their limb loss and limb difference journey. Whether it is gait clinics at our National Conference, or identifying gaps in understanding through research, the Amputee Coalition is committed to the dissemination of cutting-edge knowledge.

“Lack of knowledge leads the amputee to unfulfilled potential,” shares Tom. “There were so many Vietnam veteran amputees who were discharged that had no path forward to understand how to handle limb loss. If not for Nellie, I would have never learned about gait adjustment and regained the ability to walk again.”



Tom and Nellie Coakley

The **National Limb Loss Resource Center** is the nation's leading source of information about limb loss and limb differences. It provides comprehensive, free information to individuals in the limb loss/limb difference community. We also offer a wide range of patient education materials that are reviewed by the Coalition's **Scientific and Medical Advisory Committee**, including:

- ▶ **First Step**, a thorough guide to adapting to limb loss; and
- ▶ level-specific booklets, caregiver resources, brochures, insurance coverage and reimbursement guide, and updated fact sheets covering an array of topics.

In addition, the Amputee Coalition hosts educational events throughout the year, both in-person and virtual, that allow our community to access the most relevant information about living and thriving with limb loss and limb difference.

- ▶ **Our National Conference** is our largest event of the year, and it includes educational courses, workshops, and information sessions to provide opportunities for members of the limb loss and limb difference community at all phases in their journey to connect with one another and find support. It is the largest single gathering of individuals living with limb loss and limb difference.

▶ **Limb Loss Awareness Month** in April raises visibility among and educates the general public about limb loss and limb difference.

▶ **Limb Loss Education Days** and Youth Limb Loss Education Day provide valuable learning environments in a regional and virtual setting.

▶ **Certified Peer Visitor Trainings** and **Support Group Leader Certification** empower community members to “pay it forward” and assist those new to the limb loss journey.

▶ **Lead Advocate** training amplifies our community members voices, so they can affect systematic change.



We partner with important organizations to understand and address a broad range of issues that impact the limb loss and limb difference community.

The Amputee Coalition works with the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Veterans Administration (VA), the Department of Defense (DOD), American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics (ABC), and American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) to ensure the limb loss community, the disability community, and the professionals that support these communities are well-represented.

During **Limb Loss Awareness Month** in April, we gather for our Advocacy Forum to educate lawmakers on Capitol Hill. We provide information for community members to contact their legislators and insurers, as well as resources to inform lawmakers and congressional staff. We are working to expand the breadth and depth of our national partnerships to ensure access for care for all people with limb loss.

The Amputee Coalition’s goal is to introduce and advance legislation that addresses the standard of care for limb loss and limb difference.

In 2020, the Advocacy team from the Amputee Coalition introduced the **Triple A Study Act** in the House and Senate with bi-partisan support, to assess the gaps in care for assistive devices used for individuals living with limb loss and limb difference.

ADVOCATE

When we advocate, we empower the individual and help them to tell their story in a way that stands up for their experience. The Amputee Coalition unites and amplifies the voices of people affected by limb loss and limb difference. Educating our legislators and policymakers about the needs of the community is an ongoing and important part of our mission.

Tom, as a retired Army veteran, recognizes that he has access to care and the proper equipment that many amputees do not. He sincerely believes that all amputees should have the same level of care that he receives.

“There are relatively few people who advocate for amputee care. Many voices speaking together will create change to benefit all. We can do this through the Amputee Coalition’s advocacy programs,” Tom explains.



“While some might see losing a leg during military service as a setback, I’m here to say it set me free. It tested my resilience and provided a pathway to a wonderful life of service I never could have envisioned. I want to use my experience to help others – and I hope you will consider supporting the incredible work the Amputee Coalition does with soldiers like me and all Americans living with limb loss or limb difference.”

~ Tom Coakley

Join Us

None of our programs are fully funded by the federal grant we receive, and the number of individuals experiencing limb loss and limb difference is accelerating steadily in the U.S. Your gift would make a significant impact in the much-needed programmatic offerings for our community. Whether you would like to help us extend the capabilities of the National Limb Loss Resource Center, train more peer visitors, increase the number of support groups we offer, send more kids to Camp, or achieve active community grassroots advocacy in all 50 states, we need your gift to expand our work.

For example, this is the type of impact your gift can have.

- ▶ It costs \$25 to send one resource packet to each new amputee. There are more than 500 new amputations every day in the United States.
- ▶ It costs \$100 to enable our Peer Support Groups to meet virtually over four months. Those living with limb loss and limb difference experience a 50% increase in well-being when engaged with peer support.
- ▶ It costs almost \$250 to provide a day of learning and connection through regional and virtual Limb Loss Education Days.
- ▶ It costs \$500 to background check and train 10 Certified Peer Visitors. There are 2.1 million Americans living with limb loss and limb difference - no one should travel the journey alone.
- ▶ It costs just over a \$1,000 to train and guide a new lead advocate (in-person) to share their voice with their elected officials.
- ▶ It costs \$2,000 to give the gift of a summer camp experience to one child for an entire week at our Paddy Rossbach Youth Camp.
- ▶ It costs \$5,000 to immerse two individuals in education and support at our National Conference (all expenses paid).

The Amputee Coalition invites you to consider strengthening our work to support the limb loss and limb difference community. Your generosity ensures that we can best reach the entire limb loss and limb difference community as the premier resource for them, their families, and their caregivers.

