



Amputees Together, Inc.

A Non-Profit Organization
Affiliated with the American Amputee Foundation, Inc.

MARCH 2009

e-Newsletter

This newsletter is emailed to support group members every other month. Current amputee-related topics, upcoming events, and personal testimonial stories keep members informed and inspired. Newsletter paper copies can also be mailed upon request, at no charge.

Contact Jennifer Robinson at (813) 985-5000 ext 204, or email jennifer@wcbl.com for more information.

Who We Are

Amputees Together, Inc. is a non-profit organization whose membership consists of upper and lower extremity amputees, their families and friends, and interested healthcare professionals.

This group holds meetings in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties each month.

Guest speakers frequent our lively meetings, which offer both informative presentations and informal 'rap' sessions.

Yearly membership dues of ten dollars are used to cover activity expenses. **However, membership dues are not required to be able to attend group meetings. Join us today.**

Amputees Together, Inc., founded & hosted by



Shannon has graciously offered to share her experiences in a series of essays that track her rehabilitation. Join us in the next few issues of our Amputees Together, Inc. e-Newsletter, as we follow her on this journey.

Shannon's Career Adventure: Part 1

By Shannon Snyder



Shannon and her prosthetist, Jason Kahle, CPO

The first time I broke my ankle was when I was 18 years old. I jumped out of a second story window. I never had it set properly. In 1994, I injured it again during a car accident while slamming on the breaks. I did not have health insurance and went to a county facility. I was told it was just a sprain. I started nursing school that same year with a sprained ankle. In 2003, nine years later, after three pregnancies, seven years of full time nursing school and working full time as a critical care nurse, I started having a severe pinching in my ankle while walking. Then while walking out of the front door, I stumbled and my ankle went out on me. The first x-rays showed nothing, just a sprain. But when the pain would not go away, they took another set of x-rays and found a fracture and a bone spur. They said it was too late to set it. Off I went in a walking boot. They removed the bone spur from my right ankle two weeks later. Two months later, I was back to full time work at school. But, within one year, my talus bone fell into a valgus deformity. It was literally sitting sideways.

(Continued)

Helpful Resources

Amputees Together, Inc

Jennifer Robinson
Toll Free 1-888-552-2555
(813) 985-5000 ext 204
www.wcbl.com

.Amputee Coalition of America (ACA)

1-888-267-5669
www.amputee-coalition.org

360 O&P

An Online Orthotic & Prosthetic
Resource
www.360oandp.com



Thank you to our recent guest speakers:

Ross Silvers, Disability Rights
Coordinator/Liaison to Tampa
Mayor's Alliance for Persons
with Disabilities

**Clear Choice Healthcare
Management** for Belleair and
East Bay Rehabilitation

**Jason Highsmith, PT, DPT,
CP, FAAOP, USF Assistant
Professor, Physical Therapist,
and Prosthetist**



Factoid:

A **shrinker sock** is a compression garment that is worn over the residual limb. A shrinker sock is usually applied after the sutures/staples are removed and the residual limb is adequately healed. Prior to this, an ace bandage is normally used. A shrinker reduces swelling, can help reduce phantom limb discomfort, and shapes the residual limb.

(Shannon's Career Adventure continued)

I remember half way through a twelve hour shift I would have to take off my brace, and pull my ankle back into place. But none of this stopped my ambition to complete my graduate degree in nursing. I had already succeeded in completing my associate degree in nursing in 1997, and my bachelor degree in nursing by 2001. Now I was in my first year of graduate school and working full time as a charge nurse in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. By the beginning of 2005, I was losing my walking ability and became a candidate for a complete ankle replacement, which was still in the research phase. After six months of evaluation, it was determined that I was not a candidate anymore, due to the severe deformity. In May 2005, I underwent an ankle fusion procedure. I was back to school and work, in a wheelchair and walking boot, by September. But by early October, I was extremely sick and the pain was so severe that they determined I needed a revision. So in October 2005, I went through another operation. They removed some of the hardware, placed a PICC line in my arm, and 24 hour antibiotics ran continuously. Again, this did not stop me from completing my graduate degree... I was back in school and work, in a wheelchair and cast!

I was doing pretty good by early 2006, and accepted a teaching position at a children's hospital. I was also completing my last semester of graduate school. I graduated in May 2006. I had been diagnosed with Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD), sometimes called Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome. It was spreading to my entire body from my right ankle, where a pin was sitting on one of the ankle nerve roots. I tried to make it working through the summer of 2006, but progressively my condition was worsening. I could no longer walk the two blocks from the parking lot to the hospital and do the required walking throughout the day, unit to unit completing patient rounds. I requested a closer handicapped parking spot in the visitors' lot, but was turned down twice. I also requested that my office be moved to a building closer to the parking lot, and again was turned down. Then I went to the Vice President of Patient Care Services and requested a four day work week. Again, I was turned down. Finally, after visiting my surgeon it was determined that I needed another revision! I went back to work and requested a leave of absence for surgery. Because I had not been there for one year, I was told I could not have a leave of absence and regrettably had to resign from my position.

My condition worsened, and depression and anxiety set in. I attempted to get on disability but was turned down. Then my surgeon refused to schedule surgery, because I lost my insurance and was on Medicaid. It took me a good nine months to find another surgeon. In the meantime, the RSD was wreaking havoc on my body. In July 2007, I experienced a complete pelvic organ prolapse, which required surgical repair. I was now completely bedridden and wheelchair bound. They loaded me on pain meds, the fentanyl patch, morphine for breakthrough pain, and vicodin around the clock, not to mention all the anti-depressants and anti-anxiety pills. My life as I knew it was over!

My new orthopedic surgeon was Heidi Stephens, MD and she was my angel. She told me that I was not a candidate for another revision and that I should consider an amputation. I told her, 'Take it off and give me a new one'. I am a nurse and a mother and need to get back to work and provide for my family!

Join us in our next issue as Shannon tells us more about her successful amputation rehabilitation and her quest to re-establish her nursing career.

2009 Peer Visitation Certification Training

A peer visitation occurs between a new amputee and an experienced amputee. If you are a member of *Amputees Together, Inc.*, regularly attend our meetings, have been an amputee for at least one year, and would like to become certified by the Amputee Coalition of America (ACA) as a peer visitor, please contact us.

In 2009 we will be arranging certification for all interested members. Space is limited! Our support group is often contacted by medical facilities in need of a peer visitation and we are grateful to provide this valuable experience to new amputees in our community.

Contact Jennifer Robinson at (813) 985-5000 ext 204, jennifer@wcbl.com for more information on certification.