

Limbs of Love Helps Mom Walk Again

Jerri Chapman hadn't walked in more than a year since her legs were amputated in 2006, but 2008 will be different. The Amputee and Prosthetic Center, Houston, Texas, through its charitable organization Limbs of Love, recently donated prostheses to Chapman, the young mother of two boys.

It was in September 2007 that Joe Sansone, founder of Limbs for Love and president of TMC Orthopedic in Houston, received a request for a donation from Chapman's former employer. "I've been in this business for a while, and we see a lot of amputees and hear their unfortunate stories," Sansone said, "but it brought tears to my eyes when I first heard Mrs. Chapman's story. I was affected not so much by what she has personally gone through, but the impact it has had on her children. It was so distressing, I just couldn't become another set of deaf ears. I pulled the trigger and had our prosthetic coordinator call Jerri the very day we received her letter and tell her we would be making her a new pair of legs."

Chapman beamed with motherly pride while relating how her ten-year-old son wept with joy when he first heard that his mother was going to "get some legs." She said all her son wanted for Christmas was for his mom to "get her legs" and some toys for his little brother.

Chapman's saga began in June of 2006 after a medical line accidentally was left inside her body after routine gallbladder surgery. Complications arose as a result of the mistake, Chapman was hospitalized and slipped into a coma, and she was put on lifesupport for four months before both legs and her right thumb were amputated. When it was discovered that the medical line was the cause of the infection, it was removed and Chapman was home within two weeks, fully recovered.

Still, there was no way for Chapman to afford the estimated \$40,000 for the prostheses. "It's affected my kids 100 percent," Chapman said. "I've always been a hands-on mom. I was one of those mothers that was always around at school and especially enjoyed having lunch with my son David once a week at his school. Without legs I just couldn't do that anymore. This had literally taken my life away from me. It's so unfair--it's just crazy."

After Chapman was fit with her new limbs, she tentatively stood inside a pair of parallel bars, put her weight on her new legs, and slowly began to walk. After a few steps she turned and walked back to her wheelchair and collapsed, weeping uncontrollably. There wasn't a dry eye in the room as her husband, two children, and sister shared in her life-altering moment. When asked how she felt about her new lease on life, she repeated through tears, "You just don't know; you just don't know; you just don't know."

Chapman's prosthetist is Robyn Skogman, CP.

For more information about Limbs of Love, visit www.limbsoflove.com