

Advanced P & O Digest

technology news from advanced prosthetics and orthotics of the pacific

Volume 1
Number 1
Winter 2008

Limb Loss Didn't Stop Young Woman's Zest for Life and Helping Others



Twenty-three-year-old Katie Vrocher of Oahu doesn't lack for things to worry about – her husband is about to be deployed for the third time to Iraq, her parents and two siblings reside in Alabama, she worked a job that made it hard for her to get to medical appointments, her insurance carrier balked about healthcare coverage, and she is an amputee.

Many people would find any one of those things overwhelming, but Katie's approach to life has always

been looking toward the positive – and helping others whenever she can.

"Katie has a wonderful attitude, and it's a pleasure for us to have her as a patient," said her prosthetist, George Newton, CPO, and president of Advanced P & O of the Pacific.

Making A Difference

Katie was one of 25 military spouses who became involved with ABC's Extreme Home Makeover when they built a new home and community center for Theresa Adana and her nonprofit agency Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Center.

"The Army's Family Readiness Group (FRG) sent an e-mail to all the spouses asking for volunteers," explained Katie. "We were the clean-up crew. We picked up trash and cleared the area so the landscapers could lay down the grass."

While adjusting to a new job and life as a military spouse doesn't leave Katie much time for volunteer work, she had been a dedicated volunteer in her hometown of Mobile, Ala.

"When I was in high school I was very active in my church's mission

trips, whether it was going to Mexico or to the inner city," she said. "I have been on four trips and volunteered every summer from sixth to 12th grade for the inner city mission work. The trips and the inner city missions were for a week to two weeks long and we would scrape and paint homes for people who could not afford it or were not able to do it themselves.

"While in Mexico, we actually helped build on to homes; I helped lay the concrete foundation. I just really like to do that kind of stuff. I love to work hard like that for people that can't. It really does feel good to help people who are less fortunate or can't help themselves. I know that sounds like what everybody says or that's what people are supposed to say, but I really feel it. I mean, when I see the joy and thankfulness in the people's eyes that I have helped it really does make me feel good and that I made a difference."

continues on next page



Advanced P & O Helped Katie Get the Prosthesis She Needed

Although Katie never let her disability slow her down – she even climbed Diamond Head – she has found more comfort and increased mobility through the efforts of Advanced P & O.

Prior to moving to Hawaii, Katie was wearing a prosthesis that wasn't a comfortable fit, and didn't provide the stability she needed. "I was getting along okay but I used to fall a lot because the knee wouldn't lock when I needed it to," she said.

But finding a prosthetist who would listen to her needs proved challenging. Because there were still some "insurance snafus," as Katie calls them, "when I called other prosthetists, they said they couldn't help me. But when I called Advanced P & O, I talked to Summer and she said she would help with the insurance company, and if they didn't come through, there were other options."

"We worked with her on the insurance," said George. "We were able to justify to the insurance company that she needed to change her prosthesis to the Rheo Knee®. She was a good ambulatory prior even before she had the Rheo Knee, but this improves her comfort and gives her the stability someone with her activity level needs."

The Rheo Knee from Ossur is a microprocessor swing and

stance knee system, using artificial intelligence to learn how the user walks, recognizing and responding immediately to changes in speed, load, and terrain. The knee has multiple safeguards to guard against the knee buckling unexpectedly; disturbances in the walking path are recognized automatically and stance support instantly is activated to protect the user from a potential stumble and fall.

"The biggest advantage for Katie is that the Rheo Knee makes it easier for her to carry out her daily activities and it feels more comfortable for her walking outdoors," said George.

"The Rheo Knee just makes every day easier," Katie said. "It locks like the other one didn't. Stairs are not a problem."

Katie also wears Ossur's Iceross Seal-In Liner, making it easier to don and fit the knee, and an adjustable heel height foot. "With one push, she can go from sandals to heels," said George.

Amputation Didn't Hold Katie Back

Katie became an amputee six months after her 16th birthday as a result of injuries from a horrific one-car accident near Mobile, Ala. She remembers her legs being stuck between the front seats, the Jaws of Life extracting her from the car, the ambulance ride, and eventually the Flight for Life to the University of South Alabama Hospital.

"In the ambulance, they kept asking me if I could feel my toes and I couldn't," she said. "I didn't feel much pain. I think my body was in shock."

In addition to her mangled legs and assorted bruises and abrasions, Katie had two pelvic fractures. The doctors told her they would have to amputate. Nine days and two surgeries later, she was released from the hospital to recover at home and begin



physical therapy.

"Being that I was 16, I was worried about how I would look, and how I would be able to do things," she said. "The physical therapists really didn't know what to do with me. They were used to working with older people who had lost limbs because of diabetes. The biggest challenge they could give me was throwing a medicine ball against a trampoline and catching it." That exercise took most patients 30 minutes to accomplish. Katie did it immediately, amazing her therapists.

As Katie's recovery progressed, she returned to school in August, was elected to homecoming court for the third consecutive year, and resumed fashion modeling for a local department store.

"Because I was on the homecoming court, I started using a cane much earlier than expected. I didn't want to walk out on the field with ugly crutches," Katie said. "My mom and I even decorated it, and by Christmas break I stopped using the cane because I just didn't want it anymore, and if I was going to fall the cane wasn't going to help catch me."

A Romance Begins

After graduation in 2003, Katie went to Auburn University and when she returned from Auburn in 2006, she began a romance with an old acquaintance who would later become her husband.

"Jack and I never dated in high school but we were friends and



would eat lunch together. When I was using the wheelchair and the crutches, he would get my lunch for me and in exchange I would let him ride on the school elevator with me — one that was only for the kids with disabilities,” she said.

“We also went to middle school together for one year and I don’t remember him at all, but he would watch me cheer at football games and he can still tell you to this day where I stood in formation. I never really thought about him in a romantic way until I saw him two years after we graduated.”

Katie and Jack married in 2006 and moved to Hawaii where Jack’s unit is based.

“Dealing with my husband in Iraq is harder than being an amputee,” she said. “I can make the decision to get out of bed in the morning, or not. But there’s nothing I can do for him in Iraq. I can’t check on him every night to make sure he is safe.”

Katie added that she is appreciative of all the support she received from the staff at Advanced P & O.

“George, Summer, and all the staff at Advanced P & O are so friendly and willing to do anything to make things as easy as possible for me,” she said, which included arranging appointments after hours to accommodate an inflexible work schedule. “They are the nicest people. I’ve been to others who seem they are in the business just to get money out of it, but not APO.”



Bioness Inc. and Advanced Prosthetics and Orthotics of the Pacific Partner to Provide Advanced Technology For Stroke Patients

For stroke patients, regaining lost mobility and achieving greater independence to improve quality of life are among their most important goals. Advanced Prosthetics and Orthotics of the Pacific knows that. Working with Bioness Inc., a world leader in medical technology, Advanced P & O is one of just a few clinics in the country to offer this breakthrough technology and user-friendly therapy service to stroke and other neurological patients with foot drop.

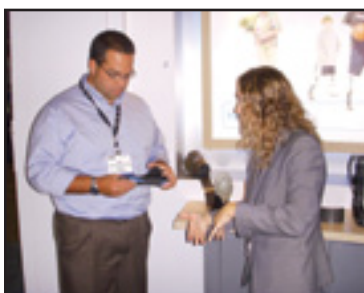
The device, called the NESS L300™ neuro-rehabilitation system, is a revolution in Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) technology, designed to help patients “normalize” walking and gait. The system uses wireless communication to “talk” to its components, eliminates cumbersome wires and allows the clinician ability to fine tune settings while the

patient is actually walking. The L300 is appropriate for a broad range of conditions, including stroke, traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy and incomplete spinal cord injury.

Kai Newton, CPO, stated the NESS L300™ accelerates and compliments traditional therapy. “We are excited about incorporating this technology into our acute and outpatient rehab settings,” Kai said. “We can maximize rehabilitation by using the device between therapy sessions and even encourage patients to purchase the NESS L300™ and take it home with them.”

Bioness Inc. was formed in California in 2004 by the Alfred E. Mann Foundation for Scientific Research, and NESS Ltd., a company headquartered in Israel that develops and manufactures innovative devices, neuroprosthetic and rehabilitation systems.

APOP Practitioner Attends AOPA National Assembly



Kai Newton, CPO, attended the 2008 American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA) National Assembly held September 10-13 in Chicago. Kai had the opportunity to participate in business and clinical education programs, as well as visit exhibitors showcasing the latest technology for the prosthetics and orthotics profession.

Other highlights included the keynote

speaker, Patrick G. Ryan, chairman and CEO of the Chicago 2016 Olympic Committee and long-time supporter of the Paralympics, tours of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, and 50th Anniversary celebrations of Northwestern University’s Prosthetic and Orthotic Center (NUPOC) and Otto Bock, the world’s leading supplier of prosthetic components.

Convenient Hours & Locations to Serve Our Patients

Our offices around the islands are open daily to meet your needs. We also offer home visits for patients on Oahu, Kauai, and Maui. Our hours of operation are as follows:

HONOLULU

1580 Makaloa Street, Suite 910, Honolulu

Monday – Thursday

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Friday

8:30 am – 4:00 pm

MAUI

Maui Memorial Medical Center

Physical Therapy Department

221 Mahalani Street, Wailuku

Second and fourth Thursday of each month

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

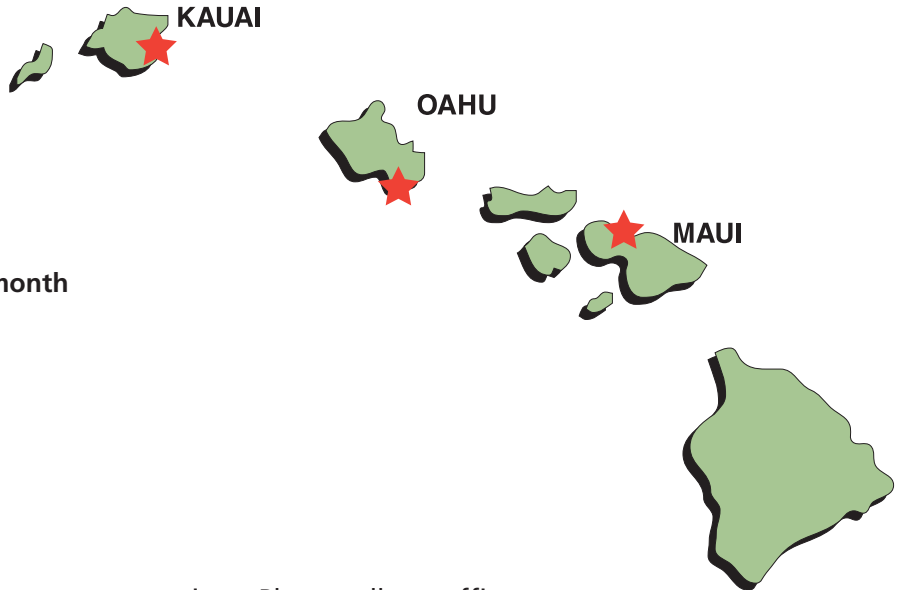
KAUAI

In-home visits only

One day per month by appointment

ONLINE

www.apohawaii.com



Our staff is also on-call offering 24-hour emergency services. Please call our office, (808) 949-8273 or toll-free at 1 (866) 949-8273, to schedule an appointment or for more information.