Thrive

NEWS FROM LIMBS 4 KIDS

JASON'S STORY

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

RESEARCH UPDATE

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

MEET SOME VOLUNTEERS

WINTER 2016 EDITION

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Are you wanting to learn more about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and how it can assist your child?

If so, visit the NDIS page on the Limbs 4 Kids website which has information, links and a ‘Parent Checklist’, that is limb difference specific, which can assist you when preparing for the NDIS **www.limbs4kids.org.au/funding/national-disability-insurance-scheme-ndis**

Limbs 4 Life Fact Sheets

Five new Fact Sheets have just been released - ‘Grief and Loss’, ‘Body Image and Self Esteem’, ‘Supporting Siblings’, ‘Bullying’ and ‘Transport and Travel’.

There are now 17 Fact Sheets available for families to use and share with others. Fact Sheets can be downloaded at *www.limbs4kids.org.au/fact-sheets* or contact us for hard-copies to be posted to you.

limbs 4 kids

FACT SHEET 15

Supporting Siblings

Talking to a sibling about limb difference

Living with limb difference since childhood

Jason Honeychurch’s life can be broken into three distinct periods. Life before his traumatic accident at 9 years of age, the life he lived until he was 15, and the life he has lived since he was 15.

Jason is 31 years old, lives in Adelaide (South Australia) and has lived his life as a right above-knee amputee since he was 15 years of age. Jason also works in the prosthetics industry, as a Prosthetic Technician, and will commence a Masters in Prosthetics and Orthotics in 2017. Jason also recently launched his own YouTube Channel and Facebook Page called ‘Limb Evolution’, where you can view videos of him doing every tasks such as walking and gardening as well as sports such as riding and running.

Jason grew up Leonora which he describes as a town that is “an isolated one in the middle of Western Australia where Kalgoorlie, despite being 300 kilometres away, is the nearest big town”. It was in Leonora where Jason had a traumatic accident that would change his life forever. Being an industrial mining town Leonora’s “main drag” had huge trucks and cranes driving through each day. Jason had a BMX, his form of transportation, to play and get around town. Unfortunately, both forms of transportation traumatically collided when Jason was nine years old.

"I had an accident in 1994 when a big industrial mobile crane came onto the foot path as I was riding my push bike. The red mobile crane flashed before my eyes and in that moment I landed under the wheels of the crane, resulting in my legs being crushed," explained Jason.

Jason was rushed to the small local hospital and, because of the extent of his injuries, then airlifted to Perth by the Royal Flying Doctors Service. "The doctors managed to save both of my legs, but my right leg was crushed beyond repair. I then spent the next six years in and out of Princess Margaret Hospital in Perth and had over 250 operations while doctors tried to save my right leg," recounted Jason.

While Jason's left leg was functional, unfortunately his right leg was not. As a result of the accident, his right leg had lost a lot of skin, muscle and bone and his right knee was permanently fused. This meant that Jason couldn't bend his leg and that it no longer grew. By the time Jason was 15 his right leg was 10 centimetres shorter than the left one, and he had to wear a 10 centimetre Ankle-Foot Orthosis (AFO) to balance his right and left leg so he could use crutches. "Because my right leg wouldn't bend I couldn't walk or sit easily, let alone run or ride a bike," described Jason.

When Jason was 15 the doctors gave him a choice to fix his leg discrepancy but not without many more operations and a lot more pain. "I was offered a 'leg-lengthening procedure' which, in my case, meant many pins stuck through skin and into my bone. I was also told that it would be an extremely painful procedure whereby the doctors purposefully break your leg with each turn of the pins until you stop growing," expounded Jason. As the doctors anticipated that Jason would probably stop growing at 18, if he selected this procedure he faced another three years of painful hospitalisation.

Not long after learning about this procedure Jason had a small fall on his leg which resulted in him "breaking the bones, excruciating pain and having a right leg that looked like spaghetti". It was after this break that Jason said he came to his senses. "I thought more clearly about what the doctors were offering, thought about my future pathways and came to the conclusion that even more pain for a bone lengthening procedure that might not even be successful was not for me," recounted Jason.

"I realised that my leg was not a real leg. I had lost my leg the moment it was run over by the crane. I realised that my leg would never be the functional leg that my doctors envisioned it would be and knew in my heart that there had to be a better way. That's when prosthetics entered my mind, and from that day forth I could see myself as an amputee wearing a prosthetic leg that would give me the functionality and mobility I had not had since I was nine," recalled Jason.

Prior to undergoing his amputation, and to ensure that Jason understood his decision, the hospital arranged for psychiatric assessments, discussions with physiotherapists and meetings with a few amputees. Jason met with three adult amputees prior to his surgery, an experience that made all the difference in his decision making. One particular amputee had a huge impact on Jason; a man who was an above-knee amputee, in his 30s, played sport, worked full-time and was in a relationship. "I was 15 and the one main worry that played on my mind was whether or not a girlfriend would ever want to go out with me if I had a missing leg. Well, that was all clarified when I met another above-knee amputee who, after we had met, introduced me to his beautiful long-term girlfriend who not only kissed him but touched him on his prosthesis," explained Jason. "It was at that point I knew that becoming an amputee would not only benefit me physically but that it wouldn't stop me from having a girlfriend, something very important to an impressionable male teenager," laughed Jason.

So at the age of 15, and with the full support of his parents and family, Jason underwent an above-knee amputation. "The first thing I remember saying to my Mum after my surgery was "Is my leg gone?" and after Mum said "Yes" apparently I went back to sleep with a smile on my face," said Jason.

Much changed within the six weeks after Jason's amputation. "I was fitted with my first prosthesis and started in Year 10 at Aquinas College, a boarding school in Perth that my older brother already attended," stated Jason.

Aquinas College is an all-male school with over 1,000 students and a long history steeped in both academic and sporting achievement. "Attending Aquinas College really helped me to quickly adapt. Suddenly I had to walk up and down, I had to go up four flights of stairs just to get to my math class, I began playing sport for the first time since I was nine and I had an older brother with me who wouldn't let me lag behind him. I had to adjust and stand up for myself very quickly and, while I hated it at times, I now realise it helped me to become the resilient person that I am today," explained Jason.

Three particular events occurred whilst Jason was at his boarding school – work experience, discovering a passion for rowing and falling in love with his first girlfriend.

After his amputation Jason began seeing Andrew Vearing, his first prosthetist. Andrew not only madehis first prosthesis but was a trusted professional who made Jason "feel special, full of potential and could see a budding young interest in prosthetics". Andrew provided Jason with work experience opportunities in Years 10, 11 and 12; experiences that allowed Jason to see first-hand the "amazing impact that Andrew had on patients, and just how much respect he was held in the eyes of colleagues and patients alike". After the work experience opportunities with Andrew Vearing, Jason then knew he also wanted to work in the prosthetics field and upon finishing school Andrew employed Jason as a Prosthetic Technician.

The second significant event that took place whilst still at school was that Jason discovered a passion and skill for rowing. "At Aquinas College all students, including me, were expected to take part in sports. I chose rowing and learned that I not only enjoyed it but that I was good at it," revealed Jason. In Year 12, Aquinas College took part in the prestigious 'Head of the River' school rowing competition with Jason one of the four oarsmen selected to represent the school.

"Head of the River is a well-known historical event in Perth which draws many spectators and media attention, and I couldn't believe it when a photo of my team was on the front page of The West Australian newspaper the day prior," recounted Jason. The newspaper article discussed Jason's team, but paid particular attention to the fact that a young amputee would be representing his school. "After the article, people drove miles to come and see us race and I had heaps of strangers approach me afterwards to shake my hand and congratulate me on being the first amputee to partake. I couldn't believe it, it was like I was a celebrity," revealed Jason. Indeed Jason was also thrilled to be awarded with the 'Best Oarsman Award' after the race, a recognition that "completely floored" him.

The third event experienced during Jason's secondary schooling years was meeting his very first girlfriend. "I used to love dancing and I always thought I would meet my first girlfriend on the dancefloor and, in fact, that's what happened," said Jason. At a school formal Jason met the young woman who would be his girlfriend for a couple of years. "I met her on the dancefloor wearing long pants, so she didn't realise I was an amputee. We started chatting on the phone at night, which incidentally was a big achievement at a boy's boarding school, and I still wasn't sure how to bring up the 'amputee thing'," explained Jason. However that was all resolved when Jason featured on the front page of The West Australian newspaper for rowing, after which his girlfriend called him and said that she was so proud of his achievements and that being an amputee made no difference to her. "I was overcome by my girlfriend's positive reaction to my limb loss, and I could then focus on the other normal things that worry teenagers when starting relationships," disclosed Jason.

After leaving school Jason was privileged to be mentored and supported by Andrew Vearing in his first role as a Prosthetic Technician. Jason was also supported by Andrew to "pick up stumps" and move to Adelaide to continue working as a Prosthetic Technician. Initially, Jason worked at Northern Prosthetics which was followed by a move to Prostek, where he has now worked for ten years. It was also during this time that Jason completed a Bachelor of Health Sciences at Flinders University.

"When I turned 24 I decided that I wanted a tertiary education in the health sciences area. With the support of Prostek's owner, Wayne Bowker, I was able to attend Flinders University part-time and also continue working part-time at Prostek. It was an extremely gruelling few years,

but without the support of Prostek I wouldn't have gotten through it and I can't thank Wayne enough for that opportunity," extolled Jason.

As a Prosthetic Technician, Jason feels "privileged" to work alongside talented colleagues and support prosthetic-using amputees to achieve their goals. Jason thoroughly enjoys assisting children and adults to receive the prosthesis designed by their Prosthetist, and is particularly thrilled when he is able to work alongside patients to create colourful prostheses that reflect the individual's personality. "Working with kids is great because their imagination really does go wild, and I love being able to help them incorporate fabrics of their favourite superhero or cartoon character into their socket design," enthused Jason.

To protect his own prosthesis at work Jason wears a fabric tattoo arm-sleeve over the top, as this acts as a protective barrier against all the dust in the workroom. This cover has also been the source of some interesting and informative discussions in the community. "I was recently in the supermarket, wearing shorts and the tattoo arm-sleeve over my prosthetic leg, when a heavily tattooed man came up to me to compliment me on my tattoo and enquire as to how much my full-leg tattoo cost. I grinned and said it cost $3 to the now bemused bloke. I then explained it was over the top of my prosthesis and spent a while discussing amputation and prosthetics to a very inquisitive and now more aware member of the community," laughed Jason.

Jason has seen significant advances in prosthetics since his amputation in 2000. Initially Jason was issued with a safety knee which was very basic, and heavy. He would have to put weight onto the safety knee for it to lock. This leg didn't have a gel-liner with a pin-lock which meant Jason had to wear thick woollen socks with leather straps that went around his waist and over his shoulder to secure the leg, something that "was very painful, heavy to wear, hot and didn't allow for comfortable walking". In the years after his amputation gel and silicon liners were introduced, and it was only a few years after his amputation that Jason was able to move to wearing a more advanced legs with a computerised knee unit that allows him even more mobility and abilities.

"I also have an amazing carbon fibre running blade that has allowed me to 'run like the wind' and train for the 100m sprint and run a personal best of 17 seconds in the Brisbane Nationals in 2015," explained Jason. Jason enthused that "the advances in prosthetics have been amazing to witness over the years and I'm so glad to see children and adults now being able to access much more functional and comfortable prostheses".

Since first meeting Andrew Vearing, Jason always thought his eventual career would be as a qualified Australian Prosthetist. Jason was recently accepted into the Masters of Prosthetics and Orthotics program at La Trobe University (Melbourne) and will commence his studies in 2017. "I am thrilled that I will be able to achieve my ultimate career goal and be able to work as a clinician supporting child and adult amputees. I really hope that the academic studies, practical experience and my own personal experience will assist me to become a well-respected and patient-centred Prosthetist in the future," said Jason.

Speaking from personal experience Jason believes that "specialised support and information is fundamental for children with limb differences and their families, as support plays a major part in accepting, learning and growing to live with a limb difference".

Jason admits to feeling a little isolated when he was a teenager, but now realises that some of his school peers were nervous talking about his amputation because they were worried they would upset him. "It was only later that I discovered that it was my responsibility to take the initiative to approach others and make them feel comfortable with the fact that I had a limb difference because, after that, then the barrier was down for all of us," explained Jason.

For these reasons Jason recently launched his own YouTube Channel and Facebook Page called 'Limb Evolution', a visual representation of his own progresses and new abilities. Jason shares his story and passion for prosthetics through videos commencing with him taking his first steps with the aid of a prosthesis, to his thirteen years of experience as a Prosthetics Technician. Jason established these pages as he felt that many people with limb differences might benefit practically, physically and morally from seeing his journey and witness just what a person with limb difference can be or do. To subscribe to his channels and receive updates on his latest videos, just type 'Limb Evolution' in YouTube and subscribe or like his Facebook Page.

Jason's final advice to children and young people living with any type of limb difference is the motto that he lives by. "Follow your dreams and believe in your vision, believe in you and seek support, support people around you, never give up, and use your limb difference as a strength, not a weakness".

Limbs 4 Life thanks Jason for sharing his story and for being one of our very committed Peer Support Volunteers. Limbs 4 Life also wishes Jason all the best with his upcoming studies and looks forward to working alongside him as an industry peer.

We also thank the West Australian newspaper for providing the photo of Jason on our cover page this edition.

Limbs 4 Kids: An update on the program evaluation

Narelle Warren PhD, School of Social Sciences, Monash University

Peer support offers well-documented benefits for people living with disability (Dennis, 2003; Arnstein et al., 2002), particularly in terms of improved psychosocial outcomes. Empowerment is a central factor for most involved in the delivery of peer-support (Fawcett et al., 1994), as an increased sense of self-efficacy (belief that you can make things happen if you wish) is often a product of peer-support. Reported benefits range from improved sense of community and belonging, self-confidence, self-esteem, and relationships with others to lowered rates of depression (Schwartz and Sendor, 1999; Stainback et al., 1994). Active engagement in peer-support has a bidirectional effect, offering positive outcomes for both the supporter (the person providing the support) and the supported. In reality, however, most people in a peer-support relationship take both roles, simultaneously giving and receiving some level of support and care.

The mission statement of Limbs 4 Life, and their peer-support programs reflect, this extensive literature. Since 2012, Limbs 4 Life has actively developed targeted programs for identified stakeholder groups. This commenced with the three-year nib Foundation-funded 'Children, Carers, Youth' (CCY) Program, a Victorian-focused support intervention aimed at supporting families of children and young people living with limb difference. The findings of this evaluation were then used to support a national roll-out of a program, Limbs 4 Kids.

The Children, Carers, Youth program

The CCY program design drew on Limbs 4 Life's adult peer-support program, as well as on feedback from Parents/Carers who lacked support following the birth of their child with a limb deficiency indicating that they desired access to facilitated support. Following consultation with key informants (including parents of children with limb difference), this was refined to respond to the particular needs of parents of children/adolescents with limb difference. The active participation of key stakeholders was central to the CCY program design in developing the key components of the program and in planning the program activities. Evaluations were conducted across three rounds between 2012 and 2014, drawing on online surveys and interviews.

Parent/carers who took part in the CCY evaluation identified the importance of a program such as this to help them attain three-related goals:

1. Information-seeking about their child's limb difference, in order to learn of the issues and challenges they could expect to encounter as their child developed. Participants perceived the advice and knowledge from other parent/carers (peer supports), particularly those with older children and who had therefore been through the process of surgery (where relevant) or had experienced increased medicalization, as invaluable for making considered decisions about their child's care, including around surgery and other interventions.
2. A desire to meet other families who were in a similar situation. Parent/carers described the importance of the empathy offered in this way, allowing the development of friendships and connections with other families. These connections were perceived as promote a sense of belonging and 'normality', and were therefore valued.
3. Provision of opportunities for their children to meet others with limb difference. This was seen as an essential part of their identity formation and contributed positively to the development of self-esteem. This was perhaps seen by parents as the most important contribution of any program, as it offered psychosocial benefits through reducing body image-related anxiety. Identification and a sense of sameness was a significant part of this, as was feeling part of a broader community. These positive benefits were seen to extend to siblings, many of whom experienced indirect effects of the limb difference (such as disrupted daily schedules in order to attend medical appointments).

Translating CCY into the Limbs 4 Kids program

These findings contributed directly to the design of the Limbs 4 Kids program, which is concerned with a national roll-out of the CCY program. Due to the geographical coverage required in ensuring that people from all parts of Australia could benefit from the program, the Limbs 4 Kids program was translated to be primarily online. The three parent/carer goals identified in the CCY evaluation led to the development of the two main tenets of the Limbs 4 Kids program: information-seeking, which occurs through Thrive magazine, fact sheets and webinars; and social support, through the annual conference, via forums and Facebook, through externally-sponsored mobility clinics, and by connections with inclusive sporting organisations.

Baseline evaluation of Limbs 4 Kids

Limbs 4 Kids was launched in mid-2015, and was preceded by the collection of baseline evaluation data from 42 parents involved in some capacity with Limbs 4 Life.

The parent/carer participants anticipated several roles for Limbs 4 Kids; as with those who took part in the CCY, most wanted to be sufficiently informed to feel capable of making the best decisions for their child's care. This was especially significant for those who had not received information on supporting their child on limb-difference-related issues from their formal health services. Limbs 4 Kids was therefore seen as directly presenting opportunities for parents/carers to advocate around their care-related activities: psychosocial support, prosthetic technologies, funding, community resources, and so forth. Given participants' interest in actively supporting – and seeking ways to enhance – their child's wellbeing, it was unsurprising that they reported high levels of general self-efficacy, suggesting that they felt as though they were in control or able to effect change in situations in their life.

Parents/carers also felt it was important to share advice and knowledge with other parents/carers, particularly in terms of role modelling. Reciprocity was significant in these exchanges, and most participants wanted to provide support as much as they desired receiving support. The idea of a mutually supportive community permeated all participants' accounts.

Connecting with like others was perceived as having multiple benefits, not only in terms of helping parents to cope through instilling in them a sense of shared experiences (and so they were not alone in their journey), but as simultaneously offering them new strategies for understanding their child's experience.

During the baseline evaluation, parents/carers felt that engagement in the program would potentially offer them, their child, and any siblings, new ways of engaging with others, particularly around ideas of difference. Engaging with other families of children or young people with limb difference was therefore, as with the CCY, seen as an essential component of the program – both in terms of identity formation and for self-esteem. As one person stated, they engaged in the program "to demonstrate life is good living with limb difference." Through such networks, the Limbs 4 Kids program is seen to offer important long-term benefits to the child, in terms of supporting their resilience-building and enhancing their wellbeing. Parents anticipated that this would have long-term psychosocial benefits.

Next steps

Between August and October 2016, the end-term evaluation will be conducted. Those who took part in the baseline evaluation will again be contacted to invite their participation. If you were not involved in the initial evaluation but are interested in taking part in the evaluation, please contact Narelle ***(Narelle.Warren@monash.edu)***. The overall evaluation findings are expected in October 2016, at which point concrete recommendations regarding the Limbs 4 Kids program, including insights on the long-term program sustainability, will be made. All evaluation reports are also available upon request.

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Meet some of our Peer Support Volunteers

The Limbs 4 Kids program is supported by a number of wonderful Parent Peer Support Volunteers who give of their time to speak to other families of children with limb difference seeking the support of 'someone who has been there before'. In our Autumn 2016 edition of Thrive we profiled some of our volunteers and in this edition we would like to introduce two more generous Peer Support Volunteers.

All of our Peer Support Volunteers go through an application process, training and are police checked. Our volunteers include parents of children with limb difference and adults who grew up with limb difference themselves. Most importantly each of our volunteers are keen to 'give back' to the community and support other families. Enjoy 'meeting' some of our wonderful volunteers...

My name is Jessie.

Being a person with Proximal femoral focal deficiency (PFFD), a congenital leg limb difference, I became a Peer Support Volunteer because I believe that my awareness, experiences and personal knowledge can be useful to other people and their families who are needing support.

A Peer Supporter Volunteer's role is incredibly valuable, as so much is gained from someone who can empathise with their own lived experiences. Great comfort can be found by being able to discuss thoughts, feelings and experiences with someone who has been through the same, and can understand.

Providing support can be incredibly reassuring and can assist people in many ways. When things are becoming tough and overwhelming, it can be such an asset to know that someone else has been there, and has gone through similar experiences.

As a Peer Support Volunteer I hope to help people in any way I can. My disability has enriched my life incredibly, and I hope my experiences and thoughts can be valuable to other families needing support.

My name is Mike.

For me, becoming a Peer Support Volunteer was a no brainer. I became a bi-lateral amputee when I was 18 due to Meningococcal Disease and I will never forget the lack of support available for amputees in the early days (before Limbs 4 Life was formed).

I remember all the Social Workers, Psychologists, Doctors, Physios and Occupational Therapists that used to try to explain what being an amputee would be like. I would have traded it all for a conversation with someone who had been there and done it – a fellow amputee. Someone who I could relate to!

Now, it's my pleasure to offer that to those in need; whether the parent of a young person or an adult amputee. I understand the power of the Peer Support program and I am extremely proud to be a founding member of it!

The value of the Peer Support Volunteer role is evident in many areas but most of all in the peace of mind we, as volunteers, can provide to those we support. It's the small things, questions about day-to-day challenges and the important role we play in shedding light on the uncertainties that new amputees face.

Peer support can assist parents and new amputees in so many ways. You can see it in their body language – their entire demeanour changes after a visit or a chat. They see the possibilities of modern technology can provide. As Peer Support Volunteers we have the ability to instil hope. Hope can be an extremely powerful tool to those navigating a crisis.

For me, as a Peer Support Volunteer I hope that I am providing peace of mind and I'm making a hard situation for someone a little less hard. As said, I'll never forget how much I would have benefitted from it during my time in hospital so I am grateful to be able to give back. People need this service. In my opinion it is by far the most valuable service any parent or new young amputee can utilize when they begin this new journey.

If you are interested in becoming a Peer Support Volunteer please contact Fiona by emailing fiona@limbs4life.org.au or call 1300 782 231.

Webinar-based training of Parent Peer Support Volunteers is held regularly. If it is something that interests you please contact Fiona by emailing ***fiona@limbs4life.org.au*** or call **1300 782 231.**

Wheelchair Basketball, an inclusive sport for Brian and everyone!

Brian Carminati, who lives in Melbourne, was born with a congenital condition known as Proximal Femoral Focal Deficiency (PFFD). It is a rare non-hereditary condition that affected the formation of his hip bone and consequently left him with just a femur. The condition can affect both sides so he considers himself lucky that it has only affected his right side. Brian started wearing a stiff prosthetic leg from age 3 till 5, after which he then underwent an operation to amputate the toes at the end shortened leg. This meant that Brian now had an above-knee amputation which allowed him to wear a prosthetic leg with a moveable knee joint.

Brian played wheelchair basketball for about six months at age 16, while he was in Year 11 at school. After playing for one season Brian stopped primarily because he needed to concentrate on his Year 12 studies. Brian's mum wanted him to focus on his academic studies and was not aware of the opportunities to participate in sport, let alone wheelchair sports. When Brian started attending Caulfield Hospital his doctor told him about wheelchair basketball and the benefits he could derive from it. Coincidently, on that day he was attending hospital, Brian happened to meet Billy Ferguson, a well-known wheelchair basketball player at the time. Billy suggested that Brian visit Knox Basketball Stadium to watch a local competition, a visit which allowed him to meet wheelchair basketball players Paul Laidlaw and Campbell Message; both of who helped Brian to play.

In 2014, shortly after graduating from secondary school, Brian decided to start playing wheelchair basketball again. Initially Brian started taking to the court at a local competition before starting to get really serious about his new sport. Brian attended one of Basketball Victoria's wheelchair basketball clinics at Boronia and came under the watchful eye of Tom Kyle, the coach of The Gliders (Australian Women's Wheelchair Basketball team). Tom encouraged Brian to work harder as he saw that Brian had the potential to become a national league player. Brian began wheelchair basketball training about once a week, and as a new player, tired very easily after only a short amount of hard pushing. From October 2014 Brian began to dedicate himself to serious training, which saw exponential improvements on and off the court as a player. In December 2014 Brian attended the Basketball Victoria Wheelchair Basketball Tournament in Shepparton. While there Brian was encouraged by everyone in attendance including Brad Ness, captain of The Rollers (the Australian Men's Wheelchair Basketball team).

Brian's persistence didn't go unnoticed and he was asked to train with The Rollers one morning per week at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre (MSAC), and regularly training at an elite level began to pay dividends for Brian. Brian now trains five times per week; including with The Gliders, The Rollers and other additional morning sessions with a group of state and national league players.

Brian admits that he used to live a sedentary life before Year 12 but since he began playing wheelchair basketball and training with the national teams, he has lost weight, become a fitness addict, maintained a healthy diet and strengthened his body and overall fitness.

Brian was invited to represent Victoria in the Kevin Coombs Cup National Championships (Wheelchair

Basketball Championships for males under 23 years of age and females under 25 years of age) and played a role in helping Victoria achieve the bronze medal.

Brian feels very honoured to be a part of Basketball Victoria. "Ever since transforming my own life, going from an overweight sedentary video gamer to an emerging athlete, it has given me a whole meaning to life and now it's starting to inspire other people around me to change their lives. As much as my own transformations make me happy, I feel extremely happy when it's also transforming and inspiring other people's lives. Hopefully in the future with greater achievements to come, I can still be an inspiration to others. Being on Basketball Victoria's posters and videos definitely helps give me the opportunity to inspire others," enthused Brian.

Brian has certainly left an impact on others. Tom Kyle, the Head Coach of the Australian Gliders team, has much to say about how Brian has progressed over the years and what a talented, dedicated and kind young man he is.

"I first met Brian at a come and try event at Knox some two years ago. He was a very shy and timid young man and I think hadn't had much time in a wheelchair let alone playing a contact sport like wheelchair basketball. I hadn't seen Brian for over two years since that time until the Kevin Coombs Cup in 2015. To say he had transformed would be an understatement. Brian had developed into an outstanding young athlete; strong, determined, aggressive but still showing incredible sportsmanship. He dominated at the Cup and led his team in rebounding and shooting. From this, Brian was, quiet rightly, selected to represent his country in the Australian Development team in Dubai. Again Brian was a force for his team showing all the attributes of a future Roller.

The thing that strikes me most with Brian is that although he has turned into an extremely tough competitor who comes to compete each and every game, he remains the same quiet unassuming young man off the court. Very respectful and appreciative for any assistance he receives. He is a real credit to his family, friends, state and country. I trust Brian will continue to grow and, I believe, he will be an outstanding Roller of the future".

Wheelchair Basketball is certainly a sport for all. It is one of the most inclusive sports in the world, allowing people of all ages and abilities to participate at both a grassroots level, just for fun, all the way up to National and International competition. If you are interested in trying wheelchair basketball contact Basketball Victoria on (03) 9837 8000 or visit www.basketballvictoria.com.au for more information. If you live outside of Victoria you are also welcome to call the team who can assist you to find a local team in your state or territory.

Limbs 4 Life is extremely grateful to Basketball Victoria for sharing Brian's story and promoting the fun and inclusive sport of wheelchair basketball in this edition of Thrive magazine.

For more information about wheelchair basketball contact Basketball Victoria or visit ***http://limbs4kids.org.au/advocacy-inclusion/community-inclusion/***

Local Parent Networks

Limbs 4 Life is keen to support parents who would like to establish a Local Parent Network in their community. Parent Networks provide an opportunity to families, children with limb differences and their siblings to meet and for friendships to be forged.

Meetings might take place in local play centres, parks or community centres. Limbs 4 Life can assist with establishing a group, provide small funding to get the group 'off the ground' and promote groups with Limbs 4 Kids families.

If you are interested get in touch with Fiona on 1300 782 231 or ***fiona@limbs4life.org.au***

New book

'Don Elgin: One Foot On The Podium'

Born without the lower half of his left leg, young Don Elgin never considered himself disabled until he was in high school – and even then, he had to be convinced. His story, of a boy from the bush who battled the odds and finally stepped onto the podium as a medallist at the Sydney Paralympics, is one of absolute inspiration. Driven by an inherited sense of grit, determination and pure guts, Don overcomes an abundance of obstacles to rise to the top of the sporting heap. His life's philosophy tells us that success is not a birthright – it's earned.

'Don Elgin: One Foot On The Podium' is not just the rags-to-riches story of a poor disabled boy who becomes an elite athlete. It's a tell-all tale laced with his natural humour and just enough larrikinism to make him loveable. The way Don tells his story is the reason he's one of the most entertaining and engaging speakers on the Australian circuit today.

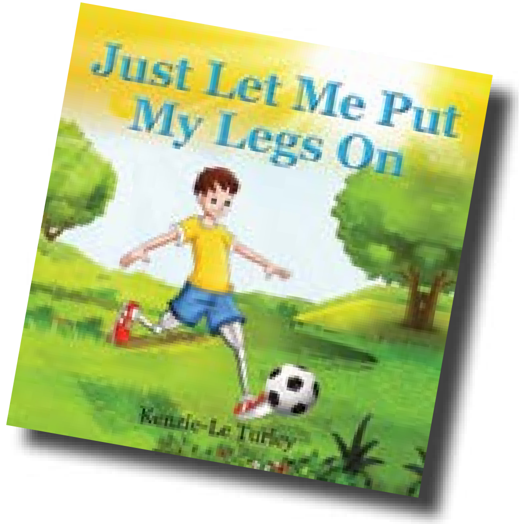
To buy your own copy of this terrific new book visit ***http://donelgin.com.au***

New book

'Just Let Me Put My Legs On'

A new book about limb difference, 'Just Let Me Put My Legs On', written by Australian author **Kenzie Le-Turley** has just been released. This book, full of wonderful rhymes and beautiful illustrations, is the story of a young boy with limb difference who shows everyone that he is more that capable of doing anything anyone else can do, once he has his legs on!

If you would like to learn about this book or order a copy for your family visit ***http://kenzie-leturley.wix.com/kindwords***



Limbs 4 Kids Golf Clinic (Adelaide)

On the 5th of June Limbs 4 Life collaborated with the charity Kidney Kids SA to offer a golf clinic in Adelaide for children and young people living with limb difference or chronic kidney disease.

Despite it being a cold and wet morning, 30 children and family members braved the weather to gain an introduction to golf and have a fun day out. Golf is an activity that benefits people of all ages and is a sport that promotes balance, physical wellbeing and provides friendship opportunities. This was particularly true for the children and young people who took part in the Clinic.

Under the guidance of golf professional Anne-Marie Knight from Adelaide Shores Golf Park, the children were given an opportunity to 'try golf' and learn some new skills. Using specialised golf clubs and putting kits the children had a chance to practice target ball hitting among other tailor-made activities.

The Clinic saw children and their siblings take part and it was great to see everyone have fun, learn skills and build new friendships during the activity.

Collaborating with Kidney Kids SA allowed for a terrific partnership opportunity, bringing together two cohorts of children who live with physical differences. Whilst the first collaborative event, it is likely that regular golf clinics at Adelaide Shores Golf Park will be made available to even more children and young people in the future.

As Sally, one of the mothers who attended the event, said "Thanks to all at Limbs 4 Kids who organised the Golf Clinic … I'm sure some budding talent has emerged and there were gorgeous kids all round".

If your child is interested in exploring golf please get in touch with Limbs 4 Life at 1300 782 231 and we can put you in touch with a golf professional and golf club in your community.

You can also learn more about junior golfing and My Golf, the national junior golf introductory program, at ***www.mygolf.org.au***

If you would like more information about Kidney Kids SA visit ***www.kidneykids.com.au***

Don’t try this at home!

The catch-cry of many television programs featuring stunts often start with a warning “don’t try this at home”. But have you ever wondered what a professional stunt person actually does and why this warning is very important for children and adults alike? In this edition of Thrive we were lucky to meet with Chris Anderson – professional stuntman, amputee and long-term Peer Support Volunteer with Limbs 4 Life.

Chris has worked in the television and film industry for close to 40 years as a stunt professional; working in many adult and children’s productions (as well as advertisements) that would be familiar to many readers of all ages. For many years Chris performed at a stunt man; designing and performing the actual physical acts as well as acting as a ‘body double’ for actors. In more recent years Chris has scaled back his physical stunt performances, and predominately works as a Stunt Coordinator designing stunts, training young stunt professionals and ensuring that stunts are hazard and risk free to all members of the cast and crew.

Having worked in the industry for decades, Chris’s resume lists hundreds of productions he has worked on; work that has enabled him to work alongside some of Australia and the world’s well recognised actors and directors.

Most recently Chris has worked on the very popular Australian children’s television show and film ‘Nowhere Boys’. Chris has also worked on other popular Australian children’s shows and films such as ‘H2O – Just add Water’, ‘Ocean Girl’, ‘Round the Twist’, ‘Flipper’, ‘Don’t be Afraid of the Dark’, ‘Tomorrow when the War Began’ and ‘Neighbours’. Older readers might also be interested to learn that Chris has worked on films such as ‘The Dressmaker’, ‘Mad Max’, ‘Moby Dick’ and ‘Pitch Black’, as well as local television shows such as ‘Glitch’, ‘The Slap’, ‘The Flying Doctors’, ‘The Sullivans’ and ‘The Paul Hogan Show’ to name but a mere few.

Chris has worked with an array of local and international actors; performing stunts for them, designing stunts that other stunt professionals perform or training actors to perform stunts themselves. Patrick Stewart, Vin Diesel, Jack Thompson, Kate Winslet, Liam Hemsworth, Rebecca Gibney and Paul Hogan are just a tiny list of the actors that Chris has worked alongside over the years.

Equally lengthy is the array of stunts that Chris has designed or performed over the years; ranging from those related to fire, jumps, car driving and underwater diving. It comes as no surprise that, given the risky nature of stunts, Chris works to ensure that any stunts are performed with the safety

of all cast and crew in mind. "It's all about ensuring that everyone involved are safe and that injuries won't occur, and when I coordinate stunts I make sure that the actor or stunt person is trained to complete the stunt hazard-free," explained Chris. "When child actors are involved in stunts there are very strict rules and regulations in place to ensure that these young people are safe, and sometimes we just won't allow them to perform a stunt," emphasised Chris.

Chris had his right leg amputated below the knee as a result of a work-related sailing accident in 1991. "The loss of my leg was a workplace accident, and really shows why safety in the industry is paramount," stated Chris. Since Chris's accident 25 years ago, occupational health and safety and changes in the industry have led to a significant reduction in stunt-related accidents on productions. The introduction of computer generated imagery also means that some of the stunts that, in previous years, would have to be performed 'live' can now been created in a design studio. However, as Chris explained, there is still a need for 'real life' action that can only be completed by highly skilled male and female stunt professionals.

Not long after his amputation, Chris returned to work as a stunt man. "I was in my early 30s and I really wanted to get back into work after losing my leg. I knew I could do it, but it would just require some adjustments, and it wasn't long before I was back doing live action stunts again," outlined Chris.

Chris grew up on a farm near Echuca, in regional Victoria. "Living in the country allowed me to expend all of my energy and assist my Dad by working on the farm, and I think being a 'high-energy' kid certainly influenced by decision to become a stunt performer in my early 20s," related Chris.

Coincidentally, Chris's father also lost a limb due to a traumatic accident on the family farm. "My dad lost his arm when I was two, so I don't remember the accident, and I have lived my whole life knowing my Dad as an upper limb amputee. I also grew up in contact with other amputees who lived in our local community, which certainly helped me to adjust when I lost my leg in the accident," recounted Chris. Limb differences were thus a feature of Chris's life and treated in a positive manner by family members and friends.

However, when Chris lost his leg he felt that there was little support available to him in metropolitan Melbourne. "I met some amputees in hospital and the rehabilitation centre, but once I went home there wasn't any local groups I could connect with or call upon for support," said Chris. "It was fantastic to learn about Limbs 4 Life many years ago, and see that people with limb differences now had an organisation and community to call their own. I felt that, as someone who has lived as a lower-leg amputee, I could assist others so I decided to become a trained Limbs 4 Life Peer Support Volunteer about five years ago," explained Chris.

Chris is a very dedicated and respected member of the Limbs 4 Life Peer Support Volunteer team, which now includes over 120 people across Australia. Peer Support Volunteers, who have lost limbs during their adulthood, assist others by visiting people pre or post a recent amputation in hospital or rehabilitation facilities. "I really get a lot out of being a Peer Support Volunteer, as I can visit people and answer the everyday questions they might have and hopefully play a role in assisting them to adjust to their new circumstance. I think I've made around 50 peer support visits over the years, as well as group meetings, and I can't imagine ever stopping as I think it's so important," shared Chris.

Chris also welcomes questions from members of the community when they notice that he wears a prosthesis, as it's a chance to give correct information and build positive awareness of limb difference. As a professional stunt coordinator, who has worked on many children's productions, Chris is also asked about his limb difference by the child actors he works alongside with.

Chris said that children's most frequent question is "what happened to your leg?" when they notice he is wearing a prosthesis. "The way I respond depends on the age of the child, but I generally explain that I had an accident and as a result the doctors had to remove my leg and now I have a new leg," said Chris. "I find that children are just so accepting and, given that many of the books and films they now enjoy feature robots, some are particularly thrilled as they think they have just met a 'real life' cyborg," laughed Chris.

Chris is the proud father of Adam, his thirty-year old son, and Cassidy, his twenty-seven year old daughter. Chris has also been happily married, for nearly forty years, to his wife Anne, a very well respected Sculptor. "I have a great life with an amazing and supportive family, and I'm also lucky to work in an industry that I love. What more could I ask for!," enthused Chris.

Limbs 4 Life thanks Chris for taking the time to be interviewed and sharing his personal and professional story with us. We also want to thank Chris for the many hundreds of hours that Chris has volunteered to Limbs 4 Life over the years, and look forward to calling upon his peer support skills for many years to come. Make sure to look out for Chris' name in rolling television and film credits!

LIMB-itless Conference

On the 30th of April 2016 Limbs 4 Life, in conjunction with our conference partner Ottobock, hosted the LIMB-itless Conference. This conference included presentations that were educative and empowering for attendees. The presentations, delivered by experts in relevant fields and across both adult and paediatric fields, covered areas such as: the NDIS; developing self-advocacy skills and confidence; prosthetics; physiotherapy; pain management; mobility; child education; and, child body image.

Over 200 attendees from across Australia attended and benefited from hearing from presenters and networking with other amputees, parents and health care professionals.

Very soon videos of presentations will be available on our Limbs 4 Life YouTube Channel and the Limbs 4 Kids website.

So watch this space...

Limbs 4 Kids Website

The Limbs 4 Kids website offers a wide range of information, personal stories, news items, videos and publications that may be of interest to families, healthcare professionals and community members. The 'Learning Centre' section is a library housing information about limb difference, your child, family and friends, education and employment, funding, health and wellbeing, and advocacy and inclusion.

www.limbs4kids.org.au

INFORMATION FOR THOSE WHO SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH LIMB DIFFERENCE

GET INVOLVED

Support other parents and families by becoming a Peer Support Volunteer or establish a Support Group in your local community.

Become a Peer Support Volunteer

Establish a Support Group

GET SUPPORT

Speak to Limbs 4 Kids staff or speak to other parents who have experienced what you are going through.

Request a Peer Support Visit

Join a Support Group

GET TALKING

Join our secure and moderated Kids-Link Forum to exchange information, experiences and become part of the community.

Visit the Kids-Link Forum

Register for Access

Limbs 4 Kids Facebook Group

Did you know that Limbs 4 Kids has its own closed and moderated Facebook Group? This group is made up of parents and family members of children with limb difference, young people, adults who grew up with a childhood limb difference and healthcare professionals. It is a safe space to connect with others, share ideas, view articles and stay in touch.

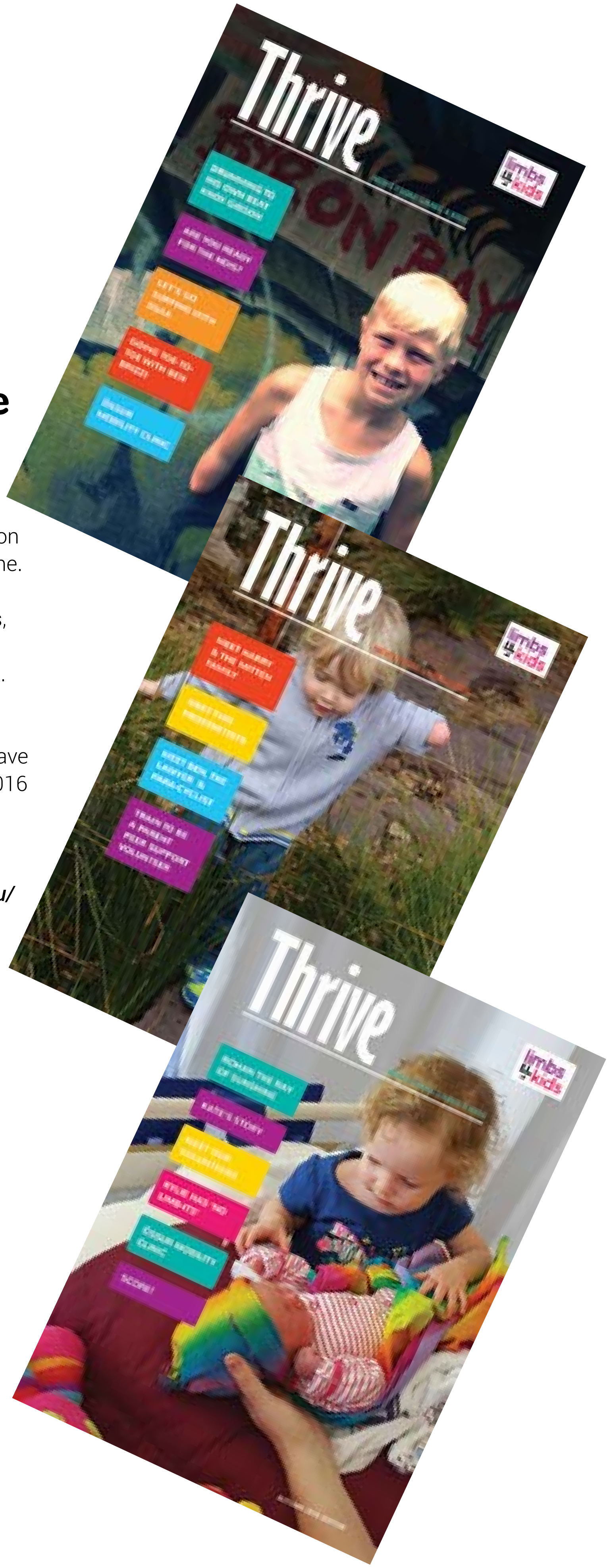
Limbs 4 Kids Facebook Group - www.facebook.com/groups/349205931872070

Have you read previous editions of Thrive magazine?

Thrive (Winter 2016) is the sixth edition of our Limbs 4 Kids program magazine. Previous editions feature stories about children, young people, parents, volunteers, healthcare professionals, community organisations and events.

You might want to read the array of stories, interviews and articles that have been profiled in previous 2015 and 2016 editions.

To access and download previous editions visit - ***http://limbs4kids.org.au/thrive-magazine/***



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