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SRT NEWSLETTER | 2014 SPRING EDITION

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srtprosthetics.com



Amputee Walking School* MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



Saturday, July 19th

4141 Shore Drive, Indianapolis, IN
10 a.m. – Noon—Training for Therapists
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.—Amputee Walking School



Tuesday, July 22nd

2130 W. Sycamore Street, Kokomo, IN
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.



**Ball Memorial Hospital
Outpatient Rehab Center**

Monday, July 21st

3300 W. Community Drive, Muncie, IN
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.



Wednesday, July 23rd

3320 N. Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, IN
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

For 25 years, Paralympic gold medalists, Dennis Oehler and Todd Schaffhauser have helped over 15,000 amputees world-wide with this FREE program, helping them optimize the use of their prosthesis. Whether you have been an amputee for years, a brand new amputee, or even contemplating amputation: the Amputee Walking School is a fun, casual atmosphere filled with inspirational stories and strength-training exercises.

*FREE CEU CREDITS FOR INDIANA PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS!

AMPUTEES IN

Action

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Unsurpassed Loyalty

The Heroic Story of Officer Marty Dulworth and His Four-Legged Comrades



Kilo

There are a few anonymous quotes floating around the internet such as, "A dog is the only creature on earth that loves you more than himself." Another quote claims, "The loyalty of a dog proves that there is potential in humans." These witty and humorous statements take on a much more serious and emotional tone when you read the courageous story of an Anderson Police Officer and the loyalty of his dogs.

Born in Anderson, Indiana and raised just outside of Madison County, Marty Dulworth graduated from Shenandoah High School in 1995. Marty's graduation cap had barely come back down from the air before he left for the Marine Corp, only four hours after graduation. He served his country for 4 years, including two, six-month tours in Iraq as a 0331 Heavy Machine Gunner. He also operated a 50-caliber Browning machine gun, and a Mark 19 40mm grenade launcher. In 1999, Sgt. Dulworth returned home and followed in his brother's footsteps into the police force.

Marty's older brother, Joe Garrett, had been a 3rd shift patrolman for the Anderson Police Department for 16 years when Marty decided to join the force. Marty was tested and sworn into the Police Department in February 2001, and is currently in his 13th year as a 3rd shift patrolman, as well as serving 6 years on the SWAT Team.

"It's the greatest job ever," said Marty as his face lit up. "My office is my car, and it's not the same routine over and over. I take pride in wearing my uniform, and enjoy the interaction with the public in different scenarios. I may not be able to save the world, but I can certainly make a difference."

Marty even met his future wife, Jessica, who worked with the Department of Child Services in Anderson, while working on similar cases together. Jessica and Marty's chemistry quickly clicked and, as he stated with a coy smile, "She just wouldn't leave me alone."

Officer Dulworth recalled an incident in 2008 when he was chasing down a suspect on foot. The suspect turned around, pointed a Tech 9 pistol at him, and pulled the trigger. Miraculously, the gun jammed, and Marty was able to apprehend the fugitive who is currently in prison. At the time, Marty was working with his first police dog, a Belgian Malinois named Fedor. Their partnership lasted until Fedor was retired after 14 years of noble service.

Shortly thereafter in 2009, Marty was approached by another officer to see if he would consider taking on another Belgian Malinois named Kilo, at the age of 6.

"Kilo was a big, strong, and hard-headed dog, and that's the best way I can put it," Marty said with a smirk. "I volunteered to work with Kilo and within only 6 weeks I had him trained to be on the streets."

In 2010, Kilo went on to take 1st place at the Dual Purpose K-9 Olympics in Peru, Indiana, beating out 105 other dog teams from around the world. The competition is a 5-day event, with up to five events per day including tracking, control, narcotics, article and area searching, and a rigorous obstacle course.

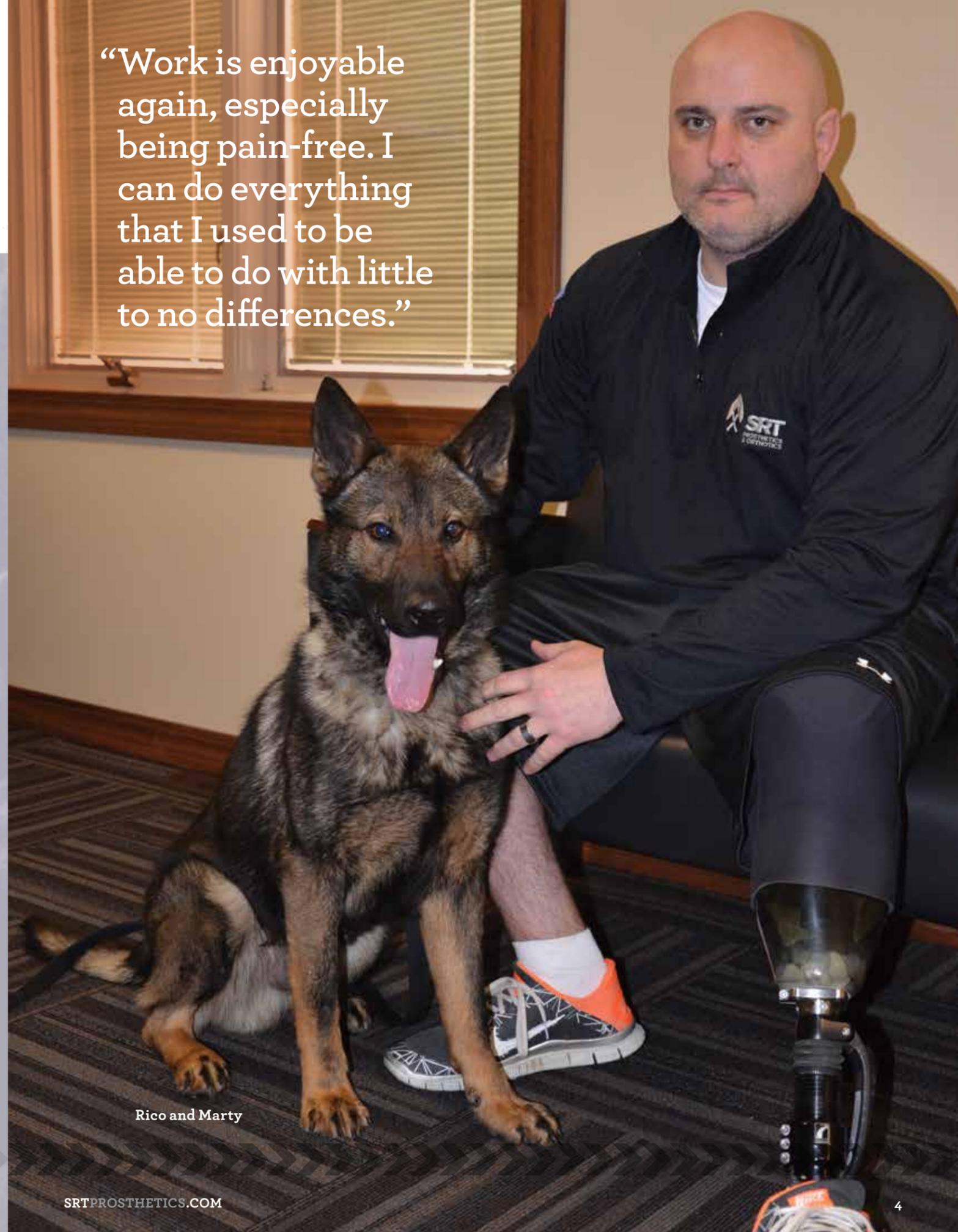
Marty and Kilo shared a very strong bond until a fateful night two years later when their partnership came to a tragic end.

On July 26th, 2012, a call went out on the police radio just before 11 p.m. This particular type of call sends a chill down any law enforcement agent's spine: "Shots fired, officer down." Officer Dulworth was in Anderson, Indiana at the time of the call, only five miles away from the scene in Pendleton, Indiana.

Meanwhile in Pendleton, the suspect, having just been sent an order of protection from his wife, was arguing with her in the middle of the street when a neighbor pulled up in his car to find out



"Work is enjoyable again, especially being pain-free. I can do everything that I used to be able to do with little to no differences."



Rico and Marty

what the problem was. The suspect was heavily armed with 200 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, plus ammunition for a 9mm, a bullet proof vest, and even a gas mask. During the argument, the neighbor was shot and killed in his car. The Pendleton Police Department arrived within minutes of the 911 call that came from other neighbors. They immediately took on gun fire from the AK-47, which wounded an officer.

Marty, as well as three other Anderson units, arrived on the scene at the same time to find several other neighbors standing on their porches. They stated that the shots came from the nearby alley. One of the neighbors came out of her house and said that she was concerned that the suspect may be hiding in her garage because the side door, which was usually shut, was open.

"I deployed Kilo with me on the scene," said Marty. "I have always lived by the mentality that I would rather have him and not need him, than need him and not have him."

Within seconds of approaching the alley, the suspect opened 20 rounds of fire from behind a tree only 15 feet away. One round ripped through Officer Dulworth's left ankle and foot and one round hit his right calf. Kilo was struck in the chest. Back-up officers returned fire on the suspect, causing him to retreat into the dark. Kilo, a loyal and noble friend, continued to fight and protect his handler until he fatally succumbed to his injury.

"While being assisted by a fellow officer, I was able to crawl behind a car across the street," stated Marty. "I radioed dispatch that I had been shot and that I was in need of a medic. However, the scene was still considered a danger zone, and they were unable to come in."

Unbeknown to Marty, his brother, Officer Joe Garrett, heard him on the radio. Joe jumped in his truck and made it to the scene within only four minutes. He had no idea where Marty was, but miraculously, he pulled right up next to him. Marty had tried to make a tourniquet out of an Ace bandage that he found in a first aid kit, but he kept passing out from the pain. Joe wrapped his belt around Marty's leg, put him in his truck, and drove him out of the danger zone to the Anderson Fire Department ambulance waiting for him. The ambulance arrived at St. John's Hospital in Anderson, Indiana where Marty was then taken by helicopter to St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis.

In a shining example of the power of social media, Marty's fiancé, Jessica, and his children Ryan and Hayley, heard about the incident on Facebook as it happened, and after a call to dispatch, Marty's family arrived at the Anderson hospital, not knowing that he was inside the helicopter that was taking off from the rooftop.

Marty would later find out that the suspect had committed suicide shortly after his wave of terror on the streets of Pendleton.

Marty underwent a total of 6 surgeries over a span of 15 days in an attempt to save his left leg. They were able to salvage the limb, although it left Marty with a "Free Flap," which is a term used to describe the movement of tissue from one site of the body to another. The only bones left in Marty's foot were his toes; the rest was all implanted metal.

During his stay at the hospital, the doctors and nurses discovered that Marty had proposed to Jessica prior to the incident, and that their wedding date was soon approaching. On a summer day in August, the two were married in the chapel at St. Vincent's Hospital among their family, friends, doctors and nurses. Even one of the nurse's mothers had made a wedding cake for them, and his plastic surgeon brought them a bottle of champagne.

Shortly thereafter, Marty was sent home on bed rest. After 7 months of recovery and physical therapy, he attempted to return to work.

"I tried to go back to work for about 6 months," said Marty. "I lacked a lot of mobility, my quality of life was horrible, and the pain was too much to handle. I went from being a very active person playing softball and lifting weights to not wanting to get out of bed in the morning because of the pain. I had a very grim outlook until I learned about the Amputee Walking School."

Marty attended SRT's Amputee Walking School in Muncie, Indiana where he quickly developed a bond with Ashtan Wallace, SRT's Patient Advocate, Dennis Oehler, co-founder of the program, and Bryan King, SRT Prosthetist.

"Walking through the doors at the Walking School, I didn't know what to expect," said Marty. "I didn't want to be labeled as handicapped and I wanted to see what life was like for an amputee. Once I saw everyone walking around and functioning like normal, I knew that this was the route for me. Dennis, Bryan, and Ashtan sat down and talked to me about everything. They showed me different types of prosthetics, and answered all of my questions. Ashtan and I have developed a friendship ever since."

On September 3rd, 2013, Marty made the decision to amputate his left leg below the knee.



"The decision was very easy for me," said Marty. "Working with SRT has been unreal. Everything has been smooth, all of my questions were answered, and I was walking on a prosthesis within one month of my amputation."

Marty went on to say that, "Work is enjoyable again, especially being pain-free. I can do everything that I used to be able to do with little to no differences."

On December 9th, 2013, Officer Dulworth returned to work full time with no restrictions, and is a leading officer in activity with the Anderson Police Department. On February 1st, he began working with a new dog, Rico, a 15 month old German Shepherd, and is currently training him five days a week to be a Dual Purpose K-9 in narcotics and apprehension.

"Rico is a fast learner and retains very well," said Marty. "I hope to have him certified and on the street by this upcoming May."

Currently, Marty lives in Middletown, Indiana with his wife, Jessica. He has two children from a previous marriage, Ryan, 20, and Hayley, 16. Marty and Jessica are expecting a new baby due in September of this year.

When asked what advice he would give to fellow amputees, or those contemplating amputation, Marty responded by saying, "Don't let the loss of your limb cause you the loss of your life. Get out there and do everything that you want to do. The only thing holding you back is you."

SRT is honored to know and serve those who serve our country and community such as Officer Marty Dulworth and his pack of exceptionally honorable dogs. Perhaps there is more truth than we could ever imagine to the phrase, "A dog is the only creature on earth that loves you more than himself."



Unlike many of SRT's heroes, Ryan Hurd's story began at a very early age. In April of 1981 at the age of 5, Ryan was running along side of a riding lawnmower when he fell in front of its path.

"Four weeks and four operations later, I returned home as an above-knee amputee," said Ryan. "In my opinion, growing up as an amputee is much easier than being an amputee later in life. You adjust and learn to live with things at an early age. Kids are resilient!"

Ryan grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and moved to Brownsburg, Indiana in 2001. He has worked with Kevin Hagemeyer at Action Brace & Prosthetic (now SRT Prosthetics) for nearly 12 years.

"Kevin has been seeing me ever since I have been in Indianapolis. Kevin and the SRT family do not see people as patients, but rather who they really are: fathers, sons, spouses and rowers," says Ryan. "That's what makes SRT special and I will always be grateful for everything they have done for me."

"At the age of 30, I came to the realization that I could no longer count on my youth to keep me trim and in shape," stated Ryan. "I joined a local gym and began riding the stationary bike and lifting some weights. I didn't particularly enjoy the bike, but it was the only piece of cardio equipment that I could easily operate with my prosthesis. After about a year of riding a bike to nowhere, I stumbled upon an old Concept2 Model B indoor rower at a YMCA. I instantly knew it was a perfect match. I was seated and didn't have to worry about my leg getting in the way. I felt like I was actually rowing in a real boat. For the next year, I plugged away at the indoor rower several times a week. In January 2010, my wife noticed an article in the newspaper about an indoor competition sponsored by the Indianapolis Rowing Center (IRC). I decided it would be a good opportunity to meet other rowers. During the event, I enjoyed watching the competitors and talking to fellow rowers, including several members of the IRC. They all encouraged me to enroll in a Learn-to-Row class in the spring to get on to the water. The following June, I did exactly that and became instantly hooked. At the conclusion of the class, I joined the IRC Masters program and

have been practicing and competing with them ever since."

"When I'm on the water, I concentrate so hard on what I am doing that I rarely think of anything else," says Ryan. "It's a good break from all of the chaos that life can bring. It's also a great team sport and my teammates are great to row with. The Masters team is co-ed with rowers in their 20's all the way up to their 70's."

When asked if he felt that rowing as an amputee was more challenging, Ryan replied, "I definitely don't have the power that the other rowers can produce, so I have to compensate by constantly working on my technique and efficiency. So far, after 3 years of rowing, I have not had any knee or hip problems."

Ryan's team, the Indiana Rowing Center, typically uses 8-person sweep shell (boats), a 4-person sweep shell and quadruple sculls. They compete in a variety of competitions each year, typically 3-4 sprints in the summer and 3-4 long distance races in the fall, and although the lineups are usually quite fluid, Ryan has been in almost every seat in every boat. They have a collection of 1st and 2nd place medals, and the fastest boat Ryan has ever rowed was in the Men's Eight that finished 2nd place at the 2011 Master's Nationals in Oklahoma City.

Ryan also recently worked with Dennis Oehler and Todd Schaffhauser at both the Amputee Walking School and a special focus group held at the SRT National Prosthetic Center in Indianapolis for training amputees how to run.

"That was the first time I had ever jogged step over step," said Ryan. "It was a strange feeling to leap onto my artificial foot, but the more I did it, the more I got used to it. It was very interesting to learn something new. The Walking School was a good reminder that you always need to be exercising the right muscles to make walking easier and more efficient. I've been paying more attention to how I walk ever since I attended the clinic."

Ryan currently lives in Brownsburg, Indiana with his wife, Anne, and children JR and Brady, and is the Senior Manager of Global Quality Management Systems at Covance, Inc. in Indianapolis for the past 12 years.

Ryan also stated, as an encouragement to his fellow amputees, "Start small and get involved. Once you become involved in something, whether physical or service-oriented, it's easy to pick up momentum from the people you interact with and what you can do to help them. That is why I love rowing. It keeps me physically fit but also provides an opportunity to bring rowing to others who would normally not realize that rowing is an option for them."





Game, Set, Match!

ON THE COURT WITH JEFF CLARK

Jeff Clark of Winchester, Indiana, and Dennis Oehler, Paralympic Gold Medalist and co-founder of the Amputee Walking School, enjoyed a friendly tennis match at the YMCA in Muncie, Indiana this past winter.

"I made the mistake of telling Jeff that I like to play tennis, not knowing what I was in for," said Dennis.

Dennis knew that Jeff was an avid tennis player, but had no clue just how strong his passion was for the game, or that he had been playing since his high school days.

"At first, I just played now and then because I enjoyed it. Eventually, I started playing all day long, only taking a break to eat," said Jeff.

Once he started to tap into his newly discovered talent, Jeff played at the Muncie Tennis Association against people of various levels that challenged him to be better. He carried this passion with him past high school and continued to play in numerous leagues and tournaments while his children grew up. He went on to coach the boy's and girl's tennis team at Winchester High School from 1995 to 2009.

However, with any sport, the rigorous physical demands of the game eventually took a toll on his body, and Jeff rolled his ankle and broke a bone in his foot in 2009. He underwent surgery shortly afterwards, including replacing one of his tendons with a cadaver tendon. With little to no improvement after several months, Jeff visited his orthopedic surgeon in Muncie, where he underwent a fusion of his ankle which included implanting three screws in his foot for over a year.

"That was worse than anything," said Jeff. "After they removed the screws, they discovered that the joints never fused together. After much discussion, I basically had the option of either trying another fusion, make due with what I had, or amputation."

With options spinning in Jeff's mind, life handed him another obstacle to climb when he was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2011.

"I could barely walk to my chemotherapy appointments," said Jeff. After six months of treatments, they finally removed a tumor the size of a grapefruit. I did a lot of praying. I got so much



of my self esteem from playing sports, and I wasn't able to do that now. I just wanted my life back. It was time to make a decision."

After doing a lot of research on his own, Jeff went back to his orthopedic surgeon to discuss the possibility of an amputation.

"My leg had become a detriment to me," said Jeff. "My surgeon told me that I had a lot of hoops to jump through first before I made my decision. He directed me in two directions. First, he had me speak with an amputee who also had an elective amputation after a four-wheeler accident, and

secondly, he sent me to speak with Bryan King, prosthetist at SRT Prosthetics in Muncie, who told me that I *would* play tennis again, which was very encouraging to me."

Jeff elected to have a below-knee amputation in June of 2012. Determined to regain his active lifestyle, Jeff attended the Amputee Walking School where he developed a bond with Dennis Oehler. His determination grew even stronger, and after being fit with his prosthesis, Jeff not only returned to the tennis court, but also lost 40 pounds in the process.

"Jeff is an excellent example of someone who chose not to give up after amputation, but instead set a goal for himself after attending the Walking School," said Todd Schaffhauser, co-founder of the Amputee Walking School, who also briefly picked up a tennis racket with Jeff and displayed why track and field is really his strong suit.

"God has truly blessed me," says Jeff. "I have never had any issues with my residual limb or my prosthesis while playing tennis. Now I can move and chase the ball like I used to."

Jeff is now semi-retired and keeps active with his church's food pantry and is also a substitute teacher. He currently lives in Winchester, Indiana with his wife Mary of 22 years. They have three children, all of whom were taught to play tennis by their dad, including Justin, who played tennis in college, Gabe, a tennis coach in Wadsworth, Ohio, and Jenna, a high school tennis coach in South Carolina. Jeff and Mary also have five grandchildren: Lily, Clay, Will, Addy and Emery, all of whom he hopes to one day teach the game to as well.

SRT is very proud of Jeff Clark for setting and



achieving his goals both on and off the tennis court. Although no official score was kept during the match between Jeff and Dennis, it was the opinion of the crowd that the home team was victorious.

"If your world is cold, make it your business to build fires," says Jeff. "It's all about hope, and hope is a good thing."

"When life gives you a challenge, show everyone you have the strength to overcome it."

By taking just one glance at the photos on this page, your interest has, most likely, been piqued. The idea of a highly accomplished amputee wrestler is a fascinating, inspirational, and very intriguing concept that can best be described when you read more about the story of Michael Feters.

A Chesterfield, Indiana native, Michael Feters, was born with a birth defect and his right leg was amputated below the knee at the age of only 9 months.

"There were ups and downs growing up as an amputee, but overall it was not that bad," Michael said. "I tried everything any other kid would try."

Michael lives with his parents Trampas and Kara Feters, as well as his brother, Wyatt Feters. Growing up, Michael had a passion for backyard football, BMX, dirt bikes, and 4-wheelers, but it was his mother, Kara, who knew that Michael would be great at wrestling and encouraged him to try it.

"We've always encouraged Michael to try new things," said Kara and Trampas Feters, Michael's parents. "Not only is Michael a great wrestler, he is an all around great son. Michael carries a 3.5 GPA and is planning to graduate with a Core 40 with Technical Honors Diploma. He works part time during the school year and full time during the summer. What a joy it has been to not only watch him try, but then to see him succeed. Michael is an inspiration to many, and to us he is a blessing. We could not be more proud to be his parents."

Michael recalls the first time he wrestled in the 7th grade by saying, "With being the new kid and not having any experience with wrestling, I felt I had something to prove. I had great coaches who took the time to teach me the moves which helped me have a great first year."

Cary House, head wrestling coach at Anderson High School for the past 17 years, has been coaching Michael for the past 3 years.

"I never had any concerns with Michael wrestling as an amputee," said House. "I had watched him wrestle in Junior High and could see his potential. He is lightning fast, has exceptional balance, and is explosive from the up position. When Michael's opponents step on to the mat, their initial reaction is to look at their coach as if to ask, 'What do I do?'"

THE STORY OF Michael Feters

Cary House went on to say, "In the three years as his coach, I have yet to find anything that Mike cannot do with the rest of his team. His drive and determination is at an adult level and he does not complain, ever."

Michael currently wrestles in the 120 lb. weight class as a Junior for the Anderson High School Indians. To date, his accolades include:

- **1st Place & MVP** – Tipton County Invitational – 8th Grade – 115 lbs.
- **Regional Qualifier & MVP** – Anderson High School – Freshman – 113 lbs.
- **Team MVP, Most Wins, Most Take Downs, Most Team Points** – Sophomore – 120 lbs.
- **Total Win/Loss Record** – 80-29

incidents, Bryan spoke with my parents and asked if he could come up with a plan for a more suitable prosthetic that would fit my very active lifestyle. Bryan is very understanding of my situation and very flexible to see me any time I'm having an issue. He's an all around great guy and I love having him there for me."

"To me, I don't notice a difference wrestling as an amputee," stated Michael. "I don't feel that I have a disadvantage or advantage either way. I compensate by leveraging my upper body. When life gives you a challenge, show everyone you have the strength to overcome it. Some people may look at me like I'm at a disadvantage, but I look at it like I can and will do anything everyone else does. I've



"It is indescribable how it felt to win those awards," says Michael. "It made me more determined to keeping doing what I love to do!"

Michael joined the SRT family two years ago when he stopped by the SRT office and met with Prosthetist, Bryan King.

"Bryan King was very helpful when I would break a part of my prosthesis that was made by another company," says Michael. "After several

never let being an amputee stop me from trying something. Always surround yourself with a good family and friend support team and you will be anything you strive to be. Go big or go home. Plan as though you will live forever, live as though you will die tomorrow."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHUCK BENNETT/ VYPE MAGAZINE (CENTRAL INDIANA)

FOR AARON NEDD, The Sky's the Limit

If you are ever near Aaron Nedd's neighborhood in Fort Wayne, Indiana and you see a small helicopter hovering over the tree tops, you'll know that he has a remote control in his hand and a smile on his face.

On a beautiful spring day in 2010, Aaron was riding his brand new Yamaha R6 motorcycle on his way home from work, covered from head to toe in protective gear including jeans, boots and a helmet. Although he doesn't remember too many details, Aaron remembers that a construction company was working near the road and a truck pulled out of a blind driveway as he was coming over a hill. Aaron's bike clipped the back corner of the truck, ejecting him from his seat and he landed in a ditch filled with rocks. Aaron spent up to two weeks in the ICU at Parkview Hospital in Fort Wayne, Indiana with a significant injury to his brachial plexus (a network of nerve fibers), leaving his arm flaccid and non-functional.

"Essentially, my left arm was paralyzed," said Aaron. "I was sent to a nerve specialist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, three months after my accident where they took nerves out of both my calves and my forearm in an attempt to relocate them from my arm to my spine."

Aaron was told that nerves can take over a year to grow; however, two years and five surgeries later, they were not seeing the results they were hoping for.

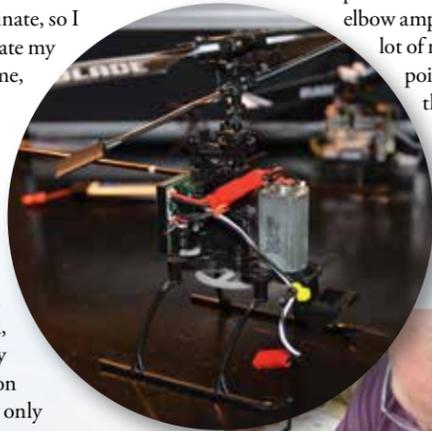
"I am right-hand dominate, so I made the decision to amputate my left arm," said Aaron. "For me, it was like trimming a dead branch."

Aaron made the decision to amputate his left arm above the elbow in 2012 at Parkview Hospital in Fort Wayne, Indiana. At the time, Aaron had been dating his girlfriend, Amy, for about 3 years. They have since married and Aaron says that this experience has only made them stronger.

Having attended Indiana Tech in Fort Wayne, Indiana on a full scholarship, Aaron returned to work at General Dynamics C4 Systems in Fort Wayne as a systems engineer where he troubleshoots software sent over by various software companies across the country. Although Aaron was able to adapt as well as he could in his position using only one arm, there were some obvious challenges that he faced which made him wonder if a prosthesis would be beneficial.



Aaron visited SRT Prosthetic's office where he met with Mike Schroeder, Senior Lab Supervisor, Sam Santa-Rita, CEO and Prosthetist, and Brooke O'Steen, OTR who collectively make up SRT's upper extremity team, and spoke with them on what options were out there for an above-elbow amputee. Aaron had done a lot of research leading up to this point, and was well aware of the over-use symptoms of his sound arm. Aaron was eventually fit with a myoelectric prosthesis with the Utah arm, which included an electric elbow. With Aaron's



engineering expertise and technologically-minded personality, he immediately became very intrigued with the functionality of the device and became very involved in the fitting process, learning the mechanics of his prosthesis both inside and out.

"It's nice to have a sense of normalcy again without my right arm being over-worked," says Aaron.

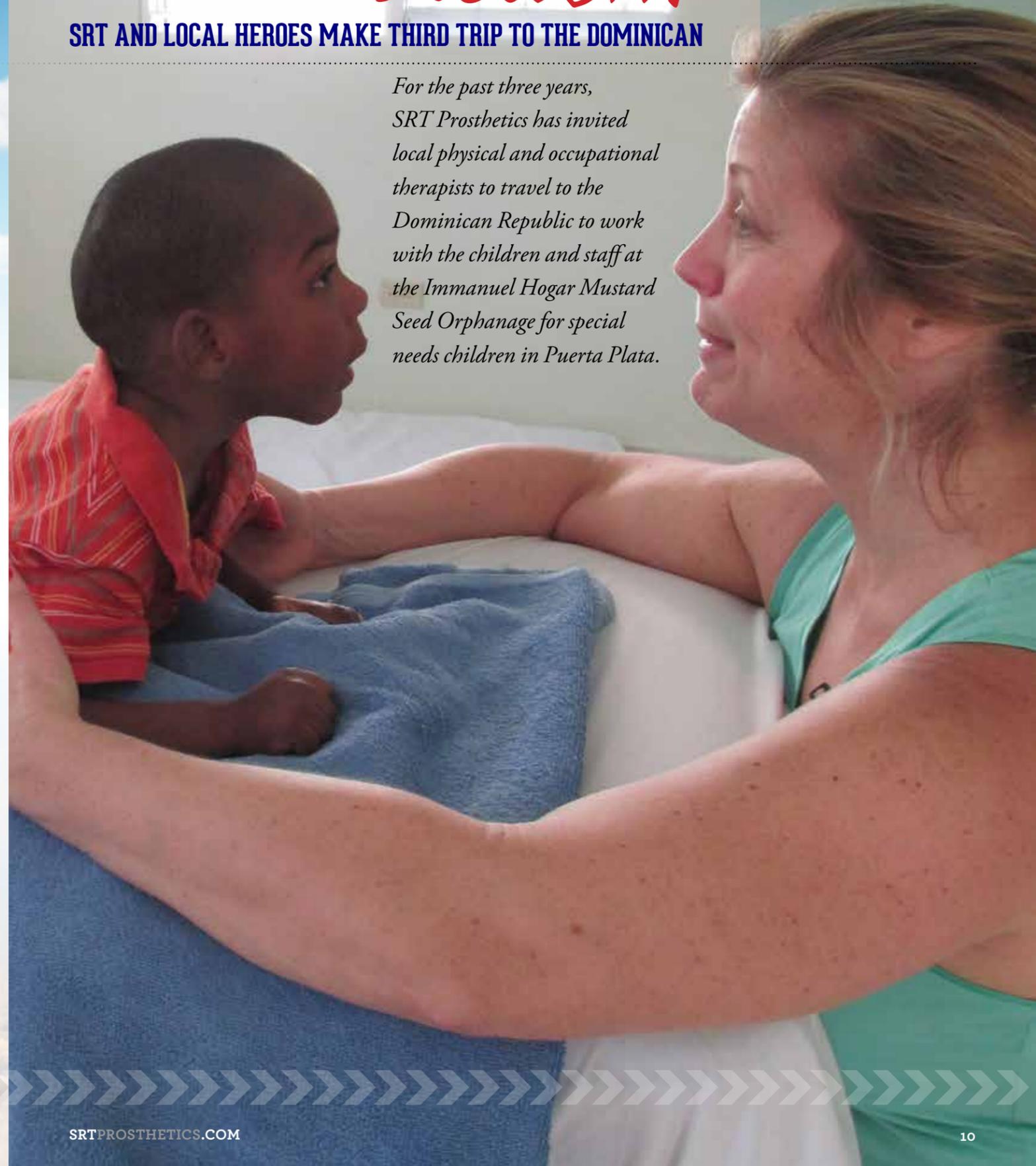
Obviously, Aaron's talents and passions are not constricted to his work environment. Over the holidays in 2012, Aaron was playing with his niece who received a toy helicopter as a gift.

"After playing with it for five minutes, I was hooked," Aaron said with an uncontrollable grin appearing on his face. "I went to a local hobby shop in town and slowly, but surely, started buying more and more advanced, fully programmable, helicopters. There are some models that reach up to 6 feet long and weigh between 30-40 lbs, but I'm happy with the medium sized models. It's like a 15 year-old kid's dream toy. Over the winter, I purchased a used T-Rex 450 Pro, rebuilding the 600-piece model from scratch. This is the real deal; operating just like a real helicopter in every way. It may take years to learn, but time is on my side."

"This experience was difficult and frustrating, but totally worth it," stated Aaron. "Some people give up hope. You have to learn to adapt to the world; don't wait for it to adapt to you. With the help of my prosthesis, I'm doing the same things with one arm that I did with two and my life is just as good as it was."

Therapists IN *Action!* SRT AND LOCAL HEROES MAKE THIRD TRIP TO THE DOMINICAN

For the past three years, SRT Prosthetics has invited local physical and occupational therapists to travel to the Dominican Republic to work with the children and staff at the Immanuel Hogar Mustard Seed Orphanage for special needs children in Puerta Plata.



PHYSICAL THERAPIST SUE TRIBOLET REFLECTED BACK ON ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL TRIP:

This is the third year that we have made the trip to the Dominican Republic to assist the children in the Immanuel Hogar Mustard Seed special needs orphanage. There have been significant changes since last year, including new buildings and new kids. Our group included our wheelchair specialist, Mark Berron, Denise Sparks PTA and translator, my 15 year old daughter, Julia, and myself.

Several new buildings have been completed down the hill from the original building. The largest building houses a dining and kitchen area, laundry room, therapy room, and a second floor for the administrative staff. The other building houses the children with two large bedrooms and two large bathrooms. There are plans to construct another building for more children as well as a church. Currently there are 21 children who reside in the orphanage. When the new buildings are completed, the orphanage will be able to house up to 50 children.

Another addition to the orphanage is Delphine, a Dominican trained physical therapist. He has done a great job with the use of massage on the children which has helped tremendously with their severe tightness. He has been using the books we made for the staff the past two years that have recommendations for positioning and exercise. He was very welcoming and interested in any suggestions we could give him to help the kids, especially in positioning in their wheelchairs.

Some of the older kids include Miguelina, 24 years old, Jessica, 21, Johnnie, 18, Lovely, 18, Maciel C., 19, Wendy, 17, and Maciel D., 19. Miguelina was full of smiles and laughter. She will repeat some phrases in English and considers this hilarious. She was able to walk short distances with a wheeled walker in a crouched posture, although it appears that she has had a stroke as her left arm and leg are weak and tight. Because she can walk, she is allowed to attend school. Johnnie is also able to walk and, therefore, attends school as well. Johnnie liked hanging out with Mark, stealing his tools, but quickly returning them. He is non-verbal, but sweet and full of smiles with a touch of orneriness thrown in.

Lovely can walk on her knees around the orphanage. She is a bit aggressive with new people but responds well to the staff. Maciel C., Jessica, and Wendy are all in wheelchairs as they do not walk. Maciel C. and Jessica have severe scoliosis (curvature of the spine) and many joints that are contracted in a flexed position. Most likely one or both hips on these girls are dislocated. The staff works hard on keeping them comfortable. They are often placed on a mat in the common area to relax



Photos, top to bottom: Denise and Miguelina; Sue and Junior; Francesca.

but also to enjoy the companionship of the staff and other kids. Wendy also has scoliosis but does tolerate sitting in her wheelchair for a couple hours at a time.

Maciel D. pleasantly surprised us this year when she walked out of the sleeping area by herself. Last year when we were at the orphanage, she needed assistance to walk. She walks with one foot flat and the other up on her toe. She does not attend school, possibly due to her poor cognition. Her mother came to visit her while we were there and it was sweet to see the interaction between mother and daughter. Most likely, her mom has not been able to keep Maciel at home as she cannot be left alone and her parents must go to work.

The mid teens include Eduardo, 15, Marcia, 16, and Bernardo, 14. None of these kids do not walk and are in wheelchairs throughout the day. Eduardo can sit by himself if placed on the floor, although unfortunately, he often fusses and yells for lengthy periods and the staff feels that he does not like to be touched. Marcia has very contracted leg muscles which make positioning difficult; however, she smiles frequently and appears to be content.

Bernardo is the most physically involved child in the orphanage. When picking him up to hold or position him, he is fixed in total body extension. In other words, picking up Bernardo is like picking up an ironing board. It is heartbreaking. However, since the first time we went to the Dominican three years ago, the staff has been positioning Bernardo on the mats in the common area and he seems much more comfortable, smiling frequently and even laughing at times.

The preteens include Juan Carlos, 12, Maria, 11, and Samuel, 10. All three of these kids use wheelchairs throughout the day. Juan Carlos and Samuel are both very sociable and love any kind of interaction, especially with each other. If they are lying on the mat beside each other, they will reach out to the other and make noise and laugh. They are good buddies and have been since we started going to the orphanage.

Maria is a pretty young lady who usually has pigtails and a huge smile, although she can be a bit ornery. When told to smile for a picture, she will start to smile, then move her head out of camera range. This is consistent enough to know she is teasing even though she is non-verbal.

The young kids include Braelin, 5, Jorge, 5, Francesca, 6, Selena, 6, Junior, 7, Joel, 8, Fausto, 8, and Steven, 9. Braelin has Down's syndrome and is very active. He walks, runs, jumps, and generally moves at warp speed. He goes to school and we

were told that he is now receiving speech therapy. The staff is also potty training Braelin. He is generally referred to in the orphanage as "jefe," which means boss.

Jorge is very small for his age. He is also quite cute and cuddly. My daughter, Julia, instantly fell in love with him and held him very frequently while we were at the orphanage. When she would put him in his wheelchair, he would fuss for several seconds and cut his eyes over to her so she would

Fausto has a cast on his left leg for a broken tibia. Julia commented that Fausto seems so scared and uncomfortable. Neither Selena or Fausto are verbal and both require a wheelchair. Fausto has a very good appetite as evidenced by two huge lunch bowls I fed him one day we were there (I would have stopped at one but he screamed very loudly and the staff handed me another bowl to feed him).

Junior and Joel are generally two quiet little boys. They both use wheelchairs as they do not

on-site physical therapist at the orphanage, made an unusual request. He wanted help in measuring the neighbor next to the orphanage for an artificial limb. When we finished measuring him, there was another gentleman waiting to be measured as well. We found out that these two men had been on a scooter together and were hit by a vehicle. The damage to both of their left legs was extensive and required above knee amputations. Their hope was to send measurements to the capital city for donated

Photos: left to right: Sam Santa-Rita, Alberto, Jonathan, Delphine, the physical therapist, and Allan. Joel and Eduardo.



pick him right back up. It got to be such a pattern that the staff just started handing Jorge to her.

Francesca does not yet walk, but appears to understand quite a bit. She is the only non-walker at the orphanage who goes to school, probably due to her good cognition and her ability to knee walk and crawl. I taught Francesca how to pull up into standing and walk (cruise) while holding on to a ledge in the common area. After only one demonstration, she was able to try this on her own, and the staff was very excited for her. Francesca most likely had a stroke as she has poor use of her left arm and leg.

Selena and Fausto are the newest additions to the orphanage. Selena has been there about 8-9 months and Fausto arrived about a week before we did. Little is known about these two children. Selena sleeps frequently even when she is in her wheelchair.

walk or crawl, but both enjoy lying on the floor or being cuddled. These boys as well as most of the kids at the orphanage are very thin even though they are fed large portions of food. My theory is that they are burning excess calories with their poor movement patterns and overall high muscle tone which makes them very tight.

There was a disappointment with the wheelchair situation this year and Mark and David (a Dominican volunteer who lives near the orphanage) worked very, very hard to position the kids for maximum comfort and alignment. This is a difficult task as the 17 kids who are in wheelchairs are very contracted at their joints and many of them also have scoliosis. In addition, the elements, such as rainy weather and sea air, can cause the chairs to deteriorate quickly because they are stored outside.

Toward the end of the trip, Delphine, the



prosthetics. Fortunately, Sam Santa-Rita, CEO of SRT Prosthetics, was on the trip with us. He went the next day, re-measured both of them, and returned in March with custom prosthetics for each of them.

These last three years of working with the kids at the Mustard Seed Orphanage has been an amazing experience. The kids are all so sweet, they love the attention and the staff is very appreciative of all our help. It has been fun learning a bit of Spanish and experiencing a different culture and although the Dominican people are very poor, they are happy, kind and very loving. And the 85 degree sunny weather is also a plus!

If you are a medical professional and would like information about the upcoming trip to the orphanage, please contact Julie Santa-Rita at 866.633.3961. To see a full list of commonly needed items to donate to the orphanage, please visit www.srtprosthetics.com/mustard-seed-orphanage.