

*in*Motion

LIVING WELL WITH LIMB LOSS AND LIMB DIFFERENCE



ONE COMMUNITY. | COUNTLESS
STORIES

Nearly 40 Years of Service

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AND CEO, CASS ISIDRO

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO, CASS ISIDRO



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It's been a turbulent new year for the Amputee Coalition as we have been navigating potential loss of federal funding support not only for the National Limb Loss Resource Center but for many of the programs across health and education that have provided critical community living support for so many to have an opportunity to thrive in their lives as they choose. As I write this message on April 1st, the Administration for Community Living is being dismantled, and we remain concerned about programs and services for people who have disabilities and their caregivers. This is especially difficult to bear as we have had a full court press for nearly 6 months now sharing the success of the National Limb Loss Resource Center® programs and services with nearly complete support on both sides of the aisle. Everyone has told us that they believe in the work we do, they agree there should be support, and they would hate to see any funding we receive be in jeopardy or go away. Yet here we are.

There are some facts that we know will not change. As of today, we know over 5.6 million people are living with limb loss and limb difference in the United States. We know that an average of 500 people will undergo an amputation each day. And finally, we know without hesitation that life does not end with amputation or limb difference. Time and time again community members living with limb loss and limb difference have described their life as more than they ever could have imagined. The peer visits and support, the customized resources, the case specific information and referral, and the community connections through events and education are all parts of the National Limb Loss Resource Center® and all have come together to impact an average of 260 lives daily, touching the lives of over 820,000 people annually through outreach across various channels as well as partnerships.

Many of you have stepped forward to make donations, offer increased volunteer support, and provide testimonials and words of encouragement. Thank you. The Amputee Coalition Board of Directors and staff remain committed to our shared mission and will continue to navigate what is possible as we move forward. As we celebrate Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month, we will continue to shine a light on community members celebrating life each and every day. Please continue to share your stories, connect with each other, and offer support.

- Cass Isidro
CEO and President, Amputee Coalition

NEARLY 40 YEARS STRONG:

SHAPING A FUTURE TOGETHER

For nearly four decades, the Amputee Coalition has been a steady and powerful presence—fighting for visibility, connection, and support for the limb loss and limb difference community. What began as a small but mighty band of volunteers has grown into a national network of hope, resources, and action. Through the National Limb Loss Resource Center® (NLLRC) and our many programs, we have helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and families navigate their journeys—not just to survive, but to thrive.

We've seen transformation firsthand: in the parent comforted by a peer visitor after their child's first surgery. In the newly injured service member who found purpose again through adaptive recreation. In the caregiver who, through our webinars and education, gained the tools to better support their loved one. In the youth who, for the first time, met someone "just like me" at Youth Camp. These moments matter. These stories are the heartbeat of who we are.

NOW, WE NEED YOU

In this time of uncertainty, as we face uncertainty and potential funding losses, we are reminded that our strength has always come from our community. You've shown up—with donations, advocacy, and your voice. And now we're asking again:

WILL YOU SHARE YOUR STORY?

If the Amputee Coalition or the NLLRC has helped you, your family, or your community—tell us.

Whether it's a single conversation that gave you clarity or a life-changing program that helped you move forward, your story is powerful.

"I was riding my Harley Davidson, and a drunk driver came up behind me. My left leg was gone, my right leg was broken in four places, the femur was broken in two places. I had back fractures and a brain injury. I went through rehab, and [after] they released me, I go to the movies, to the stores, [and] can mow my own yard most of the time. Sometimes, I could move around with a cane. Most of the time, when I get home, I get in my electronic wheelchair. I go to the gym every two days and work out for an hour and a half or two. Last year I went to the Atlanta Amputee Coalition [conference] and I hope to attend the one in Las Vegas next year [because] the National Limb Loss Resource Center helped me to know that I'm not the only one out here trying to make it." -Darrell

Your voice can:

- Help preserve essential services by demonstrating real-life impact.
- Inspire others who are just starting their limb loss journey.
- Build awareness during this critical time of need.
- Show decision-makers that this community is strong, active, and should not be overlooked.

How to Share:

Submit your story online through our [online form](#).

We believe in the power of connection. For 40 years, we've seen how one story can light the way for many. As we approach this milestone anniversary, let's honor the past, advocate for the present, and shape the future—together.

Thank you for being a part of our mission.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS



As spring arrives, it is essential to adapt to the changing weather and embrace new activities. These tips may support you in maintaining assistive and medical devices, adopting a healthy lifestyle, setting meaningful goals, and staying comfortable in changing temperatures. We hope you enjoy the coming season with confidence and well-being!

Device Care and Maintenance

- **Regular Cleaning:** Spring cleaning all around, including a deep clean of all assistive and medical devices to prevent skin irritation and infections.
- **Check for Wear, Tear, Fit, and Comfort:** Inspect for any signs of damage or wear and comfort, especially as you become more active in the spring. If needed, schedule a check-up with your Prosthetist Orthotist or other specialist.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices

- **Eat Fresh:** Incorporate seasonal fruits and vegetables into your diet when possible.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water, especially as temperatures rise.
- **Physical Activity:** Engage in what you enjoy: pickleball, swim, walks and rolls, and soak in fresh air.

Adapting to Weather Changes

- **Protect Your Skin:** Use sunscreen and wear protective clothing when spending time outdoors or near windows.
- **Dress in Layers:** Wear layers to adjust to changing temperatures easily.

Set Meaningful Goals

- **Set Small, Achievable Goals:** Separate larger goals into smaller, manageable steps.
- **Track Progress:** Keep a journal or use a mobile app to track your progress and celebrate achievements.
- **Stay Motivated:** Find activities that keep you motivated.

A PUBLICATION OF THE DETAILS

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DISCOVER A **RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY** THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Interested in participating in a research study? Visit the Volunteer Research Opportunities webpage at [Amputee-Coalition.org/volunteer-research-opportunities](https://amputee-coalition.org/volunteer-research-opportunities) for the most up-to-date listings. Your participation helps drive research forward and includes the limb loss and limb difference experience to the scientific exploration- thank you for considering being part of these important studies.

A few current opportunities include:

- Understanding Walking Adaptations to Virtual Reality-Induced Anxiety in Lower Limb Prosthesis Users
- Experiencing and Coping with Phantom Limb Pain in the Early Postoperative Period Following Amputation
- Cinema Influence on Prosthetic Limb Expectations
- Evaluation of Powered Prosthesis for use with Transfemoral Osseointegration Recipients
- Measuring Mobility Outcomes after Lower Extremity Amputation with Smartphone Data
- Understanding Clinical Phrases from Patient and Prosthetist Perspectives



JOIN US IN CELEBRATING **LIMB LOSS** **AND LIMB DIFFERENCE AWARENESS** MONTH THIS APRIL 2025!



April is here, and with it comes **Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month (LLLDAM)**—a time dedicated to honoring the resilience, creativity, and strength of the over 5.6 million individuals in the U.S. living with limb loss or limb difference. As the Amputee Coalition

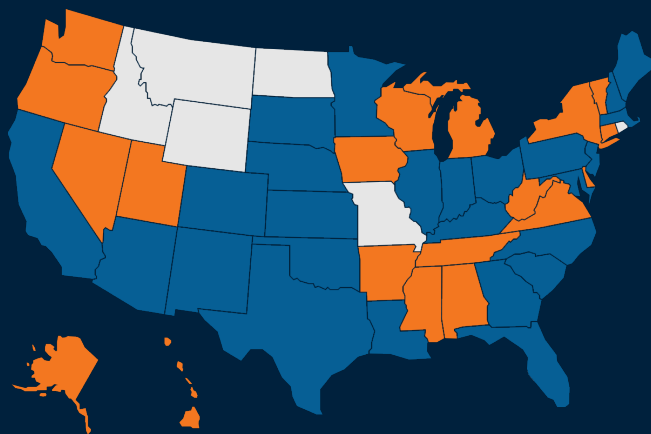
commemorates nearly 40 years of service, this year's LLLDAM promises to be especially impactful.

WHY APRIL MATTERS

LLLDAM is more than just a month on the calendar; it's a movement. It's our collective opportunity to raise awareness, advocate for our community, and celebrate the stories within our community. This year's theme, "**One Community. Countless Stories.**", emphasizes the unique journeys of each individual while highlighting the unity and solidarity that binds us all.

GET INVOLVED: EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

- **Proclamation Challenge:** Help make history by securing official recognition of LLLDAM in all 50 states. By reaching out to local leaders and requesting proclamations, you can play a pivotal role in amplifying our community's voice.



- **Mixed Medium Art Challenge:** Express your journey through art! Whether you're a seasoned artist or picking up a brush for the first time, we invite you to submit your creations. Selected pieces will be showcased during our 40th-anniversary celebrations, highlighting the creativity within our community.
- **Wear Orange Wednesdays:** Every Wednesday in April, don your brightest orange attire to

show solidarity. Share your photos on social media using #WearOrangeWednesday and #LLLDAM2025, and tag @AmputeeCoalition to join the vibrant wave of support.

- **Show Your Mettle Day:** On Saturday, April 26, 2025, we encourage everyone to "show their mettle" by proudly displaying prosthetic devices, assistive tools, or simply showcasing personal strength. It's a day to celebrate resilience and the tools that empower us.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Your story, your voice, and your participation are what make LLLDAM impactful. Here's how you can be a part of this nationwide celebration:

- **Share Your Story:** Contribute to our "Living Time Wall" by sharing your personal journey. Your experiences inspire and connect us all
- **Engage on Social Media:** Use hashtags like #LLLDAM2025, #WeTHRIVE, and #CreateArtLLLDAM to join the conversation and spread awareness.



RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

To assist you in spreading the word and participating fully:

- **LLLDAM Toolkit:** The Amputee Coalition has curated a comprehensive toolkit filled with shareable graphics, sample social media posts, and printable materials to help you champion the cause in your community.

- **Participate in Weekly Challenges:** Throughout April, we'll host themed challenges to foster connection and showcase the vibrancy of our community. Stay tuned to our social media channels and weekly newsletter for details.

#LLLDAM2025





LOOKING AHEAD

As we gear up for #LLLDAM2025, we're also on the path to our **40th Anniversary National Conference** in January 2026. Participating in LLLDAM is a fantastic way to connect with the community ahead of this milestone event.

STAY CONNECTED

- For updates, resources, and more information: Visit our LLLDAM page.
- Follow us on social media: **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Instagram**, and **LinkedIn**.
- Sign up for our newsletter to receive the latest news directly in your inbox.

Together, let's make April 2025 a month of awareness, action, and celebration. Your involvement fuels our collective strength and paves the way for a more connected future.

YOU'RE INVITED!

inMotion MAGAZINE 8

CELEBRATE ROBO-POWERED FUN WITH THE AMPUTEE COALITION AND DISNEY JR.!

Disney Jr.'s "RoboGobo"

Virtual Screening and Panel Event

Tuesday, April 22 | 5–6 PM ET

Online – Join from anywhere!



©Disney

Join us for a special screening and conversation about RoboGobo, Disney Jr.'s exciting new animated series that's winning hearts (and wagging tails)! Created for preschoolers but loved by all ages, RoboGobo follows five adopted rescue pets who get super-powered Robo-Suits from their kid inventor, Dax, and set off on epic adventures to help animals in need—while learning the true meaning of family, teamwork, and kindness.

Spotlight Episode: "Jumpin' Jaguars"

Don't miss the spotlight on Jumpin' Jaguars, featuring a jaguar cub with limb difference who teams up with Dax and robo-rescue pet Allie to save his sisters. This episode celebrates bravery, problem-solving, and positive representation in action! Bonus: Cynthia Erivo guest stars as the delightfully sneaky villain, The Slink!



©Disney

Hear from our uplifting panelists:

- **Chris Gilligan** – Creator and Executive Producer of RoboGobo
- **Nava R. Siltan, Ph.D.** – Psychologist, Professor & Series Consultant
- **Giavanna Schembri** - Amputee Coalition Youth Leadership Council Member
- **Whitney Doyle, MNM, CNP, CP** - Amputee Coalition Director of Operations and Capacity Building

Get an insider look at how RoboGobo was made and how it's changing the game by featuring characters who have disabilities in meaningful, empowering ways. Whether you're a parent, educator, or young fan of furry heroes, this event will spark ideas, conversations—and smiles!

RSVP TODAY AND BE PART OF THE ADVENTURE!



SAVE THE DATE!

JOIN US FOR THE AMPUTEE COALITION'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL CONFERENCE!

Mark your calendars and pack your bags! The Amputee Coalition is thrilled to invite you to our 40th Anniversary National Conference, taking place January 13–15, 2026, at the iconic Westgate Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. This milestone event promises to be a celebration of empowerment, advocacy, and community like no other.

For four decades, the Amputee Coalition has been dedicated to supporting and uplifting individuals with limb loss and limb difference. This conference is not just an event; it's a testament to the strength, resilience, and achievements of our vibrant community over the past 40 years. Whether you're a longtime member or new to the community, national conference is an opportunity to connect, learn, and celebrate together.



amputee
coalition™



WHAT TO EXPECT

Inspiring Keynote Speakers

Prepare to be moved by visionary leaders, advocates, and trailblazers who are shaping the future for our community. Their stories and insights will empower and energize us all.



ENGAGING CLINICS & WORKSHOPS

From mental health and wellness to innovations in care and assistive tech, our workshops and clinics will have something for everyone. Participate in clinics covering activities from swimming to theater, and attend sessions on important topics like mental health and activities of daily living.

UNFORGETTABLE CONNECTIONS

Connect with peers, industry experts, and allies who share your journey and passion. The conference offers numerous networking opportunities to build lasting relationships.

ACCESSIBLE ADVENTURES

We're excited to announce a special partnership with Wheel the World, an organization dedicated to creating accessible travel and experiences. Together, we're ensuring this conference is meaningful and unforgettable for all who attend.

EXCITING LAS VEGAS LOCATION

Experience the vibrant energy of Las Vegas while enjoying the serenity of its stunning desert surroundings. The Westgate Hotel offers world-class amenities to make your stay comfortable and enjoyable, with an on-site monorail station for easy travel to the Las Vegas strip.

WHY YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS IT

This conference is more than an event—it's a celebration of our collective journey. It's where life-changing friendships are formed, stories are shared, and we remind one another just how powerful we are when we come together. Whether you're looking for resources, peer support, clinical insights, or simply a place to belong, national conference is for you.

STAY UPDATED

Registration and Scholarship details will be announced soon! To stay informed, sign up for our mailing list and follow the Amputee Coalition on social media. You can also subscribe to our newsletter to receive the latest updates on registration, speakers, and special pre-sale events.

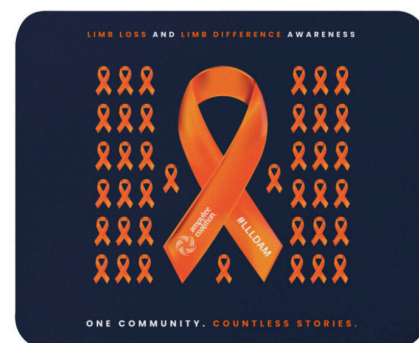
Let's honor the past, celebrate the present, and shape the future—together. See you in Las Vegas!

WE'VE GOT A NEW LOOK— JUST IN TIME FOR LLLDAM!

We're thrilled to share some exciting news—our brand-new website is live, and it's made with YOU in mind. It's now easier than ever to find helpful tools, resources, and ways to get involved as we gear up for Limb Loss and **Limb Difference Awareness Month (LLLDAM)**.

But wait—there's more! Our online merch shop just dropped some awesome new items to help you celebrate all month long. Whether you're rocking a new tee or grabbing something special for a friend, every item supports our community and spreads the word in style.





COME TAKE A LOOK AROUND, EXPLORE WHAT'S NEW, AND FIND SOMETHING
THAT SPEAKS TO YOU. **WE CAN'T WAIT TO CELEBRATE WITH YOU!**



VISIT: AMPUTEE-COALITION.ORG/SHOP

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

As a Student Who Has Limb Loss or Limb Difference: **A Comprehensive Guide**



Embarking on the journey to college is an exciting and transformative time in life, filled with opportunities for growth, learning, and new experiences. However, as a student who has limb loss or limb difference, you may face unique challenges that require careful planning and preparation. This guide is designed to help you navigate the college experience with confidence, ensuring that you have the tools and resources needed to thrive in your new environment.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT COLLEGE

Researching Accessible Campuses

Selecting a college is a significant decision for any student, but as a student who has limb loss or limb difference, it's crucial to ensure that your chosen campus is equipped to meet your needs.

Start by researching the potential colleges. Look into the layout of the campus—are the buildings easy to navigate? Are there ramps, elevators, and automatic doors? Accessibility extends beyond physical structures; consider the availability of adaptive facilities such as accessible gyms, swimming pools, and study spaces.

A college's disability services office is another vital resource to investigate. Reach out to them early in your search to understand the support they offer. Do they provide accommodations like accessible housing, transportation, or assistive technology? Are they proactive in addressing the needs of students with disabilities? Their responses can give you valuable insight into how well the college will support your academic and personal success.

CAMPUS TOURS

Visiting campuses in person is one of the best ways to assess their accessibility. During your visit, make sure to ask specific questions about dorm options, transportation services, and classroom accessibility. Observe how easy it is to move between buildings and across campus. If visiting in person isn't possible, many schools offer virtual tours that can still provide valuable information.

During your visit or virtual tour, speak with current students who use accessibility services, if possible. Their firsthand experiences can give you a clearer picture of what life on campus might be like for you.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Paying for college is a concern for many students, and as a student who has limb loss or limb difference, you may have additional costs related to accessibility and medical care. Fortunately, there are scholarships specifically available for students who have disabilities. Start by researching national organizations that offer these scholarships, such as the Amputee Coalition. Additionally, check if the colleges you're considering offer scholarships or grants for students who have disabilities.

When applying for financial aid, be sure to account for any additional costs you might incur, such as transportation, adaptive technology, or specialized medical care. Don't hesitate to reach out to the financial aid office for guidance—they can help you navigate the application process and find the resources you need.

PREPARING FOR THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

REGISTERING WITH THE DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE

Once you've chosen your college, your next step is to register with the disability services office. This office will be your main point of contact for arranging accommodations, so it's essential to communicate your needs clearly. Common accommodations for students who have limb loss or limb difference include note-takers, extended test time, accessible seating, and assistive technology. Providing documentation of your disability, such as a letter from your doctor, will help streamline the process.

It's important to advocate for yourself throughout your college experience. If you feel that your needs aren't being met, don't hesitate to speak up. The disability services office is there to support you, but they may not always be aware of specific challenges unless you bring them to their attention.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS

As a student who has a disability, you have rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA requires colleges to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that students with disabilities have access to educational opportunities. This means that your college must make adjustments to policies, practices, and facilities to accommodate your needs. If you feel that your accommodations are inadequate, remember that you have the right to address these issues. Start by discussing your concerns with the disability services office.

If the issue isn't resolved, you can work with your college's administration or seek assistance from organizations like the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF).

WORKING WITH PROFESSORS

Building a positive relationship with your professors is key to a successful academic experience. Early in the semester, take the initiative to meet with each of your professors to discuss your accommodations. Explain your needs clearly and provide them with any necessary documentation. Most professors are willing to work with you to ensure that you have what you need to succeed.

Having a plan in place for managing coursework and mobility challenges is also important. If you know that certain aspects of a course may be difficult for you, discuss potential solutions with your professor in advance. This proactive approach can help prevent issues from arising later in the semester.

MANAGING DAILY LIFE ON CAMPUS

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING OPTIONS

Finding housing that meets your needs is an essential part of your college preparation. Many colleges offer accessible dorms or apartments, but it's important to start your search early to ensure availability. When evaluating housing options, consider factors like bathroom accessibility, emergency preparedness, and proximity to campus facilities.

If your chosen dorm requires modifications, such as grab bars in the bathroom or a lower bed height, be sure to communicate these needs to the housing office well in advance. The sooner you make your requests, the more likely it is that they can be accommodated before you move in.

NAVIGATING THE CAMPUS

Getting around campus efficiently is a top priority. Many colleges offer transportation services specifically for students with disabilities, such as shuttle buses or golf carts. Make sure you're familiar with these services and how to access them.

Weather and terrain can also impact your mobility. If you're attending college in an area with harsh winters or uneven terrain, consider how these factors will affect your daily commute. It may be helpful to map out accessible routes between your classes and other important locations on campus.



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Maintaining your physical and mental health is crucial, especially during the transition to college life. Make sure you're aware of the healthcare services available on campus, including access to medical professionals who are familiar with your specific needs. If you use a prosthesis, it's a good idea to connect with a local prosthetist before you arrive on campus.

Mental health is just as important as physical health. The stress of adjusting to college life can be overwhelming, so don't hesitate to seek support if you need it. Many campuses offer counseling services, support groups, and wellness programs tailored to students who have disabilities.

BUILDING A SUPPORT NETWORK

CONNECTING WITH SUPPORT GROUPS

Having a strong support network can make a significant difference in your college experience. Seek out support groups on campus or virtual support groups where you can connect with other students who understand your challenges. These groups can provide emotional support, practical advice, and a sense of community.

Building friendships with people regardless of their disability status is also important. College is a time to expand your social circle and learn from different perspectives. Don't be afraid to join clubs, attend events, and get involved in campus life.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT

While college is a time for independence, staying connected with family and friends can provide a valuable support system. Regular communication with loved ones can help ease the transition and provide a source of encouragement when challenges arise.

Involving your family in the preparation process can also be helpful. They can assist with researching colleges, visiting campuses, and planning for your move. Their support will be invaluable as you embark on this new chapter of your life.

SEEKING MENTORSHIP

Connecting with other students who have limb loss and/or limb difference who have successfully navigated college can provide you with valuable insights and inspiration. Many organizations offer mentorship programs that can match you with someone who has experience in your chosen field of study.

Online communities and social media groups are also great resources for finding mentors and connecting with others who share your experiences. Don't hesitate to reach out—most people are happy to offer advice and support to someone new to the process.

EMBRACING INDEPENDENCE

DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS

College is an opportunity to develop important life skills that will serve you well beyond graduation. Learning to manage your personal care, prosthetic devices, and daily routines independently is a key part of this process. Time management, self-advocacy, and problem-solving are skills that will help you navigate both college and life beyond the classroom.



PARTICIPATING IN CAMPUS LIFE

Getting involved in campus life is a great way to meet new people and make the most of your college experience. Look for accessible extracurricular activities and organizations that align with your interests. Whether it's joining a club, participating in sports, or volunteering, there are plenty of ways to get involved.

Balancing your academic and social life is important, so be mindful of your schedule and prioritize activities that bring you joy and fulfillment. College is about more than just academics—it's also about personal growth and creating lasting memories.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

As you progress through college, it's important to set goals for both your academic and personal growth. Take advantage of your college's career services and internship opportunities to explore potential career paths. Planning for your future will help you stay motivated and focused on your long-term goals.

COLLEGE BOUND

Preparing for college as a student who has limb loss or limb difference requires careful planning, but with the right resources and support, it can be a rewarding and empowering experience. By choosing an accessible campus, advocating for your needs, and building a strong support network, you'll be well-equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities that college life brings. Remember, your abilities far outweigh any limitations, and with determination and perseverance, you can achieve your goals and make the most of your college experience.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Amputee Coalition Website: [Amputee-Coalition.org](https://www.amputee-coalition.org)
- Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov)



JOIN THE 2025 ADVENTURE!

PADDY ROSSBACH YEP YOUTH CAMP

Are you between the ages of 10-19? Get ready for an unforgettable summer adventure at the Paddy Rossbach YEP Youth Camp from July 27 - August 1, 2025 at the stunning Camp Aranzazu in Rockport, Texas! This FREE camp is packed with thrilling activities and a chance to build lifelong friendships in a supportive, empowering community.



EXCITING CAMP ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Sailing & kayaking
- Bayfront fishing
- Archery & ropes course
- Swimming & stand-up paddleboarding (SUPs)
- The SCREAMER!
- Arts & crafts, nature exploration & more!

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

We offer **full scholarships** covering **flights, accommodations, meals, and activities.**

- **Youth (10-17):** Submit an essay or video showcasing why you're ready for camp.
- **Youth (18-19):** Join as a **Leader in Training (LIT)** and gain valuable leadership skills.
- **Adults (20+):** Apply as Camp Counselors to help make this experience unforgettable for campers!

WHAT AWAITS YOU?

Sailing adventures and bonfire nights
Peer connections and mentorships
Life skills, education, and career development

READY TO APPLY? Visit the Youth Engagement Program Camp webpage at: **[Amputee-Coalition.org/youth-engagement-program-yep/youth-camp](https://amputee-coalition.org/youth-engagement-program-yep/youth-camp)**

Space is Limited!

Registration closes May 2, 2025.

**Don't miss out on this
life-changing adventure!**

WHEN EVERYTHING **CHANGES:**

Navigating Sudden Caregiving, Guilt, and Family Dynamics

I never imagined that a single phone call could turn my world upside down. One minute, I was going about my day, and the next, I was thrust into the role of caregiver for my dad after a medical emergency. I wasn't prepared—who ever really is? But there I was, faced with the reality of taking care of the man who had always taken care of me. The emotional rollercoaster that followed was intense, with guilt, fear, and frustration all mixed in. And to make things even more complicated, the dynamics with my sister were thrown into chaos.

THE SHOCK OF SUDDEN CAREGIVING

When my dad got sick, everything changed in an instant. There was no gradual easing into the caregiving role; it was just suddenly there, pressing down on me. The first few days were a blur of hospital visits, meetings with doctors, and trying to grasp what his new needs would be. I was scared, confused, and honestly, a bit resentful that this huge responsibility had landed on my shoulders out of nowhere.

I remember feeling completely overwhelmed by the weight of it all. The person who had always been my rock now needed me to be his, and I wasn't sure I was up to the task. I didn't know how to manage his medications, navigate the complex healthcare system, or even handle the simple day-to-day tasks that had suddenly become my responsibility. The fear of making a mistake was constant, and with it came a deep sense of guilt. What if I couldn't do this? What if I let him down?

MOURNING THE RELATIONSHIP WE ONCE HAD

As the days turned into weeks, another emotion began to creep in—grief. It wasn't just the shock of the situation that weighed on me; it was the realization that my relationship with my dad had changed in a fundamental way. The man who had always been my protector, the one I turned to for advice and support, was now dependent on me. I found myself mourning the relationship we once had, where he was strong and capable, and I was the one who leaned on him.

This mourning wasn't just about missing our past interactions; it was about coming to terms with the loss of a part of him. My dad was still there, of course, but the dynamic between us had shifted. I missed the easy conversations, the way he would always know how to fix things, both literally and figuratively. Now, I was the one who had to be strong, who had to make decisions and take charge. It felt like a role reversal that I wasn't ready for, and it hurt.

THE GUILT THAT FOLLOWS

Guilt became my constant companion during those first weeks. I felt guilty for not knowing what I was doing, for feeling resentful about the sudden changes in my life, and even for needing help. It felt like I was failing before I had even started. I wanted to be the perfect caregiver,

but I quickly realized that was an impossible standard. Still, the guilt persisted, feeding off every doubt and fear.

Balancing this new role with my job and my own family responsibilities was a nightmare. Every time I had to choose between being with my dad and attending to something else, the guilt would flare up. I felt like I was constantly letting someone down—my dad, my child, my husband, my business, and myself. And when I did manage to find a moment for myself, instead of feeling relief, I felt even more guilt. How could I take a break when my dad couldn't?

THE STRAIN ON SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

As if the situation wasn't tough enough, the dynamic with my sister added another layer of stress. She lived six hours away, so the bulk of the caregiving naturally fell to me. She would call every now and then, offering advice or questioning the decisions I was making, but she wasn't there to see the day-to-day struggles. It was easy for her to judge from a distance, and that judgment stung.

I was already doubting myself, and her words just amplified those doubts. It felt unfair—she wasn't the one juggling appointments, managing medications, or trying to keep the household running. Yet, she felt entitled to critique my decisions. She was my sister, and I wanted her support, not her judgment.

The imbalance between us was tough to navigate. I wanted to scream, "Come here and live this for a week, and then tell me what you think!" But I didn't. Instead, I bottled up the frustration and tried to keep going, though it wasn't easy.

FINDING WAYS TO COPE

Eventually, I realized that I couldn't keep going at this pace without breaking down. The guilt, the stress, and the resentment were eating me alive. I needed help, not just with the practical aspects of caregiving, but with the emotional toll it was taking. The first step was acknowledging that it was okay to feel what I was feeling. I wasn't a bad daughter for being overwhelmed or frustrated. I was just human.

I started reaching out to friends and finding support groups online where I could talk to people who were going through the same thing. It was a relief to hear that I wasn't alone, that others had felt the same fear, guilt, and frustration. They gave me permission to take care of myself, to set boundaries, and to seek help when I needed it. I learned that self-care wasn't selfish; it was necessary if I was going to keep being there for my dad.

Setting boundaries was tough, especially with my sister. I had to be honest with her about what I could and couldn't do, and about how her judgments were affecting me. It wasn't an easy conversation, but it was necessary. I explained that I needed her support, not just in words, but in actions too. Whether that meant her visiting more often or simply trusting my decisions, it was a step toward balancing our roles more fairly.

MOVING FORWARD

As time went on, I started to find a rhythm in my new role. It wasn't perfect, and there were still days when the guilt and stress would hit hard, but I was learning to manage it better. I accepted that I couldn't do everything on my own, and that was okay.



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My dad and I found a new normal, one where he relied on me, but also one where I relied on a network of support. It wasn't always smooth sailing, but it was better than before. We both realized that we were doing the best we could in a difficult situation, and that understanding made a huge difference.

FINDING SUPPORT

Stepping into the role of caregiver after a medical emergency is one of the hardest things I've ever done. The guilt, the sudden responsibilities, and the strain on family relationships were overwhelming at times. Mourning the relationship I once had with my dad was an unexpected and challenging part of the process. But through it all, I learned that it's okay to ask for help, to set boundaries, and to take care of myself too.

The Amputee Coalition's National Conference brought together caregivers like me to participate in workshops, find support, and engage in roundtable discussions. It was an incredible experience to connect with others who truly understood the challenges we face and to learn practical strategies for managing the emotional and physical demands of caregiving.

If you're going through something similar, know that you're not alone. It's a tough road, but with support and self-compassion, you can navigate it and find your way through. If you or your loved one need support, please reach out at [Amputee-Coalition.org](https://www.Amputee-Coalition.org).

SUPPORT THE AMPUTEE COALITION: ENSURE VITAL SERVICES CONTINUE

Your Support is Needed Now

In 2024, the Amputee Coalition won a competitive five-year federal grant to operate the National Limb Loss Resource Center. There is growing concern for the future of this grant given the cuts to the federal government staffing and resources. The Amputee Coalition is a donor-supported nonprofit and giving any time of year is tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Why Your Support Matters

The Amputee Coalition supports the **5.6 million people in the U.S. who have limb loss or limb difference**. Every year, tens of thousands of individuals across all 50 states turn to the National Limb Loss Resource Center for critical support, connection, and resources. The Amputee Coalition's core services include:



- **Information and Referral** – Providing trusted guidance and access to essential resources.
- **Peer Support & Support Groups** – Connecting people who have limb loss or limb difference with trained peer visitors and over 231 support groups.
- **Education & Outreach** – Advocating for greater access and awareness at local, state, and federal levels.
- **Certified peer visitors** provide encouragement and compassion to thousands of individuals and their loved ones each year. Specialized peer visits also support Veterans, active-duty military, and their families when they need it most.

Now is the Time to Give - Your contribution today helps ensure these vital services continue without interruption. Every gift makes an impact—keeping support, education, and advocacy available for those who need it.

Together, we can make a difference. Please donate today!

DIVING IN. A Beginner's Guide to Adaptive Swimming with Prostheses

The day began with a mix of nerves and excitement. For many attendees at this year's Amputee Coalition Annual Conference 2024 (ACNC24), the thought of getting back in the water—some for the first time since their amputation—was a bit overwhelming. But as the session unfolded, it quickly transformed into a powerful step towards independence and a newfound confidence in the water.

Swimming with limb loss or limb difference can feel like a big challenge. From body acceptance to the actual mechanics of swimming, things can feel impossible at first. The key? Accepting that your head has to be in the water. It's a simple concept, but it can be a big mental hurdle, especially for those adjusting to their new bodies. But as they eased into the pool, one attendee perfectly captured the spirit of the event. After a moment of hesitation, he suddenly shouted, "Just do it!" and cannonballed into the pool. His words rang true for everyone: "Whatever it is, do it, but do it... adaptively. Whether you want to run, walk, hike, swim... Say screw it and just do it." We couldn't agree more. But as we all learned that day, having the tools to do so safely is the best of both worlds.

Instructor Chris Doerger was a calm and reassuring presence, guiding the group through each step. "Floating is safety in the water," she explained. "Once you get past that, it's just about how you move from position to position." Her advice struck a chord with the participants, many of whom were discovering a new relationship with their bodies. Chris also shared that: "This is the one time you can feel free and truly understand your body in the water." It was a reminder that, in



the water, there are no limitations.

By the end of the session, the pool was filled with laughter, splashes, and a strong sense of achievement. What started as a challenge turned into a celebration of adaptability and freedom. For those who participated, it wasn't just about swimming—it was about reclaiming a part of themselves and realizing that, with the right mindset and support, anything is possible.

So, if you're considering getting back in the water, remember the lesson we learned that day: Just do it—adaptively. And know that with every stroke, you're not just moving through the water; you're moving toward a stronger, more empowered you.

TIPS FOR SAFE AND FUN SWIMMING

- 1. Don't Swim Alone:** Safety first! Always bring a friend or join a class until you're completely comfortable in the water. Having someone with you not only makes it safer but also more fun.
- 2. Embrace Your New Body:** After an amputation, it's totally normal to feel a bit self-conscious, but don't let that hold you back! Swimming is an amazing way to reconnect with your body in a new way,

boosting both your confidence and your strength.

3. **Know Your Prosthesis:** Not all prosthetic devices are waterproof or made for water, so before you dive in, check with your prosthetist or the manufacturer to make sure yours is water compatible. If it's not, consider leaving it on the deck—swimming without it might just give you more freedom and ease in the water. But if you prefer more stability, swim legs are a great option if you have them.
4. **Find Your Balance:** Your body's balance has changed, and that's to be expected. Focus on where you place your head—lifting it might make your hips drop, while keeping it down helps you float horizontally, which is perfect for swimming or just chilling on your back.
5. **Master the Basics:** Start with floating and breathing before you dive into doing laps. Get comfortable with how your body moves in the water. Practice floating on your back and then on your stomach with your face submerged to get ready for some swimming. And don't forget to breathe.
6. **Stay Safe in the Sun:** Don't forget the sunscreen—especially on your residual limbs and full body! A protective sleeve might be handy too and remember to have a backup for after your swim.
7. **Entry and Exit:** Whether you roll, ease down a ramp, use a knee pad, or prop yourself up with towels, find a comfortable way to get in and out of the water. And when you're done, make sure to dry off thoroughly and check for any scrapes or cuts before putting your prostheses back on.

8. **Listen to Your Body:** Swimming can be a workout, so stay hydrated, take breaks when you need to, and enjoy the water at your own pace. Swimming isn't just about exercise—it's about reconnecting with yourself and enjoying the freedom that the water offers.
9. **Whether you're a seasoned swimmer or swimming for the first time, remember this:** the water is for everyone. With the right mindset and these safety tips, you're well on your way to having a fun and safe swimming experience!

ABOUT CHRIS DOERGER:

Follow Chris Doerger on LinkedIn:

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Learn more about Ottobock by visiting [Ottobock.com](https://www.ottobock.com) where Chris serves as a Senior Manager in Education Strategy and Development.

SAFETY DISCLAIMER:

Before diving into any swimming activities, always prioritize your safety and well-being. While swimming is a fantastic way to stay active and have fun, it's important to consider your unique needs. Please consult with your healthcare provider or physical therapist to ensure you're prepared and equipped for safe swimming.

Always use appropriate assistive devices and take it slow at your own pace. This article is for informational purposes only and the Amputee Coalition is not responsible for any issues that may arise from your participation in swimming. Remember, your safety is the top priority—take care and enjoy the water!

THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS FOR EVERYDAY LIVING



Let's be honest—most of us are running on autopilot these days. We're brushing our teeth while mentally going through our to-do list, scarfing down lunch between emails, and walking while texting or thinking about what's next. At last year's Amputee Coalition National Conference (ACNC24), a group of attendees hit the pause button and took part in a powerful and refreshing session called **The Power of Mindfulness for Everyday Living**, led by the amazing Heather Thamer, M.Ed., ERYT-500 and certified Yoga for Amputees instructor.



Heather welcomed everyone with a simple, yet profound reminder: **Mindfulness is about being fully present in the moment—without judgment.** It's when your body and your mind are in the same place at the same time. Not in the future. Not in the past. Just... here.

Sounds peaceful, right? But if you're thinking, "That's great in theory, but who has the time?"—you're not alone.

One participant summed it up perfectly: "I knew all the benefits of mindfulness, but honestly, who has the time?"

Here's the thing: everyone does. Because the practice of mindfulness isn't about adding something new to your day—it's about **bringing presence to what you're already doing.**

Yep, even brushing your teeth.

Just feel the brush against your gums, notice the taste of the toothpaste, the coolness of the water. That's mindfulness. That's it.

WHY IT MATTERS

Practicing mindfulness doesn't require hours of meditation or a quiet mountaintop retreat. It's for real people, living real lives—with all the chaos, change, and curveballs that come with it.



And the benefits? Totally worth it:

- Boosts your overall **wellbeing**.
- Helps you **cope with change**.
- Quiets those looping, ruminating thoughts.
- Supports with **pain management**.
- Encourages better **mobility** by tuning into your body.

EASY WAYS TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS (YES, EVEN IF YOU'RE SUPER BUSY):

- **Breathe:** A deep breath in, and exhale through your nose with your mouth closed. It instantly slows things down.
- **Body scan:** Gently shift your focus through your body, from top to bottom. Release tension as you go.
- **Mindful movement:** Yoga or Tai Chi are great, but even stretching or moving slowly while breathing counts.
- **Meditation:** Just five minutes a day can work wonders.
- **5-4-3-2-1 technique:**
 - 5 things you see
 - 4 things you feel
 - 3 things you hear
 - 2 things you smell
 - 1 thing you taste



Heather also shared a few helpful breathing techniques for handling discomfort or stress—like the “blowing breath,” the “haaa breath,” and the “hissing breath.” These can even be used during rehab or when you’re having a tough moment emotionally or physically.



MAKE IT PART OF YOUR DAY

Not sure where to start? Try weaving mindfulness into your daily rhythm:

- **Morning:** Begin with a few minutes of stillness or gratitude.
- **Mealtimes:** Eat without distractions. Savor the flavors.
- **While walking (or moving from place to place):** Pay attention to each step, each breath.
- **Evening:** End your day with reflection or a few calming breaths.

What surprised many people at the session was how quickly they were able to quiet their minds. It didn’t take hours of practice or fancy equipment—just a willingness to be in the moment.

If you’re curious to learn more, or ready to learn more, Heather offers great resources at Yoga for Amputees. There are also local classes, free online videos, and apps to help you stay consistent.

Mindfulness doesn’t require perfection—just presence. Give it a try. Your body, your mind, and your spirit will thank you.

601 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Suite 420, South Building
Washington, DC 20004

NATIONAL LIMB LOSS RESOURCE CENTER®

Where can you go when you have questions about limb loss or limb difference? Here at the National Limb Loss Resource Center®, we provide comprehensive information and resources free of charge. Information is developed and reviewed by the Resource Development team and the Scientific and Medical Advisory Committee (SciMAC) who are experts in the field of limb loss and limb difference. This ensures accuracy of the information being provided.



Connect with a resource center specialist to request materials or discuss your needs with a Healthcare Navigator. Our knowledgeable team is the place to turn to when you have questions about your journey in limb loss and limb difference. You can reach them by calling toll-free 888/267-5669 or by completing our secure online intake form at [Amputee-coalition.org/service/find-support-services](https://amputee-coalition.org/service/find-support-services)

Call **Toll-Free 888/267-5669, Ext. 1** to speak with an information specialist
8 AM - 5 PM Eastern, Monday-Friday.

