

Purpose

Journal of the



**Amputees
Federation**
of New Zealand
Incorporated

July 2017

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GUEST EDITORIAL

(As I review this edition of Purpose prior to publication, I am aware that its main focus is on young people. However, this can only be good - hopefully they are the future leaders of this Federation. We now have two youth members on our National Executive and this Guest Editorial is contributed by one of them - Ed.)

My name is Matthew Bryson, and I'm 33. I lost my leg below the knee in June 2014 by trying to take on an auger at work. I consider myself still relatively new to the amputee world. I feel very privileged in being a part of such an amazing amputee community in NZ, and look forward to what the future will bring.

I have been one of the Give it a Go! participants for the last three years and this year it included rock climbing, a high rope course and a bridge swing. All 15 of us who took part were faced with challenges when trying to complete these activities and no matter how difficult they were, everyone gave everything a go. It was amazing to see us work together as a group and helping each other out. We all face challenges every day living as amputees; we mostly face these challenges by ourselves as people around us can only imagine what it would be like living with an amputation. With GIAG we faced these together as a group and helped, supported and encouraged each other with the challenges we were given. GIAG has also allowed us to meet so many amputees from all around New Zealand; I have met some amazing people because of it. The best thing about being an amputee is being involved with GIAG!

(See pages 4-6 for a report on the Conference and more about GIAG)

*Our sincere thanks go to our Conference and GIAG sponsors -
Ossur Asia-Pacific, Otto Bock Australia Pty Ltd, Invacare,
Pub Charity, NZ Community Trust, and the Lion Foundation*

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2017

The Taranaki Society proved to be excellent hosts for this year's Conference held at the Novotel Hotel in New Plymouth and the



Opening on Friday evening 7 April provided an opportunity for the 80+ attendees representing the 9 Regional Societies to renew and make new acquaintances. This was followed by the AGM, during which a new Executive was elected (refer page 2). Two important items of business were: (a) a change to the Constitution to allow for the co-option to the National Executive of a Cultural Adviser and (b) agreement (by majority vote) that the Federation enter a Memorandum of Understanding with CCS Disability Action. It is believed that such a MOU will facilitate co-operation to the mutual benefit of both organisations, whilst at the same time allowing for the retention of individuality and autonomy. We will keep members informed of further developments.

Most of the group took in the sights of New Plymouth on the Saturday morning and in the afternoon guest speakers included Dr Lorna Fox, a pain management specialist, who gave a very insightful talk on the different techniques she uses with her clients for long-term pain management. A talk by Tim Crowe of Amputees in Action followed and showed the various ways amputees help to train emergency personnel by participating in exercises as victims of catastrophic events. Other speakers during the weekend were from ACC, the NZ Artificial Limb Service, Otto Bock and Ossur. Last, but by no means least, Ken Sowden (Operations Manager of Parafed Canterbury) talked about his experiences as part of the Para-Olympics team over the years.

On Sunday morning, the *Give it a Go!* group shared their experiences of the previous day with obvious enthusiasm for the challenges they had faced and some later wrote about these.....

This was my first year attending this event and I was excited if not a little nervous. I had nothing to worry about as it was very well organised and I was looked after the moment I stepped off the plane. Meeting other amputees in my age group and even one of them lives in the same town as me that I had no idea about, was amazing. To be able to give it a go on activities that I would not normally even attempt to do was something I will never forget. Normally if I was to partake in activities I would be the only one in the group to have a disability, so

at GIAG it was good to not even have to think about how I was going to adapt to the situation or activity. As a group we all supported each other and I now have a network of support/friends that I will be keeping in touch with. Thanks! (Brooke Donaldson, aged 30)



I've had my artificial leg for 23 years and it was only because of GIAG that I was able to meet an amazing group of people that were just like me, and in the same age group. I'm not able to express how good that felt. But enduring challenging tasks that able bodied people struggle with, and seeing new found friends able to do it, gave me such a new found

confidence and view that if you could do it, there's no way I can't. Just staying at the hotel where you'd walk around the corner and bump into an amputee built my confidence and helped me feel comfortable in my skin. I can't wait for next year and the many years to come. GIAG brought out a passion for me to want to get involved. (Danielle Neeson-Morgan, aged 23)

New Plymouth 2017 was my second time attending the Amputees Federation National Conference, but my first time at Give it a Go. And what a time it was! Being able to spend a whole weekend with a group of young people who just 'got it' was an incredible and priceless experience. Fifteen young people of different ages, from different places and backgrounds, all with the shared experience of being an amputee. We cheered each other on as we each tackled the rock climbing wall. We celebrated as each





of us conquered our fears on the high ropes. We counted down as one by one we took a leap of faith, backwards off a bridge. I had no excuse not to participate in any of the activities. No one had any excuses... because we all faced the same challenges. No one was left behind. This was

a new and exciting experience for me. Usually I am the odd one out, the one who needs extra consideration because of my impairment. But not this time. When I think of the new friendships I formed and the old friendships that were strengthened, I think of a bunch of brilliant, empowered, confident and outgoing young people. Amputees who are leaders within their families, their whanau and their work places.

We laughed, we cried, we shared, we grew and we gave it a go. I can't wait to give it another go next year! (Robbie Francis, aged 28)

Saturday evening provided an opportunity for many to get dressed up for the Western theme and dance to the music of local band *Midlife Crisis*.



PUBLICATIONS available (no cost) from the National Coordinator or Regional Society Secretaries

A New Challenge - Advice for New Amputees (a 32 page booklet)

An Ongoing Challenge - A 60 page publication which covers a wide range of topics and includes personal profiles of 11 amputees.

A Challenge with Purpose - A History of the first 50 years of the Amputees Federation of NZ Incorporated (275 pages)

The Amputee Society of Otago & Southland Inc. -The first 60 years (146 pages)

Little Jellybean by Margot & Anton Wuts - for child amputees, their parents and families (24 pages)

INTRODUCING GRACE JOHNSTONE

(Excerpts reprinted with thanks to the Canterbury/Westland Society)



Hello everyone, I'm Grace Johnstone and I am 15 years old. I was the first child to my parents Mark and Tracey, a much loved and wanted fertility treatment baby. I was given a very poor prognosis after antenatal scans and although I was born with twisted legs and a malformed spine, I was alert and well and my parents celebrated. After many operations, I walked at the age of three and a half with a built up boot, AFO splints, and a truck to balance on. When I started school I was the size of a petite two year old and was adept at using crutches and could zoom around in a wheelchair when

needed. Hospital trips for ongoing corrective surgeries to re-angle bones, sort tendons and lengthen my smaller leg were a big part of my childhood. Orthopaedic surgeries involve a lot of pain and unfortunately epidurals never worked for me. When I was 13 and had been unable to walk without crutches for a year and a half, my right foot was very painful and leg not too useful. Amputation, although hard, was amazing, enabling me to walk, run and ride a bike using my new prosthetic leg. My amputation was a "through the knee" procedure and my new leg was fantastic, once I mastered it. I did the Pegasus fun run only four months after the amputation. My spinal health deteriorated and a year later I had surgery for my scoliosis. My spinal abnormalities meant it was a very challenging operation. I lost movement in my legs and was in a lot of pain. Further surgery was required to free the nerves and this was followed by an intensive rehabilitation time. I'm now a year on from this surgery and learning to walk with my prosthesis is my next challenge. Sitting at school all day is difficult and trying to walk causes pain. I'm also four months post a heel osteotomy and tendon transfer on my left foot. Also a sciatic neuroma resection in my stump which I call my "little leg". My spine needs a higher fusion at some stage and I'm looking forward to getting back to the activities I love: rock climbing, kayaking, swimming, badminton, bush walks, reading, singing and the piano.

OSSUR AUSTRALIA MOBILITY CLINIC

There were over 140 attendees at this clinic held in Melbourne earlier this year. The event combined a mix of clinical presentations and physical activities as well as opportunities for participants to connect with professionals and other amputees of all ages and abilities. Amputee athletes enjoyed the chance to build overall mobility skills under the guidance of a renowned amputee physiotherapist and an expert team of coaches. Attending healthcare professionals had the opportunity to build upon their own knowledge and learn techniques to improve clinical outcomes. Over the course of the two-day event, improvements in mobility, balance, speed and confidence became evident amongst all participants. One session this year was called 'Athlete's Choice' and gave amputee athletes the opportunity to choose between several activities: How to use your Micro-processor Knee, Running Reprise, Mini Soccer or Golf. This was a great success and allowed amputees to work on areas where they want to improve their mobility and confidence. At the conclusion of the event, a presentation ceremony was held where two deserving amputees received a free Össur Running Foot.

(It is hoped that Ossur might sponsor a similar clinic in NZ at some time in the future - Ed.)

INTRODUCING HOLLY ROBINSON



Earlier this year, Holly was one of eight from Otago to receive a NZ Youth Award - hers was for representing NZ as the flag bearer in the opening ceremony of the Rio Paralympic Games and also for breaking the world record for the F46 javelin and being placed second overall. The latest reprint of our publication An Ongoing Challenge includes Holly's profile (written by Jane Smith).

Holly, who is of Ngai Tahu descent, was born without a hand and forearm on her left arm.

A no-nonsense West Coast family did not let her feel sorry for herself so she soon learned how to manage eating, dressing, and handling books and paper, not easy with only one hand. She started school in Hokitika. On the first day children in the playground bullied her

and commented on her arm. She was prepared. She knew how to stand up for herself and twin brother Jonathon was there in support. Her ebullient personality and competitiveness helped her overcome many obstacles and she was soon involved in competitive sport – rugby, basketball, netball, swimming and badminton. From Hokitika Primary School she graduated to Westland High School where her favourite subject was PE and she concentrated on athletics field events – javelin, shot put and discus. She was selected to compete in the CCS Disability Action Games where she was recognised as an exceptional talent. Paralympics New Zealand awarded her a scholarship to Taieri College near Dunedin so that she could work with Paralympic coach Raylene Bates and take advantage of the facilities at the High Performance Sport New Zealand Training Centre. This was a huge boost to her athletic career. Holly has since competed with distinction at the 2012 Summer Paralympics in London and the 2016 Summer Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro.

These days Holly is working for Sport Otago as Walk n Wheel coordinator 2017. She enjoys working rather than studying all the time, particularly since this job involves working with young people, encouraging them to be more active. She shares a flat with four others and does all her own cooking. Training takes most of her spare time as she strives to be the best in the World. Her performances in International competition show outstanding progressive improvement with the javelin from a throw of 30.61m in 2011 in Australia and a 7th world ranking to 41.22m in Brazil in 2016 and a 2nd world ranking. As part of a team of six representing New Zealand, Holly will be competing in the para-athletics championships in London beginning on 14 July.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Auckland & Northland - A major change in recent months came about with the resignation (due to a health concern) of Helen Kocks as Secretary/Treasurer. Welcome back to Janis Bourne who has stepped in meantime. At Conference, President Claudia Teague was re-elected to the National Executive. Committee members have been busy - fundraising with a sausage sizzle at Bunnings Warehouse in Mt Roskill and promoting the Society at the Z Service Station in Royal Oak.

Waikato, Bay of Plenty & Districts - We have our June Social Function on the 24th coming up - this time a trip to the Avantidrome on the outskirts of Cambridge. We will be taking part in their tour with lunch at the venue. We are looking forward to our younger members joining us on the occasion. *(Lee Cook, President)*

Hawke's Bay/East Coast - The winter has come to Hawke's Bay and by the time this is printed the big boat race will be over for better or worse. Much like sailing conditions at times in Bermuda, it feels a bit like we are in the doldrums in our region so far this year. We are struggling to get projects off the ground. Some offers of help and donations, such as sausages for an upcoming fundraiser, have been harder to come by than usual. There seems to be more competition for resources, also attendances at social events are down. We are on the lookout for a new Field Officer, a paid position as long as funding is available, and also a Treasurer for our Society. *(Diane Walsh, President)*

Taranaki - The Society has settled back down into a normal type of routine in the life post Conference. We were more than happy with the weekend in that there were no significant issues that cropped up. Looking ahead we have planned a mystery car rally in September and hopefully later in the year will be combining with the Waikato Society for another weekend away somewhere in the North Island. It is concerning that the Artificial Limb Service clinic which was to be held at the Taranaki Base Hospital Orthotics Department in early May was cancelled, apparently due to the extremely low demand for appointments. These Clinics are a great opportunity to get minor adjustments to your prosthesis done and/or a chance to have a chat to the visiting Prosthetist regarding any issues that you may have. We need to be mindful, that we could in the future be in the situation where it becomes the "use it or lose it" syndrome. *(Wally Garrett, President)*

Manawatu - Two member functions have been held since the last *Purpose* was published. The most recent was a luncheon held at Turakina with 16 members attending, including 6 travelling from Wanganui and 2 from Levin. The committee as always are open to any suggestions of member functions either social or informative. In the last ASM newsletter feedback was sought on a proposed name change to the "Amputee Society of Manawatu and Districts Inc" but at this stage no opinions have been received. The current membership is spread over a wide area geographically and the

committee is mindful of how best to meet the needs of members.
(John Maher, Secretary)

Greater Wellington Region - We will be hosting next year's National Conference and our committee is busy securing a venue and attending to details. Kate Horan MNZM has received her medal at a ceremony at Government House. We recently had a fundraising Sausage Sizzle at Mitre 10 Mega in Porirua selling over 200 hotdogs. Two days later we were blown away to receive news that a local business had seen our fundraising efforts and had made a substantial donation to the Federation and our Society. We have another Movie fundraiser and fellowship coming up July 23rd at the Light House Cinema in Pauatahanui. (Ken Te Tau, Vice President)

Nelson & Marlborough - Nelson members are invited to join with other amputees at the Honest Lawyer for morning tea on the last Friday of the month from 10am. Marlborough has been enjoying monthly get-togethers held during weekends and hope that in future more people will be available to attend with their families.
(Carla Taylor, Secretary)

Canterbury & Westland - Seven of our members attended the New Plymouth Conference in April. We have an indoor sports afternoon coming up mid-July and are investigating the possibility of holding a youth get-together later in the year.
(Eileen Poplewell, Secretary)

Otago & Southland - Two of our Committee members - Anna Grimaldi and Holly Robinson - will be part of the New Zealand team of six competing in the World Para-athletics Championships in London, beginning on 14 July. Javelin thrower Holly will be attending her 4th world championships. (Lorraine Peacock, Coordinator)

Newsletters of Regional Societies are available on the Federation's website (www.af.org.nz) along with other useful information.

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