

e-news

June 2013



Kath's Burpee Challenge

On Sunday 21 April Kath Koschel's incredible burpee challenge came to life, with 100+ participants assisting Kath to achieve her goal of completing 14,650 burpees to raise funds for Limbs 4 Life. Kath shares her story and the circumstances which led her to take on the challenge.

2012 was a tough year for me. Things came to a head in August when I found myself within hours of losing my entire left leg. Looking back now, I had a pretty good idea that things weren't as they should be the day I noticed my foot was slightly off colour. I had already been spending hour after hour at a rehabilitation

centre following two spinal surgeries for extensive nerve damage. Time spent with family and friends was already at a bare minimum and so I carried on until the worst happened and I awoke one morning with no feeling in my leg from the hip down.

I was no longer able to control any part of my leg - it had no strength and worst of all I had lost control of my bladder and bowel. Things had hit boiling point.

My initial thought upon waking was that I must have slept on my leg in a strange position. When I fell to the floor trying to get out of bed I

knew something wasn't right. My mind was racing. I went immediately into overdrive and made my way directly to hospital. The news was not something I was prepared for. The blood pressure in my leg was low, dangerously low.

After what felt like hours and countless doctors consultations I was told that the safest option was to amputate my leg from the knee down. I begged the doctors to hold off! Just one day. We argued to the point of exhaustion... but I won!

The next day, the blood pressure in my leg had risen just enough for it to be considered moderately stable. It was still



slightly blue but with a lot of hard work it had every chance to make some sort of recovery. I could live with that! And so, exercise was the order of the day. (Exercise was considered a vital component to recovery as it would help improve the blood flow.)

Before the initial back surgery I had spent the previous five years living a very active lifestyle through my involvement in representative cricket for both NSW in the Women's National Cricket League and Middlesex CC in the English Premier League Competition.

After deciding to give the 2012/13 season a miss following my second back surgery, I reignited my love for exercise when joining my local gym just two months before that dreaded morning. After two weeks off following my desperate hospital visit, I returned to the gym and got

stuck straight back into it. I exercised and exercised and exercised some more. I had previously gained the help of a personal trainer, Marnie. She was brilliant to me. Nothing was ever too hard and somehow she managed to think of different ways to get me training again, even with the difficult challenge she had in creating workouts that would get me sweating without the use of an entire leg! Twice a week I would climb the stairs on crutches to the gym, have a training session and then have my brother carry me back down the stairs and take me home. It was these two people that made me realise just how lucky I was to have the help of a lot of great people. They both kept me on track and I will never be able to thank them enough.

Throughout all of this I continued to hold down my full time job whilst also travelling to rehab three mornings a week

for two hours before work, as well as overnights in rehab on weekends.

I lasted two weeks before the pressure in my leg dropped dangerously low again. In early September I was given a two week deadline by the doctors. I had two weeks for the pressure to reach a stable point or they would cease treatment, resorting to a full leg amputation shortly after. That was probably the worst day of all on this journey. I remember calling my brother to tell him the news. I fell apart. I had not only lost control physically, but also emotionally. I don't ever recall feeling that broken. My brother held me in my exhausted state and slowly, after nearly drowning in my own tears first, I gained some strength back.

I had two choices. I could choose to give in and give up, or I could choose to fight. I fought. I found myself in the

gym at all hours of the day... 2am, 3am, 4am. Sleep was no longer a friend of mine and I was going to win this fight.

I WON!

Within less than 24 hours of the deadline the doctors had imposed, it was found that I had been bleeding internally for what could possibly have been months. The blood had been pooling in my stomach and consequently the blood flow was minimal. The extensive nerve damage in my leg meant that the limited blood supply had no longer been reaching my leg.

After four months of full time rehabilitation, a lot of pressure tests, pools and gym work, my leg is now in a much better state, although I currently live with a slight limp... but hey, nobody is perfect! ?

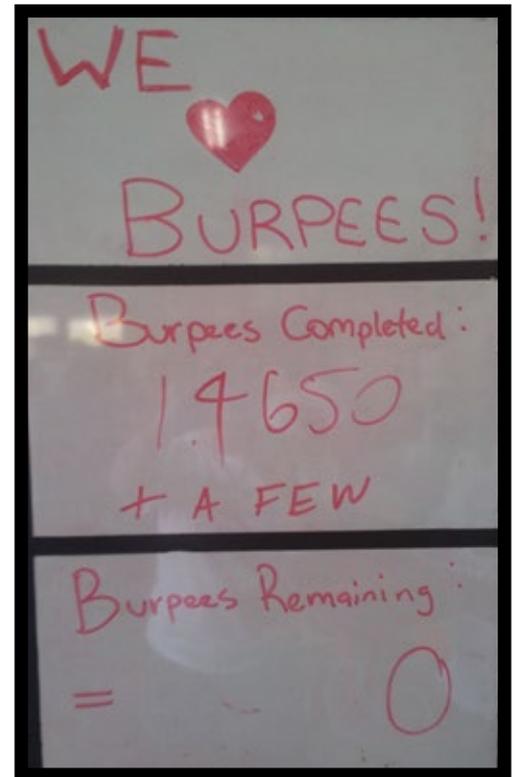
I was and am lucky enough to have the support of a lot of really great people. Some of them I have known for years, some I have met along this journey.

I know there are a lot of people out there facing the same life changing situation that I was faced with. Sometimes it is without much warning at all.

Along my road to recovery I believed that everything would be okay as long as I could complete just one Burpee! I even mastered the art on one leg while I continued my rehab program.

So, between us, on April 21 at Mortdale Fire Station, my friends and I pledged to complete one Burpee per every dollar pledged to Limbs 4 Life.

Kath Koschel



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Soldier On for Aussie troops

Soldier On was started by John Bale after he lost his mate, Michael Fussell, to an IED attack in Afghanistan. Looking for ways to support those wounded in the same attack, he realised that while there were charities that supported the families of those who had been killed in action, there was no way for the Australian public to support service men and women who had come back from active service with physical and psychological wounds.

He enlisted the support of Cavin Wilson, who was involved in bringing wounded servicemen back to Australia, seeing first hand the terrible effects of war injuries and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Together they decided to start a charity that directly supported contemporary wounded servicemen and women, and made sure that our wounded knew the Australian public cared about them. And so on the eve of ANZAC day 2012, Soldier On was born.

Soldier On works to supplement the good work done by Defence and DVA, by enhancing rehabilitation, while inspiring and empowering our wounded Australians.

One of the most important elements of Soldier On's work is ensuring Australia's wounded receive world's best care during their rehabilitation. To do this, the organisation fundraises for medical equipment, such as the Lokomat Pro. CEO of

Soldier On, John Bale, says this type of robotic locomotive therapy equipment is used in the treatment of spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries.

"These are the most common wounds encountered by those serving in conflicts overseas," Mr Bale said, "and once purchased will greatly enhance rehabilitative capabilities at selected hospitals around Australia."

The charity also works to inspire those undergoing rehabilitation, by giving wounded soldiers the opportunity to participate in a variety of adventurous activities. Mr Bale says that the men and women going through rehabilitation often find it hard to stay motivated.

"We've worked with several members of the ADF who found physical challenges to be a great way to stay motivated during their rehabilitation," he said.

"Someone like Sergeant Michael Lyddiard, who lost his right arm and right eye in Afghanistan, said his motivation improved significantly when Soldier On presented him with the opportunity to participate in the Mark Webber Challenge in Tasmania.

"Not only did he rise to the challenge, but he and his team mate came seventh of 14 elite teams."

Finally, Soldier On works to empower wounded service personnel, with plans to offer comprehensive educational and employment opportunities as the charity grows.

"We've already had wounded soldiers act as mentors on the 2013 Mateship Trek in Papua New Guinea," Mr Bale said, "as well as giving others the opportunity to share their stories at St Kilda Football Club training sessions and matches.

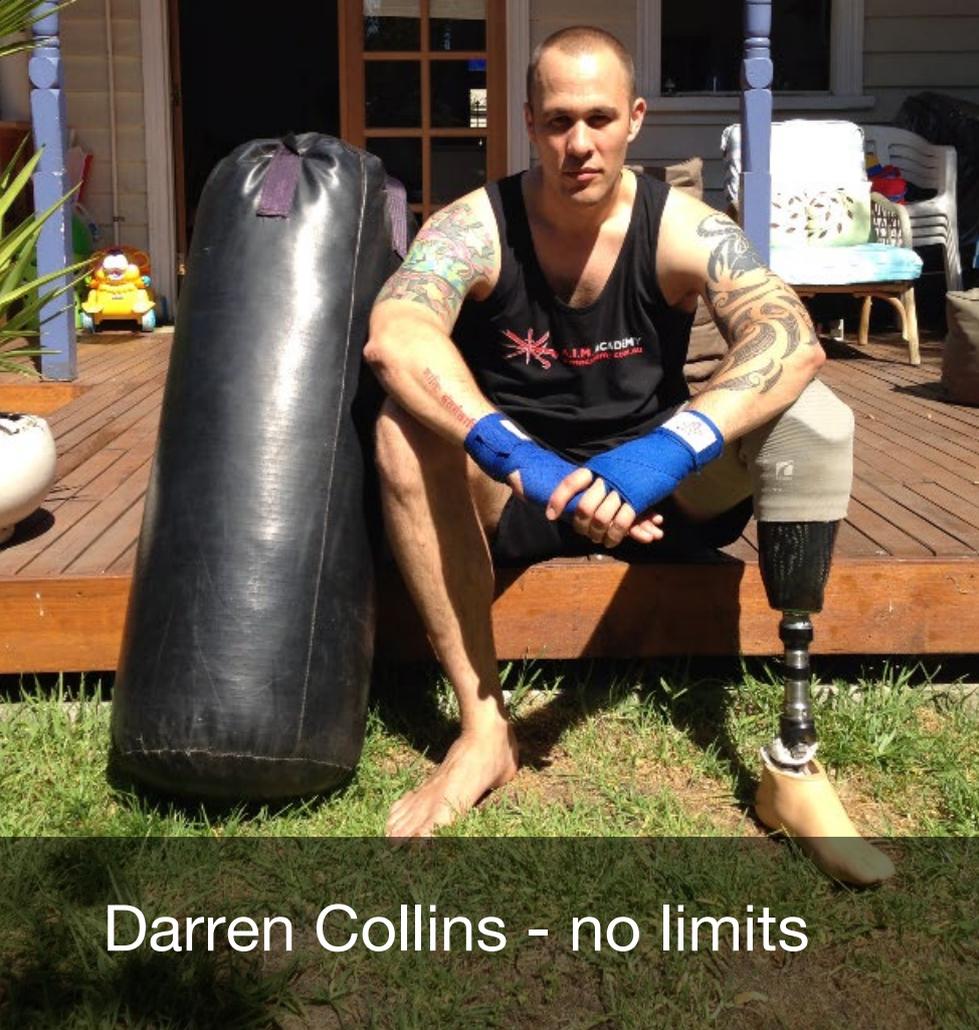
"We will continue to look for more ways to empower our wounded men and women, allowing them to share their valuable skills and experiences. They are all very talented people and it's important we involve them in the process of educating our communities about the difficulties these brave men and women face."

Mr Bale says that once a service man or woman is wounded, they can be left feeling as though their lives are over. He says Soldier On aims to show them that although they have been wounded, they still have a full life to live, and that they have the Australian public supporting them along the way.

"It needs to happen at all level of the community, from business, to government, even the mums and dads at home. It's important those wounded, either physically or psychologically, understand they are not going it alone. We need to show them that we are proud of their sacrifice; that they are still important members of our communities; and we will, together, help them through what will be one of the most difficult parts of their lives."

To learn more about how Soldier On supports Australia's wounded, visit www.soldieron.org.au





Darren Collins - no limits

It is a great pleasure to have been asked to write a few words for L4L about my recent endeavours. By way of introduction, I am Darren Collins, L4L board member and Peer Support volunteer, husband and father of two wee children and fast approaching forty years old! I am a below-knee amputee, having lost my leg following a leg break playing football (that's soccer to you Aussies - yes, I'm a Pom!) and a resulting Compartment Syndrome and infection. I am also mad about sport and keeping fit and following a stint as an adaptive rower, I decided to follow one of my favourite all time sports....Boxing. In fact, I am hoping to enter my first interclub sparring competition later this year and if I continue to progress (plus successfully juggle career and homelife and stay fit!) I may attempt to compete at the Australian Masters Games. My underlying goal is not only to further my own fitness and to play competitive sport but to try

and raise awareness in a field that is not heavily populated with amputees.

There are so many reasons why I chose boxing as a sport to participate in. I have been a fan of boxing for many years. It is often overlooked that there is a beauty, an art and an elegance to boxing. I don't ever want to see someone get seriously hurt - however, in many cases, the body movement, athleticism, fitness and conditioning of the participants is a joy to watch. There is a huge distinction to be made between the art of boxing and the sight of two people brawling, the ugliness and violence of which has no place in a peaceful society. Boxing also gives many young men and women opportunities that society itself does not offer.

For me personally, as a below-knee amputee, I am often drawn to high intensity sports that require discipline, hard training and a

strong mind. Putting myself up against able-bodied athletes is a great challenge, as much for them as me, and everyone benefits from the experience. In all honesty, if I can inspire one other disabled person to try something they love, then any effort I am able to put in is all worth it.

Boxing also requires core strength, flexibility, balance and timing. My general footwork and ability to move quickly and in different directions is having a real impact on the range of movement I have while wearing my prosthetic limb. This is also a great opportunity to challenge myself and to show that there are few barriers in life and no limits to what we can all achieve, regardless of what can be perceived as holding us back.

A boxing gym or martial arts academy can initially feel quite intimidating, especially for a disabled athlete. Don't be fooled! Of course, some people may be cautious, nervous or even unintentionally patronising. Don't let this put you off! Most of the caution is in the interests of safety. Display a great attitude and passion for what you are attempting and all will fall into place very quickly!! Try everything, find workarounds and don't be afraid of failing (or falling!)? I deliberately looked for a place to train where I felt comfortable and where I was made welcome. I joined the AIM Academy in Melbourne where I met with the coaches, had a chat about my goals and we went from there. They now fully back me and are happy for me to spar with guys who are already competing. It has been a great learning experience for all involved. Of course, if a boxing gym is not your style, most gyms now run some kind of boxing fitness class. Go for it!

As mentioned earlier, there do not appear to be many disabled athletes actually participating in combat sports although

there are some doing it really well. This may be due to how boxers and disabled people are stereotyped. The stereotypical disabled person does not fit into the stereotypical boxer's World. This may mean that disabled athletes think that it is not an avenue that is open to them. Fortunately, these boundaries are beginning to blur and more and more clubs and academies will look to accommodate disabled athletes.

Boxing is not a Paralympic sport - I am not necessarily suggesting that it should be. I can understand that from a classification perspective it could be a logistical minefield! However, this can mean that a disabled athlete may lean towards other sports such as rowing, athletics and so on. I have tried a few other sports, adaptive

rowing included, but you have to have the passion, otherwise it just won't work. The only barriers are those that exist in our own minds. That's a topic for another day!

I would love to see boxing gyms and martial arts academies open their doors a little more and invite disabled athletes to train in controlled environments. It would also be fantastic if the various boxing authorities could consider how they may develop competition for amputee boxers, wheelchair athletes and so on. In the meantime, while there is no competition specifically for disabled athletes, the boxing rules need to be reviewed in full to allow certain levels of disability to compete against able-bodied athletes. This may be a subjective exercise and needs to be to keep

everyone safe, but it will need to occur if the sport is to be inclusive.

One final point I would like to make is this. If you feel strongly about a sport you are considering and the issues that may prevent you from participating, jump on board and support your global and local organisations. By getting involved in the issues you feel strongly about, we can continue to break down the barriers together.

Darren Collins



Nicole McLean Stronger Now

On 12 October 2002, the beautiful island of Bali was hit by a deadly terrorist attack. It claimed the lives of 202 people and left 240 others severely injured. Nicole McLean had been in Bali for just six hours when she was caught in one of the explosions. That night she lost her arm and was left fighting for her life.

This is Nicole's extraordinary journey. Shown through her eyes, and through the eyes of friends and family who watched helplessly while the horror unfolded before them, this is a gripping personal account of what happened that fateful night and Nicole's difficult yet incredible journey towards recovery.

Ten years on, the scars from Bali have not faded. But while those left behind will never be forgotten, this book is a testament to the resilience and strength of spirit in those that survived. It is a story about hope, second chances and never giving up.

Nicole McLean lives in Victoria with her husband and son. She is a motivational speaker, Limbs 4 Life spokesperson and Bali bombing survivor. Stronger Now is her first book and is due to be released by Pan Macmillan Australia on October 1st.

www.panmacmillan.com.au



Sale to Sea 2013

The 2013 Sale to Sea Disability Kayak Challenge took place in March. The event was widely attended by participants and supporters. Sixty kayakers completed the journey from the Port of Sale to Lakes Entrance over the course of four days. Event organiser (below knee amputee) Andrew Bedggood and his team were thrilled that fifteen new disabled kayakers took on the Challenge for the first time this year; their participation highlighted

their spirit and determination.

Mr. Bedggood said "This year's event was by far the best yet." The organising committee and support crews on the water and land did a wonderful job and we could not have achieved such a wonderful outcome without their assistance.

Limbs 4 Life is extremely grateful to John and David - Directors of BankVic (formally Police Credit) who not only participated in the

event but worked tirelessly to provide support to paddlers both on and off the water.

The next Challenge will be held 11 -14 March 2015. If you are interested in taking part or would like more information please contact

Andrew: 0407 471 539



Our new website is up and running



www.limbs4life.org.au

Limbs4Life



In remembrance of Linda McGarvey

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the passing of Linda McGarvey

Linda was the Peer Support Coordinator for Limbs 4 Life in South Australia, for over five years.

A truly an inspirational lady, who had the incredible ability to listen to others and make new amputees and those around her feel comfortable and at ease.

The support that Linda gave voluntarily to help people undergoing amputation and throughout their journey was remarkable.

Linda will be truly missed by all who knew her.

In honour of Linda the South Australian Society for Vascular Nursing have initiated an annual "Linda McGarvey Memorial Education Scholarship"

Amputee Golf Clinics ● ● ● ●

- Saturday August 31
- Saturday October 5
- Friday November 22. Nine and Dine Event | Nine holes (Ambrose) followed by a gourmet BBQ dinner.

Clinics will be held at Sandhurst Club. Time 1:15pm - 3:30pm

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email: golf@limbs4life.org.au



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MEET DWAYNE:

In 2008, he ran up all 1504 stairs of his first building – the Sydney Tower – in 23 min and 49 sec. He also was the first Double amputee to scale the 1576 steps of the Empire State Building Tower Run Up. Dwayne doesn't think of himself as the fastest or fittest, but believes that "life is worth living" and "you've got to do what you can with what you've got." Now he is doing it on Variflex XC feet by Ossur.

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DisabilityCare Australia Update

From 1 July 2013, DisabilityCare Australia will launch in South Australia, Tasmania, the Barwon area of Victoria and the Hunter area in New South Wales, with the ACT and the Barkly region in the NT starting in July 2014.

There will be a gradual intake to ensure that everyone who is eligible is properly supported and receives the right services for their individual needs.

The scheme will work with the community to build capacity and improve inclusion for people with disability. It will also link people with disability to mainstream supports and help to make informal care sustainable. For those that need funded support, individualised support packages will be funded. The range of supports will be diverse and cover

supports to enable daily living, participation in the community and to make progress on goals and aspirations.

If you are a person with disability and you meet the access requirements you can become a participant in the scheme. As a participant, you will be able to access DisabilityCare Australia individualised planning processes to identify the reasonable and necessary supports you need to enable you to achieve your goals. To get an idea about whether you meet the access requirements, you can use [My Access Checker](#). The Access Checker generally determines if you meet the disability requirements; meaning that;

- you have a permanent disability

- you cannot join in activities or do things without assistive technology, equipment (other than commonly used items such as glasses) or home modifications; or
- you usually require assistance (including physical assistance, supervision or prompting) from other people to join in or do relevant activities.

To access support after July 1, you will need to reside in one of the launch site regions.

For more information go to

www.disabilitycareaustralia.gov.au

disabilitycare
Australia



Students raising funds for Limbs 4 Life

Prosthetics and Orthotics students from La Trobe University are leading a team in the 10k Age Run Melbourne to raise funds for Limbs 4 Life.

Donations are tax deductible please support them by going to:
http://runmelbourne.everydayhero.com.au/limbs4life_5

**Click here to
donate**



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