

# Our Patient's Story

## Helpless to Hopeful: Amputee Embraces Possibilities



**D**ick and Carol Willey remember the day they had to choose the direction of their future. Sitting in a rehab hospital bed, Dick looked down at the bandaged stump where his right leg used to be and thought, “Where do we even begin?” It was fall 2016 when 81-year-old Dick saw a podiatrist for what he thought was an infection spurred by his diabetes. But by March, that suspected infection traveled up his leg until a surgeon presented the only solution to halt its spread: Dick needed a below-the-knee amputation. Everything changed for the Willeys when Dick lost his leg. Carol had to rearrange their rec room so that Dick could take his wheelchair from the garage into the main living space. Dick slept on a single bed in that room and Carol moved from their bedroom

to the pullout sofa to be near him. “Our whole life changed in what felt like an instant,” Carol says. “It’s not even about getting back to normal. It’s getting through the day. It’s finding what ‘normal’ means now.”

### Choosing a Prosthetic Provider

When the time came for them to choose a prosthetic provider, Dick and Carol met with three prosthetic companies. But when the couple met Knittel Ansa, CPO, of Aspire Prosthetics and Orthotics Inc. in York, the decision was easy. Knittel took the time to learn what mobility meant to Dick – that he could go out for breakfast on the weekends, move freely about his home and enjoy one of his favorite pastimes, cheering on Penn State’s football team. Knittel educated the Willey family and painted a clear picture of what the journey ahead would be. “We didn’t know what we needed or even the right questions to ask,” Dick says. “But Knittel walked in the room and laid it out. We didn’t need to know everything because he was going to be there each step of the way.”

### Going Above and Beyond

Although young, Aspire Prosthetics and Orthotics has been rapidly turning the heads of the medical and general community with their hyper-focused attention on patient care. The technical side of Aspire is just one of the many ways they provide exceptional care. Angela Ansa, MPH, of Aspire carries her vision for changing the way healthcare is delivered through access and quality patient care. Each staff member looks at the comprehensive care of the patient, which is why pre-amputation consultation and home visits prior to prosthesis design and fabrication are so important. “We see how they live, what challenges exist around the

home and how a properly designed prosthetic device can improve their lifestyle,” Angela says. “We take a public health approach to patient care. Well fitted prostheses have many benefits, not only to the patient, but to the overall healthcare system. It reduces waste in healthcare and minimize utilization. This is where healthcare is going and we’re placing ourselves on the same trajectory as the development and evolution within the industry.” David Smeresky, MSPO, Aspire’s orthotic resident, had no trouble deciding where he wanted to do his residency, thanks to Aspire’s obvious commitment to the patient. It’s why he commutes almost two hours to gain the experience that will propel him into his career. “Aspire’s culture about doing the right thing, no matter what, really resonated with me and was important to me,” David says. “Whenever it comes to integrity and doing what’s right, even at a cost to the company, the leadership doesn’t blink an eye. That’s what matters.”

## Embracing the Device

The human factor drives Aspire above anything else when evaluating and designing prosthetic for patients. Take, for instance, one of their many unique patient-centric strategies: custom prosthetics like the one Dick wears today. He could be in a restaurant or out pumping gas or anywhere else in public when he hears strangers yell the Penn State “We are!” chant. It’s just what happens in Central Pennsylvania, he says, when fellow Penn State fans see the Nittany Lion on his leg. It’s why Aspire will customize a prosthetic device with a favorite logo or, in the case of a young patient, a Star Wars design to boost confidence in wearing the device at no additional cost to the patient. “Our company would rather do more to help the patient embrace their device so they want to wear it and show it off, rather than hide it,” Knittel says. “That’s why we do this.”



## A Brighter Future

Carol didn’t want her husband to face the fate of many before who have lost a limb. She’s heard the stories and even met some of the people who watched a loved one sink into depression because losing a leg meant losing their lifestyle. Or worse, she says, they lose a marriage. But Aspire is changing that for them. It’s thanks to regular check-ins, continued education, and a longterm relationship with Aspire that Dick and Carol have found hope. They’ve returned to some of their favorite activities, like going out to breakfast, and are still working on others, such as walking on the gravel paths that lead Dick and Carol to some of their favorite flea markets. It’s just one way Aspire is helping the Willeys embrace their possibilities. “We couldn’t be in better hands,” Carol says, a smile creeping on her face as she watches Dick walk. “I know we’re not alone in this.”