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## Limbs of Love Helps Paralympic Hopeful



**Chasing a dream**  
Thanks to Houston's Limbs of Love, an aspiring Paralympian has a bounce in her step and a chance to dash for gold.

By SAFIYA RAVAT • Nov. 11, 2010

Daphne Hegreiness has mastered rock climbing, wake-boarding, swimming and even skiing. Those feats may not sound that impressive until you learn that the 22-year-old has accomplished them with only one leg.

Hegreiness' left leg was amputated in 2008 after she was diagnosed with cancer in her foot and lower leg.

But rather than pull her down, the prosthetic leg Hegreiness wears has made her more determined than ever. In fact, she's working hard to be in the stadium for the London Paralympic Games in 2012.

That is, only if she can get the right gear.

Hegreiness' goal to sprint in the 100-meter and 200-meter races in London requires more than just the average prosthetic leg, and the Houston organization Limbs of Love was happy to provide



that for her this week.

"I feel like my goal just got a little bit closer," Hegreiness said after trying on her new Cheetah Flex Foot for the first time Tuesday. "It's a little bit more in reach than it was last week."

During her freshman year in college, Hegreiness developed a painful ulcer in her left ankle. After three years of consulting with doctors, Hegreiness was diagnosed with epithelioid sarcoma, a rare type of tissue cancer. Within a few months, doctors amputated her leg to stop the cancer from spreading.

### Staying active

After being fitted for a prosthetic leg, Hegreiness was determined to live an active lifestyle.

"When I lost my leg I decided I didn't want there to be anything to stand in my way," she said. "I didn't want losing my leg to define who I was. I was a very active person, and I didn't want to lose that."

With just one leg, Hegreiness managed to tackle physical activities than many people could not with two legs. But regardless of all those feats, there was one thing she couldn't do — run.

"Whenever I tried to do it, I couldn't," she said, "but I was stubborn and I wanted to do it."

Hegreiness wasn't even a runner before losing her leg. In fact, growing up in Maine, she'd never even been to a track before. But the chal-

lured Hegreiness.

Almost one year after receiving her prosthetic leg, her husband, Jeff, brought home the solution. Studying physical therapy at the time, Jeff was coincidentally assigned to a clinical group of amputees and learned how to re-teach them how to run.

"He came home one day and told me, 'I can do this, I can teach you how to run,'" Hegreiness said.

So in that little tiny apartment living room he taught me how to run. And not only did I learn how to run, but my love for running grew. ... It was like an



ultimate freedom for me."

### Wrong prosthetic

As she began running and later sprinting, Hegreiness found a large network of amputee runners like herself, some of whom encouraged her to take it further by trying for the Paralympics. She accepted the challenge and began training. That was when the problem of her leg first arose. The type of prosthetic Hegreiness owned was too stiff for running, let alone sprinting. Created for walking and everyday use,

the prosthetic leg that started 6 inches below her knee was L-shaped, too straight and without the bounce needed for fast-paced, ground-pounding activity.

"There's just no way that you could run on that thing to qualify for the Olympics," said Ben Falls, chief prosthetist at Limbs of Love.

But with their student health insurance, a specialized running leg - ranging from \$25,000 to \$80,000 - was too steep for the young couple. That's where Limbs of Love stepped in.

The nonprofit group gives limbs to amputees locally and nationally who can't afford a prosthetic device. After reading about Hegreiness' story, the organization called her up and offered to donate the specialized running prosthetic.

It was like Christmas a hundred times over when I got that e-mail," Hegreiness said. "It's very special to have people who care enough to want to help me."

### 'I feel like Tigger'

The couple flew into Houston from Ohio on Monday, ran some tests at the amputee clinic and by Tuesday the new foot was ready - customized to Hegreiness' weight, strength and level of activity. Unlike her former prosthetic, the Cheetah Flex Foot is curved into a C, giving her more bounce and allowing her to run more smoothly.

"I feel like Tigger from Winnie the Pooh," Hegreiness said, laughing as she ran around the clinic. "I'm just kind of bouncing."

Hegreiness is one of many who have been provided a new opportunity through Limbs of Love. The idea for the organization came after Limbs of Love founder Joe Sansone found that his for-profit prosthetic business was

turning down so many patients who lacked insurance.



"It's just not a pleasant experience determining whether someone is going to live an active life based on their insurance coverage," Sansone said. "I just thought that there had to be a better way."

Limbs of Love has been helping amputees without resources for more than three years now, Sansone said, with \$1.4 million donated in limbs.



# Harry Shaw Returns: Veteran Skydives at Last!

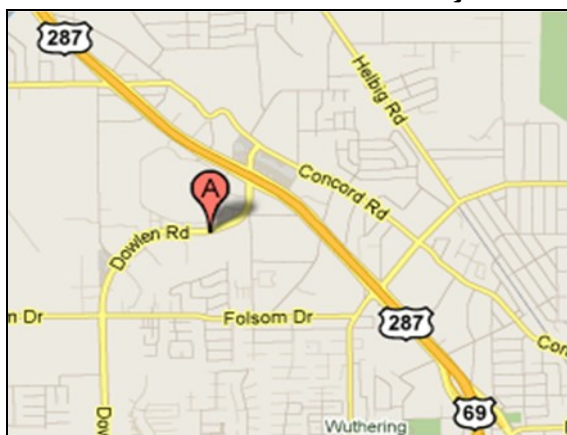


Veteran paratrooper Harry Shaw finally got his chance to skydive! You may remember Harry's story—he was unable to jump at the Annual Airborne Amputee event in May, because his limbs were too short for the harness. Since then, he's got 2 new C-Legs and he's learning to walk all over again at the Center for the Intrepid in San Antonio. He also finally got his chance to skydive to mark the 27 anniversary of the day he lost his legs. It was an amazing moment for Harry and for Limbs of Love.

## We're Moving! 2 New Locations in 2011!

Because of our tremendous growth, the Clear Lake and Beaumont patient care centers will be moving to bigger and better offices!

### Beaumont Move: February 2011



We'll keep you posted on our progress!  
Questions?  
Call: 713-747-7647

## Greek Healthcare System Opts for Amputation as Money Saver

One of Greece's most respected newspapers, To Vima, reported that the nation's largest government health insurance provider would no longer pay for special footwear for diabetes patients. Amputation is cheaper, says the Benefits Division of the state insurance provider.

the Benefits Division. In a statement, the group argues that the decision is contrary to evidence as presented in the international scientific literature.

Greece's National Healthcare System was created in the early 1980s, during the tenure of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou. Papandreou, an academic, won election under the slogan, Αλλαγή, which is the Greek word for Change.

The new policy was announced in a letter to the Pan-Hellenic Federation of People with Diabetes. The Federation disputes the science behind the decision of

### Clear Lake Move: February 2011





## Activities & Events:

*Finding the perfect gift is never easy, why not give a gift that changes lives?*



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Here's how it works:

- Buy a gift card in any amount, called a "Good Card", through the website [sixdegrees.org](http://sixdegrees.org)
- Give the card as a gift
- The recipient can redeem the card on the site and donate the dollar amount to their favorite charity (Limbs of Love, of course!)
- You can also buy the card and redeem it yourself for Limbs of Love, in a friend or loved one's name



**THE 2011 ANNUAL AIRBORNE AMPUTEE SKYDIVE IS JUST A FEW MONTHS AWAY!**

**MAY 21ST—22ND**

**SKYDIVE SPACELAND**

**ROSHARON, TEXAS**

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