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## LEAP Program Helps Amputees Overcome Challenges

LOUISVILLE, KY (Jan.12, 2010) – For 59-year-old Ronnie Brown, every day is a blessing and a challenge. Nearly two years ago, Brown lost his leg due to complications from diabetes. Since then, he has been working to regain his life.

Accepting the loss of his leg was the biggest hurdle for Louisville homicide detective Kevin Trees, who says that was more difficult than any of the physical challenges he faced.

KORT Physical Therapist Hilbert Potter knows just what these men are going through. In 1990, Potter was serving as an Army Combat Construction Engineer and medic stationed in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm when machine gun fire severed his right leg. Potter made a choice to move on with his life and not let what happened prevent him from doing what he wanted to do. He chose to use this as a catalyst to create LEAP, a program that would help others facing the same challenges and obstacles.

“I’ve wanted to implement a program like this for a long time,” said Potter. “As a service member, I received excellent medical care and the most advanced treatments during my rehab experiences. I wanted to develop a program that would help regular people facing amputation.”

Potter has spent years researching numerous programs, including those offered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., to develop the Lower Extremity Amputee Program (LEAP). LEAP includes gait training, pre/post prosthetic training, strengthening and flexibility training, residual limb care and edema control.

“The goal with LEAP is to get amputees as active as they want to be. To help them resume their lives and do as much as they want to do,” said Potter. “I think it is easier for people to relate to me because they know I am in the same situation, -- that I have been where they are and can understand their fears.”

Potter says there is a large gap in treatment for amputees. He says following their surgery and after their home health treatment is completed, they hide themselves away. They may feel embarrassed by their appearance, fearful of walking with their prosthetic limb, or too depressed by their situation to want to do anything, he said.

“In this area, our biggest problem is connecting new amputees with someone that has been there done that,” said Trees. “The biggest thing Hilbert did for me was put a face on possibility and introduce me to someone else who knows. I looked at Hilbert and saw me. He is young, driven and unwilling to give up because something traumatic happened in his life. He showed me that all amputees were not sad and pathetic people looking for sympathy.”

Ronnie Brown agrees saying that Potter was very inspirational, demonstrating the possibilities that existed for him and that life would go on.

“Therapy was a real inspiration to me. Each day I learned different things like how to get up and down stairs, how to get up and down on my knees, to lean and turn, and to trust the prosthetic,” said Brown. “It’s traumatic, but you must never give up and never feel like life can’t go on. Don’t get stuck on not being able to do things, you have to focus on what you can do. I still drive and still take care of myself.”

“I believe God chooses certain people in the world to step up and play different roles in life,” said Trees. “Some people exist to be leaders, others exist to educate, while others exist to help fellow humans in need. An amputee exists to show everyone else the power of the mind and perseverance. People can say to themselves, ‘If he can do it, so can I.’”

*Kentucky Orthopedic Rehab Team (KORT) is an outpatient physical and occupational therapy company and has more board-certified specialists than any other physical therapy provider in Kentucky. KORT’s licensed athletic trainers provide sports medicine to numerous high schools and colleges. Founded in 1987, KORT has over 35 clinics throughout Kentucky and Southern Indiana. For more information, visit [www.kort.com](http://www.kort.com).*