



Center for Orthotic
& Prosthetic Care

Making a Difference in Everyday Lives...

NEWS RELEASE:

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Physically challenged get in the game

by: John McCann



DURHAM -- Golf's hard enough if you have two good arms. And here's Robin Burton going around sticking drivers in the hands of folks who are missing limbs?

"This population has literally had something taken away from them, be it a limb or a limitation," and they need to know that they can get out there in the world and mix it up with everybody else, said Burton, executive director of the Orthotic & Prosthetic Assistance Fund Inc. in Langhorne, Pa. She recently was in Durham at Hillandale Golf Course for a First Swing clinic aimed at either introducing golf to the physically challenged or getting them back into the game.

At the same time, as much as First Swing is about letting those with physical challenges understand that they have a place on the fairways and greens, the program allows this population to get acclimated to golf while around others who face limitations due to limb loss or ailments like stroke, multiple sclerosis or cystic fibrosis.

Plenty of room that day at Hillandale for First Swing. Half of the driving range was set aside for the clinic's participants. And it wasn't about wooing potential course customers, either, said Karl Kimball, director of golf at Hillandale.

"Nope," Kimball said. "I see them as friends."

That's all there is to it. Just letting First Swing participants know they can hit golf balls like everybody else, Kimball explained. Simple as that.

The Center for Orthotic & Prosthetic Care at Duke University hosted First Swing along with Burton's OPAF. The clinic got a nice assist from Duke women's golf coach Dan Brooks and members of the team.

Deborah Waddell Jackson is the patient-care coordinator at the Duke center that caters to amputees. Her 9-year-old son, Desmond, was born without a left knee and wears a prosthetic leg.

Desmond's daddy exposed him to golf at an early age. First Swing sharpened the boy's skills.

"With a good set of clubs in tow, Desmond considers himself a young golfer in the making," Jackson said. "First Swing just puts the icing on the cake for a kid like him. Adaptations are still necessary for him, and there were great golf professionals there with limb loss who fine-tuned his swing."



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“Many times it seems that the challenged population is unaware of all the sports available to them. First Swing provides an avenue for people to learn the great game of golf and meet fellow potential players who are also interested in adapted sports,” Jackson said. “Fortunately, there’s not much Dez can’t do. Right now his focus is flag football.”

Learn more

Deborah Waddell Jackson co-founded Pediatric Amputees Links and Support of North Carolina, or P.A.L.S. of N.C. The support group reaches out to families coping with issues related to limb loss. Learn more when you contact Jackson at deborah.jackson@duke.edu or (919) 684-2474.

Learn about the Orthotic & Prosthetic Assistance Fund Inc. at www.opfund.org, or call (215) 752-5756.