Staying Active

MANY BENEFITS TO MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Find out more on pg. 8
CHAD STALTER, MSPO, CPO, is the managing clinician responsible for care at Ability Prosthetics & Orthotics’ Mechanicsburg office in Pennsylvania. Chad developed an interest in O&P at a young age through his older brother, Corey, who has cerebral palsy. “[Corey] wore orthoses as a child, so I always knew about the profession, but I never considered it as a career,” Chad says. As a college student, however, one of Chad’s friends landed a job in the field that further sparked his interest. “I’ve always enjoyed working with my hands, and I wanted to work in the medical profession, so it was a perfect match,” he says.

Chad graduated from State University of New York College at Cortland with a degree in kinesiology with a concentration in exercise science in May 2012. He completed his O&P studies at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), and graduated with a master’s degree in O&P in May 2016. He completed his residency at Ability’s Hanover facility in Pennsylvania in January 2018.

Chad enjoys working at Ability because it is progressive in its approach to the latest in trends and technology in O&P. “The company is very proactive, and as a whole we stay on the forefront of the profession,” he says. “We are early adopters of new technology, and it is awesome to work for a company that embraces all the changes occurring in our profession.” Chad calls his colleagues at work a cohesive group. “We work very well as a team to provide our patients with quality outcomes. The best part of Ability is interacting with all the different patients on a daily basis. I get to help a lot of great people and it is definitely very rewarding.”

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PHIL HESS, MSPO, CPO, wears many hats at Ability’s York location, including office manager, head marketer and clinical expert. His day is filled with treating patients and colleagues, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Alysa, and staying active outdoors. “I love to be outdoors,” he says. He played football for Cortland and still plays on a recreational flag football team with some of his coworkers. He also enjoys hunting and fishing.

Phil’s interest in O&P also began as a child. He was in a boating accident when he was eight years old that resulted in a transtibial amputation of his right leg. “Early on I had a prosthetist who made the process fun, which made me decide to pursue this profession as a career,” he says. Phil began job shadowing and volunteering at local O&P practices when he was in high school and graduated from Penn State University with a kinesiology degree in 2013. He received his master’s degree in O&P from CSUDH in 2016 and completed his residency at Ability’s Mechanicsburg office in December 2017.

Phil likes that Ability gives him the freedom to “play.” “They let me trial new devices on patients knowing that the best outcome for that patient might not always be best for the bottom line,” says Phil, who also practiced at the Mechanicsburg office before heading to the office in York. “We have access to some of the latest technology, so I always feel like I am working on the leading edge of the industry.”

When Phil isn’t treating patients or ordering office supplies, he is a big supporter of his alma mater and spends many autumn afternoons with 100,000 of his closest friends at Beaver Stadium. He too enjoys the outdoors, playing flag football, dodgeball, kickball and softball. He also enjoys being home with his wife, Mary, and their dog, Wynn.

ON THE COVER: Andrew Parys, Chad Stalter from Ability’s Mechanicsburg office, Phil Hess from Ability’s York office, and Tom Jenkins. Photograph by Erin Shaffer Photography.
Supporting you through the seasons
ABILITY P&O NAMED ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO WORK IN PA FOR THE SECOND TIME

ABILITY PROSTHETICS AND ORTHOTICS, Exton, Pennsylvania, was named one of the best places to work in Pennsylvania for 2019. It is the second time the company, which has more than 50 employees, has been honored with the award, which recognizes the best places of employment that are benefiting the state’s economy and workforce.

The company was honored the first time in 2017.

“Ability is a [P&O] company founded under one simple but meaningful principle: Enhance the health and well-being of all our patients through artificial limbs and braces that fit their bodies and their lives,” Jeff Brandt, CPO, founder and CEO, said.

“Creating positive outcomes for our patients is central to our patient-centric culture and provides for an environment to attract talented employees and motivates them to go above and beyond for our clients and each other. Seeing patients achieve their fullest potential each day, telling their stories and sharing that across the team gives every employee the opportunity to feel their contribution to that success.”

Created in 2000, the Best Places to Work in PA awards program is one of the first statewide programs of its kind in the country. The program is a public/private partnership between the Team Pennsylvania Foundation, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania State Council of the Society of Human Resource Management, and the Central Penn Business Journal.

Winners are selected based on a review of each company’s workforce policies, practices, philosophies, systems, and demographics and the results of an employee survey evaluating employee satisfaction. To qualify, companies must be a for-profit or nonprofit organization, publicly or privately held, in business for at least one year and with at least 15 employees working in Pennsylvania.

The final ranking of the companies was revealed at an awards banquet on November 21 at the Lancaster County Convention Center.

Jeff Brandt, CEO, and Kathleen DeLawrence, COO, Ability Prosthetics and Orthotics, Exton, Pennsylvania, have received a Patriot Award, which is presented to managers and supervisors who are nominated by an active military reservist employee.

First Lieutenant U.S. Army Reserves Cody Smith, CPO, a clinician in Ability P&O’s Charlotte, North Carolina, facility, nominated the pair for supporting him during his obligations for active duty service. Cody serves as the assistant operations officer in an engineer battalion consisting of six companies in three states and is required to perform several weeks and weekends of reserve duty each year for which Ability supports him in this mission.

Command Sergeant Major PA Army National Guard (Retired) Jeffery Hall, a volunteer representative for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, came to Ability’s Exton location to present the award.

Ability gave a heartfelt thank you to Cody and all U.S. military members for their dedication and service.

From left: Kathleen, Jeff and Jeffery Hall during the award presentation.
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ANDREW PARYS WAS BORN with amniotic banding and little had developed normally between his right thigh and foot.

He was 12 months old when his parents and doctor decided it would be better to amputate his leg below the knee while he was a baby. “They thought that would be best so that I could wear a prosthesis more effectively as I got older,” says Andrew, who is now 35 and lives in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He works full time as a bartender at Hershey Lodge and has a part-time bartending job at Iron Hill Brewery, where he has been able to assist in some large-scale brewing.

For the last two years Andrew has run the Pittsburgh marathon and ran the Hershey half marathon in 2018. He also completed the running leg of a triathlon relay. Next year, however, Andrew says, “I plan on doing all three components.”

Before he started receiving care at Ability Prosthetics & Orthotics’ Mechanicsburg office, he was barely able to run. “To go from under a half mile to being able to do 26.2 miles in a row is incredible to me and really has been life changing,” says Andrew, who usually wears an Ottobock X3 knee with a Challenger foot. When he runs, he uses an Össur Cheetah Knee and Össur Flex-Run foot.

Andrew says he learned of Ability about two years ago via a post on Reddit from one of its practitioners who had said some of his clients were getting good results from a new microprocessor knee. Andrew was getting care at another O&P facility at the time and wasn’t happy with his practitioner or care. “I had been getting frustrated that the care I was getting did not seem to match my ability level,” Andrew says. “I have a physical job and I always try to stay active. Instead of matching me with prosthetics that would help me live a fuller life, it seemed I was relegated to using things that barely kept me ambulatory and not as pain free as I would have liked.”

Andrew was eventually put in touch with Eric Shoemaker, MS, CPO, who was then at the Mechanicsburg office. Andrew also works with Phil Hess, MSPO, CPO, and Chad Stalter, MSPO, CPO, since starting care there. “Eric, Phil and Chad are always amazing at answering any questions I have, whether through phone or email, and have included me in several trials of new prosthetic technology that has helped me to figure out what works best for me and my lifestyle.”

Andrew says he appreciates the attention to individual care he receives at Ability. “And the fact that they will fight for their patients to get the help and support they need,” he says. “A lot of places will put lip service to this, but I’ve seen firsthand how tirelessly the staff is in making sure their patients have a better quality of life.”

Chad says Andrew is a prosthetist’s dream client. “There’s not anything he can’t do physically, and he’s willing to try just about everything and anything,” Chad says. “Any new socket technology or components we are beta testing or that come to market, he’s one of our first to try them out.”

Andrew says he also likes that Ability P&O is involved in the local community. They have connected him with sporting groups such as Players Using Competition Helping Others Grow (PUCHOG), a local sled hockey organization that supports wounded veterans, and led him to work with a group of students at Messiah College who are helping to provide low-cost prosthetic devices to less resourced nations.

Andrew hopes to one day become involved in the Paralympics. “Sports has always been a big love of mine,” he says. “As a rule, every amputee should do what they can to maintain their health and wellness. While it is important to everyone, to an amputee the difference between a strong body and a weak one can be the difference between being sedentary and living an active fulfilling life. The main objective for an amputee should be getting better every day.”
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TOM JENKINS has a plaque in his home in Pennsylvania that reads, “Life is like a bike. In order to keep your balance, you have to keep moving.”

The same can be safely said when it comes to the human body and staying physically active. The more active a person is, the more likely they are to maintain good health throughout life—especially as the body ages.

“As we age, one of the benefits of being physically active is an improved ability to do everyday activities in your life,” says Betsy Trumble, PT, MS, director, Inpatient Rehabilitation Post-Acute Service, WellSpan Surgery and Rehabilitation Hospital in York, Pennsylvania. She has been a physical therapist for 23 years. “It is amazing how regular physical activity makes a difference in overall health. As we get older, aging affects our tissues, making it harder to do simple activities.”

Regular exercise can counter the negative effects of aging, she says.

“This may mean the difference of needing to rely on others or not,” Betsy says.

Another benefit to keeping the body physically active is it has been shown that activity decreases falls in older adults, which is a leading cause of visits to the ER as
well as a leading cause of death for older adults, says Sean Simonds, PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS, CKTP, FMSE, ITPT, who has owned Specialized Physical Therapy in Asheville, North Carolina, for 10 years. Staying active also reduces one’s risk for cancer and heart or other diseases as well as increasing life expectancy, he says. It improves sleep and bone health, increases energy and focus and decreases depression and illness. “People are living longer, and exercise will improve the quality of life and a person’s ability to remain independent longer,” Sean says. “Our bodies are designed to move, not be sedentary, and I tell everyone as long as they are moving, I am happy.”

Tom, who retired from a career in juvenile justice and child welfare that spanned more than 30 years, agrees. “Activity and exercise are always ways to clear my head so that I can be the best version of myself for my family, friends and those around me,” he says. “I have written memos and speeches while exercising when I was unable to do so at a desk. The mind becomes clear, open and receptive while in a state of movement. I have solved seemingly unsolvable issues while exercising. I have had many high stress jobs throughout my life, and I hesitate to think what my physical and mental well-being—as well as my relationships—would look like without exercise.”

**LISTEN TO YOUR BODY, MORE IS LESS**

While exercise is necessary, it doesn’t need to be triathlon intense, clinicians agree.

Jacob Townsend, CPO, and Cara Yocum, CPO, with Ability Prosthetics & Orthotics’ offices in Asheville, North Carolina, and Hagerstown, Maryland, respectively, say while exercise is important, it is different for everyone.

“Physical activity does not need to be running marathons,” Cara says. “It’s best to start with small goals. If you haven’t walked in your neighborhood, start with walking one block before you aim for walking a mile.”

Jacob says, “While intense exercise can be beneficial in some cases, low-intensity exercise offers many of the same benefits.” Exercise doesn’t have to happen every day. “Any amount can be beneficial,” he says. “Depending on what a person’s baseline fitness level is, as little as two to three times a week of low-intensity exercise can also provide many benefits.”

Sean says that moderate exercise is different for everyone. “While walking around the neighborhood might be strenuous for some,
running uphill for two miles might be necessary for others. We usually recommend people do some kind of exercise every day. It doesn’t have to be super intense, but it does have to be a little bit of a challenge to get the most benefit from it.”

There was a point in Tom’s life when he felt it was necessary to train intensely to run marathons. “Now I believe less is more, if you are able to pay attention to the quality of your training,” he says. “Interval workouts are better for cardio improvement than long intense runs.”

THERE’S GARDENING AND YOGA, TOO
Exercise comes in all forms, practitioners say. “People are usually more compliant with exercise when they do activities they enjoy,” Betsy says. “Maintaining your hobbies indoor and out, taking part in a gym, and finding local activities are all ways of being active and promoting good health,” says Brian Nguyen, MD, a physiatrist with WellSpan Surgery and Rehabilitation Hospital.

There are plenty of activities that don’t require a gym membership, from hiking, biking, swimming, skiing, golfing, to yard work and gardening to yoga, Tai Chi and dancing.

THE BENEFITS OF STRETCHING, REST
Children are usually as flexible as rubber bands, but that changes the older one gets. As important as it is to exercise and stay active, stretching is an activity that adults often overlook. Stretching is especially important as a precursor to exercise or any physical activity, Brian says. “As we age our muscle can be more tense,” he says. “Stretching helps to warm up your muscles and can help to prevent injury.”

When it comes to stretching, less can often be more. “As we age, things naturally stiffen up and stretching becomes more important,” Sean says. “Some people think stretching needs to be a full hour of intense and painful stretching and that’s not the case.

I recommend people do about 10 minutes of stretching most every night while they are watching TV. If you’re too stiff, then something as simple as getting out a chair or bending over to tie your shoes can be impossible.”

Tom says he stretches off and on throughout his day. “Before I get out of bed, I stretch,” he says. “I also stretch before and after each period of exercise. I have found that the older I get the more important stretching has become.”

Betsy agrees. Maintaining flexibility in the joints and tissues is an important aspect of overall health and the body’s ability to do simple or advanced activities, she says. “Our bodies tend to stiffen without activity and throughout the aging process,” Betsy says. “Stretching throughout the day and during exercise is necessary to maintain flexibility and minimize the risk for injury to our joints and muscles and prevent strains and sprains.”

Stretching is a good way to prevent and relieve post-exercise aches and pains, Cara says. “Stretching can also help improve posture and circulation.”

Proper rest is also important, the experts say. It’s beneficial to listen to your body, Jacob says. “If your body is telling you to rest or go slow, it is important to listen,” he says. “Make sure you give yourself plenty of time for rest and recuperation after increased periods of exertion.”

Proper sleep allows the mind and body to recover from the activity and stress of each day, Betsy says. “Our brain and tissues need uninterrupted sleep to help our memory and ability to learn, to improve our mood and mental wellbeing, to fight off illness or disease and to decrease overall stress,” she says.

Cara says listening to a recent podcast on the benefits of rest and sleep was a revelation for her. “It changed my life in terms of how I prioritize sleep and rest,” she says. “An overtired brain and body makes us vulnerable to cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, depression, anxiety, obesity, chronic pain and diabetes.”

Staying physically active, recovery and proper rest each has its benefits for the human body. “You must listen to your body,” Tom says. “It will tell you when to slow down and relax. This is how our body heals and prepares for the next round of movement, getting proper rest and nutrition will help the body heal. Mixing it up is just as important as having a routine. Walking versus running, working out in a pool versus on land. All of these have benefits and don’t allow us to get into a rut where we can become burned out from an inflexible routine.”
“Know Thy Patient”

How Ability Uses Powerful Data Analysis to Improve Patient Care

Many people may understand or appreciate the powerful data analytics that support Ability Prosthetics and Orthotics’ practitioners as they evaluate their patients’ functional deficits and develop treatment plans. In the time of “big data” and cloud computing, the benefits can be difficult for the casual observer to conceptualize. Luckily, Ability’s Outcome Measure Reports offer a shining example of how clinical care benefits from the powerful data analysis that Ability applies to each patient.

Ability has collected the Activities Specific Balance Confidence (ABC) scale on over 2,200 patients. The ABC is administered via an iPad app to patients receiving lower limb orthoses. The outcome measures patient-reported balance confidence, and the ABC is well known throughout most healthcare environments.

When a patient is administered the ABC, their score is instantly added to thousands of other datapoints, and the Outcome Report allows the patient and practitioner to make many significant comparisons. Ability has treated a variety of patient diagnoses, and patients can view their ABC score against the average score of all Ability patients with the same diagnosis. Some of the most commonly treated diagnoses include: Foot Drop, Osteoarthritis, Ankle Instability, Posterior Tibial Tendinitis, Neuropathy, Charcot-Marie-Tooth disorder, Ankle Pain, Knee Instability, Stroke, Ankle Trauma/Fracture, Pes Planus, Spinal Cord Injury and Valgus Deformity.

Similarly, Ability’s own patient dataset shows that balance confidence decreases with age. The Outcome Report shows how an individual patient compares against peers in their same decade of life.

Knowing the average balance confidence score across all 16 questions on the ABC instrument is useful, but practitioners at Ability are able to dig deeper and investigate a patient’s balance deficits on each of the situations tested in the ABC. Ability’s patients struggled with most: sweeping the floor, being bumped into when walking, stepping on or off an escalator while holding items so they cannot hold the railing and walking outside on icy or slippery sidewalks. This in-depth knowledge can make the difference in recommending the most appropriate orthosis to treat the individual patient.

Patients often desire to track their progress over time, or to compare their current level of functioning to before they received orthotic care from Ability. This is all possible, because the Ability Outcome Measure Report and the data analysis that powers are tracking ABC over time for each patient.

As patients consider which type of lower limb orthosis they will require to address their balance, they can trust that Ability practitioners are using the best data analysis to help them make the right decision.
BEST PRACTICES, CLINICAL PROCESS

WELCOME

Share the Ability difference
• Overview of the clinical care process
• Review the importance of patient/practitioner partnership
• Discuss your goals and questions

EVALUATION
• Perform clinical assessment
• Scan, measure or cast area of need
• Explain outcome of visit
• Develop a treatment plan

AUTHORIZATION
• Describe authorization process (coordination of benefits)
• Explain role of documentation
• Discuss potential financial responsibility

MANUFACTURING
• Access to best-in-class solutions
• Clinical explanation of device(s) selection process
• Value your input
• Explain timelines

FITTING
• Demonstrate putting device on/off
• Evaluate fit and function
• Perform in-office adjustments
• Explain Ability and product warranties
• Discuss wear-in schedule, care and use

FOLLOW UP AS NEEDED
• Re-evaluate fit and function
• Perform and refine device adjustments
• Assess changes in condition
• Collect satisfaction and outcome measures

PATIENT INCENTIVES
• Collection of outcome measures directly impacts quality of care, patient access and research
• Participation in clinical research projects
• Opportunities to work with device developers

ADDING VALUE
• Support groups, organizations and peers
• Offer access to adaptive sports, activities and quality of life adaptive resources
• Share educational opportunities and digital resources — abilitypo.com

ABILITY P&O LOCATIONS

PENNSYLVANIA
Exton
Corporate Headquarters
The Commons at Oaklands
660 West Lincoln Highway
Exton, PA 19341
p: 610.873.6733
f: 610.873.6735

Hanover
Hillside Medical Building
250 Fame Avenue
Entrance C, Suite 102
Hanover, PA 17331
p: 717.337.2273
f: 717.337.2285

Limerick
410 Linfield-Trappe Road, Suite 110
Royersford, PA 19468
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