



News Release

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Century Orthotics and Prosthetics Student Lives What He Learns

Talk about living what you are learning.

Century College Orthotics and Prosthetics student Mike Schulenberg of South St. Paul had his leg amputated in January and received a new knee, leg and foot this spring. He has shared his experience with classmates and brought the textbook learning to life.

Since surviving bone cancer in his left leg at the age of 15, Schulenberg, now 25, had three different artificial knees implanted in a series of limb-saving surgeries. Each knee eventually wore out. The last knee finally broke last December as Schulenberg bent over to pick something up in his living room. Earlier that day, he had slipped on the ice.

Schulenberg, weary of the knee surgeries, decided to have his leg amputated above the knee and have a new artificial leg, knee and foot attached. His doctor endorsed the idea.

Schulenberg had the amputation surgery Jan. 3 and received his new prosthetic in March at a clinic in Rochester, Minn.. He is very happy with the results.

“I was really sick of having surgery every four years,” said Schulenberg. “Since I was limited in what I was able to do anyway, I decided I might as well get a new leg. It meant less pain and eliminating the prospect of more surgeries.”

From the time he had the surgery to the time he was fitted with the new leg on March 15, Schulenberg managed to get around on crutches. With the new leg, he is walking without crutches.

“I like it,” said Schulenberg. “I’ve had it adjusted a couple of times and now it feels good. I can walk, but I can’t run, jump or bike – yet. I can’t push it too fast. It is a learning process. I think everyone in class has seen it, and they think it’s kind of cool.”

Instructor Steven Stolberg said this was the first time in his 27 years of educating students in prosthetics that he has had a student go through an amputation and receive a new leg while going through the program. “It’s been an interesting experience,” he said.

Schulenberg started in Century’s Orthotics and Prosthetics program in fall 2007 after earning his bachelor’s degree in exercise science at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls. He started in orthotics and has now advanced to the prosthetic practitioner program.

When Schulenberg was selecting a new prosthetic this past winter, he talked over his decision with Stolberg, his instructor. Due to insurance limitations, Schulenberg was not able to get the top-of-the-line model with the computerized knee, but he received a good, light-weight leg, knee and foot - and a new pair of size 14 athletic shoes. The cost of the new prosthetic, which is made of titanium with a carbon-fiber socket, is about the cost of a new Honda sedan.

Schulenberg grew up in Wells, Minn., near Albert Lea and graduated in 2003 from United South Central High School. He was active in football, basketball and baseball until his bout with bone cancer. A tall,

athletic young man with a ready smile, Schulenberg is matter-of-fact about what has happened to him. He said he went through his grieving at age 15 after chemotherapy and his first surgery. Since then, his attitude has been, “I’m going to get as far as I can with what I have. I’m going to live with what I have and not sit on the couch and whine. The point is, I am cancer-free. And there’s a lot I want to do.”



Photos: Century student Mike Schulenberg

