

ONE-LEG-UP Steve Ehretsman's Quest to Offer Hope



To Motivate. To Inspire. To Change.

When Steve Ehretsman stopped for breakfast at a fast food restaurant in Atlanta before a business meeting in the early morning hours of April 25, 2001, he was another young, ambitious marketing executive on his way to even bigger things. Success and excellence were part of his every day mantra - as a Division I college basketball team captain and in various national and local sports and entertainment marketing roles for Coca-Cola and Anheuser-Busch Companies - he was used to accomplishing his goals. When he was hit by a car as he left the restaurant that morning, he couldn't have known how the course of his life would be altered or the ways that the events of the coming months would change his body and mind and ultimately set him on a new and profoundly different path.

After the loss of his right leg at the knee, a month long stay in the hospital, 12 surgeries, a dire depression and the struggle to find sensitive and knowing physicians to help him, Steve began to accept that many of the circumstances of his life would be immeasurably different.

He learned to walk again. He learned that some people's discomfort with his prosthetic leg made him feel separate and apart. He learned that the proper prosthetician is essential to finding the mobility and comfort to move forward with life. Somewhere along the road to recovery, he began to recognize the same spirit that drove him in sports and in his career - the one that pressed him to keep going - could be used to get in shape and compete as a triathlete and on the court. Through that process, he discovered, he could also inspire others.

A strong desire to help and provide support to those who still needed to cover the territory he had crossed, compelled Steve to make a change that would bring him back to his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio and to a new career in the nonprofit healthcare sector. The driving force behind the change was the realization that people of all ages who are learning to cope with the loss of a limb could benefit from "a leg up." In 2005, Steve joined University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital as a major gifts fundraiser. Almost immediately, he became a "heavy hitter" in a competitive fundraising arena. Steve has already brought in well over \$2 million in private, corporate and foundation support all in the name of healthcare research, medical care and programming.

Through his efforts, Rainbow has leveraged support for important pediatric healthcare research that has garnered national attention, in turn, generating additional support. One of Steve's strongest skills is his ability to generate enthusiasm for the projects in which he is involved. Steve also connects with pediatricians and physicians of adult patients at University Hospitals Case Medical Center to help patients and families in need of emotional and practical support. As soon as he learns of a new patient, Steve pays a visit to listen and learn how he can help.

At six foot six inches, Steve's height is probably the most striking thing about him. But, his kindness and strength of spirit quickly become evident. Today, Steve, the doctors at Rainbow and University Hospitals, and many members of the community who are excited about the work Steve is doing are collaborating to spread the message that help is available. Steve also regularly speaks to large and small groups about ways to motivate, rethink and repurpose business and life goals. His own story being a prime motivation, everyone he meets him can't help but be inspired.

ONE-LEG-UP's mission is to help children and adult amputees and their families determine what their goals are and how they can reach them. Steve works to help children and adults lead fulfilling lives by beating the odds against depression, reduced quality of life and obesity that can accompany the loss of a limb.

Ways ONE-LEG-UP helps:

- If a child wants to know how he'll ever play basketball again, Steve is there to inspire and encourage through example.
- If parents worry about the heavy costs of prosthetics and replacement as their child grows, Steve works to connect them with sources of support so the child can be properly fitted with the prosthetics needed to perform any activity the child dreams about.
- If difficult choices about amputation and concerns over future mobility limitations need to be weighed, Steve helps families make informed choices.



Steve and a Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital patient at the 2006 Rainbow Golf Classic fundraiser

Visit ONE-LEG-UP.COM for more about Steve Ehretsman and his quest to help others.