

Ministry enables amputees to stand with hope

April 26, 2012

NASHVILLE (RNS)—Allan Doyle used to have big dreams and little faith.

He'd grown up Methodist but dropped out of church after high school. A bad marriage in his early 20s ended in divorce, leaving Doyle afraid he would spend most of his life alone.

Gracie and Peter Rosenberger

His main goal was to save enough money from serving in the Army to go to college and become a corporate lawyer. "I wanted to make as much money as possible," said Doyle, 39.

But the Iraq War changed all that.

In 2003, Doyle was in Saddam Hussein's palace in Tikrit when a stone from one of the walls fell on him, crushing his left leg. Doctors had no choice but to amputate it below the knee.

A few months later, Doyle was fitted with his first artificial leg. Along the way, he rediscovered his faith and found a new calling as a prosthetist—a medical professional who fits amputees with new limbs.

This summer, he'll spend a week in Ghana with Nashville-based Standing With Hope, a nonprofit that helps provide high-quality limbs for people of the West African nation.

"I just want to help people walk again," said Doyle.

When they founded [Standing with Hope](#) seven years ago, Gracie and Peter Rosenberger had the same goal. The couple met in college at [Belmont](#)

[University](#) in Nashville, where she was an aspiring Christian singer who hoped someday to be a missionary.



Standing With Hope President Peter Rosenberger (left) observes Ghana Health Services' senior prosthetic technician James Annang making adjustments to a patient's new limb. Standing With Hope Field Director Daniel J.M. Kodi stands by, as well. (RNS PHOTO/Courtesy of Standing With Hope)

A week before Thanksgiving in 1983, she fell asleep while driving in rural Tennessee. She endured dozens of surgeries, hoping doctors could repair her shattered legs. The recovery was excruciating.

Doctors weren't able to save her legs, and both were amputated. That left her with a fearful and uncertain future, until she got her first prosthetic legs. She was able to recover enough to walk and play basketball in the driveway with her two boys, and to realize her dream of becoming a singer. A highlight of her career was singing for President George W. Bush in 2004 at an event in Nashville.

She's also visited wounded soldiers at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Without those new legs, she said, none of that would have been possible.

"They gave me my life back," she said. "I had no idea what I was capable of. I want to offer people the same hope that's been offered to me."

The Rosenbergers founded Standing With Hope in 2003 and starting working in Ghana two years later.

The nonprofit ships the parts and supplies needed to build legs to the National Prosthetics and Orthotics Center run by Ghana's National Health Service in the capital city of Accra. Most of the parts are recycled from old prosthetic limbs that have been donated to Standing With Hope.

Technicians trained by Standing With Hope then use those recycled parts to assemble and fit the new limbs on amputees.

Jim McElhiney, a Spring Hill, Tenn.-based prosthetist who's a longtime friend of the Rosenbergers, helped design the training program.



Gracie Rosenberger, founder of Standing With Hope, assists Abraham, a patient in Ghana, as he receives a prosthetic limb. (RNS PHOTOS/Courtesy of Standing With Hope)

Initially, he was skeptical, saying the program wouldn't work if it relied too heavily on Americans to build and fit artificial limbs.

"I didn't want to do it at first," he said. "Look, if I go over there for weeks once a year, how many legs can I make? The need is so much bigger than I—even if I had a team of 50 prosthetists—could handle."

With the help of Standing With Hope, technicians at the clinic in Accra now can build custom limbs to fit amputees, as well as provide follow-up care.

"We put hundreds and hundreds of legs on people, but each person needs adjustment over the years. If the patient is young, they might need new legs as they grow. It is a lifelong commitment to each patient."

Last fall, Standing With Hope started a new program they hope will expand the number of prosthetics they can provide in Ghana. Inmates at a Nashville prison now disassemble donated limbs and sort the parts for shipping to Africa. The charity's biggest need is for more donated limbs, Rosenberger said.

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**Gracie Rosenberger and the story of
Standing with Hope.**

At the clinic, each patient also gets a bag with cleaning supplies and tools needed to care for the new limb. The bag also includes an explanation of the charity's Christian mission.

Peter Rosenberger, who will make his 10th trip to Ghana this summer, said he and other volunteers don't push their faith. But if the patients are interested, he shares with them how faith in Jesus motivates the charity's work.

He recalls telling one patient about how Christianity gave his wife hope

after she lost her legs. "I told him, 'You are literally standing on her belief,'" he said. "She trusted on that belief, and every step you take, you are standing on that faith."