

Member Spotlight

BY DEBORAH CONN

FACILITY:
Prosthetic Solutions Inc.

OWNER:
Wade Skardoutos, CP

LOCATION:
Santa Clara and Hollister, California

HISTORY:
21 years

October 2023 O&P Almanac

Facilitating Fitness

California prosthetist hosts clinics to aid mobility and boost activity



Wade Skardoutos, CP



The Santa Clara location of Prosthetic Solutions features an open gym area.



Skardoutos designed a new socket that features raised dots inside to help prevent slippage.

Wade Skardoutos, CP, knew that when he opened his own facility, he wanted it to be "patient forward," a place that focused on the goals his patients wanted to achieve, rather than on his bottom line. As part of that philosophy, he started Fitness for Life clinics with Paralympic athletes Todd Schaffauser and Dennis Oehler. The program brings together individuals with limb loss from throughout the area, whether or not they are his patients, to practice skills and meet others with limb difference. And the clinics are completely free.

"Some patients do well with their prostheses, while others struggle," Skardoutos says. "We mix them up together and use games to motivate them." Participants start with simple activities, like soccer, frisbee, and cornhole, and then move on to golf, baseball, basketball, and other sports. These activities allow participants to focus on the game, rather than their prosthesis, he says.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Skardoutos hosted a monthly amputee walking school; once a quarter, he hosted a fitness day, with basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and horseback riding. Today, amputees can attend weekly clinics where they can practice drills, stretching, heel target and heel strike, and weight shifting, for muscle memory. "For above-knee amputees, we work on how to control the yield [stance flexion]," he says. "If the knee twitches, patients pull back and stiffen up. But if we repeat that movement, they get more relaxed and confident. Patients know they can come in and practice any time." Skardoutos has found the clinics so successful that he invites his competitors and teaches them training drills for their patients. He didn't start the clinics to make money, although he has found that they are indirectly profitable, as patients become more active and need more advanced devices.

Skardoutos and his brother, Jim, grew up in the industry. Their grandfather, Wade Hampton, CP, was a prosthetist in San Jose, California, and the boys worked at his facility during school vacations, and then full time after they graduated. Hampton divided the work, assigning lower-limb prosthetics to Skardoutos and upper-extremity work to his brother.

When his grandfather retired, Skardoutos went to work for Wright & Filippis in Michigan for more than nine years, where he was impressed by the facility's patient-first approach. Next, he worked at a facility in California.

In 2002, Skardoutos launched Prosthetic Solutions in Hollister, California. One year later, he opened the Santa Clara office. The Santa Clara facility features an open gym area, complete with a ceiling harness, stairs, and ramps. Patients can use the space to practice on their prostheses without fear of falling.

Because of its exercise clinics, Prosthetic Solutions attracts a high proportion of active limb loss patients in addition to veterans, some teens, and vascular amputees. Skardoutos finds the younger patients can inspire older ones. "They have no fear; they just want to get out and do things," he says. "We try to give our older patients the same mindset, because fear causes them to stop and hesitate."

Skardoutos has developed a new socket he calls the OSC—Offset Surface Contact, which minimizes slippage. Patients call it the "Gripper," he says. "I was wearing Crocs during a wind and rainstorm, trying to put things away outside, and I noticed that the small bumps on the insole kept my feet from sliding around," he says. Skardoutos added raised dot patterns in small sections of a socket. Patients liked how it held the residual limb in place, so he added them throughout the socket.

"These offset dots control sweat, rotation, and pistoning; they don't irritate the skin, and they stay on," Skardoutos says. "One of my above-knee patients wore the Gripper socket to a river and fell in ... water got into the socket, but the prosthesis stayed on."

Prosthetic Solutions contributes to nonprofit organizations, both by sponsoring adaptive sporting events and by providing free sockets to the Challenged Athlete Foundation, which partners with Össur. Skardoutos has another civic project in mind: building a fitness center next to the facility, where individuals with limb loss can come and work out anytime. 🦿

Deborah Conn is a contributing writer to O&P Almanac. Reach her at deborahconn@verizon.net.