



SOUTH LAKE HOSPITAL

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National Training Center member inspires others

Clermont, Fla. – While the National Training Center (NTC) has seen many Olympic and professional athletes walk through its doors, there is another person that walks through the doors that is just as, if not more, inspiring.

NTC member and personal training client, “Z” Oates has been coming to the NTC since April 2009. She started in outpatient rehabilitation to rehab her rotator cuff after surgery in July of 2008. After rehab she was ready to use the NTC Step-Over Program and get some personal training. However, a minor surgery set her back another six weeks. What might seem like a major delay and disappointment for most was barely a problem for Oates. She had been tackling much larger obstacles with great perseverance her whole life.

Oates is a bilateral above knee amputee who also has to deal with syringomyelia. Syringomyelia is an uncommon chronic disorder involving the spinal cord. In syringomyelia, a cyst develops in the spinal cord and fills with fluid and expands. When the cyst enlarges and lengthens, which it has done in her case, it can damage the spinal cord and cause severe pain, loss of sensation, weakness and in some cases, it can result in major loss of function not often seen on the outside. Due to her disease she has to be sure she gets plenty of rest so her body does not get run down and cause other problems.

Instead of letting her complications take over her life, Oates has proactively searched for ways to push herself to make her body be the best it can despite her physical limitations. Working with her neurologist at the Mayo Clinic, exercise was recommended as a way to keep the function she still has while keeping the loss as minimal as possible. However, there is not much research on the best exercise regime for those suffering with syringomyelia and for those who are also bilateral above knee amputees.

So Oates was faced with finding the right facility and personal trainer that could understand her problems and needs and work with her to achieve her desired results. Although she lives in Tavares, Fla., after much investigation and asking questions, she decided on the National Training Center in Clermont, Fla., and trainer Jose Rivera.

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“Choosing a personal trainer isn’t a simple choice, it is almost like picking a physician,” commented Oates. “You have to make sure they understand your background and have the knowledge and willingness to work with you, especially in my case. Jose seemed the best fit for me and seemed able to think outside the box to help me.”

Rivera holds a bachelor’s degree in physical education, a master’s degree in athletic training and his personal training certification.

The focus for Oates was to strengthen her core to help with her balance, which is essential for her in her situation, and to work all of her muscles to avoid atrophy. It takes Oates 300% more energy to get through her day than it would most others, making good health and physical shape imperative to her well being. In addition, she must also maintain her weight within five pounds; otherwise her prosthetics will start to bother her because they are designed to hold a certain weight.

“Jose has had to modify exercises for me and has gotten creative on ways to get me to work all my muscles,” Oates said. “He knows exactly when to push me, which is pretty much always, and he knows how to make sure I am performing all my exercises safely. We have an excellent line of communication and trust and I think that is what makes our sessions together so successful.”

“Working with Z has definitely been a great challenge for me,” commented Rivera. “We laugh because when we first started I would show her an exercise and my knees would be bent. Then she would remind me she can’t bend her knees. Working with her has really taught me the art of adapting exercises to an individual.”

“She is such a hard worker and so determined that it makes me work that much harder to help her achieve her goals,” added Rivera. “I can be tough with her yet she knows that I’m never going to let her fall or get hurt. She is such an inspiration to me and others here at the NTC. I’m truly blessed to be able to work with her.”

Oates now trains at the NTC two times a week, an hour at a time, with Rivera. She also incorporates outpatient rehabilitation at the NTC into her regimen, focusing on tissue work.

“Working out with Jose has done so much for me,” said Oates. “My balance has become at least 50% better, I’m much more solid and it helps me keep my immune system strong. Being physically active is so important regardless if you have any conditions or not.”

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Oates is no stranger to exercise and sports. In high school, she played able-body basketball and field hockey and later in life was on the US Disabled Demonstration Ski Team. She is also a certified professional ski instructor in adaptive skiing. She taught disabled skiing to children who had been affected by cancer, which she has found very rewarding. Now she enjoys some golfing in central Florida. She grew up in a family with seven kids, which she attributes to part of her tough attitude and personal motto, *“Never say never until you have tried several times and were not successful even with adaptation.”*

“I wasn’t babied by any means due to my situation so my mother let me run around and play with my siblings, who didn’t understand the word ‘can’t’ and expected me to keep right up with them and I did,” commented Oates. “I try to encourage parents of disabled children today to do the same thing and push their kids to try any activity that interests them. It really helped me.”

Oates commented that the technology in prosthetics has come a long way and you can get prosthetics for just about any sport including running and swimming so the possibilities are endless. She spends a lot of time speaking with new amputees encouraging them to build up their body and strength and about the countless possibilities for amputees. She would like to create a foundation someday to help raise funds for children whose insures does not pay for sports legs. She wants them to do things now that are now possible but were not available to her as a child. She is a true inspiration to everyone at the NTC.

For more information on syringomyelia, please visit ww.asap.org. For more information about prosthetics for amputees or if you would like to get more involved, please contact Prosthetic & Orthotics Associates in Orlando, www.poacfl.com, 407.245.7770.

The National Training Center, part of South Lake Hospital, is a state-of-the-art sports complex that includes a 37,000 square foot fitness center, 400 meter outdoor track and field complex, 70 meter x 25 yard heated outdoor pool, cross country course, human performance lab, group fitness classes, private Pilates studio, events department, sports performance and coaching, softball/baseball complex and massage. The NTC offers community fitness memberships and a wide variety of youth programming and is also open to visiting athletes and teams. For more information on the NTC, please visit www.usantc.com or call 352.241.7144.

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