

John's Story

John RattlingTail was born in 2008. Although there was nothing out of the ordinary during the pregnancy with John, upon birth his family was told that there appeared to be something going on with his left leg and that he needed to be seen by an orthopedic specialist for further evaluation.

As his family waited anxiously for the appointment with so many unanswered questions, the specialist informed them that John had been born with Fibular Hemimelia, otherwise known as FH. They were told that John's fibula bone in his lower leg did not form which resulted in other issues with some bone and muscle attachments.



The specialist was not familiar enough with this condition to treat John, so his family was told the best option was to contact the Shriners Hospital for Children, as they most likely have dealt with FH regularly.

John's family contacted the Algeria Temple who helped start the journey with the hospital in Spokane, beginning when John was approximately three months old. Over the course of the last almost 17 years, John and his family have been given exceptional care and guidance to best manage his condition and quality of life.

In November 2010 at just two-and a-half years old, the difficult decision to amputate John's foot was made. He had what is called a syme amputation performed by one of the wonderful doctors at the Spokane hospital. This was done to be able to fit him with a prosthetic to help with leg length differences that would surely negatively affect him later-on in life if not treated. At this very stressful time, the Shriners amazing care and comfort helped lift much worry and anxiety for the family.

Since his amputation, John has been back at the hospital for follow up appointments nearly every six months until recently. John is now nearing the end of his growth and therefore isn't needing appointments as frequently.

John's journey began with his prosthetic being made locally in Great Falls. Once the POPS (pediatric orthotics and prosthetic services) department was established at the hospital, he began utilizing the services in 2015 when he was seven years old and has made strong bonds with this team of really caring individuals over the last decade. The professional staff helped ease the process with humorous conversations to put John at ease while making sure he was, as comfortable as he could be, in his new prosthetic.

Over the years John has had many prosthetics made (9 just at POPS) as he has grown into adulthood. Designs were modified continuously to help him adapt to changes in comfort and function, most recently transitioning to a posterior mounted foot to give John a more natural spring when he steps. John has also had surgeries in 2017 and 2018 in Spokane for placement and removal of plates and screws for guided growth to help correct a curvature of the tibia bone in his leg.

The gratitude John and his family have for the care they have continued to receive from Shriners Children's Spokane is immeasurable. John credits them with giving him the ability to walk and lead as normal of a life as possible.

"I can't thank them enough for the care and guidance they give at no cost to us. That is such a blessing to my family and so many other families going through similar situations. It will be a sad day when we will need to say goodbye to the Shriners as John transitions into adulthood, but we will forever hold them dear to our hearts," John RattlingTail.