

A letter from the parent of a Grant recipient for a Prosthetic arm:

I am not sure if you realize the huge impact the Houston Elks Lodge/Texas Elks Children's Services has made on our family, so I wanted to take a little time to show you both in words and photos.

You assisted us back in December 2010, so I feel awful about taking so long to write. Unfortunately, we had some family tragedies occur over the last several months. Life seems to be back on track now, so I wanted to write you while I had a moment to take a breath. I want you to know that the Elks Lodge has never been far from my mind and that I take thank-yous very seriously. I cannot think of any service which would be more deserving.

Let me begin by telling you a little about our family. My husband was in the United States Marine Corps. for 9 years and when we found out I was pregnant and that Kayleigh was going to be born with a congenital amputation, we made the decision to separate from the military in hopes of being stable in one location and in hopes that we would be able to care for our daughter better with private insurance. My husband was infantry and had deployed to Afghanistan once and Iraq twice. If he had re-enlisted, he would have left shortly before the birth of our daughter, to go back to Iraq. So, we moved to Houston, bought a home, and started looking into getting our daughter a prosthesis when she was 6 months old. I was working for a hospital that signed a contract stating they would pay for Kayleigh's arm through Pediatric Prosthetics. Jean and Linda were absolutely amazing with Kayleigh. They fitted Kayleigh and gave her a passive prosthetic arm while we waited for the myoelectric arm to be made. Kayleigh loved the arm, as you will see in the photos (named 1st prosthesis). When Kayleigh received the myoelectric arm, we found that she was exposed to another world completely. Our daughter was able to hold items, grasp items, walk with better balance, and was just all around happier. Kayleigh understands that her arm is different than others, but she knows her arm is special and guards it profusely. Due to her having the arm since about 1 year old, she is open to showing other adults and children, and feels no shyness or anger when anyone shows interest. She will gladly take off her arm and show it proudly! I have Pediatric Prosthetics to thank for giving our daughter this chance to feel comfortable and "fit in" around others.

Our problems with private insurance showed up about a year after Kayleigh received her arm. Linda and Jean did not call me to worry me initially. They worked tirelessly to get Kayleigh's arm paid for. They offered the company I worked for reduced prices and valid reasoning for why Kayleigh needed the arm. Unfortunately, the company's CEO (a physician) sent notification saying he felt the arm was unnecessary and that "children could do just as well with no arms as they could with" and claimed he had studies to prove such. At this point, Pediatric Prosthetics had to call me to tell me that the company was refusing to pay for Kayleigh's arm. I was a bit naive at this point and had no idea that the CEO could decide what was necessary and unnecessary when it clearly stated in my benefits that we had prosthetic coverage. Linda told me that she would never take the arm away from Kayleigh even though they had received no payment. At that point, I retained a lawyer and tried to fight back in order to get Pediatric Prosthetics paid. They help so many children that have no insurance and are low income.

Here I was, with what was supposed to be a great insurance plan, and I could not pay them anything. We fought tirelessly for several months and finally had to settle for a substantially lower sum for Kayleigh's arm. Linda agreed to this settlement, even though they lost money on her arm, and never asked me for a penny. After settling for the arm, the CEO proceeded to make my life miserable at my place of employment and forced me to quit eventually. I had been employed there for nearly 3 years and absolutely loved my job, but I was forced to leave due to mistreatment and we were forced to sign documents stating they would never pay for another arm for our daughter. At the time I left, Kayleigh was already due for an extension on her current arm and I knew I would not get any assistance through that company. I took another job that added a 2 hour commute to my work day. I already worked 12 hour shifts, so this was very hard to get used to. Unfortunately, this caused great stress on our family and I was forced to leave after approximately 3 months. I started at another hospital, where I am currently employed, back in November 2010. Due to the waiting time for new benefits, we were unable to get Kayleigh's arm covered under the new plan for at least another 3 months, and Kayleigh was not able to wear her arm anymore because it was too tight and short. We contacted you back in October; I believe or somewhere close to that time. I had nearly a 6 month lapse in benefits and the Houston Elks Lodge came to our assistance right away. Yet again, Pediatric Prosthetics agreed to fix Kayleigh's arm, whether they were paid or not. Luckily, the Elks Lodge was able to offer some assistance so that Pediatric Prosthetics was not forced to lose all the money invested on Kayleigh's arm. I hated feeling like another needy child would not be able to get a arm from them because I had used up all their available funds on 2 of Kayleigh's arms. In the midst of all of this, Kayleigh's daycare accidentally allowed her to soak her arm in water, which fried the circuit board and battery for her arm. This was not covered under warranty, but Linda was able to talk the company that provides parts for her arm to donate a new battery and Linda gave us a new circuit board at no cost. I just cannot say enough wonderful things about the Elks Lodge (Texas Elks Children's Services) and Pediatric Prosthetics.

We have had to cross so many hurdles and yet have come out of it all completely blessed. I truly believe everything happens for a reason. We were led to Pediatric Prosthetics and then eventually led to you. If not for both, our daughter would not have an arm, and I fear that she would not be as well rounded of a child as she is now. I pray that others are able to see what people like you do to make our world a better place. I want people to know the assistance that the Elks Lodge provides so that many more children can be helped like Kayleigh was. If there is anything I can do to assist in that endeavor, please do not hesitate to ask. I would be honored to help.

Thank-you again for all your help!

God Bless,

Paula Howard.