

Darryl Partridge

Overcoming Challenges & Inspiring Others

By Jenna Caputo
Photos by Angela Mia Photography



It's funny how life changes. Now, he's a personal trainer, but all through elementary and high school, Darryl Partridge hated gym class. "I was always the last pick for teams and was considered an athletic loser by classmates and gym teachers. I almost didn't graduate high school due to failing gym. I had skipped gym class all winter to go ski," he explains.

Originally from Windham, NY, Darryl may have hated gym class, but he was still active, spending much of his time skiing, hiking, biking, growing plants, and building things. With a little wood and tools in hand, he would craft anything from furniture to rudimentary structures.

After high school, he lived a "ski bum" life for a while, employed as a Certified Ski Instructor in the winter and working a landscaping job in the summer to offset the cost of his spring ski travels. He skied the Austrian Alps and hiked Mt. Washington in New Hampshire to ski off Tuckerman's Ravine. He served as the Director of the Children's Ski School at Windham Mountain for a few years, where he designed programs that are still in place today.

Eventually, he took a job as an elementary school teacher, but life changed again when he suffered a rare ankle fracture at 42 years old. He thinks it happened when he did a simple jump from a low counter to the floor, but he wasn't aware of the injury right away. When he could no longer put pressure on his foot months later, he knew something was wrong. The fracture had happened in the top of the talus, a small but important bone in the ankle joint. The bone around the fracture died, taking the cartilage with it and causing significant pain. Six unsuccessful surgeries later, the pain was still there, and the anatomy of his lower leg had changed forever. The pain seemed to worsen with each surgery. Despite 10 leg casts and constant use of crutches, the leg became deformed, he was no longer able to walk without crutches, and had chronic pain that just kept getting worse. "I basically had a live peg leg that caused debilitating pain," he says. "The pain continued getting worse, my knee was beginning to contract, and the rest of my leg was wasting away. I was disabled and



out of options other than to amputate. The decision to amputate was the most agonizing and difficult decision I have ever had to make. With the help and support of my wife, we felt I had to take the chance with amputation because I could no longer live with the excruciating pain the leg caused. On September 24th, 2014, I had my leg amputated and began living again!”

After the amputation, he found himself at the gym. “The more I worked out, the more I wanted to work out,” he remembers. “It was addicting because I realized the loss of my leg didn’t keep me from challenging myself physically.” In addition to constantly challenging himself, he also wanted to find a way to help other amputees after feeling so alone himself during his first year. Despite his relief from his previous pain, he had to learn how to deal with a prosthetic, which is a complicated and insurance-driven process. “Everyone tells you everything will be fine once you get your prosthetic,” Darryl says. “What they don’t prepare you for are all the skin issues and prosthetic fitting issues that cause a great deal of pain as you are learning to walk with the prosthetic.” He is grateful he had

the strength to do the hard work on his own but didn’t want others in the area to have to go through the same ordeal. He reached out and became an educational support system to other amputees, serving as a sounding board for any of their concerns while also teaching them

about limb and skin issues, prosthetics options, and body and limb preparation for a successful return to full lives.

When the opportunity presented itself to become a personal trainer, he felt like it was his calling and jumped at the chance. Fifteen months after losing his leg, Darryl became a NASM Certified Personal Trainer and began working full time.

“I lost my disability and got my life back in the gym,” he says. “Now it was my turn to guide, support, and push others to overcome their challenges, discover their capabilities, and give up their excuses. The most rewarding part of my fitness journey was having the ability to inspire people to get out and make improvements in their own lives. With the loss of my leg, I gained an incredible gift—the awesome ability to teach people that it doesn’t matter what challenges life has thrown at you, you can accomplish anything you want with determination and hard work.”

Darryl worked for five years as a trainer at Vent Fitness, but once COVID hit, life changed again. But he wasn’t going to let the pandemic stop his work. As soon as the gyms closed, Darryl began posting daily workouts on Facebook to keep his clients going. This soon led to virtual classes and then meeting outdoors in





parcs and back yards to continue their work. Eventually, Darryl realized he could open his own gym. Reaching out, he procured the support and space he needed to get started. After obtaining equipment, he had a fully-functional workout studio that upheld clients as the number one priority. On September 1, 2020, he began training clients in his own studio, and Leg Up On Fitness was born.

“Following all the COVID regulations and dealing with quarantines due to possible exposure made running a business difficult at times,” he says. “However, if COVID hadn’t happened, I most likely would not have opened my own studio. So, while it hasn’t been easy following all regulations and keeping everyone safe, overall, it was a very positive move!”

Leg Up On Fitness offers personal as well as small group training, bootcamps, adaptive training, amputee training, and Spartan training. Darryl continues to help other amputees not only within his studio but through websites, virtual and local hospital visits, peer mentoring, and through the Amputee Blade Runners organization, where he helps with education on limb skin care, prosthetics, exercise, and hacks on everyday tasks to help amputees live a better life. Amputee Blade Runners is a Nashville-based organization that provides free running legs to amputees who want to live active lives and participate in sports.

Darryl works with the recipients to help them strengthen their bodies to use the running leg and be successful. “Without Amputee Blade Runners, I would not be running,” says Darryl. “They provided me with my running leg. Health insurance doesn’t cover sports prosthetics, and they cost thousands of dollars.”

Darryl had never been a runner before, but after his amputation, running became a freeing and empowering activity. He started when training a client for a Tough Mudder race, promising him that if he went for it, Darryl would race right alongside. After that, Darryl switched to Spartan races since teams are not needed. “Running and Spartans are my unwind times,” says Darryl. “Time for myself; time to clear my head. When I am on the Spartan course, it is all about survival and getting to the fire.” Pre-COVID, he ran 15 races a year, which included a mix of 5ks, 15ks, half marathons, and a Spartan Trifecta. He also takes a team of his training clients to compete in the Fenway Spartan Sprint each year and is looking forward to getting back to his racing schedule once the pandemic winds down.

Skiing continues to be a big part of his life as well, holding an even more special meaning since he met his wife, Laurie, while giving her a skiing lesson that did not go well. “We avoided each other for a few years until she asked me for a job teaching kids skiing. I hired her and here

we are, 29 years and three kids later!” he jokes. Their daughter, Alex, is now 25 and in cosmetology school. Jake (23) is working on his MBA with a goal of becoming a Disney Executive, and Jessie (20) is on a premed track, hoping to be an OBGYN with a specialty in Fertility. Their family also includes their rescue mix dogs, Dixie, Flurry, and Gretel. Their preferred family vacations always include either skiing or Disney (Darryl and Laurie even went to Disney for their honeymoon!). Fall in the Capital District is their favorite time of year. They enjoy all the local seasonal activities, including lunch at Lakeside Farms, and of course, apple cider doughnuts. Darryl looks forward to once again running the trails on a crisp, fall morning.

The month of September holds special meaning for Darryl, marking his seventh year of amputation and the one-year anniversary of Leg Up On Fitness. It’s a good reminder of his mantra to “set your goals high, then become the person who can achieve them.”

“Everyone has challenges, problems in their lives. Do not let those challenges be your excuses to give up on yourself,” Darryl urges. “Overcome what challenges you by turning those obstacles into fuel to become a strong person.”

For more information on Leg Up On Fitness, visit leguponfitness.com.