

## **Naples man recovers from coma with newfound purpose to help other amputees**

Pat Nix Ford, Community Contributor

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Five years ago, after being in a coma for four days, Bob Ayres, a long-time resident of Naples, awakened with a new purpose in life. An above-knee amputee from being hit by a car in the '70s while changing a tire, Ayres had struggled to come to grips with his adversity for years. He had convinced himself that it was a mistake to have survived and had turned onto the road with all of the pitfalls depression and alcoholism can cause.

During the coma, however, Ayres is convinced that an angel spoke to him and explained his purpose in life. That day was the last negative day in Ayres' life, and with passionate pursuit, he and his wife Diana created Miracle Limbs-Courage in Motion, a Naples-based organization with a mission to provide financial, emotional, rehabilitative and spiritual support for amputees.

"The statistics alone told us the need was there," Ayres said. "There are 253 new amputees daily in the U.S. from diabetes alone, and Florida has one of the top incident rates in the country. And there are more amputees returning from the Mideast conflicts than at any time since the Civil War, with 35 percent of our soldiers facing life as new amputees. We were shocked when we researched the nonprofit community and found such a void to help existed."

Ayres will celebrate his fifth year of sobriety this November and Miracle Limbs-Courage in Motion will celebrate its fifth anniversary as well in January.

"We are growing as quickly as we responsibly can," Ayres said, adding that the organization is receiving as many as three referrals each week from area hospitals alone and that it is struggling to keep up with the demand locally before expanding its networks past Southwest Florida.

As Diana Ayres says, "The word retirement has dropped from our vocabulary."

"Although we have helped many, one of our most emotional challenges has been little Jamarion, who at 8 months had a virus that was misdiagnosed and as a result, lost both arms," said Bob Ayres.

At age 6, Jamarion Styles had taught himself to write with his feet, refusing to wear the hooks his insurance would provide until he was 18. With help from Pediatric