Amputees find strength, laughter: ‘They are not alone’

RECLAIMING LIFE | Someone in the U.S. loses a limb every three minutes. Recovery takes support, and people have been finding it at a Seattle group for nearly 40 years.

by CHRISTINE CLARRIDGE
Seattle Times staff reporter

Alex Helms was riding his beloved Ducati 1299 Panigale motorcycle home from brunch with his family on Mother’s Day this year, when he crashed into an oncoming car on a winding Renton road.

Head bleeding and shocked on the asphalt, he said afterward, “I thought I was dead, that’s how I felt.” Suddenly, his foot “suddenly took on a life of its own and self-removed itself from my leg” as he lay on his back, bleeding and groaning on the road,” recalled the personal banker, skater and dancer and lifelong motorcycle fan, who grew up in South King County.

Surgeons amputated the lower half of his leg, but not his foot. By the end of the month, he was riding through the airport.

He didn’t want to sacrifice any more muscle, skin or time to a foot that might not ever work again.

“I’m not a maimed person,” he said goodbye to his foot, “and I’m not going to look back or be tied down to it. I’m moving forward.”

By the end of the month, he was riding through the airport.

Craig Milkins, of Puyallup (foreground, back to camera), talks at a support group meeting in July about losing his leg. For nearly four decades, hundreds of people have attended the meetings for much-needed support and information.

By MIKE ROSENBERG

Alex, his first stage

Watch Alex work on his first foot stage with a prosthetic. seattletimes.com

In the group regularly was “one of the smartest things I’ve ever done,” Helms says.

“Coming close to death has made me feel that I’m living life to the fullest,” Helms said. “I talk to my son about life and death, and it’s helped.”

Alex Helms and his son Anthony, 6, head toward the elevators after an amputee support-group meeting at Harborview Medical Center.

CONSTRUCTION ROOM | It’s the least competitive market in the Seattle area since the recession, so more apartments sit empty and rents have flatlined.

by ROSE HALEM

It’s getting easier to find an apartment to rent, and in some neighborhoods it’s even getting harder to find one.

Seattle-area renters are enjoying the least competitive market since the recession, with more and more apartments at empty and monthly refreshments — as evidenced in a story on the city’s continues to enjoy the advantages of the suburbs as passrates. The suburb market continues to enjoy the advantages of attracting renters with no rent control.

The ride-hail app company and its drivers have long been champions of congestion pricing in Seattle as part of a $10 million push to that city’s transportation network.

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Enjoy more choices, lower costs

Renters are seeing more choices, lower costs

Kavanaugh confirmation

How left may push back after big fight

by DANIEL BEEKMAN

Seattle Times staff reporter

Uber to lobby Seattle, other cities to adopt street tolls

by KEN LAMBERT

Seattle Times staff reporter

Outdoor gear, home and eats

The ride-hail app company and its drivers have long been champions of congestion pricing in Seattle as part of a $10 million push to that city’s transportation network.

Though several foreign cities use congestion pricing systems to reduce traffic in busy areas at busy times, no American city has a widespread tolling system. Many of them are planning to start, but in many of these cities it is not expected to have a significant impact on traffic.

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