

**For Immediate Release**

October 10, 2002

Contact: Elaine St. Jean (603) 647-8606  
Vital & Ryze Advertising, Inc.

**Young Amputee Begins New Hockey Season**  
*Joins American Amputee Hockey Association Youth Team*

PROVIDENCE, RI — For eleven-year-old Andrew Bateson, October 20 marks the beginning of what promises to be some awesome hockey experiences. It is opening day of the Brown University Youth Hockey season. While many players are looking forward to that day, Andrew's perspective is a bit different from most. He is a bilateral amputee after severe bacterial meningitis led to the amputation of both legs below the knee five years ago.

Andrew's excitement about playing hockey will be magnified the following week when he joins other young amputees on the American Amputee Hockey Association Youth Team for practice at the Max Ulin Rink in Milton, Mass., on October 26. The youth team will share the ice with the U.S. National Amputee Hockey Team, which is hosting tryouts. Comprised of skaters from ages 8 to 16, the youth team is also scheduled to play a Marblehead Youth Hockey Pee Wee team at Salem State College in Salem, Mass., on October 27. The youth team will next meet in Duluth, Minnesota, in November.

Now a sixth grader at Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School, Andrew learned to play hockey in the Edgewood Youth Hockey League in Cranston about 14 months after the amputation. That first season, while Andrew sometimes had difficulty getting up off the ice and completing some drills, his coach and teammates realized only at the end of the season that they had an amputee playing on their team. Andrew's competitive spirit on the ice, not his amputation, both then and now is what many first notice about him.

When Andrew takes to the ice this fall, he will be playing his second season in the Brown University Youth Hockey League's 10- to 13-year-old division. Last year he played offense and defense on the B line and scored a few goals. His mother, Rebecca Bateson, cringes a little when recounting his aggressive play. "I probably don't like to see that side of him," she says "because I like to think of him as a lover not a fighter but...he's very aggressive, very assertive on the ice."

Energetic by nature, Andrew also skis, snowboards and plays roller hockey in the Cranston Street Hockey League, when he's not launching his bike off jumps in the neighborhood.

-MORE-

On hockey game days, Andrew gets even more pumped up than usual. Eager to get to the rink, Andrew starts well before departure time to get most of his game gear on before leaving home. The process includes putting on his “hockey legs,” a pair of prosthetic legs with his skates attached. His only advantage over other players is he has to tie his skates just once a season.

Making sure Andrew has the necessary mobility and comfort on the ice has been the job of Next Step Orthotics and Prosthetics in Warwick. Stephen Marfia, RTP-PA, applies a foam covering to Andrew’s prosthetic legs so his skates can be tied securely. Next Step practitioners also adjust the angle of Andrew’s prosthetic feet so he can feel the toe of his skate a little more as he pushes off the ice.

“Our philosophy is to allow children to be children and participate in any and all activities they want to participate in,” says Peter Couture, CP, President and Clinical Director of Next Step. “It would be tragic for someone like Andrew to be sitting on the sidelines watching his friends play. Our goal is for Andrew to put on his legs and forget he’s an amputee.”

As Andrew gets on the ice this season and races after the puck, his first thought will probably be that he is just a hockey player, not an amputee.

#### **About Next Step Orthotics & Prosthetics, Inc.**

Next Step Orthotics & Prosthetics, Inc. specializes in prosthetic limbs for amputees, as well as orthotic products such as custom back braces. Fabrication is done on site by staff technicians in the in-house lab using state-of-the-art high-tech components such as lightweight carbon fiber and computerized knees. The key to Next Step’s success is their commitment to fitting a client for optimum mobility and comfort. Next Step’s reputation encompasses the world, as they see patients from around the globe. Next Step Orthotics & Prosthetics, Inc. has offices in Warwick, RI, and North Andover, MA, as well as their new headquarters in Manchester, NH. For more information about Next Step Orthotics & Prosthetics, Inc., visit them online at [www.nextstepOandP.com](http://www.nextstepOandP.com).

#### **About the American Amputee Hockey Association**

The American Amputee Hockey Association (AAHA) is a new disabled association whose primary mission is to develop the sport of ice hockey for amputees and other amateur athletes, regardless of race, gender or physical ability, who are interested in competing locally, nationally, and internationally. AAHA is sanctioned by USA Hockey and Disabled Sports USA to conduct development camps and clinics and to advance the goal of future Paralympic participation of amputee hockey players competing upright on or with their prostheses. For more information on AAHA, visit them online at [www.amputeehockey.org](http://www.amputeehockey.org).

###