



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Erin Thompson and her son, Cade, encourage Chelsie to practice the motions required to make the blade prosthetic work as it should for running. Chelsie didn't let a fall on the road earlier that day keep her from a little more practice.

## CHELSIE

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She broke the knee of that leg within eight months. "To see her go from this

timid girl who didn't want to get rid of her walker, didn't want to go on her own, to wearing out the knee in eight to 10 months was exciting to see," said Erin.

This new leg is her third prosthetic, which features a blade, instead of an artificial foot, with a Nike tread on the bottom to replicate a shoe. This running leg is an inch

taller than her walking leg to compensate for compression the blade takes when running. Erin said this creates a learning curve for Chelsie as she figures out her balance and her stride.

Erin said that when Chelsie wears jeans and boots you can barely tell she has a prosthetic leg because she's climbing and running all over the place with the other kids.

Last fall Chelsie played basketball with the YMCA, and she rode her dirt bike with her siblings and friends in the Fourth of July parade in Haines this year. She uses training wheels on her Honda 50 cc dirt bike until she can balance without them.

It was hard for Chelsie to wear her cowboy boots, and Erin said they bent a shoe horn trying to get them onto the plastic left foot. Then they had the idea to get the boot modified and had a zipper sewn into it so Chelsie can put it on by herself.

"You just have to get creative," said Erin. This running leg should last Chelsie until she's 100 pounds, Erin said, and different components of the legs are replaceable as her height and weight changes.

Erin said Shriners will take care of the costs of the prosthetics and physical therapy until Chelsie's 18.

"We're super lucky to work with Shriners," she said.

A grant from the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) out of San Diego paid for Chelsie's \$20,000 running leg, which Shriners assembled and fit for her.

Chelsie attended CAF's Portland and San Diego clinics in 2017 participating in their running camps and surfing at the one in California.



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One of Chelsie's family chores is keeping the container for drinking water full for the hogs.



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Chelsie's motorcycle will retain its training wheels for a while as she gets used to riding and using the controls around the ranch near North Powder.



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The backyard trampoline draws the 8-year-old to action between chores.

"Surfing I didn't want to do, but then it was really fun," said Chelsie.

CAF funds the cost of clinics and travel through grants, and the Thompsons could even apply for a grant to get Chelsie special equipment if she decides to take up sports like horseback riding or water skiing.

While at the San Diego clinic Chelsie met a girl from Kentucky who, after dozens of surgeries, also had her leg amputated due to a lawn mower injury.

"It's huge for her to meet kids like her who she can ask about things, like if she wants to go to a dance or how to wear certain shoes, who can speak her language," Erin said. "It's a whole world no one knows about unless you have kids with these needs."

This year's rodeo was also exciting for the Thompson family, which Erin and her husband, Colby, have been involved with for about 13 years now, because Cade's team won the wild pony races earning him a belt buckle.

It also was special to be able to present Chelsie with her new leg at the rodeo.

"The way the community

has rallied to support her and support us is truly amazing," Erin said as she started to tear up. "We're blessed to live in a community where people step up and help out."

Chelsie's doctor checks on her residuum, the remaining part of her left leg, every six months. Erin said it's unlikely she'll have to have any more surgeries.

"I believe this was the plan Heavenly Father had for her and that she's still here and able to run and play," she said. "We've been blessed."

Although an accident like this can be trying, Erin said they had to adapt and keep a positive attitude. She and Jacee joked about what they should do with Chelsie's extra legs laughing about how it's become normal to have legs laying around.

"You have to be able to laugh and joke about it. It's a part of life now. We don't have time to play poor pity me. We had to say, 'well this happened and we still have stuff to do.'"

Nonetheless, Erin wanted to encourage lawn mower safety saying, "No one's exempt. It can happen to anyone."

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