

**For Immediate Release**



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## **City of Kentwood and Hanger Clinic to Host Annual Hanger Limb Loss Awareness 5K on April 29**

**Kentwood, Michigan, April 11, 2023** – The City of Kentwood and local orthotic and prosthetic care provider [Hanger Clinic](#) are again partnering to host the fifth annual Hanger Limb Loss Awareness 5K on Saturday, April 29 in honor of Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month.

The all-ages, all-abilities event will begin with packet pickup at 9 a.m. at Veterans Memorial Park, 355 48th St. SE, followed by a Show Your Mettle photo at 9:45 a.m. The race will begin at 10 a.m. The race will include a new route this year that will take runners through Veteran’s Memorial Park and part of the East West Trail.

The race seeks to increase awareness of limb loss and limb difference, build community and raise funds for [Kentwood’s adaptive recreation programs](#). These programs provide quality recreation and enrichment programs for people of all abilities and offer opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in athletic activities in an adapted way to allow for a safe, fun experience.

“Our Limb Loss Awareness 5K is focused on inclusivity, awareness, relationships and making a difference in our local community,” said Katelyn Bush, Kentwood recreation program coordinator. “We’re honored to host this event alongside Hanger Clinic and are thrilled about its growing popularity since the first one in 2018.”

Online registration is available at [RunSignUp.com](#). Registration is \$35 through April 28 and \$45 on race day. Participants will receive a long-sleeved T-shirt and swag bag as part of their registration. To guarantee a shirt, please be sure to register by April 14. Packet pickup will be available at the event and in advance at the Kentwood Activities Center, 355 48th St. SE, during business hours beginning Thursday, April 27.

Four first-place awards will be given to the first adult men and women amputees and nonamputees who cross the finish line. The event is set to conclude at 1 p.m.

The kid-friendly event will also include a fun run for ages 12 and younger at 11 a.m. in the park. The kids race costs \$10 per child and includes a T-shirt and finisher ribbon. There is also a Family Fun area with yard games, chalk and more for all ages to enjoy.

This year's event will feature two speakers: **Kelly Allen** and **RJ Myler**.

**Allen** was born missing a femur, tibia and patella and with a hip that is not fully developed on her left side due to a limb difference called proximal femoral focal deficiency. She was fit for her first prosthetic at just 3 months old.

She was born into a family of athletes, but there was not an adaptive sports community near her home. So, she competed in able-bodied sports, working hard to keep up with her peers on the field and court. In 2006, her prosthetist introduced her to the Extremity Games, an extreme sport competition for athletes with disabilities. This was her first introduction to adaptive sports, and it had a big impact on her view of her disability.

“In a flash, I went from being the only person I knew with a prosthetic leg to being surrounded by people who shared similar life experiences to me,” Allen said. “I walked away from this event with a second-place medal in rock climbing and with a new sense of belonging and pride in my disability.”

Allen's love of sports and participation in adaptive recreation took her many places. She trained and competed in adaptive skiing in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. While recovering from a ski injury, she was introduced to paracanoe and became a paralympic kayaker, representing the U.S. on the world stage for 10 years in Hungary, Portugal, Germany, Poland and Brazil.

**Myler** experienced a workplace accident that led to his left leg being amputated from the hip down in June 2022. Due to the accident, he suffered a broken left femur and humerus, a broken pelvis, two broken hips, a fractured right femur, tibia and fibula, a fractured heel and a severely dislocated right knee that tore all four major ligaments. Upon waking up on a ventilator and finding his left leg amputated, Myler knew he had a long road to recovery ahead.

He spent three months at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital rebuilding strength in his right leg and preparing to use a prosthetic limb. During this time, he said it was hard to focus on the bright side of his new life when he was often faced with thoughts of activities he would no longer be able to do.

A supportive community made all the difference for Myler.

“Fortunately, I have an amazing wife, family, friends and neighbors who rallied behind me and gave me something to fight for,” Myler said. “I knew I wasn't alone in this.”

“I hope others read this and know help is always available to those who ask.”

Myler returned home from the hospital in October, was fit with his first prosthetic leg at Hanger Clinic in December, and recently returned to work as a dispatcher, where he enjoys encouraging others to approach life with a positive mindset.

Phil Tower, a West Michigan radio personality, amputee and advocate for people with disabilities, will serve as the event's DJ. Tower has more than 40 years of broadcasting experience and a background in higher education and talent coaching.

Along with the race, there will be activities and educational opportunities to raise awareness about limb loss and limb difference. These resources will help participants and attendees learn more about amputation, prosthetics and orthotics as well as connect individuals who have experienced limb loss or limb difference connect and build relationships. Several informational booths from various sponsors will also be at the event.

Sponsors include Corewell Health, Mary Free Bed Orthotics & Prosthetics + Bionics, Buist Electric, Green Shield Deck Builders, Life Beyond Barriers Rehabilitation Group, College Park, Metronet, Muskegon Surgical Associates, Summit Labs LLC, Amazon, Foot and Ankle Specialists and Willow Wood.

“We have a vibrant, supportive community for people experiencing limb loss and limb difference in West Michigan as well as many local resources,” said Nikki Stoner, Hanger Clinic care coordinator and a lower limb amputee herself. “This event gives us an opportunity to raise awareness and let individuals know they aren't in this alone – we're here to help.”

Volunteers are needed for the event. Those interested may sign up at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com).

More information on the Hanger Limb Loss Awareness 5K is available at [kentwood.us/LimbLoss5K](https://kentwood.us/LimbLoss5K).

All profits from the event will go toward improving and expanding the City of Kentwood's adaptive recreation programs to encourage health and wellness, socialization and excellent quality of life for all. The programs – offered in collaboration with community partners – enable participants to enjoy the benefits that come with any athletic or recreational activity, such as a sense of camaraderie, improved confidence and new skills. For more on the City of Kentwood's adaptive recreation programs, visit [kentwood.us/adaptive](https://kentwood.us/adaptive).

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