

DATE: August 18, 2008	STATION: CJOB 68
LOCATION: Winnipeg	PROGRAM: The Drive Geoff Currier

Geoff: Coming up next, Cliff Chadderton of The War Amps. You all know The War Amps and Cliff Chadderton, the CEO of The War Amps. He has been a guest on this station countless times, as well, I would think, just about every other radio station and TV station in this country at one time or another and is fresh off a weekend seminar which was held in Toronto and Cliff joins us from his office in Ottawa today. Cliff, one of the things that you talked about to young amputees, because of course The War Amps has changed so much in what it does over the years in the CHAMPS Program, which was your baby, has really become the big focus of The War Amps and at this point, we still find out, and I guess I was a little bit surprised to find out to some extent, that child amputees still get, they still get the business from their school mates, sometimes.

HCC: Oh yes. Ridicule is high on the agenda and we have to teach them at these seminars how to deal with it and I think we do ... well actually what we do, we bring in older Champs who've been through it and they are allowed to take the microphone and they say 'listen, it's just a lot of baloney, just ignore it'. And we did, and you know, some of these Champs ... one girl we had there, quadruple amputee, now working in a major bank and she's been all through out program from the time she was three years old.

Geoff: How early does it start, Cliff, the teasing and the name ... you know, that sort of childhood cruelty?

HCC: I would say at age five. About age five. Sometimes we hear while the kids are still on strollers and the mothers are going through a shopping centre, but that is really just curiosity. But, when they get five into kindergarten, it's a 'yeh, yeh, yeh, look at you, you haven't got an arm' ... this type of thing. 'You have to have help when you go to the bathroom, you can't cook yourself and you look funny, and what's that crazy thing ... you've got an arm that pinches everybody, but what else can you do with it?' That's a myo-electric arm, of

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course. So it's a whole lot of things and we have to teach them that they have to get over that, and once they get over it, then it's clear sailing ... they're in, what we call, the Winner's Circle. It's what you have left that counts.

Geoff: Well, we can be mean to each other, can't we? We're not very much different from the geese that shunned the one that's got a broken wing or, you know that kind of thing? We're not much different from the animals.

HCC: We first experienced it when we came back from World War II. I remember my own experience when I got to Ottawa and I went swimming on crutches and some lady came up and screaming 'get away from my kids'. So I sat down and talked to her. I said 'what's the problem'? 'Oh, they shouldn't see that because they'll remember it all their lives and it'll upset them ... (laughs) I said 'lady, you've got a problem, not me'.

Geoff: Upset you, lady, you should have been there. (both laughing) I think that would have been my response. Well you know, Cliff, in your lifetime, you have seen so much progress in this area and I think that, you know, from those days when we were told as kids, if we saw an amputee, don't look, don't look, don't stare, you know, that kind of thing. From complete discomfort to a point where ... I thought in Canada, you know, we're all kind of pretty comfortable with each other, but it turns out that for kids, it's not necessarily the case. So what kinds of things can you tell and do you tell young amputees to get past this stuff? Because I don't think we're ever going to get rid of those kinds of attitudes all together, are we?

HCC: Well the thing that really works with me is what we call the senior and junior counsellors. I mean I'm a little old, but they'll listen to me, but when we get some of these kids who've been through our program and their successes and, you know, they're hopping all around the place and they're all upbeat and they

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say 'don't listen to the taunts of your school mates, just get your education and then they'll come after you with their questions'. So it's kind of a monkey-see, monkey-do type of thing and I think that works more than anything. The other thing we have to do is talk to the parents and we have a look in the mirror philosophy. We say 'before you tell your child not to do this or not to do that, you look in the mirror and look back again and practice what you're going to say, because if you say one wrong thing, that child retains it for the rest of his or her life. It can ruin them. And, you know, when the child is five, six, eight, ten, nine, when they're that age, they're very susceptible to being upset by what other people think and so you know, this is why we spend a lot of time with these multiple amputee seminars ... they're all triple or quadruple amputees, but they will have to rely on the computer age, so we are ... so we're right into computers. That's a great equalizer for these kids who are missing arms and legs, and I think with the advice of the older child amputees who have been through it and with their first experience with computers, what it can do for them, and then we have WEBMASTERS ... we'll bring them into seminars in Ottawa and teach them to set up web sites for smaller employers, and that helps the parents too ... because the parents say 'my God, what am I going to do? My child can crawl all around the floor, but what's going to happen to her when she's 18, 19 and she's into dating and all of those kinds of things ... or boys, you know, you can't play hockey in the NHL. So the parents get educated, is a good word, at these seminars too, so we bring both parents and you see miracles happening, Jeff, every time I look around at a seminar.

Geoff: Well, Cliff, I know you're all about opening doors rather than closing them.

HCC: Yes, absolutely, yes.

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Geoff: How are we doing as adults? We talk about some of the kids being mean to each other, but we usually, most of us outgrow that. As adults in Canada, how are our attitudes now?

HCC: Well, I think, I have to speak to employers for example. If a girl answers an advertisement and they're looking for somebody who can take orders for Chinese food or something, she doesn't get past the door. But we say 'go in and show them. You can write with your feet, you don't need arms.' And, but here's where you have to get the parents very, very oriented towards 'I've got to support my child' and then the child's got to do some things themselves, but we'll teach them how. We'll teach them how to operate a computer, how to operate an e-mail ... all of the modern conveniences. That's what's going to save these children. Now, I might say that we also deal with senior amputees and we get them into e-mail right away, if we can, and we say 'you know, if you want to talk to your grandchildren these days, go upstairs and get on the computer ... you'll find you've got a willing, sort of, companion there with that'.

Geoff: Well the world opens up to you if you can do that.

HCC: Oh, absolutely.

Geoff: Cliff, it's always a great pleasure to talk to you. Thanks for doing this today.

HCC: OK Jeff. Thanks very much. Bye-bye.

Geoff: Cliff Chadderton, the CEO of The War Amps. He spoke to us from Ottawa.