Sarasota amputees benefit from same technology as Winter the dolphin

September 16, 2011

Sarasota, Fla., September 16, 2011 – It's the stuff of movies – literally. A baby dolphin lost her tail after it became entangled in a crab trap in 2005. Two prosthetic experts stepped in to create the first prosthetic tail for a dolphin. The real life survival story of that little dolphin named Winter and her innovative prosthetic team, Sarasota, Florida-based prosthetist Dan Strzempka and Orlando, Florida-based Kevin Carroll, is coming alive on the silver screen nationwide on September 23rd in a feature film titled, "Dolphin Tale" starring Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Kris Kristopherson, and Harry Connick, Jr.

Having lost his leg at the age of four due to a lawnmower accident, Strzempka shares something more in common with Winter than just the connection of being an amputee – Strzempka is now also benefiting from a new gel liner that he helped create during the research and development necessary to fit a prosthetic tail on Winter. The new liner, called WintersGel™, is used as an interface to protect Winter's delicate skin from the forces of the prosthesis. That same liner material is now benefiting human patients around the country, including Strzempka and his patient Dana Pounds who was forced to amputate her right leg above-the-knee in November 2008 due to a rare form of cancer. WintersGel has drastically improved the comfort for both Strzempka and Pounds, and in some cases, has even allowed other amputees to wear a prosthesis who could not previously wear one.

Both Strzempka and Pounds recently talked to their local media about the difference WintersGel is making in their lives:

- Associated Press: Art imitates life in 'Dolphin Tale'
- *Bradenton Herald*: Sarasota prosthetist helped to give dolphin a new tail
- WFLA-TV (NBC): Sarasota man who made Winter's prosthetic tail excited about movie

A certified prosthetist and orthotist with nearly 30 years experience, Strzempka is an area practice manager for Hanger, treating patients in Sarasota, Bradenton, and Venice, Florida. When not taking care of his human patients, Strzempka volunteers weekends to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium where he works with Winter the dolphin alongside his colleague Kevin Carroll, fellow co-developer of Winter's prosthetic tail. A young Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, Winter was caught in a crab trap near Cape Canaveral in December 2005, when she was just three-months-old. Her tail fluke eventually came off, as it was severely damaged by the trap's rope entanglement. Thanks to Strzempka and Carroll's ingenuity, Winter became the first dolphin to have her entire tail fluke replaced with a prosthetic device.

Scheduled for nationwide release September 23, 2011, Winter's story will be shown on the big screen in a 3D family movie titled "Dolphin Tale". Playing a prosthetist, Morgan Freeman will portray the prosthetic work completed by Strzempka and Carroll. The movie trailer is available here.

About Hanger Prosthetics and Orthotics – With 54 locations in Florida and 670+ nationwide, the certified clinicians of Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics provide patients with the latest in orthotic and prosthetic solutions, including microprocessor devices for those with limb loss and neuromuscular technologies for those with paralysis due to stroke, MS and other debilitating conditions. For more information, visit www.hanger.com.

###

Jennifer Bittner, Hanger Orthopedic Group
904-249-4210, jbittner@hanger.com

Krisita Burket, Hanger Orthopedic Group
904-249-0314, kburket@hanger.com

For more stories like this, visit www.hanger.com/aboutus/newsroom, www.Facebook.com/HangerNews, and www.Twitter.com/HangerNews.