Cancer survivor and amputee competes in triathlon one year post-amputation

October 26, 2011

Charlotte, N.C., October 26, 2011 – When she was pregnant with her third child, Karen Piro, now 37-years-old, noticed a small lump on the back of her ankle had grown to the size of a golf ball. Following the birth of her child, doctors removed the lump and discovered it was clear cell sarcoma cancer. Knowing there was a good chance the cancer would return, Piro made the decision to have her leg amputated below-the-knee. Six weeks following her amputation, Piro walked for the first time using a prosthetic leg that was fitted by Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics clinician Mike Jenks. Piro continues to thrive with prosthetic technology a year later, so much so that she recently competed in the Ramblin' Rose Triathlon in Charlotte, North Carolina.

FOX Charlotte spoke to Piro before the event and followed her throughout the competition. View the news segment here.

The Ramblin' Rose triathlon included a 250 yard swim, nine mile bike ride, and two mile run. Piro did not use a prosthesis for the swim portion of the race, but used a microprocessor-controlled socket system called the V-Hold Black to participate in the bike portion of the event. For the two mile run Piro used a custom-designed prosthesis made specifically for running. For more information on the race, visit www.ramblinroseevents.com.

About Karen Piro – Piro is the mother of three boys, ages 11, 10, and two, and an employee of Hanger where she receives her prosthetic care. Piro also serves as the regional Amputee Empowerment Partners (AEP) coordinator, providing peer-to-peer support visits with people who are about to face an amputation or have recently undergone an amputation.

About the V-Hold Black – A microprocessor-controlled active vacuum suspension system, the V-Hold Black uses a vacuum suction technology to provide improved fit, comfort, and control of a prosthetic leg. The V-Hold Black is a "smart" system in that it measures and monitors the vacuum level in the socket, which can change based on what the patient is doing, and adjusts the amount of suction within to create the ideal fit. Similar to how an EKG monitors heart activity, the proprietary vacuum signature technology measures pressure within the socket and produces a visible record of the patient's gait. With this information, the V-Hold Black makes adjustments to the socket suspension to accommodate changes in activity, walking speed, terrain, and even barometric pressure. An analogy for someone who is not an amputee, the V-Hold Black would be like a device that automatically tightened or loosened your shoe laces according to your activity.

About Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics – With 13 patient care centers in North Carolina 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.