

Giving Awards, Getting Rewards

Two-year-old facility grows business through patient-centered care and community engagement

OWNING HIS OWN PROSTHETICS facility was always part of the plan for Aaron Moles, L/CP, who opened Prosthetix Shop in Cincinnati, Ohio, in December 2012. Moles, who graduated from the prosthetics and orthotics program at Northwestern University in 2004, believed he would be able to give back to his community more effectively if he had his own business.

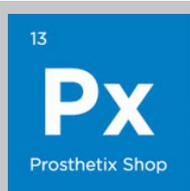
Moles enjoys the freedom that comes with being a business owner—for example, choosing to provide pro bono work to those who need it. Earlier this year, Prosthetix Shop partnered with Rehab Resources, a local rehabilitation facility, to offer the Mobilizing Amputees with Prosthetics, or MAP, Award—a free prosthesis and follow-up physical therapy—to an under-insured or noninsured amputee nominated by a health-care provider, relative, or friend. Moles expects to repeat the award program periodically.

Moles' facility occupies three suites in a commercial building on the east side of the city. He has three full-time employees, including business manager Nicole Jordan, a prosthetic assistant/technician, and an administrative secretary. But, he says, as a small business, "everyone wears all of the hats."

Moles works with upper- as well as lower-extremity amputees, although upper extremity accounts for only about 10 percent of his business. Prosthetix Shop fabricates many of its own devices, but does turn to central fabrication when things get busy. "Ultimately, we plan to do everything in-house," says Moles. "It



Aaron Moles, L/CP



FACILITY:
Prosthetix Shop

LOCATION:
Cincinnati, Ohio

OWNER:
Aaron Moles, L/CP

HISTORY:
2 years

is such a custom thing. Everyone is so different. I think you really need to be able to fabricate devices yourself."

Moles plans to add additional offices and is scouting for appropriate locations in the Cincinnati metropolitan area.

He has a close relationship with local physicians and often is called upon to consult on amputation surgeries to improve the ultimate fit of a prosthesis. Moles is a champion of the Ertl procedure, a reconstructive surgery that builds a bridge between the tibia and fibula to create a more viable limb for the prosthesis. "It promotes better vascularity in the residual limb, improves muscle tone, and allows the patient to distally bear weight, improving the functional outcome and eliminating discomfort," he says.

Moles credits Jordan with the successful launch of his facility as well as continuing effective marketing activities.

"The three 'As' of marketing are awareness, acceptance, and action," says Jordan. "Because Aaron had worked as a prosthetist in the community long before opening his own business, he already had acceptance. We had to build awareness that Prosthetix Shop was his new facility."

Jordan uses a mix of traditional marketing strategies, including in-person "lunch and learn" sessions with referrers, to convey the message that Moles can be a valuable resource for them. She employs a full range of social media, including Facebook and LinkedIn, a blog, videos, personal stories from patients, and media interviews. Moles offers free educational sessions with nurses and physical therapists on such topics as how to wrap a newly healing amputation.

Moles believes Prosthetix Shop differs from its competitors in several ways. First, he says, "we do extremely thorough assessments of our patients to find out exactly what they need. What are their functional needs? That means we don't just do range of motion, we do an amputee mobility predictor test, a timed up-and-go test, a distance-walk test. It might take longer, but we get a much better idea of what each patient requires."

Developing a personal relationship with patients also is paramount. Moles even spends time outside of the facility with some patients, and in doing so, is able to understand their environments.

"I took a boat ride with one patient and was able to see the challenges he ran into while operating the boat," says Moles. "You can ask a million questions, but until you really connect, you won't get the answers."

The result, he says, is that "we have very functional patients. They are successful with their prostheses." **CP**

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