

Motivated *Mei*

Upon meeting Mei Deavers, staff in the Children's Limb Deficiency Program said they'd never met a child who so badly wanted to walk. Thanks to a determined spirit, specialized care and a supportive family, he's now walking—that is, when he's not running.



Zippering around the aisles of a local department store one recent afternoon, the joy in the eyes of 3-year-old Mei [*pronounced may*] Deavers brought smiles to all who encountered him.

"One woman stopped us and said she was having so much fun watching everyone else react as he ran down the aisles with such joy in spite of his disability. He's a great inspiration for a lot of people," said his mom, Shannon Deavers.

Born with incomplete formation and deformities in his arms and legs, Mei lived his first two years in a special needs orphanage in China. The deformities in his legs made it difficult for him to stand up straight and walk.

When Shannon and Tracey Deavers adopted Mei in 2010, they hoped his legs, which were also missing the calf bones, could be corrected with surgery. When the family consulted with professionals from several hospitals, including Michael Schmitz, M.D., Children's Chief of Orthopaedics, and Colleen Coulter, Ph.D., Children's Physical Therapist, they learned walking would become even more difficult for Mei as he grew. Amputation, combined with prostheses, would allow him the greatest mobility.

"We chose Children's because its surgical team was the only one willing to take the more conservative approach of starting with the ankle and trying to keep his knees," said Shannon.

Shannon credits Children's staff with providing strong support that comforted them—and Mei—along the way.

"One of our nurses, Margaret Harrison, really connected with Mei after the surgery. She had known an amputee as a young person, and her ability to share her experience provided a world of comfort," said Shannon. "She was sensitive to how we were feeling and assured us that Mei would thrive just as her friend had."

In 2011, Mei underwent a second surgery in his right leg that helped his prosthesis fit better. After that surgery, Mei's drive to regain mobility was so great that he tried to walk—in full leg casts—just days after the procedure. To help Mei in his quest, Richard Welling, Orthotist/Prosthetist, tapped his mechanical engineering skills and modified Mei's casts in a way that allowed him to walk while also supporting proper healing in his bones.

"They [prosthetists and therapists from Children's Limb Deficiency Program] said they'd never had a child who so badly wanted to walk, and they took on the challenge and retrofitted his cast so he could move. They really went the extra mile," said Tracey.

After conquering physical therapy and receiving several adjustments to his cast and prosthesis, Mei began walking within weeks of his major surgery.

Today, Mei zips through life thanks to supportive parents, dedicated surgeons and staff in Children's Limb Deficiency Program—and an innate drive to be on the go. 📍

**Visit the Careforce Chronicle page on Careforce Connection to read the Deavers family's blog.*



When the Deavers family brought Mei home to Cochran, Ga., in November 2010, he became a younger brother to two sisters and two brothers.