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## Wright & Filippis steps in to help young teenager

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POSTED: April 4, 2008

As a former hockey player, Kelly Shields of Wright & Filippis in Alpena didn't have to think twice about helping Garrett Bartlett of Lachine.

The 13-year-old seventh grader plays goalie for a Thunder Bay Wrecks team at the Bantam level. He was born with a congenital defect that means he stops pucks without a left hand. The defect hasn't ever kept Bartlett from embracing all sorts of physical activities like hockey nor has it affected how he approaches life.

Still, the absence of a hand dictated how he plays goalie. With a standard hockey glove positioned over his left arm, he more or less trapped flying pucks between his hockey glove and his chest rather than having the full range of hand mobility to just reach out and catch them.

That was before Shields and other Wright & Filippis team members got involved. First a member of the Alpena Hockey Association, then a physical therapist and then an athletic trainer approached Shields about seeing what his company could do to help Bartlett.

"Being a former hockey player, I was pretty excited," said Shields. "Wright and Filippis looks for great opportunities to help kids like this. It's what we do."

The prosthetics, orthotics and home medical equipment company undertakes such cases through its philanthropic foundation, which agreed that Bartlett was a very deserving individual.

But time became a factor. Shields and his co-workers, including certified prosthetist Joe Kuerth, wanted to have a prosthetic hand for Bartlett before he left this week to compete on Team USA in the Upright Amputee games in Marlborough, Mass.

"Garrett had no motion without a prosthesis," said Kuerth. "We built a prosthesis to help him close the glove. It was a team effort."

Kuerth and Shields, along with Bartlett and his mother, Paula, gathered last week at the Wright & Filippis office to do a final fitting of the prosthesis and to see how it would work with his hockey catching glove.

"It feels great," said Bartlett, who also rides bikes, snowmobiles and quads as well as fishes and hunts.

Bartlett's mom, from the very beginning, instilled in her son the belief that he could do anything he wanted. Her positive parenting efforts weren't lost on Kuerth, who has been impressed with the young teen's attitude.

"Garrett is going to succeed in life whether he has a prosthesis or not," Kuerth said. "He's inspirational because of his attitude and approach to life. He doesn't let it get in his way."

The new glove is just the first step. According to Shields and Kuerth, Wright & Filippis plans to build another type of prosthesis for Garrett that will allow him to better handle his bike. The company also is sponsoring a trip to the amputee camp, "Yes I Can," this August and a trip to the EX 2 games, to be held in Michigan.

### Article Photos



Kelly Shields, left, and Joe Kuerth of Wright & Filippis in Alpena help 13-year-old Garrett Bartlett of Lachine with his new prosthetic hand that makes playing hockey goalie easier. Bartlett is in Marlborough, Mass. this week competing for Team USA in the Upright Amputee games.

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