

# AMPLITUDE

POWERFUL, PRACTICAL, AND POSITIVE LIVING WITH LIMB LOSS.

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# Hollywood Dreams

## NO ONE LIKE ME

Actor and Paralympian Katy Sullivan was born missing both legs through the femur bone. She grew up in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, surrounded by a supportive family, and believed that what she could accomplish in life is not limited by her missing limbs.

After seeing the musical *Annie* at age 6, Sullivan knew one thing she wanted to accomplish: She wanted to be an actor. However, growing up with a disability, she also noticed an absence of anyone like her in plays, movies, or on TV.

“I never saw myself reflected anywhere in the media,” she says. “I couldn’t point to anyone and say, ‘I relate to that person.’” Filling that gap for others is one of Sullivan’s goals with her media career.

After receiving her bachelor of fine arts, Sullivan moved to Los Angeles to establish a career in Hollywood. Between auditions, however, she took up competitive running and soon gained recognition as a sprinter, which led to a brief detour from pursuing her acting objective. She held the American record in the 100m for over five years and placed sixth in that event at the 2012 London Paralympics.

She describes her competitive running years as “this amazing, random, wonderful chapter.” Yet her “first and forever love” is acting. (Her forever love in careers, that is. Sullivan is married to Jay Cramer, a comedic actor and writer.)

Sullivan has many credits on her acting resumé: the upcoming romantic comedy *Offside*; TV series that include *NCIS: New Orleans*, *Last Man Standing*, *Legit*, and *My Name Is Earl*; and videos on her production company’s YouTube channel, SulliFlinn.

However, Sullivan may have just earned her most fulfilling credit yet, completing a fellowship at the Producers Guild of America. There, she and her production partner, Becca Flinn, workshopped a project that Sullivan wrote, a half-hour comedy series, which has been optioned.

“We’re shopping it around, taking it to networks and trying to find a home for it,” Sullivan explains.

She describes the series as “an honest portrayal of someone living with a disability,” which, she points out, is far removed from a person with a disability being the center of either a tragic or an inspiring story, as the media often presents.

“I don’t know if we’ve seen that in a real, genuine sort of way—and especially not from the female perspective,” Sullivan says.

If she can find a home for her new

project, Sullivan may give a generation of young girls the chance to point to her and say, “I relate to that person.”

## FROM LIMB LOSS TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Jason Koger did not expect his life to change on March 1, 2008. That day, Koger was electrocuted when his all-terrain vehicle (ATV) ran over a fallen power line, leading to the amputation of both his arms below the elbow.

A positive attitude helped him quickly adjust to his new status. He taught himself to drive immediately upon leaving the hospital. After being fitted with prostheses, he learned to perform activities of daily living, including dressing, eating, and caring for his two daughters, Billie Grace and Cambell (who were joined by younger brother Axell in 2011).

Before his accident, Koger had been content working in his family’s Owensboro, Kentucky-based construction business, spending time with his wife, Jenny, and their children, and hunting in the woods near the family farm. However, he found that his limb loss offered new opportunities.





Koger reading with his daughter Cambell. Images courtesy of Advanced Arm Dynamics.

Out in public, complete strangers would tell him his prosthesis use was inspiring. These encounters gave Koger, who is always looking to help others, an idea.

“I thought the best way I could give back in my situation was to inspire people,” he says. “I could share my story to inspire other amputees, and anybody with a problem, just to show that you can go on and live life.”

Subsequently, Koger has told his inspirational story to small gatherings at nearby schools and at large events such as the Farm Bureau Conference, the Cattlemen’s Association Convention, and the Amputee Coalition National Conference. Any fees he receives go to charity. He also volunteers with amputee assistance organizations.

Koger has also found work acting. Apple asked him to perform in a computer commercial that was released during last year’s Super Bowl, and the producers of the TV series *Hawaii Five-0* invited him to be the stand-in for guest star Peter Weller. In the 2013 *Hawaii Five-0* episode, the veteran actor portrayed a killer with prosthetic hands. But it’s Koger’s prostheses shown in scenes featuring prosthesis use.

It was supposed to be a three-day job. However, inspired by Koger’s dexterity with his prostheses, Weller—who also directed the episode—added more scenes for his body double, stretching the original three-day stint to two and a half weeks.

Koger and Weller became such close friends that last year the actor flew from



Cambodia to stay the weekend at Koger’s home and attend a fundraising party. The event raised \$18,000 for local charities.

Koger now has a role in Matthew McConaughey’s 2016 film *The Free State of Jones* and would like to pursue acting further. However, between enjoying family life in his quiet hometown and also finding ways to help others, he hasn’t yet determined how to proceed with an acting career. Still, whatever path Koger follows, it doubtless will be inspired. 🌱

For more information about Koger, you can follow him on Twitter, Instagram, or [www.jasonkoger.com](http://www.jasonkoger.com).