

Gwen Davies: My Champion

One-Minute Speech by Megan Stromberg

While you don't often hear the name Gwen Davies come up in conversation, I would like to argue that it should. Gwen Davies was born in Australia, in 1941, and due to complications upon her arrival into the world, she had to have her left leg amputated. When the family immigrated to Canada, they joined a Golf Club, and Gwen had to learn to play the sport on a prosthetic leg. Putting a spin on the expression, Gwen got many "holes on one" leg, and went on to win the Canadian Amputee Golf Championship a record of 18 times throughout her career. Her passion for sport and people led her to countless hours of volunteering at Calalta Skate Club, and she helped found an organization to help others in her situation. The Canadian Amputee Golf Association (CAGA) works not only to bring amputees together to create friendships and try a new sport, but also helps amputees in their personal life by providing hospital visits before and after surgery, assisting families of amputees and giving them options in terms of programs and education. Gwen was the president of the CAGA for 25 years, and her work has been able to reach so many and give them a better life. Many who went there made connections with others like them, and were able to create lifelong friendships in an environment that cared and loved them. In her 79 years on Earth, Gwen was able to give others hope and a love for the sport that she loved. She shared her passions and ambitions with the world, and that is what I find so inspiring about her. Gwen's greatest impact is in her hard work, perseverance and in her caring heart. I look up to her, and I wish her story could be shared with many more. She may not be rich or famous or have her name in lights, but she has been a champion to so many, and I know she is already my champion. I hope that as you hear her story, you too will be inspired and that she could be your champion too.

Gwendalyn Jean Davies: My Champion

By Megan Stromberg

In Canada, it is estimated that 7,400 people who are older than 18 have their leg amputated every year. That number is astounding. Have you wondered what it would be like to be one of those people? To watch the world go by, with two legs and two arms. To be left behind. There are few stories of people who overcome this. Terry Fox is one. Terry Fox is an extremely respected and influential figure in Canada. He ran halfway across the country on one leg, to raise money for cancer research. This is the story all Canadians have heard, and rightly so. A second story is of Gwen Davies, a woman who lived a life of selflessness and perseverance. Gwendalyn Jean Davies' story starts in 1941, where she grew up in Faulconbridge, a town in Australia. With some complications upon her arrival into the world, Gwen had to have the lower half of her left leg amputated. Later, the rest would be taken as well. She could have given up, given in to the cold weight of despair and loneliness: even so, she did not. Gwen moved to Canada with her family and developed a love for golf, which she had to learn to play on a prosthetic leg. This hobby eventually turned her into a national champion who insisted on giving her success back to others. Her impact has been incredible, and one can see this through her talent, her big heart, and her legacy.

Firstly, Gwen Davies was a leader in her life of sports. After turning 40, she often went downhill skiing, and, of course, was a golf star. Gwen lived at a time where the scene for amputee sports was just beginning. As Gwen was born in 1941, almost twenty years before the paralympics were created, it would have been hard to pave your way through a challenging path of sports. However, her passion and skill for the sport grew and grew, despite these setbacks. The Alberta Champions website explains that, "Throughout her 25-year competitive golf career, Gwen would go on to win the Canadian Amputee Golf Championship a record 18 times. She would also win the Ladies Amputee British Open in 1995 and the World Series of Amputee Golf in 2002.". This woman, living at a time where women's golf was not a popular sport, and where amputee golf was just starting, was able to achieve so much. Gwen didn't let her success go to her head. Instead she used her talent to give back to others. Her talent and achievement are incredible, but also hit home in my life. Two years ago, I discovered the amazing world of sports when I played on my school's Junior Girls Basketball team. It was a wild ride, but I discovered that I love basketball and want to do better. The next year, I tried out again and was honoured to be on the Senior Girls team. Gwen's story is so powerful, and she kept going to raise awareness for amputee and disabled sports in a way that few can attest to. Her great perseverance is now what I remember when I can't seem to keep going. I would like to keep playing basketball with the same perseverance she had for golf. She is a powerful female sports and amputee sports figure. The thought of her hard

work always sparks my desire to try harder. I hope that by following in her footsteps, I can push myself to achieve my goals, just as Gwen did time and time again in her talent, but also in her caring nature.

Secondly, Gwen Davies has been crucial to Albertans through her devotion. She cared about individuals, and was able to shine hope to others in the way she lived. She held quite a few volunteer and leadership positions during her lifetime, although she is particularly well known for her work with the Calalta Skate Club. She gave her time freely for almost 30 years, helping out in national, provincial and local positions. In 2010, she was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame. In her profile, it is explained that, "Gwen is a role model for others. She volunteers her time and expertise in helping families who are facing the prospect of the amputation of a limb, helping to quell their fears, and finding the strength to carry on. She is a tireless worker, mentor, and organizer and has been a strong builder, advocate, and ambassador for persons with disabilities and for sports." I found this resonates strongly with me. I often volunteer at my church in the preschool class, and I admire her ability to serve people. Because of her, I now have a great desire to volunteer somewhere that helps amputees. Now that I understand what their lives are really like, I want to help them. Gwen did so, not just physically, but emotionally. This realization made me want to do much more for amputees. They must feel so alone. She was able to help others greatly, and one day, I aspire to serve people as well as she did. There isn't much opportunity for volunteering with amputees, because most support is financial, but I will keep my eyes looking for opportunities. Even so, Gwen took volunteering to a whole new level. She didn't just sit back in sympathy, she helped people in empathy. She helped their lives go on. I would like to follow her example of care and compassion for those in need, and I will strive to treat others with the same care she did. Helping strangers. Giving without expecting anything in return. When one looks at her story, one can see the evidence of her skill, love and finally, her impact.

Thirdly, Gwen was an avid supporter of amputees and their lives. She even co-founded a club for amputees: to support them and help them get their lives back. Apart from coaching and teaching amputees to play golf, the Canadian Amputee Golf Association(CAGA) provides families with options and visits homes and hospitals to assist amputees. On the CAGA website, one of their objectives is, "Assisting amputees and their families in the rehabilitation process, by giving them personal support – both physically and morally – through interaction with other amputees". This organization, co-founded and run by Gwen Davies is a source of light for amputees who are struggling and need help. Through this, Gwen has been able to help so many people that are in her shoes, and to give them some of the joy she had by introducing them to golf. This is absolutely mind-boggling! I can't imagine how hard it must have been to get that far. She was ambitious and a dreamer, although it paid off immensely. She assisted countless individuals, but the

work she started still runs today, and will for a very long time. In her death, her legacy will be remembered by many more than the ones she knew. After learning more and more about her, I am determined to share her beautiful story with others, and that it can inspire them the same way it does me. The next time my family travels to my Great-Grandma's senior home, I want to ask some of the amputees about their stories, so I can gain a better understanding of what it is like to be an amputee. Even though her name is still fairly unknown, Gwen has been able to help numerous people in Alberta and give them excitement for life. Her impact has been, and will continue to be worthy of admiration.

Therefore, Gwen Davies is not only an amputee, or even just an influential figure of what selflessness and strength can achieve. She has all the qualities of a hero: skill, care and positive effect on the lives of others. Alberta needs more people like her. People with ambition and vision, who can see the problems of our society and combat them with open arms to those in need. I want to follow that. To see where the shadows lie in our world, and shed light on them. To be obedient to the needs of others. It will not be easy, and it was not for Gwen, but I think Albertans should all try to be more like her. She has played a crucial role in shaping Alberta for the better. Amputees around Canada now have hope that they can become just as good as Gwen. They feel loved and cared for in their lives, and there are many more who will be touched by her legacy. I expect that as her story reaches a larger number of Albertans, that they too will be inspired. She is Alberta's Champion. She is my champion.

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