

## Sprague standing strong after losing lower leg

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

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Smiles and giggles are what 8-year-old Luke Sprague greets his visitors with less than a week after losing the lower portion of his left leg in an auger accident on his family's farm.

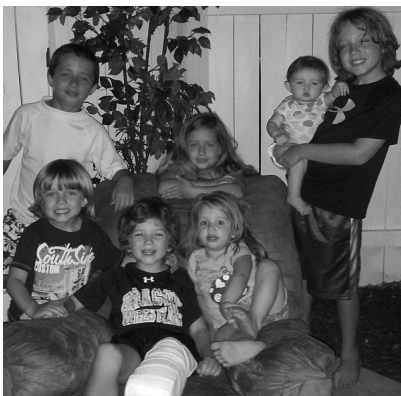
"He blew those physical therapists away," said his mom, Emma, in telling about Luke's quick release from Children's Hospital in Denver on Sunday, July 21 after his July 17 accident.

Her Facebook post said, "PT signed Luke off as a rockstar and ortho docs say the best way to recover an amputee is in their own home."

She was pleased to report Sunday that they were on their way home to their big family of Holyoke who has given overwhelming support in so many different ways.

"It's a long road to recovery, but home is where the heart is," Emma added.

The third of seven children, Luke and four siblings were with their dad, Alan, at Sprague Farms in Yuma County on Wednesday morning, July 17.



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**Luke Sprague is surrounded by his loving siblings as they rejoice at being home in Holyoke. The family is pictured from left, front row, Mason, Luke and Lily; and back row, Alec, Emma, Harper and Gage.**

**Luke returned to Holyoke with his parents Sunday night, July 21 and was elated to see Mason, Lily and Harper, who had been staying with their grandma, Carmen Piper. Alec, Gage and Emma had stayed with an aunt in Denver so they could see Luke periodically. The brothers and sister returned home Monday afternoon, not realizing that Luke was already home. It was a grand reunion filled with tears and smiles and lots of love.**

Luke slipped on some corn, and his left leg was caught in the auger. His dad tried to get him out, but couldn't. As Alan went to shut off the auger, brother Gage, 10, held Luke and brother Alec, 11, ran to get help. Once the auger was off, Gage could pull his brother out.

Emma explained that each blade in an auger is called a flight. They estimate 300 flights went through before the auger was shut down.

When Alec rounded up his uncle, EMT Dan Robinson of Imperial, Neb., was with him. The family is extremely grateful Robinson could ride to the hospital in Holyoke with Luke and Alan.

With the blessings of Dr. Dennis Jelden and the personnel at Melissa Memorial Hospital, Luke was sent by helicopter to Children's Hospital in Denver.

Emma's sister-in-law Krystal Piper and friend Cassidy Denney sat with Luke in ICU until Alan and Emma were able to get there by car.

Determining there was no way to repair Luke's left leg, doctors opted to amputate one-quarter below the knee. That leaves several inches of leg below the knee and will fit better for his prosthesis, which Emma said they hope he will get in September.

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A blood transfusion was required on Thursday, and some painful hours were recorded before Luke took a wonderful turn for the better.

“I don’t like to talk about it,” said Luke on Monday afternoon, admitting it’s scary and he can hear his sister Emma, 6, crying.

Alec, Gage and little Emma all went to Denver with Alan, and Emma and saw a psychologist while there. Their mom said the kids will continue to go to therapy for a while.

Luke’s parents stayed by his side in his hospital room and are eternally grateful for the powerful prayer crusade that pulled Luke through.

Pastor Gary Rahe of Zion Lutheran Church was at Luke’s bedside already Thursday morning. And his school counselor Sharon Jones and first-grade reading teacher Kimberlee Bennett visited on Saturday, representing his school staff.

Jones went to the Children’s Hospital website and then posted a link on Facebook where people could send cheer e-cards. Emma said Luke received over 100 e-cards from all over the nation. He was thrilled.

Bennett and Jones also initiated the purple ribbon campaign, with purple being one of Luke’s favorite colors.

The ribbon plea was put out on Facebook and just exploded. The request is for people to place a purple ribbon on one of the trees in the Sprague yard and then to also place one in their own yard to show support for the whole family.

Emma said someone even wrapped a tree trunk in their yard with purple ribbon. It means a lot

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to the family.

Jones suggested that this purple ribbon campaign continue to show support while Luke recuperates.

A Bonfils blood drive on Wednesday, July 24 in Holyoke was hosted by Holyoke Elementary School at the Lions Den, in honor of Luke.

The Sprague family and supporters will be in the Phillips County Fair parade this Saturday, July 27 to thank the community for their support.

### **Baseball, wrestling, stock car races show support**

Word traveled quickly and prayers started immediately for Luke and his family last Wednesday.

Border League's 13-15 All-Star baseball team was playing in the state tournament in Burlington Friday-Sunday. They had Luke's name put on jersey No. 33 and took it with them and dedicated their first game to him.

Coach Sherman Kage sent the photo to the Spragues, and Luke was extremely pleased to see their "thumbs-up" tribute.

At the Mouse Races in Holyoke Friday night, July 19, the Holyoke Wrestling Club fundraiser showed solid support for Luke, who is a member of the club.

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Coach Jack Garrison asked the gathered crowd for their thoughts and prayers for Luke, and a large card was on the wall for people to sign for Luke.

When Mouse Races organizer Brooke Dirks and her son Max stopped by the Sprague home Monday afternoon with a check for \$2,500 from the Wrestling Club, the family was speechless.

Mouse No. 7 was purchased in Luke's honor and was actually named after him. Those proceeds brought a huge smile to the face of the young wrestler.



**Luke Sprague, pictured in center, is enjoying his first full day at home in Holyoke on Monday, July 22. His mom and brother Mason are pictured at left with visitors Max and Brooke Dirks who stopped by with a \$2,500 check from the Holyoke Wrestling Club that was raised for Luke at the Friday night Mouse Races. —Enterprise photo**

Luke and his siblings, cousins and other Sprague kids who aren't even related sang "I'm Proud to be an American" to open the July 4 stock car races in Holyoke.

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Joe Bellm of BST Promotions remembers that and wants to show support from the stock car racing program at Phillips County Raceway.

Bellm is amazed by Luke's positive approach to his situation and said, "A lot of us can learn from something like that."

Luke's mom said they're putting all contributions to save for a sports leg. There are all kinds of prostheses, but sports legs have more spring in them for athletic competition.

Hearing that, Bellm has planned a fundraiser for Luke's sports leg at the Saturday, Sept. 14 season-finale races at PCR. Details will be established and announced soon.

With Luke's mindset, Bellm believes he can do whatever he sets out to do, including compete in sports. "And he will be an inspiration to others too," he added.

## **Flag flies over Kuwait**

The outpouring of love and support for the Spragues continues to show up in the finest of ways.

Their friend Row Carwin and his group of pilots in Kuwait, in honor of Luke, flew a certificate and flag proclaiming "Luke!! You are my hero!" over Kuwait early this week. Carwin sent the photo to the Spragues.

When they return stateside, they'll make sure the sign and flag make it to Luke.

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### Account set up

An account for Luke has been set up at Wray State Bank in an effort to help him through the long journey he faces.

“Luke makes it easier,” said his mom when asked how they’re all coping. His positive demeanor is delightful and they all thrive on that. “I’m just glad to see him smiling,” said Emma.

“He’s talked about God nonstop since the accident,” said Emma, and she’s comforted by that.

First Baptist Church second-graders made beautiful cards for him in Sunday School. Facebook has served as a huge communicator as the cards were photographed and posted so Luke could get a sneak preview from those thinking about him.

Trying to express their appreciation for the outpouring of love they’ve received from the community, Emma was at a loss for words. “Thank you seems so small,” she said. The family is overwhelmed with appreciation for the support they continue to receive.

Luke’s video rendition on Facebook of his VBS song he learned recently at First Christian Church in Holyoke is priceless and sums up his focus precisely.

He ends it with a grin, a swift punch, punch, punch of his fists and a little giggle of hope.

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“Stand Strong, when life changes.

“Stand Strong, from the ups and downs.

“Stand Strong, so you know that God is in control.”

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