

# Newsday

## Touro University students take apart prosthetic limbs for reuse in other countries

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By Robert Brodsky



*Guichard Francois, of Queens Village, left, Nick Kelly of Bay Shore, and Billy Anderson of North Massapequa disassemble prosthetic legs at Touro University in Central Islip on Thursday evening. Credit: Newsday / Steve Pfof*

More than five dozen donated prosthetic limbs were disassembled into smaller components Thursday by students from Touro University in Central Islip before the parts are shipped through a humanitarian effort to help those in need, including civilians and soldiers in war-torn Ukraine.

The event, sponsored by Penta Medical Recycling, a Manhattan nonprofit that helps bring prosthetics to low and middle-income countries, was held as part of Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month.

Henry Iseman, executive director and co-founder of Penta, said hundreds of thousands of limbs get thrown out every year in the United States because of liability regulations while millions of people across the globe need prosthetic care.

"The equipment that's reached us has either been replaced because someone got a new limb or it was the equipment was never sold in the first place or was maybe a return item," he said. "So the equipment ranges from pieces that have been used for sometimes a year or two to pieces that have been worn for a day and sometimes not at all."



*Kaitlin Deegan of Levittown, left, and Sienna Burnett of Rosedale disassemble a prosthetic leg at Touro University in Central Islip on Thursday evening. Credit: Newsday / Steve Pfost*

On average, amputees in the United States change their prosthetic, or at least some of the parts, every three to five years, officials said.

Though most prosthetics are in good enough condition to be repurposed, they are considered medical waste in the United States due to strict regulations, according to Penta. Since its inception in 2016, the group has partnered with 40 organizations in 27 countries, shipping more than 9,000 prosthetic components to date.

The more than 60 limbs that were taken apart Thursday evening by 28 Touro physical therapy students, all of whom take a prosthetics and orthotics class, came from individual amputees, prosthetic care clinics or equipment manufacturers, Iseman said.

The parts, which can be more easily distributed when broken down into smaller components, in the coming weeks will be shipped across the globe, he said. Some will go to Ukraine, where an estimated 10,000 people have lost limbs during the war with Russia, while others could go to Sri Lanka, India, Haiti, Morocco, and United Nations organizations working with children in Palestine, Iseman said.

The components will be paired with compatible prosthetic elements and matched to amputees, he said.

Emily Sargent of Kings Park, a second-year student at Touro, volunteered to participate in the program.

"It's great for not only the people that are donating [the prosthetics] but also for the people who are receiving them," Sargent said. "It's kind of a way for both parties to relate to each other and for one party to give back and the other party to receive."

Robert Troino, director of Touro's physical therapy program, said this is the first time working with Penta but he hopes to make it an annual event.

Guichard Francois, a second-year Touro student from Queens Village, said the process is personal to him as he has relatives with prosthetics.

"To know that they're helping people that are actively in wars and people that need prosthesis pieces is incredible," he said.

Robert Rodriguez of Bay Shore, whose right leg was amputated below the knee when he was 10 months old, works with Penta, helping advocate for the program.

"We're just taking parts made for someone else and giving someone else a better life," said Rodriguez, who now competes internationally for USA Triathlon. "They always say 'one man's trash is another man's treasure' It's very cliché, but this is just beauty and art in itself."