



Shriners Hospitals FOR Children

Making A Young Boy's Trip Of A Lifetime Possible

(NAPSA)—The story of a 9-year-old's remarkable journey to health began more than nine months ago and an ocean away from the United States.

In February 2006, Lentrit Aliu was on his way to school in his hometown of Gjilani, Kosovo, accompanied by his father, Sejdi. Staff Sgt. Matthew Malmquist and fellow members of the Texas Army National Guard were on patrol and noticed that the boy had a severe leg-length discrepancy.

They learned Lentrit had a birth defect called proximal focal deficiency, a condition in which the upper half of his right thigh-bone and hip joint failed to develop properly. As a result, Lentrit's right leg was 8 inches shorter than his fully developed left leg, presenting serious physical and social challenges for the boy. Sejdi told the guardsmen that Lentrit was often the subject of ridicule from his peers, requiring him to escort his son in public.

Touched by Lentrit's situation and a desire to help, Malmquist researched orthopaedic hospitals online and discovered Shriners Hospitals for Children. He contacted the Shriners Hospital in Shreveport, La., submitted an online application, and Lentrit was accepted.

After finding a hospital to provide Lentrit care at no charge, Malmquist's next challenge was



Lentrit and other kids from the Shreveport Shriners Hospital visited the National Guard Armory in Shreveport during an out trip. Members of the 1st Battalion of the 156 Armor Division let Lentrit sit behind the wheel of a family of medium tactical vehicle.

raising money for the boy's trip to the U.S. His grandmother spear-headed the project, and fundraising efforts in Texas and Minnesota quickly raised the \$5,000 needed in travel costs for Lentrit and his father.

"I'm proud of my family for working so hard to raise the money to fly him out," Malmquist said. "I'm proud of the U.S., that we have organizations like Shriners to help people like Lentrit."

At the Shreveport Shriners Hospital, physicians removed a portion of Lentrit's underdeveloped right leg so the boy could be

fitted for a prosthesis. With his prosthetic leg, Lentrit can now stand tall and walk upright for the first time in his life. And he is very excited about learning how to ride a bike—something he has never been able to do, until now.

"In Kosovo, it's very hospitable, but they cannot do things like they can here," Sejdi said. "I cannot believe this has happened to us, that my child was lucky enough to be chosen to come to the United States for treatment."

When Lentrit and his father left Shreveport to return to Kosovo in the middle of September, Lentrit was anxious to see his mother and two siblings. He was also eager to find Malmquist and thank him.

"I wish I could do something to give back to all of the people who have helped us here," said Sejdi. "No matter what, I know my child will be able to walk around."

Shriners Hospitals for Children is an international system of 22 hospitals committed to excellence in specialized pediatric care, teaching and research. Children up to the age of 18 with orthopaedic conditions, burn injuries, spinal cord injuries and cleft lip and palate are eligible for admission and receive all care at no charge—regardless of financial need or relationship to a Shriner. For more information, please visit www.shrinershq.org.