

GIMPY

SPRING 2015

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF STUMPS 'R' US.
A WHIMSICAL SUPPORT GROUP OF CHEERFUL CRIPPLES
WHO CAN ANSWER ALMOST ANY QUESTION YOU MAY HAVE
ABOUT LIFE WITHOUT ONE, TWO, THREE OR FOUR LIMBS.

WOMEN AMPUTEES MODEL AT A FASHION SHOW TO PROMOTE PARASPORT

HITOMI ONISHI is the face of a fashion show highlighting a special photo shoot for athletic models. But she, like other models gathered on February 14 in the Japanese port town of Yokohama for this show, are no ordinary models or athletes.



Onishi's leg was amputated 15 years ago due to a mistake in a medical procedure. She has been using a prosthetic leg since. When she received her first artificial leg, she was delighted thinking she might be on her feet walking again. But it was a bad fit.

She fell into depression and didn't recover until she met a prosthetist who made a leg which allowed her to run. She has become Japan's fastest 100m and 200m sprinter, competing in the T42 category.

The International Paralympic Committee defines this as: "Single above knee amputees and athletes with other impairments that are comparable to a single above knee amputation."

Now Onishi has her sights set on Rio 2016!

And she graces the poster of the fashion show, where she, along with other women amputees proudly display the legs that allowed them to take back the control of their lives. At the fashion show, the reception from the crowd was overwhelmingly positive.

Amputees in Japan and in Asia generally tend to hide their prosthetics and are embarrassed about it, in a region where social attitudes about disability range from pity to shame. Prosthetist Fumio Usui is the man behind much of this effort to change attitudes. There are an estimated 80,000 people in Japan missing all or part of a leg, and the vast majority of them - are fitted for prosthetics by Usui and his workshop. Usui has also founded a sports club to help amputees train for competition and last year teamed up with photographer Takao Ochi to produce the photos for the show. Called "Amputee Venus", The photo shoot features 11 young women who have all lost a leg and all hope to change attitudes toward the disabled in Japan, which remains behind much of the West in terms of accessibility and acceptance.