

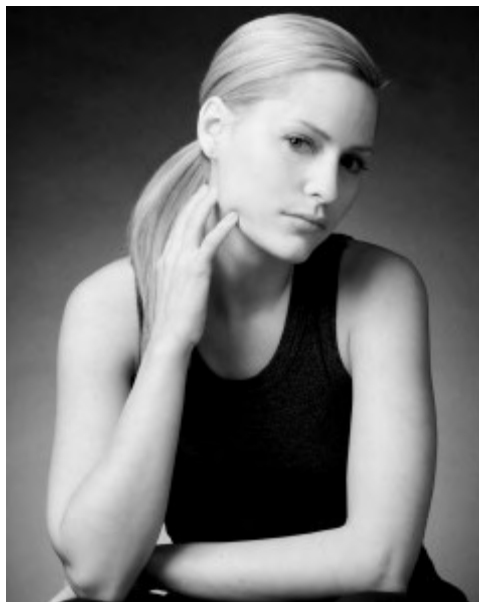
By: [Jana K. Hoffman](#)

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It was several months ago when I was paging through a national fashion mag when I discovered a [Kenneth Cole](#) ad campaign with Theo Kogan (vocalist for legendary all-girl punk band Lunachicks) photographed in such a way that you could only see one eye, both arms clad in her full-sleeve tattoos, and both of her skinny legs accessorized with platform strappy white sandals and yet even more tattoos. I thought it was beautiful. The tagline read “We all walk in different shoes” and it captivated me in such a way that I logged online and learned there were others involved with this particular campaign, too.

One of those others was Aimee Mullins, an Allentown native and Parkland High School graduate. Immediately I couldn't help but think she would be a perfect fit for a *Style* interview. Excitedly, I started digging and discovered what a fascinating life she has led—and she's from the Valley. Unfortunately, I came up short every time I tried to contact a representative for an interview so I stuck it on the back burner until, just a couple of weeks ago, I received an e-mail announcing her appearance at [Via](#) of the Lehigh Valley's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual All-Star Banquet. Score! (Via is a nonprofit organization providing services for children and adults with developmental disabilities.)



I stopped by Freedom High School Wednesday night for a media meet and greet prior to the evening's event. The gymnasium was decked out in Via's signature blue and yellow colors with tables set for the 100 basketball honorees and guests. You could tell Aimee was certainly no stranger to the limelight. In fact, she said she didn't hesitate in the slightest when contacted about speaking at the event mentioning she just needed to check her calendar.

Relaxed and casually dressed in black with a complementing bone-colored jacket, she's as beautiful in person as her photos reveal. It's no wonder she's hit the catwalk for designer Alexander McQueen and graced the pages of magazines like *Elle*, *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *Paper Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated for Women*, and *Jane* in recognition of her incredible achievements.

By now you may be wondering exactly why this woman is so remarkable. Aimee was born without fibulae in both legs. At age one, doctors amputated both of her legs below the knee. She then learned to walk with prosthetic limbs by age two. Sports kept her morale high, but she admits having insecurities and feeling rather defeated as she hit puberty. "But wasn't everyone?" she asks while saying most teens have things that they wish they could change.



During the meet and greet, Aimee was discussing a time when she was speaking to an audience of 6- to 8-year-olds at the Boston Children's Museum. She enabled them to explore their

curiosities with a question-and-answer session where they immediately ran to the table of her legs. Aimee told the kids she woke up that morning and decided she wanted to jump over a house and asked what kind of legs she should build. “Finally, one kid said, ‘Why would you just want to jump over the house? Why wouldn’t you want to fly, too?’ And I really thought about that ...” Aimee said. “Even in our crazy dreams, in our crazy imagination, we still have a tendency to put limits on it when we shouldn’t.” Through that Q & A, Aimee immediately went from being a person that could have been thought of as having a disability to a woman with a potential that these kids didn’t have in their own bodies. “They coveted the ability to be able to jump over a house,” she added. “That’s a very important shift in perception.” Aimee intended to share that story with the audience.

I listened intently as she discussed what she wanted the audience to take away from her speech as she listed athletes that have had to overcome adversity. “Sports is such a perfect arena to talk about ability because it requires every player to decide for themselves what their potential is and I think that’s the message I want people to go home with,” she said.

It’s true. Just as that Kenneth Cole ad conveys, we all walk in different shoes. We all have a different story, but share a certain degree of similarity.

You can learn more about Aimee via her Web site [aimeemullins.com](http://aimeemullins.com). I think she’s an inspiration to men and women alike, and I was fortunate enough to have had a few minutes to learn a little more about her. Now I’m going to continue my quest for a *Style 7* interview. Here’s hoping! Guess you’ll have to wait for a future issue to find out.