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Heather in tribute to brave bomb amputees

By Gail Edgar and Ciaran McGuigan
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Heather Mills last night paid tribute to the bravery of three young victims of the Omagh bombing as they learned to live with the horrific injuries suffered in the Real IRA atrocity.

In an exclusive interview she told Sunday Life how, 10 years on, the young women's fight

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bravery had been reflected in an entire community.

What are these?

"They are an example to us all," she said.

The former model, who has worn an artificial leg for more than 15 years, met with three young women who had all undergone partial leg amputations after being caught up in the horrific events in Omagh on August 15, 1998.

After having her left leg amputated following an accident in which she was hit by a police motorcyclist, Heather has helped counsel amputees around the globe.

She witnessed the horrors of the aftermath of the Balkans war and has worked with victims of landmines.

Heather had special praise for the three Omagh victims who fought back against their horrific injuries.

Michelle Mimmagh was just 17 when she lost her right leg above the knee.

Pauline Green, now 29, lost her left leg below the knee and Suzanne Kelly, now 31, had part of her right leg amputated.

Heather said: "After what they have been through, I know they have the courage to do anything."

Heather was contacted by Sue Prenter, from the then Sperrin Lakeland Trust, who had been inspired by a magazine article in which she had told how she refused to let her own accident have a negative effect on her life.

She travelled to Northern Ireland to meet the young women and their families to try to pass on advice and encouragement. Heather was able to give them advice on which type of artificial limb to choose and even showed

them how to rollerblade to demonstrate they could lead a normal life.

Speaking last night, she told us: "I met Suzanne and Michelle and I also met Pauline Green. I spent over five hours with them and their families, had private chats with each of the girls, and answered any questions they had about their artificial limbs.

"I told them how I carried on with my life after losing my leg and how they could enjoy life again, as difficult as it may seem after the tragedy of Omagh," she told Sunday Life.

"I have learned to ski, swim and snowboard, and only having one real leg hasn't stopped me achieving my dreams.

"I counsel hundreds of amputees and their families, and a common question is will I be even less attractive to the opposite sex.

"I told them it was all about confidence and that was one of the most attractive features in anyone. There was no reason for these girls to feel any less attractive than before.

"There are a million things out there that they can do well, if not better than anyone else.

"Losing a leg need not be a disability to them.

"I told them they could still do anything they used to do and not to let anyone try to change their minds." The ex-wife of Sir Paul McCartney also paid tribute to the bravery of the entire community in Omagh as it prepares to mark the 10th anniversary of the bloodiest atrocity in Northern Ireland's history.



Heather Mills and former husband Sir Paul McCartney

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Added Heather: "I had worked on the frontline in the former Yugoslavia and had seen on many occasions families' lives torn apart and how the community came together and helped each other heal through time and connection.

"It is impossible to celebrate the anniversary of a terrible act of terrorism. The courage the people of Omagh have shown and the overcoming of adversity, however, is definitely something to celebrate.

"However, the lives lost can never be replaced and we pray and hope that some lessons have been learned so their deaths were not in vain."

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