

Program Offers Gift of Sight to Quadriplegics

By Denise Dador

"As I came down hill my ski hit patch of ice on top of snow, and my foot came out from under me and I fell forward ... I crushed my C5 vertebrae," Courtney Henrichs said.

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Courtney Henrichs's life changed forever four years ago this month. She spent months in the hospital and faces years of rehab.

"All the little easy things I used to do are really hard now," Henrichs said.

18-year old Courtney will need assistance for the rest of her life, but today she's regaining one small measure of independence thanks to Southern California eye surgeon Dr. Robert Maloney.

"Her story just really moved me," Dr. Maloney said.

Dr. Maloney may be best known for his role on ABC's "Extreme Makeover," but he's also just created a program called "Focus on Independence." It provides free Lasik surgery to quadriplegics all across the country, just like Courtney.

"When she wakes up early in the morning she can't see. She doesn't want to wake somebody else up to put her glasses on, so she just lies in bed with world blurry to her," Dr. Maloney said.

It's a quick and painless procedure for a young girl whose spirit in the face of adversity has touched everyone around her.

"There's no bitterness, no anger. There's optimism and hope and warmth and that courage really moved me," Dr. Maloney said.

Courtney's Lasik surgery went off without a hitch, and just minutes later Courtney could see clearly for the first time, without her glasses!

"I'm so excited, I'm so grateful, it's like the best present ever," Henrichs said.

Her vision and her future are suddenly more clear.