



Sports/Marine

Program helps disabled
 By John Newman
 On Saturday, June 13, dozens of surfers and volunteers gathered on Wrightsville Beach to help others.
 "It was incredible to see that many people come together for us out and show us a great time." Chris Leonard of Jacksonville said he was touched that so many people would offer their own time to help others.
 "It was incredible to see that many people come together for us out and show us a great time." time goes on the decision day. Do I keep organs...

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Program Provides Free LASIK Surgery for Quadriplegics



Beverly Hills vision-correction specialist Dr. Robert Maloney (far right) may be best-known for his celebrity clientele and appearances on television shows such as Extreme Makeover; however, he and Kansas-based, Dr. Daniel Durrie (left), who, like Dr. Maloney is recognized as one of the 10 Best Refractive Surgeons in the United States, have teamed up to empower the SCI community with greater liberty. In 2005, the renowned eye surgeons launched a non-profit organization, Focus on Independence, which provides laser or surgical vision correction at no-cost to those paralyzed by spinal cord injuries. Through this program, qualified individuals throughout the country are able to receive complimentary LASIK surgery, an estimated savings between \$4,000-\$6,000, from a network of first-class ophthalmologists.

"It's important to get the word out to spinal cord injury patients in the U.S. that this service exists," Dr. Maloney said in a press release. "For many people glasses are a real nuisance, but to quadriplegics glasses are an actual disability. With the Focus on Independence program, we aim to make day-to-day life a little bit easier for these patients."

The doctors understand that how the patients feel about themselves is just as important as their vision. Courtney Henrichs, then 18-years-old when receiving her LASIK surgery, was also treated to a mini-makeover.

"I'm so excited, I'm so grateful, it's like the best present ever," said Henrichs after her surgery. "When it was over, I could see the clock on the wall and tell the time," she told 20/20 News. "Dr. Maloney was totally awesome!"

Program hopefuls may contact the program's headquarters at the Maloney Vision Institute. If an individual qualifies for the program, Dr. Maloney's staff will locate a physician within an hour of the prospective patient, even if that means getting a qualified doctor registered in the program.

A potential candidate for Focus on Independence is:

- A quadriplegic due to a traumatic spinal cord injury who finds it is difficult or impossible to put on or remove glasses and/or contact lenses without assistance
- More than 18 years old
- At least one year post-injury

Final determination of qualifying for the program is at the discretion of a participating physician and eligibility does not guarantee a surgeon can be located in the candidate's area.

LASIK surgery will not work for everyone who qualifies for this program and is not suitable for all types of vision impairments. In addition to being physically mature, the eyes must also be free of all infection and of stable vision for at least one year.

To learn more about Focus on Independence, call 1-877-EYESIGHT or visit the Maloney Vision Institute online at www.maloneyvision.com.

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