



Free Lasik Surgeries Offered To Quadriplegics By New Foundation

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LOS ANGELES -- If you need glasses, a new foundation may be able to get you Lasik for free, according to NBC4's Dr. Bruce Hensel.

It may seem like a little thing for someone who's confined to a wheelchair. But getting rid of glasses may help give back some of the freedom they've lost.

Ever since she broke her neck in a car accident 25 years ago, Marta Johansen has been wheelchair-bound with minimal use of her hands.

She's fought her way through many challenges. She gets around well in a home designed by her husband and she even drives.

One challenge she's can't overcome is her need for glasses.

"It's almost impossible for me to get them adjusted properly," said Johansen.

"The few times I dropped them, I can't reach to the floor. It's really hard to clean with these hands," said Johansen.

Physically challenged people have been telling ophthalmologist Robert Maloney that for years, Hensel reported.

"Things we take for granted are difficult for them. If a quadriplegic wakes up he or she can't see. You have to wake up your caregiver or lie in a fog," said Maloney.

The solution, Hensel said, struck Maloney during a fishing trip. It was to offer some people the surgery for free.

"Even though they're in prime of their life, they can't afford us. They need this. We can make a big difference," he said.

Maloney and his partner formed Focus for Independence. Almost every ophthalmologist he asked joined to provide a nationwide guarantee.

"If you're quadriplegic, we'll try to find you a surgeon who works within one hour of your home to do this for free," said Maloney.

"Our goal is make their lives a little bit better and give them back their independence."

Johansen's Lasik took 15 minutes and her eyesight, better immediately, will continue to improve as the swelling goes down, Hensel reported.

Disclaimer: Viewers should ask their own doctor for a referral. Dr. Hensel and NBC do not endorse this nor is it clear if they are not-for-profit.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Focus on Independence Web site
1-877-999-eyes