

# Taylor addresses city council regarding C-spine injury

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times," he said. Taylor learned something about the spinal cord from his injury.

"There is no such thing as a minor spinal cord injury," he said. "The spinal cord is the conduit from the brain to the rest of the organs in the body."

Taylor spent five days at the Atlantic City Medical Center before being transferred to the Moss Rehabilitation Center in Elkins Park, Pa., where he spent the next 11 weeks in physical and occupational therapy, three hours a day, six days a week. When he came home he started outpatient rehab, three days a week for four and a half months. After two years he is still getting physical therapy.

"In the beginning he could not feed himself, blow his nose or brush his teeth," Judy said.

Taylor is now able to do those things, as well as shower, shave, and dress himself. But he still cannot put on his own socks and shoes, and he has difficulty flipping open a cell phone. He can stand and walk with a cane, but only for about half a block. He used to walk from Second Avenue to the marina area or down to Cape May Point. At home he has a walker and a motorized wheelchair.

"I became a pretty good driver, but I was also determined to be on my feet as much as possible," he said.

Taylor said his injury happened at age 60. Below 60 you have a better chance of recovery. Initially they gave him a 30 percent chance of walking again. He has made great strides from lying in a hospital bed unable to even scratch

his nose, but it has come at a great expense.

The Taylors' hospital bills are approaching \$700,000. They feel they are fortunate to have good insurance, but their insurance will eventually run out. Additionally, the first year their out of pocket expenses were \$18,000. Add to that another \$30,000 to modify their home to make it wheelchair accessible. And that doesn't include the time and the emotional costs.

"You just don't realize the time and extent of care that needs to be given," Judy said.

Judy told Cape May City Council, Tuesday, she sometimes gets angry with her husband, although she knows she shouldn't. It's just difficult for her to give the care David needs without it taking a toll on her. Judy said she wanted people to understand that a spinal cord injury is not a temporary situation. Her husband has been undergoing treatment for two years and he still has a long way to go. She also wanted to speak to council because, in her words, she wanted to "put a face on this" C-spine injury situation that has been growing on Cape May beaches.

The Taylors say they are not bitter, taking solace and comfort in their faith and the support of friends and family. However they also want to get the word out about the dangerous shorebreak situation, and they want government to take some action to help prevent injuries.

Taylor worked for the railroad for 42 years, retiring from Norfolk and Southern two years ago. He said if there was a dangerous situation identified on the railroad it was corrected. If it couldn't be corrected, bulletins were

issued and everyone was made aware so they could avoid the situation. The Taylors would like to see the city of Cape May and the state of New Jersey adopt this same attitude.

City Manager Bruce MacLeod said the city has been working on the problem. He acknowledged that Cape May beaches do have a more abrupt slope due to the beach replenishment project, and that has created a different set of problems - particularly the potential for injury. However he said the city's hands are bound when it comes to altering the slope of the beach.

"The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection controls beach management. They have said it's illegal for the city to push sand toward the ocean," MacLeod said.

Chad deSatnick, who suffered a C-spine injury in 2001, told city council he believed there could be a way of altering the slope without pushing the sand into the ocean. He said the city of Saint Augustine, Fla., was able to give their beaches more of a gradual slope by moving the sand perpendicular to the beach.

MacLeod said the city has also been in contact with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and has asked them to study the situation to see what can be done about altering the slope. The city also initiated contact with the office of U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg to request his aid in remedying the situation.

The city has also put up signs advising people of the dangerous shore break. Two weeks ago, deSatnick advised the city that some of the signs

had been removed, probably to decorate someone's garage, and needed to be replaced. On Tuesday, MacLeod said the city should probably keep a backup supply of the signs so they could be replaced if they are removed.

MacLeod also said the city was working on a flier that could be handed out when people buy a beach tag, or left in cardholders at the beach entrances, or on the lifeguard stands. Todd deSatnick said his brother, Chad, was having to battle to get the fliers distributed. He also questioned the design of the multipurpose brochure, saying the section on head and neck injuries is just a small portion and it gets lost in the overall content of the brochure.

"There's a bunch of topics and the head and neck injury part blends in," he said. "I would like to see a professionally designed brochure."

Mayor Edward Mahaney said he would favor a better brochure printed on heavier stock and put on the lifeguard chairs and to be distributed by beach taggers. The mayor also supported other recommendations, such as posting the high tide times at lifeguard stands.

The shorebreak becomes a more dangerous situation at high tide when it is not as apparent. The waves break in the shallow water at the beach instead of farther out making it dangerous to play in the shallows. Taylor said he recommends people go out a little farther to avoid the breaking waves.

Taylor said he visited the Second Avenue Beach a year after being injured there. At that time, he saw an eight or 10-year-old boy come out of



Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

David Taylor's smile belies the two-year struggle to come back from a C-spine injury. He is shown here outside the Jetty Motel, not far where his injury occurred.

the water holding his back and crying.

"I could see a rerun of what happened to me," he said.

The Taylors said they love Cape May and their fourth generation is now coming here on vacation, staying at the Jetty Motel, and enjoying the Second Avenue Beach. But they are also more aware

of the power of the ocean and the dangers of a shorebreak. They would simply like the local and state government to take more of a role in informing the public so other people do not have to go through the same amount of pain, expense and emotional difficulty they have for the past two years.

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Free hors d'oeuvres and cash bar available. Attendees are encouraged to bring plenty of business cards. Please call the Chamber for more information and reservations at 465-7181 ext. 104 or [www.capemaycountychamber.com](http://www.capemaycountychamber.com).



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