

Matt's Story

Talking with Matt, you begin to notice a few things. His physical limitation has not altered his pursuits in life – writing, music, and school. You also notice he has a good head on his shoulders as he describes how he would like to pursue advocacy/counseling work with the disabled. He has a great relationship with his parents and has three dogs – Zoë, Godiva, and his newest and biggest fan, Guinness. Matt is 6 feet, 3 inches tall and a typical 24-year-old except for one thing – a split second that changed his life forever.

In May 2003, Matt was driving to

his family owned liquor store in Connecticut where he works as a wine aficionado. On the way, he had to stop for an accident in front of him. He looked in the



rear view mirror and saw a tractor trailer truck fast approaching. Matt was boxed in and there was no place to turn his car out of the way of the oncoming truck. He was hit from behind and pushed into another tractor trailer. This split second resulted in Matt sustaining a C4-5 fracture of his spine with resulting tetraplegia. Matt did not have any other injuries from the accident but he was paralyzed for life and unable to move his arms or legs. Matt was able to go home for the first time since he entered the hospital and completed rehab on October 14, 2003.

Matt talks about his journey to getting his first power wheelchair, “It took a long time to get my wheelchair. I have no idea why they did not start earlier

so that I could have my power chair when I went home from rehab. The entire process should have started earlier.” Matt was evaluated by a therapist, a certified rehab technology supplier (CRTS) and his physician while he was in the inpatient rehab facility. He developed a stage four

bed sore – down to his bone – while in the hospital. The bed sore and the lengthy application process for a Medicaid number delayed the wheelchair evaluation further.

His initial evaluation was September 2, 2003. A series of evaluations, adjustments and modifications continued until after December 24, 2003. [See reverse for details.]

Matt shared his concerns as he becomes adapted to life in a wheelchair. He has not been out much since going home but Matt is concerned that, “people will look at

“I hope people will not make assumptions about me because I am in a wheelchair.”

me as someone who is in a wheelchair, not as just another guy,” and that, “they will not make assumptions about me because I am in a

wheelchair.” Matt reveals that some of his friends before his accident no longer come around or call because they are uncomfortable around him. He hopes that won't be the case with everyone as he pursues his goals in life.

Fast forward to February 2004, and Matt is able to move independently throughout his home and get into his specially modified van. Although it took more than four months to get his wheelchair, Matt is happy that he has what he needs as many others in his situation are not as fortunate. He is working on a plan to return to school for training as a disabled advocate/counselor. Matt also wants to write a book of his

journey and what he has learned so that he can help others in his situation. He wants you to know he is just another guy with all the same dreams and interests of anyone his age. Matt hopes that he will always be able to get the proper equipment and supplies he needs to live like everyone else.



The Journey to Matt's Mobility



1. Matt's initial evaluation at the rehab hospital took place on September 2, 2003. The evaluation consisted of measurements, evaluation of his medical condition and assessment of seating and mobility options based on his home environment and physical needs. In addition, pressure mapping also was completed to evaluate the location of increased pressure areas and the amount of pressure on his current bed sore. This evaluation took over two hours of non-billable time by the CRTS. It was determined that Matt needed a power wheelchair with a power tilt and recline system with custom seating.

2. While waiting for prior authorization from his primary private insurance and Medicaid, his family had to purchase a wheelchair, out-of-pocket, that reclines to enable Matt to go home. Another evaluation was completed- another hour of non-

billable time by the CRTS. This manual wheelchair and wheelchair cushion had to be rushed as his discharge date was set and could not be changed unless he had a complication. This manual wheelchair meant that Matt would be able to go home but he would not have any independence while he waited for his power wheelchair.

3. After he got home, it was determined that the recliner wheelchair his family paid for was not meeting his needs, and causing further friction and shearing on his skin. This friction and shearing causes bed sores. The CRTS bought a loaner (non-billable) tilt-in-space wheelchair to enable Matt to have position changes but not cause further damage to his skin from friction and shearing. This temporary chair had to be specifically configured for Matt's needs: trough arms for positioning; headrest for head support; chest belt for upper trunk control; and a contoured back to support his trunk for optimum breathing, comfort, and digestion. The loaner wheelchair configured for Matt was provided at no charge since insurance only pays for one wheelchair. All the evaluation and assembly time is non-billable. Approximately ten hours was spent to get Matt's loaner wheelchair configured and delivered to his home.
4. After he was in his loaner wheelchair the CRTS then needed to return to the home to re-adjust the headrest. This was non-billable time.
5. On December 18, 2003, Matt's power wheelchair was ready for delivery to his home. The delivery with training and adjustments took over two hours of non-billable time. Assembly of the power wheelchair to Matt's specifications took over six hours.
6. A few days later the CRTS received a call that Matt was unable to tolerate the wheelchair back and lateral support on his new power wheelchair. The rehab technician went to the home with the loaner wheelchair as a back up. Suggestions on altering the back of the power wheelchair did not work and Matt's family contacted the CRTS that evening for further evaluation.
7. On December 24, 2003, the CRTS went to the home for additional evaluation of the seating and Matt's position. It was determined that Matt would need the back he used while in rehab – a more contoured back to support his trunk and allow him to sit with greater comfort. Measurements were completed. Matt returned to the loaner wheelchair since his power wheelchair needed to return to the production shop for modifications to accommodate the new back. There was more than eight hours of non-billable time spent for re-evaluation, production/modification and re-delivery.

“Approximately 10 hours of non-billable time was spent to get Matt's loaner wheelchair configured and delivered to his home.”

Non-Billable Time Overview

Initial Evaluation by CRTS = **2 hrs**

Evaluation for loaner wheelchair to get Matt home = **1 hr**

Configuration of loaner tilt-in-space chair and delivery = **10 hrs**

Re-Adjust headrest = **1 hr**

Delivery and adjustment of Matt's powerchair = **2 hrs**

Assembly of Matt's powerchair to his specifications = **6 hrs**

Follow up due to Matt's inability to tolerate back and supports = **1.5 hrs**

Re-evaluation, modification and re-delivery of powerchair = **8 hrs**

Funding, purchasing, payables and receiving admin time = **7 hrs**