



LOS ANGELES COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT

2013



Beach Day: Hope and Healing on the Sand

For Rancho Los Amigos patient Alicia, this is the first time she's visited the beach since her spinal cord injury.

"It's different. Very different. But I like it," Alicia said.

Today is beach day for six Rancho Los Amigos' patients. They suffer from various injuries, but for a few hours they get to be out and enjoy some fun in the sun.

Erik Rodriguez, another Rancho Los Amigos patient, expressed his happiness. "It makes you feel good, you know? Alive, more fresh, that you can be out here enjoying life."

This is the fourth year Rancho Los Amigos patients have traveled to the beach. What makes this year's visit even more special are specialized beach wheelchairs that can be pushed on the sand and taken into the water. These beach wheelchairs are available at any L.A. County beach. One only needs to call ahead and reserve it.

Julie Helgren of the Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center explains their functionality. "You can actually go in the water, and that is the coolest one. So that's the neatest part is that we can actually put them in the water, in the chairs. They can get soaking wet, it's perfect, and we can just pull them right out."

For many of the patients, hearing the waves and feeling the sun and the water is healing.

Jonathan Lathon, Rancho Los Amigos patient said, "It just calms me down, everybody's happy."

"It's good to be out on the beach," Jeffrey Young, another Rancho Los Amigos patient agreed.

The beach day is made possible by L.A. County Supervisor for the 4th District Don Knabe. Officials hope that Beach Day gives these patients a sense of freedom and a belief that anything is possible.

"It's a matter of independent living," said Supervisor Knabe. "Giving them opportunities to do things that is very difficult for them. We try to make it as easy as possible. But most importantly, we just want them to have fun."