Paralyzed bride puts wedding on hold to get care

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KNIGHTDALE, N.C. -- Lack of health care, not lack of love, has put wedding plans on hold indefinitely for a North Carolina couple after the bride-to-be was paralyzed in a freak accident.

Rachelle Friedman was paralyzed from the chest down after one of her bridesmaids shoved her into a pool just a month before her June wedding to her college sweetheart.

If Friedman and fiance Chris Chapman tie the knot, Friedman would stop receiving the Medicaid checks she needs to pay for her constant care and rehabilitation. Still, Chapman hasn't left his love's side.

"We know we're a strong couple," Friedman, 25, told ABC News. "And when I got hurt, it never crossed my mind that he would ever leave."

As a married couple, their combined income would be too high to qualify for the Medicaid payments. So the pair plans to live together in a home in the Raleigh suburb of Knightdale until they can figure out their insurance issues and have that dream wedding Friedman was planning for last June.

Friedman was enjoying a night out with her bridesmaids when one pushed her into the shallow end of a pool as a joke. Friedman hit her head on the bottom, immediately went stiff and couldn't move. But she didn't panic, let herself float to the surface and told her friends to call for help.

Friedman forgave her friend and refused to tell ABC News her name, saying they are still close friends and had pushed each other into swimming pools as a joke many times before the accident.

"She was having a really hard time at first, but my family gave her a lot of attention and let her know we don't blame her and nobody is angry with her," Friedman said.
Friedman, an aerobics and dance instructor before the accident, initially had no feeling below her collarbone. But she can now type with her thumb and sit up in bed on her own after months of therapy. She may even start a family with Chapman, even though she would have to stop taking the medication that keeps her comfortable and out of severe pain.

"I haven't ruled it out - I'm almost willing to be in pain lying down for nine months," Friedman said.

The couple have been together for five years. Both graduated from East Carolina University, and Friedman said she was excited to be marrying her first boyfriend. And both said they could never imagine ending the relationship.

"We do as much as we can to maintain the lives that we had ahead of time," Chapman said. "It's just different."
If you haven't signed up for the free e-mail help from Maintain, Don't Gain Holiday Challenge yet, go to www.myeatsmartmovemorenc.com. It's easy to join, and the Eat Smart Move More program sends helpful hints and encouraging messages through December 31. It's not too late to get a friendly competition going at work, school, church, book club or your neighborhood to help you enjoy but not overdo during the holidays.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and I want to express my thanks to the Pitt Memorial Hospital Foundation and its contributors for their continued generous support of nutrition and physical activity programs in our community. I had a great time at a recent Community Benefits Grants Program Fair talking with men and women in our community who have received funds from the foundation and are working hard to help our citizens eat smart and move more.

This year there were more than 18 programs who serve children and adults throughout Pitt County who wrote successful grant applications. Some of the programs help our citizens who need good nutrition. The Food Bank of Eastern North Carolina got support for its fresh produce and mobile food pantry. It is almost hard to believe how great the need is. The food bank works through 45 partner agencies to serve 58,825 households and 146,390 individuals. There are 12 mobile food pantry sites in Pitt County. Last year the pantries served 8,010 households and 21,414 individuals. The Food Bank distributed 2.4 million pounds of food to Pitt County; 356,133 pounds were distributed through the Fresh Produce Initiative.

The Greenville Shelter continues in its efforts to ensure those who need their services start the day with a healthy breakfast. The number of individuals has risen from an
average 55 to 72 per night in recent months. Last year, almost 9,000 morning meals were served.

Some programs are trying to help children who are overweight work to achieve a healthier weight. Unfortunately, it is expensive to help kids who are overweight, so the foundation's money makes the programs both affordable and accessible. The Brody School of Medicine's KIDPOWER program is working toward sustainability but needed help to continue to provide nutrition counseling to children and their families in their own doctor's offices. Additionally, there were scholarships for kids to attend the great immersion program called “Take Off 4 Health.” Dr. David Collier and the Take Off 4 Health Team help overweight teens get started on a new way of life.

ViQuest in Greenville has a great weight-management program for kids and the Foundation's help makes the program affordable for many. We all hope that programs designed to teach kids to eat healthy and be physically active will prevent the development of obesity. These programs are also expensive but the cost per child is smaller than clinical programs. Pitt County Schools continues to encourage ninth graders to give themselves a nutrition and physical activity prescription.

Another funded project is at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Pitt County. Their Triple Play project utilizes physically active games as part of the learning process to teach youth between 6 and 11 years old about nutrition, stress management, physical fitness and positive relationships with peers.

The Little Willie Center provides after school care and physical activity and healthy snacks for kids.

Other programs to receive support for food and nutrition and physical activity programming include the Food Literacy Partners administered by ECU’s Public Health Department; the NC Cooperative Extension's Healthy Communities program in Pitt County; the popular Farmers Market Nutrition Education Program managed by the Pitt County Health Department; the Straightway Family Life Center, another after school program that also serves a healthy meal; several diabetes programs as well as walking trails in the county; and outreach programs from Nutrition and Physical Activity Partners, Pitt Partners in Health.

There are lots of agencies and politicians who talk about the childhood and adult obesity epidemic, but with the support of the Pitt Memorial Hospital Foundation, there are several groups in Pitt County working hard to make sure our kids and their families achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Professor emeritus Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian and Ph.D., works with the Family Medicine Center, Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolasaka@ecu.edu.
Officers warn of holiday crackdown

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By Jennifer Swartz, Staff Writer
The Daily Reflector

Traffic may be lighter but revelers are expected to be plentiful, prompting State Highway Patrol officers in Greenville to warn of potentially treacherous travel around Pitt County this holiday weekend.

The effect of East Carolina University and other students leaving town for the holiday means “less cars but more drinkers” as the people who are in town raise a glass then get behind the wheel, Highway Patrol First Sgt. Marvin Williams said. Colder weather can cause slick roads and further endanger drivers already distracted by the frenetic holiday season, he said.

“Drink responsibly and have a designated driver and maintain the normal defensive-driving techniques, especially this time of year when you have a lot of people out shopping,” Williams said. “Your mind might not be focused on driving.”

Statewide, officers are targeting drunken drivers, speeders and aggressive motorists as part of a holiday crackdown aimed at reducing accidents. Operation Slow Down and Operation C.A.R.E., an initiative known as the Combined Accident Reduction Effort, will be enforced through Sunday.

“I have instructed our troopers to crack down on speeders this holiday weekend,” Col. Michael Gilchrist, commander of the State Highway Patrol, said in a statement. “Speed is the leading cause of fatal collisions on our highways.”

Last year, 12 people died and 1,370 were injured on North Carolina roads during Thanksgiving week. During that same period, 49 collisions, nine injuries, five drunken-driving arrests and no fatalities were reported in Pitt and Martin counties, according to the Highway Patrol in Greenville.

Road construction has been suspended during the holiday weekend to help celebrants arrive safely, state officials said. Most work on interstates, state and U.S. routes was set to halt late Tuesday and resume Monday morning, according to the Department of Transportation.

Exceptions include U.S. 17 business in Jacksonville, which will be reduced to two-lane, two-way traffic on the New River Bridge. Traffic also is restricted to one lane in Windsor on the Cashie River Bridge. Interstate 40 in Greensboro will be restricted to two lanes in
both directions between Wendover Avenue and Guilford College Road. Part of U.S. 220 South of Asheboro will be limited to one lane in both directions for widening work.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.
Contact Jennifer Swartz at jswartz@reflector.com or (252) 329-9565.
Duke had no right to arrest, attorney insists

By Jesse James DeConto, Staff Writer

DURHAM– A local defense lawyer is challenging the Duke University Police Department's power to arrest suspects on the ground that it violates the separation of church and state.

Bill Thomas, a former defense attorney in the Duke lacrosse case, filed a motion Tuesday to dismiss alcohol-related traffic charges against 19-year-old Thomas Holloway. Officer Doreen Hogan's stop near Duke's East Campus was illegal, he argues, because of the university's affiliation with the United Methodist Church.

In August, three judges with the state Court of Appeals stripped Davidson College of its power to arrest, saying state-certified police protecting the Presbyterian school represented an excessive entanglement between government and religion. Campus security officers at Campbell University and Pfeiffer, a Methodist school, lost their power to enforce state laws in 1994 and 2002, respectively.

The state Supreme Court has stayed the appeals court's judgment and agreed to hear the state's appeal in the Davidson case, according to Noelle Talley, spokeswoman for the state Attorney General's Office, which certifies police officers throughout the state.

Davidson College police continue to operate until the appeal is resolved. Though Duke University has students, faculty and staff of all faiths and no faith, Thomas argues that the influence of Methodism and the prominence of Duke Divinity School, a seminary that trains Christian clergy, make Duke a religious institution.

Duke Police Chief John Dailey declined to comment.
Michael Schoenfeld, Duke's vice president for public affairs and government relations, said Duke police are fully trained and certified by the state of North Carolina.

"It is business as usual for DUPD to protect the safety and security of our students, employees, patients, visitors and campus facilities," he said.

Duke theologian Stanley Hauerwas, known for his pacifism, said banning the use of force by university police could bring the university closer to its academic mission, regardless of the legal question about Duke's Methodist roots.

"To even suggest that Duke is a religious university ... that's a reality long gone," Hauerwas said.

"It would be a good thing for the police at the university not to carry guns, because I don't think it should be what universities are about."

Duke's bylaws require that 24 of 36 members of its board of trustees be elected by the United Methodist Church in North Carolina.

Thomas cites the university's Latin motto, translated as "Knowledge and Religion," and its bylaws: "The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion as set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ... to develop a Christian love of freedom and truth ... and to render the largest permanent service to the individual, the state, the nation and the church."

Thomas also points to the central place of Duke Chapel on the campus, and the carvings of Methodist heroes such as Francis Asbury, George Whitefield and John Wesley inside.

He also quotes Duke President Richard Brodhead installing New Testament scholar Richard Hays as the divinity school's interim dean this month: "The divinity school is the embodiment of the intention of the university to fulfill its calling in the preparation of a learned ministry. It is also the symbol of the long and abiding relationship between church and academy."

jesse.deconto@newsobserver.com or 919-932-8760
Ex-Texas Tech assistant survives, thrives at East Carolina

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By KATE HAIROPOULOS / The Dallas Morning News
khairopoulos@dallasnews.com

Ruffin McNeill's East Carolina Pirates gave up 62 points in a loss last week at Rice, so the former Texas Tech defensive coordinator wasn't particularly chipper Monday.

But he still sounded like 'Coach Ruff,' with the same warm personality that endeared him to so many during his tenure in Lubbock, including the fallout of the Mike Leach firing last December.

As interim coach, McNeill led Tech to a win over Michigan State in the Valero Alamo Bowl, but then was passed over to replace Leach.

With almost his first season as a head coach behind him, McNeill has led his alma mater to a bowl-eligible 6-5 record. SMU visits Friday in the regular-season finale with a chance to punch a ticket to the Mustangs' first-ever Conference USA title game.

"It has been a whirlwind," McNeill said. "It's gone from one of the biggest challenges to one of the most rewarding times in my life, to another low point and then a high point to come here to East Carolina. It's been an adjustment ... but coming back home has been a blessing."

McNeill is now close to his father and daughters and said he needs dozens of tickets for family members for each home game. ECU, which had won two straight C-USA titles under Skip Holtz, has won 10 straight conference games at home.

But the Pirates should be tested against SMU. ECU's defense, which has lost three starters to season-ending injuries, has given up more than 57 points a game over the last four contests, of which ECU has lost three. But ECU also has impressive wins this season: 51-49 over Tulsa, 44-43 at Southern Miss and 33-27 (OT) against North Carolina State.
McNeill made former Tech assistant Lincoln Riley his offensive coordinator, bringing along an interpretation of Leach's spread offense. "I wish them well," McNeill said of Tech. "You go through ups and downs in life, pick your chin up and keep fighting."

Getting defensive: SMU defensive coordinator Tom Mason praised nose guard Marquis Frazier for playing his best game of the season in last week's 31-17 win over Marshall. Frazier, a junior out of Garland, had four tackles and a sack. More importantly, Mason said, Frazier provided the physical presence in the middle of the 3-4 that SMU hasn't always had this season.

Frazier responded to losing his starting job for a couple games after making repeated mistakes. "He dominated inside," Mason said. ...

SMU's defense is nearing the goal Mason set at the start of the season of finishing in the top 50 of the defensive rankings in the Football Bowl Subdivision. SMU's total defense ranks 52nd (358.91 yards per game), up from 84th last season (397.02 ypg). ...

East Carolina features the top-ranked passing offense in the league (319.8 ypg) and is tied for the second-ranked scoring offense (38.2 ppg).