

Pointers For Parents

Shriners Hospitals Encourage Safety Around Lawnmowers

(NAPSA)—With the long winter over, grass everywhere is in need of attention. To ensure safe lawn-mowing, Shriners Hospitals for Children are alerting parents that safety precautions should be followed.

Shriners Hospitals treat many children each year who have been seriously injured as a result of power lawnmower accidents. Many of these incidents result in the loss of fingers, toes, limbs and even eyes. Tragically, some lawnmower accidents can result in permanent brain damage or even death.

Twenty-one-year-old Spence McArthur of Lovell, Wyo., knows the effects of a lawnmower accident firsthand. When Spence was 3-years-old, he lost part of his right foot when he tripped in front of a riding lawnmower. To improve his mobility, doctors at the Intermountain Shriners Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah amputated Spence's foot and fit him with a prosthesis. Many years—and prostheses—later, the athletic teen is living proof that amputees can compete with other athletes on the playing field.

His high school years were spent playing basketball and football, and running track. In 2002, Spence participated in the Wyoming Shrine Bowl, making him the first Intermountain Shriners Hospital patient to compete in the game. High school seniors play in the annual event, which raises money for Shriners Hospitals for Children.

"Not thinking about my prosthesis gives me an advantage," he said. "I know I'm just as strong as they are."

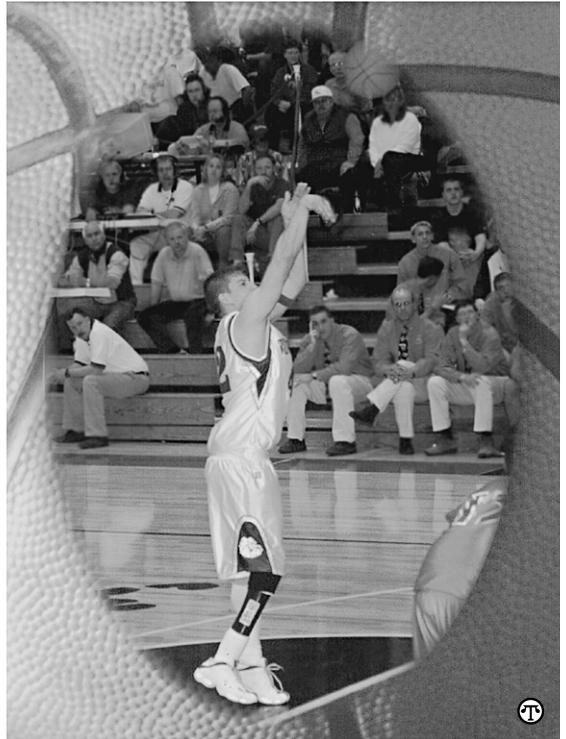
Today, Spence is doing church missionary work in Argentina before heading off to Northwest College in Wyoming. He wants to eventually work with children.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, on average, each year about 20,000 people are injured on or near power mowers, most of them riding

mowers. One out of every five deaths involves a child. The Commission estimates that most of the deaths occur when a child is in the path of a moving mower. Although tragic, these unfortunate situations could have been avoided, if adults had taken the proper precautions.

To prevent injuries to children and adults from lawnmowers, please follow these safety tips from Shriners Hospitals and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Do not allow passengers on a riding mower.
- Keep children out of the yard and indoors while mowing the lawn.
- It is recommended that children under the age of 14 not be allowed to operate a lawnmower.
- Always prepare your lawn for mowing. Check your lawn for items such as sticks, rocks, toys, etc. Make sure nothing is hidden in the grass.
- Handle fuel with care. Wipe up spills. Never fill the tank on a mower that is hot. Never smoke or use any kind of flame around gasoline.
- Wear appropriate clothing and shoes. Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, eye protection and heavy gloves. Wear sturdy, close-toed shoes with slip-resistant rubber soles.
- Check guards and shields. Be sure to read the owner's manual and know how to operate the equipment. Don't remove or disable guards or other safety devices.
- Use a mower with an automatic blade cut-off. Stay behind



Shriners patient Spence McArthur was a standout basketball player in high school.

the handle until the blade stops. Never reach under a mower while it is still operating. If you need to remove debris or check the blade, disconnect the wire from the spark plug.

- Don't cut grass when it's wet.
- On slopes, mow up and down rather than across the slope.

For more information on lawnmower safety, or Shriners' network of hospitals that treat children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, please write to Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, FL 33607 or visit www.shrinershq.org. If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada. Shriners Hospitals provide free treatment to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.