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CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND

PRESS RELEASE:
For immediate release

Contact: Tybee Island City Hall
(912) 786-4573

Tybee Island Beach Accessibility

Tybee Island, Ga. – (July 29, 2008) The City of Tybee Island continues to welcome visitors to enjoy its beaches, with the upcoming replenishment of the sand on the beaches and by the refurbishment of the streets and sidewalks in the Tybrisa-Strand shopping district. The City has several amenities to help the mobility impaired to enjoy the beach as well, mainly, though not exclusively, focused on the more popular beach at the south end of the island.

Thus far, the City has invested \$45,000 installing and maintaining Mobi-mats at the dune crossovers at Gulick Street, Second Avenue (also known as the East Gate cross-over), and at 18th Street at the south end of the parking lot on the Strand. These crossovers have no stairs to navigate, and the Mobi-mats provide proximity from the hard surface at the end of the wooden crossover to the harder sand at the tide line. Besides making the beach more accessible to wheelchairs, the Mobi-mats help to guide all visitors away from sensitive dune areas and protect some of the sand from erosion. They are removable for storage in case of extreme emergency. Joe Wilson, head of the City's Department of Public Works, has an on-going strategy at these crossovers to extend the wooden walkways closer to the high tide mark to reduce the amount of Mobi-mat required at each site. This would in turn reduce costs while improving access. The wooden walkway extensions will take place over the next several years based on continual inspection results at each site.

The Ocean Rescue Headquarters can supply specialized beach wheelchairs at no charge for temporary use. Their office is located just outside the Tybee Island Marine Science Center and next to the Parker Pier and Pavilion. The wheelchairs have very large, hard-plastic wheels which allow them to roll more easily over sand. Built entirely of plastic, they will not rust in the sea air. These wheelchairs have been made available to the City by individual donations as well as under a grant written by Fran Todd from Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE), Inc. Due to limited availability of these two very popular wheelchairs, they cannot be held or reserved and must be returned by the end of each day. To check on current availability before heading to the beach, lifeguards can be reached at (912) 786-4573, x119.

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www.cityoftybee.org

Spending a day at the beach should be pleasant without having to search for a restroom. Portable restrooms can be found at many of dune crossovers along the island beaches and accessible restrooms are also provided at the north beach and south beach parking lots. With the Strand re-development effort, restrooms attached to the old Parking Services building were removed. Due to FEMA regulations, a permanent and accessible replacement facility at ground level is restricted. An portable, ADA-compliant, air-conditioned restroom in the 18th Street parking lot provides an accessible facility that is easily serviced. This structure can also be moved away from the beach, to meet those FEMA requirements in the event of an emergency such as a hurricane. These facilities cost over \$18,000 per year.

About L.I.F.E., Inc.:

Living Independence for Everyone Inc. (L.I.F.E. Inc.) is a small nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to empowering people with disabilities to achieve equal rights, equal opportunities and integration into the community. L.I.F.E. Inc. is operated by and for people with disabilities. Our organization embraces the independent living philosophy. This philosophy is based on the core of independent living concepts of consumer control, self-advocacy, community change, and cross-disability participation. One of the bases of the IL philosophy is that everyone, no matter what his or her disability, has the right to make his or her own informed decisions. For more information, visit the website at <http://www.lifecil.com/>.

About Tybee Island, Ga.:

The city of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee's Fort Screven, Tybee Fort Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick's Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks displays on Independence and New Year's Days off the Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia's DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>.

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Picture attachments: (5) beach wheelchairs; (3) Mobi-mats on the beach.

Copies of this release can also be found at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/PressReleases.aspx>

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