

Updated: Tragedy narrowly averted on the Jetty

November 27, 2023





Smith River resident Christina Clark was observing the spectacular King tides, last Saturday when she watched in disbelief as a young man and his mother were swept off the Crescent City Jetty.

Christina's camera caught the exact moment 13 year old T.J. and his mother Shalice Nielson of Utah hit the rocks on the Harbor side of the Jetty and the expedient rescue by family friend and paramedic Trevor Mortenson, Saturday mid-morning after Thanksgiving.

Owner of the jetty, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) signage warns of the dangers posed to those who slip between the locked gates atop the jetty but does not discourage trespassing. In the last two decades, three people have perished after being swept off the jetty. Another 15 have been rescued by Del Norte Search and Rescue, between 2001-2021.

Shalice suffered a broken wrist and sustained back injuries. T.J. suffered facial trauma and a lacerated spleen. Both were treated at Sutter Coast Hospital (SCH) and expected to make full recoveries. The Nielsens' expressed their gratitude and appreciation to SCH and orthopaedist Dr. Micah Berry for his superb and immediate care.

Shalice candidly admitted her dismissive reaction to the warning signage, especially during the two most severe King tide months, November and December. "I was in no way prepared for (this ordeal) almost losing my son." Shanice requested the City renew its discussion with USACE to permanently secure the jetty and prevent all public access.

The very good news is, with instinctive reaction from paramedic Mortenson, the family was able to successfully rescue both, no doubt, saving their lives. Del Norte Search and Rescue was on hand to patrol the jetty for the balance of Thanksgiving week-end.

This is yet just another example of folks defying prominent signage warning of the perils of walking out on the 1.6 mile dog-leg jetty, separating the Pacific from the Harbor.

It was indeed a great Thanksgiving and beginning of the Holiday season for this lucky family, an unforgettable experience and visit to Crescent City, California 2023.