

# Nearly decapitated child recovering

By Darcy De Leon  
USA TODAY

A 10-year-old Arizona boy, nearly decapitated in a bicycle accident, on Thursday made his first effort to speak since surgery to reattach his head to his spinal column.

Doctors are confident Timothy "T.J." Mathias of Glendale eventually will be able to walk out of St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix.

The boy, awake and alert, was listed in serious but stable condition.

"He made little moaning sounds today. He's really trying to talk," says his mother, Kerry Mathias. "I'm just amazed."

So are doctors who performed the rare five-hour surgery April 26 at the hospital's Barrow Neurological Institute.

"He was comatose and quad-



By Peter Schwepker, Arizona Republic via AP

**INJURED BOY:** Kerry Mathias comforts her son Timothy, who is recovering after surgery to reattach his head to his spine.

riplegic when he got here. Now he's recovering very nicely. We're very optimistic," says Volker Sonntag, one of six surgeons who teamed up for the operation.

T.J. was on his way to school

when he was hit by a pickup truck and dragged 15 feet. His skull was pulled away from his neck vertebrae. Muscle and skin held his head to his spine.

Since the surgery, T.J. has moved his left leg and wiggled

his toes. He also is able to bring his right hand to his head, says Kerry Mathias.

"I can't say what I'm feeling. I'm just going to sit back and fight with Timmy little by little," she says.

And T.J. is fighting.

He's moved so much in bed that he pulled his broken leg out of traction. "He's a normal 10-year-old boy who doesn't want to sit still," she says.

His classmates at Horizon Elementary School in Glendale "ask about him every day," says fourth-grade teacher Jay Maynes. "We're amazed at his recovery."

Maynes says his family includes T.J. in nightly prayers.

"When I told my 5-year-old son T.J. was OK, he got really excited," Maynes says. "I guess he felt he was helping him get better with the prayers."