

SUMMER 2004

# Changing

THE WORLD



a global mission

OF PEACE



## A MESSAGE FROM KEN BEHRING



As I travel around the world, our mission of peace and friendship is received with open arms. The idea that a simple mobility device like a wheelchair can instantly change the lives of so many people is beyond the comprehension of many. I share stories about children who have been waiting for years to be able to go to school, and now with a wheelchair they can start immediately. The independence and pride that comes with mobility makes a brighter future for each wheelchair

recipient and every family member or friend that has helped them get around. The bottom line is that we are improving the quality of people's lives with every wheelchair we deliver.

I have been told of numerous cases where the recipients are now determined to use their newfound mobility to help others that are less fortunate than they are. Wheelchair recipients have joined or started organizations designed to aid people with physical disabilities and use their talents to improve the quality of life for others. This kind of dedication and commitment to our fellow human beings is extremely rewarding for us to witness in countries around the world.

An outstanding example of how a wheelchair can help a person to fulfill a lifelong dream is Xie Yanhong from Dalian, China, who was born without the use of his legs. He received a wheelchair from us a year ago and used his wheelchair to accelerate an ambitious exercise regimen to strengthen his upper body by swimming great distances every day. When I returned to China earlier this year, he told me how with the wheelchair we gave him he was able to travel to England and become the first paraplegic ever to successfully swim the English Channel! He was sponsored by the Dalian city government and the local China Disabled Person's Federation, and swam the 32 km. from Dover, England, to Calais, France. He thanked me for the love he felt when receiving the wheelchair, and the inspiration for his success.

I personally receive the greatest satisfaction from meeting people, shaking their hands and hearing their stories about how our simple gesture of friendship has brought them great joy and allowed them to live their dreams.

Thank you for helping us make so many dreams come true.

Kenneth E. Behring  
Founder & Chairman of the Board

# mission and goals

### Our Mission

The Wheelchair Foundation is a nonprofit organization leading an international effort to create awareness of the needs and abilities of people with physical disabilities, to promote the joy of giving, create global friendship, and to deliver a wheelchair to every child, teen and adult in the world who needs one, but cannot afford one. For these people, the Wheelchair Foundation delivers Hope, Mobility and Freedom.

### Our Goal

Over the next five years, the Wheelchair Foundation aims to deliver 1 million wheelchairs to people who cannot afford to buy one, and to further the awareness that a wheelchair is no longer an unaffordable relief option for delivery to developing countries around the world.

### Mobility

Since its establishment on June 13, 2000, the Wheelchair Foundation has witnessed tens of thousands of examples of how mobility creates independence and new possibilities for recipients and their families. A mobile child is able to attend school. A mobile adult is able to get a job and provide for their family, or care for the children at home so their spouse can work. An elderly person can rejoin society or family activities after years of staying in a bed. The joy and hope that a simple mobility device can deliver, is what gives people a new outlook on life and hope for the future.



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## THE OVERWHELMING NEED FOR WHEELCHAIRS

- People require the use of a wheelchair for many reasons: accidents, birth defects, war injuries, debilitating diseases and advanced age.
- One of the most horrific causes of disability worldwide can be attributed to landmines or unexploded ordnance (UXO). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), every year more than 29,000 people are injured by landmines or UXO around the world. This number does not include unreported cases, or those that are killed by the explosions.
- An estimated 100–150 million people with physical disabilities worldwide need wheelchairs, though less than 1 percent own or have access to one. The number of physically disabled is likely underestimated, due to the difficulty in accounting for “forgotten” citizens who spend their lives hidden from sight.
- It is estimated that the number of people who need wheelchairs will increase by 22 percent over the next 10 years, with the greatest need existing in developing countries.
- In developing countries, only a small percentage of those who need wheelchairs have them, forcing dependence upon family and friends to get around. For others, the only way to get around is to crawl, or lie in a bed or corner of a room for years at a time.
- Despite tremendous efforts of many relief organizations, they are still not sufficient to meet the overwhelming need. Traditionally there have been three wheelchair delivery options—sadly, none of which is adequate for a country’s poorest disabled citizens:
  - >> Wheelchairs available in the West: The most basic durable wheelchair with similar features to the type we deliver costs from \$375 to \$500, not including shipping charges. This sum is out of reach for most people in developing countries. In Vietnam, for example, a person with a physical disability may earn about \$30 a month—if she or he is able to work.
  - >> Refurbished wheelchairs: There are several organizations that refurbish and distribute wheelchairs very professionally and responsibly. Unfortunately, their efforts cannot hope to address the overwhelming need.
  - >> Wheelchairs manufactured in country: Some developing countries have domestic wheelchair manufacturing operations. But the wheelchairs still must be sold to the physically disabled citizens and are almost always too expensive for the destitute.
- *The wheelchairs provided by the Wheelchair Foundation are purchased in bulk from Chinese manufacturers, and designed to be the best possible solution in developing countries. They cost \$150 each, delivered by a 280-wheelchair container, and are offered free to those most in need. Each donation of \$75 will be matched by the Wheelchair Foundation, with funds provided specifically for that purpose, to deliver a wheelchair. \$21,000 will deliver an entire 280-wheelchair container.*

## Kenneth E. Behring

The establishment of the Wheelchair Foundation marks the most recent chapter in Kenneth E. Behring’s philanthropic efforts to improve the lives of disadvantaged people around the world.

From his successful career as an automobile dealer in Wisconsin, Ken entered the world of real estate development in the 1960s. Over the course of the next 35 years, his companies created numerous planned communities in Florida and California, including the world-renowned Blackhawk development near San Francisco.

After purchasing the Seattle Seahawks football team in 1988, Ken established the Seattle Seahawks Charitable Foundation, which benefited numerous children’s charities. The Seahawks Foundation was the most substantial donor to the Western Washington Muscular Dystrophy Association for many years.

Ken Behring founded the Blackhawk Museum and the Behring-Hofmann Educational Institute in Blackhawk, California, to benefit the San Francisco East Bay region. In 1997, he pledged \$20 million to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, and in 2000 he pledged an

**“When I see the happiness in the eyes of the people who get a wheelchair, I feel that this is the greatest thing I have ever achieved in my life.” —Kenneth E. Behring**

additional \$80 million to rebuild the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. For only the fourth time in the Smithsonian’s 170-year history, the prestigious James Smithson Award was bestowed on Behring in recognition of his generosity and vision. The Blackhawk Museum is now an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and hosts Smithsonian exhibits.

During his years of travel around the world, Ken has made it his personal mission to help those in need. His donations of food, medical supplies, clothing, toys and educational materials have helped people in some of the most impoverished nations on earth. His firsthand involvement has given him a realistic picture of how much help is needed worldwide.

In 1999, Ken donated shipments of wheelchairs to relief organizations in Eastern Europe and Africa. His personal contact with the recipients gave him a greater understanding of how much hope and happiness can be given to a person who receives a wheelchair. In the following months, he traveled the world delivering wheelchairs to numerous countries. On June 13, 2000 (his birthday), the Wheelchair Foundation was established at a ceremony in Washington, DC.

Since June of 2000, Ken has tirelessly traveled the world delivering tens of thousands of wheelchairs to the disabled citizens of six continents. The relationships he has developed with world leaders have led to a greater awareness of the needs and abilities of the physically disabled, and are a great force in propelling the mission of the Wheelchair Foundation. In 2002, Ken was awarded an honorary doctorate by Brigham Young University for his worldwide charitable efforts.

Ken and Patricia, his wife of 54 years, reside in Blackhawk, California. They have five sons and ten grandchildren.



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MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF ADVISORS OF THE WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION ARE INDIVIDUALS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING WHEELCHAIRS TO CHILDREN, TEENS AND ADULTS AROUND THE WORLD WHO CANNOT AFFORD ONE FOR THEMSELVES. THE ADVISORS BRING THEIR EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE TO BEAR IN PROVIDING VALUABLE COUNSEL ON THE DIRECTION OF THE FOUNDATION AND SUPPORT IN ACCOMPLISHING ITS GOALS AND FULFILLING ITS MISSION.

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## WHEELCHAIRS COMMITTED OR DELIVERED SINCE JUNE 2000

Afghanistan.....	5,800	Liberia.....	250
Albania.....	550	Lithuania.....	530
Algeria.....	640	Macedonia.....	500
Angola.....	2,920	Madagascar.....	1,030
Argentina.....	2,771	Malawi.....	2,020
Armenia.....	2,124	Malaysia.....	1,980
Australia.....	12	Mali.....	240
Bahamas.....	920	Malta.....	240
Bangladesh.....	240	Marshall Is.....	140
Barai.....	196	Mexico.....	32,019
Belarus.....	740	Micronesia.....	1,390
Belgium.....	280	Moldova.....	980
Belize.....	1,860	Mongolia.....	1,040
Bolivia.....	2,244	Montenegro.....	120
Bosnia-Herzegovina.....	1,010	Morocco.....	520
Botswana.....	568	Mozambique.....	1,100
Brazil.....	2,055	N. Mariana Is.....	280
Bulgaria.....	250	Nambia.....	186
Burundi.....	240	Nepal.....	1,485
Cambodia.....	1,770	Nicaragua.....	3,105
Cape Verde.....	500	Niger.....	240
Central Africa.....	240	Nigeria.....	1,310
Chile.....	3,548	Pakistan.....	655
China/Hong Kong.....	970	Palestinians/Israel.....	1,965
China/Tibet.....	50,191	Panama.....	3,640
Colombia.....	2,420	Papua New Guinea.....	1,240
Costa Rica.....	4,035	Paraguay.....	1,544
Croatia.....	1,050	Peru.....	2,629
Cuba.....	1,240	Philippines.....	2,040
Czech Republic.....	480	Poland.....	280
Dominican Republic.....	3,726	Puerto Rico.....	250
Ecuador.....	2,481	Romania.....	3,556
Egypt.....	1,058	Russia.....	1,060
El Salvador.....	3,285	Rwanda.....	800
Eritrea.....	250	Samoa.....	520
Estonia.....	250	Senegal.....	240
Ethiopia.....	1,928	Serbia.....	500
Fiji.....	250	Sierra Leone.....	1,280
French Polynesia.....	280	Somalia.....	88
Georgia.....	500	S. Africa.....	4,360
Ghana.....	1,960	Spain.....	500
Greece.....	240	Sri Lanka.....	240
Guam.....	250	St. Lucia.....	280
Guatemala.....	4,323	Suriname.....	240
Haiti.....	1,820	Swaziland.....	240
Honduras.....	3,844	Syria.....	81
Hungary.....	120	Taiwan.....	506
India.....	2,791	Tajikistan.....	240
Indonesia.....	1,020	Tanzania.....	1,128
Iran.....	3,600	Thailand.....	3,050
Iraq.....	1,620	Tonga.....	500
Israel.....	4,790	Trinidad & Tobago.....	1,604
Italy.....	560	Turkey.....	1,800
Jamaica.....	1,880	Uganda.....	2,624
Japan.....	1,750	Ukraine.....	2,848
Jordan.....	1,788	Uruguay.....	852
Kazakhstan.....	730	USA.....	17,809
Kenya.....	2,260	Uzbekistan.....	990
Korea, North.....	140	Venezuela.....	760
Korea, South.....	4,672	Vietnam.....	5,070
Kosovo.....	1,080	Virgin Is.....	280
Kyrgyzstan.....	490	Western Sahara.....	153
Laos.....	780	Zambia.....	400
Latvia.....	240	Zimbabwe.....	1,550
Lebanon.....	2,090		

TOTAL COUNTRIES . . . . . 129  
TOTAL WHEELCHAIRS . . . . . 272,047

For current totals visit [wheelchairfoundation.org](http://wheelchairfoundation.org).



AFGHAN LANDMINE VICTIM.

### HELMOND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

This young girl lost both of her legs two months ago when she stepped on a landmine while grazing her goats. Her father carried her on his back to the place where he heard that Americans had donated wheelchairs for people that needed them. Their family is very worried about her because her wounds are not fully healed, and if someone moves her around, she feels great pain and cries. He said that she will feel much less pain in this wheelchair because her wounds will not be touched and will heal more quickly.

The girl and her father were so happy to receive a wheelchair because now she will be able to go to school, and begin learning how to live life without her legs. As he said a prayer of thanks, her father blessed all of the Americans who are coming to the aid of Afghan citizens in need.

### A LETTER FROM CHINA DEAR MR. BEHRING,

I am thrilled to see you again. I was one of the fortunate people who received a wheelchair from your last trip to Dalian. I still remember shaking your hand and hugging you the day I received my wheelchair. The wheelchairs you donated help thousands of people with disabilities find dignity and hope in their lives.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks on behalf of all the people you have

helped in Dalian. You have a kind heart. Being 75 years old has not stopped you from tirelessly traveling around the world to over 100 countries and bringing hope and light to the disabled. You are like an angel from America that comes into people's lives and delivers wheelchairs.

I remember a quote you said in your speech: "I can see from the people's eyes that they cherish the wheelchairs we give them. If everyone can help those who need help, the world will be changed for the better."

We hope you know the impact you have had on the lives of the people of Dalian. With your help, we have been



KEN BEHRING WITH SUN SHUMING IN CHINA.

able to embrace life with our new mobility. We hope that someday we will be able to do kind things in the world, helping those in need just as you have helped us. The love you give is unselfish. This love gives us the power to live our lives.

I wish you great health and happiness every day. Thank you!

Sun Shuming, Dalian

### TEENS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

There was the competitiveness of a Wheelchair Marathon and a Wheelchair Jog-a-thon, not to be outdone by the excitement of Pie-Your-Teacher Dodge Ball and Wheelchair Christmas Caroling.

Several hundred teens from 40 high schools in three San Francisco-area counties recently put some "fun" in "fun"-raising. They created the dodge ball and wheelchair events and went door-to-door in their neighborhoods and contacted businesses—

and raised enough money to give hundreds of deserving people the gift of mobility. More than 200 teens also earned themselves an evening to remember.

The teenagers are all members of Rotary Interact Clubs of District 5170, which is at the high school level. Collectively, the Interact clubs raised more than \$45,000—enough to sponsor the delivery of more than 600 wheelchairs for people who could not otherwise afford one.

"We want high school students . . . to realize what a positive difference teens can make when they work together for a great cause," says District Governor Lia Marshall.

Along with making that difference, the 200-plus Interact teens who raised funds for at least two wheelchairs were treated to a free dessert cruise and dance on San Francisco Bay. It was hosted by Ward and Susan Proescher, owners of Commodore Yachts. The cruise featured the presentation of a seven-foot ceremonial check for \$45,550 to the Wheelchair Foundation.

Of the 600-plus wheelchairs, 280 have already been designated for Costa Rica. The Rotary Club of Alameda will participate in this August 2004 distribution, as will the top four Interact participants.

"The enthusiasm and dedication of young people throughout the world



ROTARY INTERACT STUDENTS SPONSOR 600 WHEELCHAIRS.

is contributing so much to our mission of peace and friendship," says Wheelchair Foundation founder Ken Behring. "The lessons of getting involved and giving of yourself to help others took me many years to learn, so I am very happy to see these dedicated young people helping us give the gift of mobility."



# LDS

## a global partner



LDS SPONSORED  
WHEELCHAIRS IN  
CHINA.

**BUILDING ON A LONG-ESTABLISHED TRADITION OF COMPASSION, LDS CHARITIES HELPS THE WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION REACH THE IMMOBILE AROUND THE WORLD**



**CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE: POHNPEI ISLANDERS IN MICRONESIA RECEIVE WHEELCHAIRS FROM LDS CHARITIES. >>> DELIVERING A NEW LIFE IN JAKARTA, INDONESIA. >>> A YOUNG GIRL WITH HER FIRST WHEELCHAIR IN THAILAND.**

The very first “global partner” in the Wheelchair Foundation’s mission to bring hope, mobility and freedom into the lives of people with physical disabilities was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The members of the LDS Church are building on a long and established tradition of compassion and charity by reaching out to help those who are in need of a better life. During the economic devastation of the Great Depression, the church formalized its present day welfare program. The first president of the church initiated the emphasis of helping people to help themselves. The church then began a comprehensive program to provide food, employment, training and social services for those who need them: “We’ve been directed by our Savior to



love one another. To lighten the burdens of one another, to lift the load, to help out. When people go out to do this, they can’t help but feel good about themselves.”

Each year, members volunteer hundreds of thousands of hours, on farms, in canneries, storehouses and training facilities that provide food for the hungry, relieve the pain of those who suffer and offer a helping hand to those who yearn to become more independent. And always, this is done in a way that brings joy to those who give, and fosters self-reliance for those who are in need.

Since the establishment of the Wheelchair Foundation in June of 2000, the LDS Church has sponsored the delivery of tens of thousands of wheelchairs each year around the world. Combining hands-on wheelchair distributions with ongoing humanitarian programs in dozens of countries, young missionaries and senior couples working with local church members participate in multifaceted deliveries of clothing, food, medical supplies and vocational training as a small part of their global effort.

Touching and improving lives on every inhabited continent of the Earth regardless of race, color or creed is a common thread that exists effortlessly within the circle of partners that share the mission of the Wheelchair Foundation. The strength of our joined hands sends a message of peace, love and friendship to the world, and allows us to accelerate our humanitarian efforts on a daily basis. For this reason, we see the eradication of immobility as a reachable goal during the 21st century.

The Wheelchair Foundation expresses our most sincere thanks for the selfless commitment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for helping improve the quality of people's lives worldwide.



**CLOCKWISE, FROM FAR LEFT:**  
 >>> HELPING A CHILD INTO A WHEELCHAIR PUTS HIM ON THE PATH TO A NEW LIFE. >>> A YOUNG CAMBODIAN GIRL RECEIVES MOBILITY. >>> YOUNG LDS MISSIONARIES HELP GET RECIPIENTS TO THEIR NEW WHEELCHAIRS IN THAILAND. >>> SOFIA MIHAILOVNA RECEIVED HER WHEELCHAIR FROM LDS CHARITIES IN UKRAINE.



**LDS CHARITIES MAKING AN IMPACT IN CHINA.**





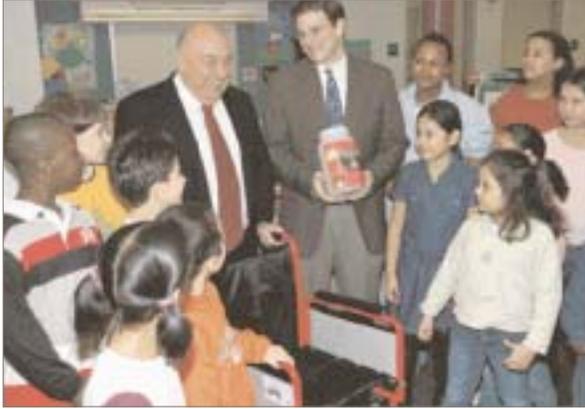
# A global mission of peace

**IN JUST FOUR YEARS, THE WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION HAS DELIVERED HOPE, MOBILITY AND FREEDOM TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS AROUND THE WORLD**

It would be hard for most of us living our everyday lives to imagine having the ability to travel around the world in our own large jet and make the kind of difference in people's lives that makes a person feel as though life truly has a meaningful purpose. Almost as hard to imagine would be the fact that in just four short years the mission set in motion by one man and his ideas would literally be changing the way world leaders, ethnic and religious groups, international service and relief organizations,

multinational corporations and everyday citizens view people with physical disabilities in developing countries.

This is the success story of Ken Behring and the foundation that he established in June of 2000. The Wheelchair Foundation has not only delivered hundreds of thousands of wheelchairs, but has also created a global awareness about the great abilities and dreams that live within many millions of people worldwide



**OPPOSITE PAGE: >>>** Ken Behring, his wife Patricia, and their sons, Tom and David, shook the hands of all 1,000 wheelchair recipients.

promote the mission of the Wheelchair Foundation. These extra wheelchairs are for the random stops he makes between large distributions and to provide extra wheelchairs when more people with physical disabilities than expected show up, as often happens, even when the large distributions include up to a thousand recipients.

The simple act of a Romanian girl being lifted from the ground and placed in her new wheelchair changed the life of Ken Behring forever. “Before that experience four years ago I had never thought about wheelchairs,” he explains, his eyes growing soft, as they always do when he speaks of his passion. “After that experience, I could think of little else.”

Ken soon learned that in developing countries the physically disabled are often discarded, abandoned to live out short lives in the back room, or even in a cardboard box, by families who at times are ashamed to include them. “To me, wheelchairs had always appeared to be confining, used by those who are unfortunate,” he says. “I learned in an instant how they are really liberating, providing freedom, mobility and independence that people can’t receive any other way.” That is when Ken decided that his mission would be to end immobility worldwide.

Beginning this most recent journey in Washington, D.C., Ken visits the Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School to thank children who have donated six wheelchairs with their nickels, dimes and quarters. He is comfortable as he poses for photographs and is warm to the children who treat him like a grandfather. Their enthusiasm for what they have accomplished prompts him to share the story of Kunsha, a Chinese orphan without the use of his arms and legs, who had been abandoned early in life.



**TOP: >>>** Children at the Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School donated six wheelchairs.  
**BOTTOM: >>>** Language barriers disappear with the clasping of hands.

who are challenged with physical disabilities. The documented change in the lives of so many children, teens and adults that are now living fruitful lives because they received the gift of a wheelchair is creating the kind of humanitarian groundswell that will make the prospect of eradicating immobility within reach.

For Ken Behring, traveling for a month on an around-the-world trip to promote the mission of the Wheelchair Foundation almost seems routine at this point in his life. The Foundation ships wheelchairs by 280-wheelchair containers to distribution partners on every continent but Antarctica. Ken, however, rarely travels without filling the cargo holds of his large private jet with wheelchairs, and he spends 46 weeks of the year traveling to



# delivering hope



LEFT: >>> A wheelchair means not having to be carried.

“This child with such pain in his life sings with a glorious voice,” Ken says, “he sings a song that says, ‘I’m going all over the world looking for my father. If anybody sees him, tell him I want him to come home. I need him.’ He sang that song to me, over and over, as I held his hands. Then, in Chinese, he asked, ‘Are you my grandfather?’ I couldn’t reply, but wanted desperately to take him with me.”

Kunsha is one of thousands of wheelchair recipients in China. Fortunately, there will be thousands more as Ken leaves Washington to sign an historic agreement with the national China Charities organization in Beijing.

China is well organized in its outreach to the physically disabled, with a national effort coordinated through the Chinese Disabled Persons Federation (CDPF). Each city and even neighborhood has a CDPF representative who works to

identify the physically disabled people under his or her stewardship, and assists them when possible.

En route to Beijing, Ken lands in Dalian, an industrial city separated from North Korea by the Yellow Sea. He has promised to visit hundreds of people who received wheelchairs a year earlier, and he has more wheelchairs to deliver. In a three-day whirlwind of activity, he piles one meeting on top of another, including a visit to the local CDPF center, where he is greeted by an emotional crowd of more than one hundred.

One young man enthusiastically tells him how he has used the wheelchair he received a year earlier to go to the United Kingdom and become the first paraplegic to successfully swim the English Channel. Another woman tells

him how her wheelchair has freed her and provided her with the confidence to become a writer. She has now published over 200 articles for magazines and newspapers. Beautiful and noble, she shares her story with a captivated audience.

The outpouring of love is one that repeats itself time and again as Ken takes every opportunity to visit members of the “Wheelchair Foundation family”—those who have received and those who have given wheelchairs. At times it appears beyond comprehension to some that such an important man would share his wealth and precious hours with them, impoverished as they are and often ill.

During the height of the SARS scare, when the western world was shunning Asia, Ken went to China to deliver wheelchairs and shook hundreds of hands a day. “They were depending on us,” he says without affect. “I wasn’t going to let them down.” His courage was featured on the front pages of national papers. Such volunteerism is a concept foreign to many Chinese, and they try to understand his motivation. “I get more in return from being here with you,” he says, “than you do being here with me.” And he tells them the wheelchairs are not from himself alone, but from many wonderful people in the United States of America.

“Wheelchairs had always appeared confining. I learned in an instant how they are liberating, providing freedom, mobility and independence that people can’t receive any other way.”

—Ken Behring

“That’s what true religion is to me,” he says, his point underscored by the ever-present involvement of the LDS, Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches on this world tour. For all he knew, Ken may have set a record of sorts by spending one afternoon in Istanbul (known to the Greek Orthodox Church as Constantinople) with his Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Greek Orthodox Church and the next morning in Rome with Pope John Paul II, both dedicated to the mission and effect of the Wheelchair Foundation.

But even before arriving in Istanbul, he spent three days with LDS leaders in India, taking wheelchairs into the countryside. At the same time, thousands more were being distributed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, Vietnam, Angola, Mexico and dozens of other nations—more than 10,000 wheelchairs a month.

After China and the historic signing of the agreement that distinguishes the Wheelchair Foundation as the first western charity able to provide donors with tax deductions, Ken was on to Singapore for an academic conference held by University of California at Berkeley, which he sponsored in part, but not before he met with leaders of Beijing’s Forbidden City to discuss plans to provide access for physically disabled visitors. No small feat in the labyrinth of 999 rooms.

*Continued on page 14 >*

ABOVE: >>> Forbidden City, Beijing. BELOW: >>> Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew meets wheelchair recipients and offers his prayers.

In the four years since the mission to Romania, the Wheelchair Foundation has grown to include global humanitarian relationships with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Rotary Clubs worldwide, the Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus, Crystal Cathedral Ministries, Samaritan’s Purse, the Greek Orthodox Church, members of numerous faith-based groups, ethnic organizations and corporate sponsors such as the Oakland Athletics, Major League Baseball, ChevronTexaco, Samsung, Hyundai and Altria, to name a few. It has become a global crusade, oblivious to race, creed, color, religion and politics. As one nun in Central America said after she received her wheelchair, “Who would have believed that a gift from the Latter-day Saints would allow me to continue my work as a Catholic.” That is the spirit of worldwide participation that Ken seeks: where lines of distinction become blurred and all that remains is the effort to help people improve the quality of their lives.

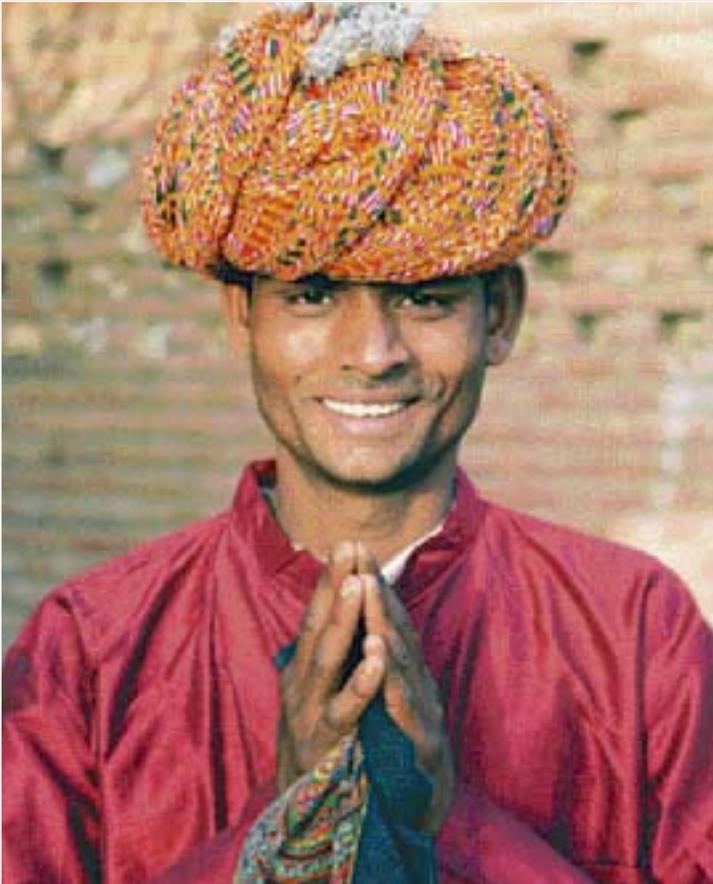


# season highlights



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: >>> These girls in Dalian, China, are learning about giving to others. >>> Young artist's group with Ken Behring in Shanghai, China. >>> Partners in the Wheelchair Foundation's Middle East Initiative deliver wheelchairs to Baghdad, Iraq—sponsored by Rotary Clubs in the U.S. and Canada. >>> Reverend Robert A. Schuller welcomes Ken Behring back to the "Hour of Power" television program.





CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: >>> Gestures of friendship and gratitude are the same the world over. >>> Ken Behring in London with Life Insurance Association (LIA) officials and Gil Loescher, a survivor of the Baghdad U.N. Headquarters bombing. >>> Jeff Behring delivers wheelchairs and compassion in French Polynesia. >>> Wheelchair Foundation Canada Director Christiana Flessner meeting recipients in Mexico. >>> Al Fedoriak lending a strong hand in Rosarito, Mexico. >>> Wheelchair Foundation Australia directors promoting our mission. >>> Juanita and her grandma can now take walks together. >>> Wheelchairs donated by Canadian Rotarians to the island of St. Lucia have improved the quality of life for these happy people.





# delivering mobility



The wheelchair distribution is an emotional experience for everyone. The seasoned cameramen and producers from the Discovery Channel are visibly touched as the lives of these beautiful children change the moment they are placed in wheelchairs.

“We give these wheelchairs to people who have nothing,” Ken explains when we are once again aboard his plane heading for Turkey. No stop lasts more than a day or two. His daily meeting schedule is like one that might be scripted in any busy executive’s calendar—the difference being that Ken is global. Breakfast in one country, noon meetings in another, reception and dinner in a third.

## India, Turkey and Italy

“How can you not be involved?” he asks, as his plane leaves Singapore for India. He has been up since 4 a.m., his delegation—including a film crew from the Discovery Channel—moving efficiently and in high spirits. “In Zimbabwe, a fellow crawled on his elbows over 10 miles to get to us. We put him in a wheelchair, and he was going around and around with a big smile on his face. After a while, he pulled himself out of the wheelchair and sat on the ground. We asked him why. He said, ‘I’ve had my turn; it’s someone else’s turn now.’”

“He could hardly believe it when we told him that the wheelchair was his to keep. You just can’t imagine how much it means to these people.”

Kirin Modi welcomes Ken to the Udayan Care facility in Uttar Pradesh, 30 miles south of New Delhi. A sophisticated woman in traditional dress, Kirin has turned a personal tragedy into a blessing for others.

Twelve years ago, her son was murdered in the New York City subway. His name was Uday, and Kirin channeled her sorrow into protecting and educating abused and exploited children.



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: THESE INDIAN CHILDREN ENJOY THE WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTION. >>> KEN BEHRING RECEIVES A BLESSING FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II. >>> THIS MOTHER AND DAUGHTER BOTH BENEFIT FROM THE GIFT OF MOBILITY IN NEW DELHI.**

“In Guatemala, a young man’s leg was painfully swollen,” he continues. “He wanted to know if he could borrow a wheelchair, which would get him around so that he could raise the money needed to have his leg amputated. It had gangrene, and he had 30 days to have it removed or die. The doctor wanted \$100 for the surgery and another \$25 for anesthetic. I gave him \$125, and he handed me back \$25. He said, ‘That’s okay. I don’t need to be put to sleep.’ I handed the money back again and convinced him otherwise. We found out a week later that he was doing fine and with his new wheelchair he could stay home with the kids while his wife went to work.”

Lunch and a wheelchair distribution with the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church take place in a single afternoon. Leaving the dining area just off

The simple act of a girl being lifted into her new wheelchair changed the life of Ken Behring forever.

“Before that experience I’d never thought of wheelchairs. After that I could think of little else.”

—Ken Behring



ABOVE: >>> Dr. Majed A. Al-Kassabi and Ken Behring discuss helping people with physical disabilities in Saudi Arabia. >>> LDS Charities is actively helping families in India.

the “Chamber of the Throne,” Ken travels with Patriarch Bartholomew to the Society of Spinal Chord Paralysis 10 miles outside of Istanbul, a rehabilitation center overseen by handsome Ramazan Bas, a 39-year-old professional who lost his ability to walk after a diving incident 18 years earlier.

The people within the center are honored by the Patriarch’s visit, and he converses with them humbly and graciously. Many are receiving a wheelchair for the first time, and it becomes clear that no other gift can make such a difference so quickly.

The Patriarch takes time to focus on each recipient and asks Ken if he can help get wheelchairs into the poverty-stricken country of Georgia. Ken promises it will be done, just as the following day, he promises the Pope that the Wheelchair Foundation will work with the Vatican and the Centro Don Orione to advance their work with the impoverished physically disabled. Ken kneels before the Pope and kisses his ring, as he receives a blessing on himself and his work.

## Spain, Saudi Arabia and Jordan

King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain are co-chairs of the Wheelchair Foundation’s International Board of Advisors, a gracious couple who have spent their lives serving others, and who have become close friends of Ken’s. “I know how important wheelchairs are,” King Juan Carlos told Ken when he agreed to serve as co-chair of the Board of Advisors. “My mother could not have functioned in her later life without a wheelchair. Because of her wheelchair, she never missed a bullfight, and was active to the day she passed away.”

Following a short flight from Rome to Salamanca, Spain, Ken takes a well-deserved break and spends a day off with his friend the King. After a day in Salamanca, the King pilots his own helicopter, taking Ken to Madrid. Ken shares the most recent news concerning the Foundation, its work and the future. The King listens intently, offering counsel and talking about how to build the work even further, clearly devoted to helping people with physical disabilities. The few days they spend together elevates Ken’s energy, preparing him for the final leg of his journey—the Middle East.

The need for wheelchairs in Afghanistan and Iraq is staggering. In September of 2003, Ken flew into Kabul and participated in the delivery of the first of 5,000 wheelchairs sponsored by the LDS Church and the Knights of Columbus. Several containers of wheelchairs sponsored by Rotary Clubs in the U.S. and Canada have been transported into Iraq at great



peril to those moving them. Drivers trucking the wheelchairs in Afghanistan have been pulled over, beaten and robbed. On one occasion, a driver pleaded with the thieves to take his money and other possessions, but to leave the wheelchairs. They complied, and the wheelchairs were delivered.

Ken discussed the global mission with the Saudi Royal family. They had heard of his work and facilitated visas for Ken and his delegation. In Binban, a small city outside Riyadh, he receives an early commitment from the Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Humanitarian City, a state-of-the-art hospital and rehabilitation center.

“You are a visionary,” the director tells Ken. “We want to be a part of your effort. Our work is the same.” Ken



## delivering freedom

**A YOUNG JORDANIAN GIRL RECEIVES HER FIRST WHEELCHAIR.**

leaves wheelchairs for the physically disabled children in the center and travels to the other end of Riyadh to meet with His Royal Majesty Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, the world-famous Saudi who orbited the earth aboard the space shuttle.

Prince Sultan echoes the enthusiasm heard earlier, and offers his organization, the Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, as a partner. Spontaneously, he invites the delegation to a traditional Arabic feast at his desert home. Ken accepts, and the next night finds himself sitting on carpets dining under the

palms. As he was throughout his journey, Ken is at ease—a citizen of the world who sincerely enjoys people and the subtle differences between cultures.

He moves in and out of nations like a seasoned diplomat. After two days in Riyadh—one night with Prince Sultan and the other attending the Fourth Forum for the Gulf Disability Society—he is on to Amman, Jordan to take wheelchairs to a children’s rehabilitation center set up by King Hussein and Queen Noor. The delegation is met at the airport by Jordanian Rotarians who have been very committed to getting wheelchairs distributed throughout the country and now commit to Ken that they will do even more to advance the joint mission of the Wheelchair Foundation and Rotarians in Jordan.

Ken is familiar to the children and staff at the rehabilitation center, as he has delivered wheelchairs there before. The impact that the wheelchairs have had on the children is enormous, and Ken takes great pride in helping change so many lives.

His energy is as forceful as it was on the first day of the trip, but he has been gone for over a month and visited more than two-dozen cities. Yet for all of his passion, he remains pragmatic.

“I can’t do it alone,” he says. “The Foundation has shown what’s possible. We can end immobility. We’ve delivered over 270,000 wheelchairs in four years, and we’ll deliver a million within the next few years. But there are more than 150 million people worldwide who need us, and we need everyone’s help.”

Wouldn’t it be something if during the course of our every day lives we could turn on the television and hear a news report that says, “There is a very special messenger making it his personal mission to help you with the most devastating problem in your life, and he won’t stop until the quality of your life has been greatly improved.” If you were to ask any one of the hundreds of thousands of people with physical disabilities around the world who received a wheelchair in the past four years from the Wheelchair Foundation, they would tell you that there is a messenger, and his name is Ken Behring.

**PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE [WWW.WHEELCHAIRFOUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.WHEELCHAIRFOUNDATION.ORG) FOR:**

- DONATION AND PLANNED GIVING INFORMATION • FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS • UPCOMING EVENTS •
- OUR ANNUAL REPORT • SUBSCRIPTION TO OUR ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER •
- TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION • ONLINE SHOPPING TO BENEFIT THE WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION •
- TO WATCH VIDEOS OF OUR WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTIONS WORLDWIDE

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# Hometown



# heroes



## **FIREFIGHTERS FROM CALIFORNIA ANSWER THE CALL—DELIVERING HOPE, MOBILITY AND FREEDOM**

The firefighters in Contra Costa County are the first in the nation to be identifying people without mobility or the funds necessary to acquire a wheelchair during the normal course of their duty. This information is then passed on to the Wheelchair Foundation, and the firefighters are provided with the wheelchairs to deliver to the people in need.

Joining the Wheelchair Foundation and the IAFF at the

Concord distribution were representatives of Wells Fargo Bank and Catholic Charities of the East Bay. Wells Fargo Bank of Rossmoor donated funds matched by the Wheelchair Foundation to provide a total of 140 wheelchairs in Contra Costa County, 30 of which were distributed at the Concord ceremony.



**FIREFIGHTERS FROM THE IAFF LOCAL 1230 PARTICIPATE IN A RECENT WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTION IN CONCORD, CALIFORNIA.**

The Contra Costa Professional Firefighters (IAFF Local 1230) participated in their first-ever wheelchair distribution earlier this year. The event, held in Concord, California, marked the beginning of a distribution relationship between the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the Wheelchair Foundation, and will serve as a model for other communities throughout the United States and Canada.

“These are good people doing good work, and it is a natural fit for us,” says Lou Paulson, president of the California Professional Firefighters. “Firefighters are exposed to people every day who are in need of mobility assistance, and we are very proud to be involved with the mission of the Wheelchair Foundation. We look forward to helping as many people as we can throughout North America and Canada, and being able to see lives of families changed in an immediate and positive way.”

The IAFF is the all-time leading supporter of the fight against neuromuscular disease, having donated more than \$200 million to the Muscular Dystrophy Association since 1954. Last September, the IAFF donated \$18.3 million on the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon. Chris Lewis, son of Jerry Lewis and director of public education for the Wheelchair Foundation, asked the IAFF to become involved in wheelchair distributions in the United States and Canada.

“Having Chris approach the IAFF made it easy to embrace the idea,” says Paulson. “Our commitment to protect the community doesn’t end when we go off-shift. These wheelchairs will give comfort and safety to those less fortunate, and we are proud to be able to offer our services in this cause.”

Catholic Charities identified the recipients and hosted the event.

“The firefighters are our heroes who let us sleep well at night knowing they are there to protect us,” say Debbie Roessler, retired Wells Fargo assistant vice president. “We are proud that they are doing so much to help us in our local communities, and are now distributing these beautiful fire-engine red wheelchairs.”

“We are blessed to be able to partner with the Wheelchair Foundation, the Contra Costa Professional Firefighters and Wells Fargo Bank to bring mobility into the lives of people without the ability to help themselves,” says Solomon Belette, program director of Catholic Charities of the East Bay. “Our collaboration is one of sincere purpose and compassion to bring mobility into the lives of our neighbors in need.”

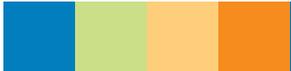
The Wheelchair Foundation and the IAFF have just initiated a program called “Athletic Mobility” that will help bring sports wheelchairs into local communities throughout North America. The basketball-type wheelchairs will be distributed by firefighters to schools and community centers that can provide sports programs for people with physical disabilities. Local and national sponsors will be providing funds for the delivery of wheelchairs by the firefighters.

The Wheelchair Foundation and the U.S. Paralympics Academy have been distributing sports wheelchairs to local communities since 2003 and welcome the IAFF to our mission of making dreams come true for future Paralympians in North America.



Operation:

realizing



ROTARY CLUBS IMPROVE LIVES ON A GLOBAL SCALE

dreams

Since March of 2001, Rotary Clubs, Districts and Rotarians have sponsored the delivery of over 70,000 wheelchairs to more than 80 countries around the world. To date, Rotarians from every one of the 50 United States and every province of Canada have participated in the Wheelchair Foundation mission.

In the first six months of 2004, Rotarians improved the quality of life for many thousands of people with physical disabilities worldwide—and every member of their families—with the gift of a brand new wheelchair.

Some of the best reasons to be a member of a Rotary Club

in North America are the heartwarming stories of friendship and gratitude that are brought back by members who have traveled abroad and participated in a hands-on humanitarian service

project. But some of the realities that they face on these missions of peace are that disease, advanced age and accidents are the primary reasons for needing a wheelchair, and that landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) are a continued and growing problem worldwide. It is estimated that over 60 to 70 million landmines are planted in nearly 60 countries. And that number does not include the millions of UXOs that are left-over from the World Wars and thousands of regional conflicts since the early 20th century.

Initiated by the Wheelchair Foundation, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department

## Global Stories

The following are a few Rotarian's stories from worldwide humanitarian missions. You may be surprised by some of the countries involved.

### COLOMBIA

**POPULATION: 42 million; LANDMINE AND UXO ESTIMATED: over 100,000; LAND AREA AFFECTED: 250,000 sq. km. (Civilian landmine and UXO incidents are extremely common throughout the country, and often unreported.)**

"From one soldier to another soldier, I want you to accept this wheelchair as my gift to you," said Frank Dean, assistant governor of Rotary District 7670 in North Carolina and a former lieutenant colonel in the United States Army, when he gave a physically disabled Colombian comrade in arms the precious gift of mobility—and helped change the man's life forever.

Colombia is currently the only country in the Americas that has landmines being laid on a continuing basis. The government stopped using mines in 1999 and began destroying their stockpiles, but serious armed conflicts



OPPOSITE PAGE: >>> Delivering wheelchairs in Cambodia. THIS PAGE, LEFT: >>> This young Colombian man is the victim of a landmine.



of Defense, is a global outreach to deliver wheelchairs to the victims of landmines and UXO. Rotarians have participated in missions to the most landmine and UXO-infested countries of the world, including Angola, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Eritrea, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Croatia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, among others. The U.S. Department of State has provided funds to be combined with each donation to provide wheelchairs to these destinations, and the U.S. Department of Defense has provided the transportation funding necessary for the delivery of the wheelchair containers.



ABOVE LEFT: >>> Home of a wheelchair recipient in Colombia. ABOVE RIGHT: >>> Frank Dean and Tony Baker in Colombia.

have been going on for years between the government and insurgent forces throughout the country. The products of war have taken a heavy toll on many innocent civilians.

Tony Baker, another former soldier, volunteered to join Dean. "I couldn't think of a better person to go with me on this mission," Dean says.

The two men arrived in Bogotá and began distributing the wheelchairs at sites throughout the city. They saw many people in desperate need. "I support the Wheelchair Foundation 110 percent," says Dean. "When I speak to my fellow Rotarians and I tell them that I guarantee \$75, it does not mean much to anyone in the room. However, it means the world to someone who needs a wheelchair, and that is just how much money it takes to get them one."



“Until you have been there and seen what a wheelchair means to someone, it is impossible to understand what it is like to be immobile for months, years or a lifetime.”

—Tom Venable  
Member, Rotary Club of Thousand Oaks, California

The Rotarian’s mission to Columbia was to provide some very needy people with mobility and hope for a better life.  
By all accounts, it was a mission accomplished.

### UKRAINE

**POPULATION:** 47 million; **LANDMINE AND UXO ESTIMATED:** over 1 million, most WWII era; **LAND AREA AFFECTED:** primarily Crimean Peninsula. (Civilian landmine and UXO incidents continue to occur in Ukraine to this day, and it is reported that 50 percent of the victims are children.)

Alexander Kosayk desperately needed a wheelchair. A resident of Belaya Tserkov, Ukraine, Kosayk is unable to walk and was often left alone at home, confined to a bed or chair for most of the day while his wife, Lena, worked as a taxi dispatcher. His was not a pleasant life—until the day Tom Venable showed up with a wheelchair. “Until you have been there and seen what a wheelchair means to someone, it is impossible to understand what it is like to be immobile for months, years or a lifetime,” says Venable, a member of the Rotary Club of Thousand Oaks, California. “A wheelchair allows people to do the simple, modest things you and I take for granted every day. The change the Wheelchair Foundation is making in



**TOP:** >>> Natasha and her new wheelchair can now go to school in Belaya Tserkov, Ukraine. **CENTER, LEFT:** >>> Tom Venable (fourth from left) and the mission team in Ukraine. **CENTER, RIGHT:** >>> Landmines are a constant danger in 60 countries **BELOW:** >>> Demining is very costly and time-consuming.

“You are not affecting just one person when giving a wheelchair, you are affecting their entire family.”

Those words rang particularly true when Dean and Baker met a wheelchair recipient who lost a leg from either a landmine or UXO. Dean asked, through an interpreter, if the man had been a soldier. The answer was, “Yes.” At that point, Dean presented the man with his wheelchair, saying, “From one soldier to another soldier ...”

“It was like I had said something divine,” says Dean. “The look on that man’s face was priceless. It was a tender moment—this might have been the crowning moment in my life. When you can experience this first hand, it is truly amazing.”

people’s lives around the world is just unbelievable.”

Venable’s journey to Ukraine began at a Rotary district assembly, where he heard Marc Leeka of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles discuss the good work of the Wheelchair Foundation. Right away, said Venable, he knew he wanted to get involved with distributing wheelchairs.



Meanwhile, through his church, Venable learned about God’s Hidden Treasures (GHT), a private agency that does humanitarian work for the poor and physically disabled people in Ukraine, including those injured by the remnants of war. GHT agreed to work with the Wheelchair Foundation in this effort and serve as our distribution partner. The nursing and health-related

services already offered by the organization complement the mission of the Wheelchair Foundation and will allow for the monitoring of recipients' progress with their new wheelchairs.

When the distribution team showed up at the Kosayk's apartment with Alexander's wheelchair, the couple was so moved and so appreciative that Lena presented Venable with their apartment's sole wall decoration—a small plaque of an angel she made herself.



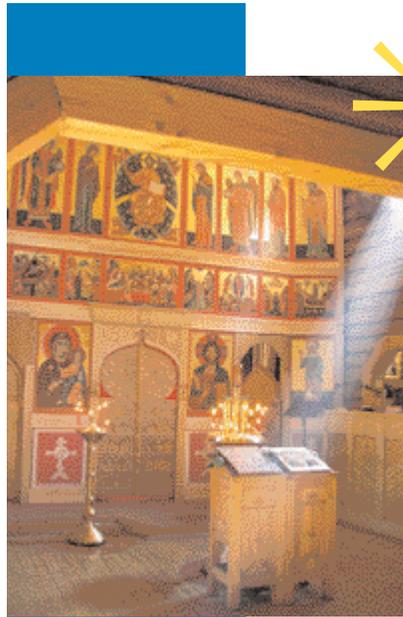
“No one in the world has enough money to buy this plaque from me,” says Venable. “It is a priceless reminder of how precious the gift of mobility truly is.”

Likewise, how can the value of mobility be translated into dollars and cents? The ability to deliver a wheelchair that would sell in the United States for \$500 with each \$75 donation allows donors to give the most precious gift a person will ever receive in their life, with very little effort.

## RUSSIA

**POPULATION:** 143 million; **LANDMINE AND UXO ESTIMATED:** over 500,000, most WWII era; **LAND AREA AFFECTED:** Western Russia. (Civilian landmine and UXO incidents in Russia continue to this day, and demining/UXO removal has slowed due to economic factors in recent years.)

For the first time ever, the Wheelchair Foundation and mission partners were directly involved in giving the gift of mobility to people with physical disabilities in Russia. The city of Dubna, a world famous center for scientific research on the north end of the Moscow region, was the site of the groundbreaking event.



LEFT: >>> Red Square, Moscow.  
 TOP: >>> The only church in Dubna, Russia.  
 BOTTOM: >>> Sandra McCormick and Bill Hoel change lives in Dubna, Russia.

# Interested Rotarians

Rotarians interested in participating in a Wheelchair Foundation mission should contact:

## IN THE U.S.

Dr. Jon B. Grant  
 Rotarian Volunteer  
 (650) 574-0520  
 JonBGrant@aol.com  
 (California)

## IN CANADA

Christiana Flessner  
 Wheelchair Foundation Canada  
 (866) 666-2411  
 cflessner@wheelchairfoundation.ca  
 (Vancouver)

## IN AUSTRALIA

Harry Melkonian  
 Wheelchair Foundation Australia  
 02 4323 3194  
 hmelkonian@wheelchairfoundation.org.au  
 (Sydney)

The wheelchair distribution was made possible when Rotarians from opposite sides of the world joined forces for this mission. It was two years in the planning, with Sandra McCormick leading the way.

McCormick is a member of the Rotary Club of La Crosse, Wisconsin, active in Sister Cities International, and the president and CEO of World Services of La Crosse, an organization that is committed to improving social welfare, health and quality of life in targeted communities in several countries, including Russia.

Already familiar with the Wheelchair Foundation, and knowing the needs of physically disabled people in Dubna and other parts of Russia through her work and her connection to Sister Cities, McCormick was in a good position to shepherd the wheelchairs, even though there were many challenges. Traditionally, importing brand new medical devices duty-free into Russia has been very difficult, if not impossible.

Concerns about the project's feasibility were dispelled by the ease with which funds were raised and by the relationships McCormick built with Vitali Ulianov, head of Dubna's custom office, and Sergei Riabov, director of the Medical Case Administration of Dubna.



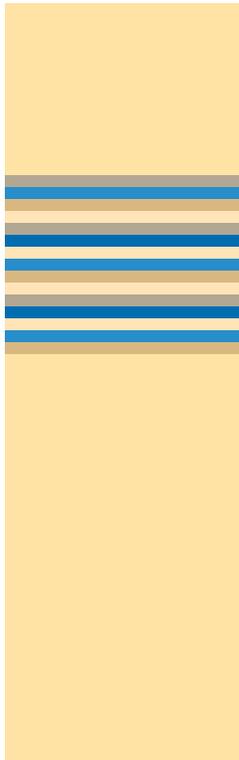
Both men were key to knocking down the barriers to a successful importation process and distribution.

Attending the distributions were Rotarians from La Crosse and Dubna and the Wheelchair Foundation's Russian-speaking Vladimir Todorovic.

"It was extremely exciting when the wheelchair distribution took place," says McCormick. "One young university student was so excited that he now had the freedom to get to class and go to the library, he was spinning his wheelchair around in circles to show his joy and enthusiasm."

The distribution also served to increase awareness among Dubna residents of the importance of accessibility to buildings by people with physical disabilities, and inspired the participants to work towards future deliveries to other parts of the country.

The partnerships that have been established in Dubna are appearing to be the open door that will allow the importation and distribution of wheelchairs throughout the country, with an initial priority on getting wheelchairs to needy residents in the Moscow region, and those injured by UXO in rural areas of Western Russia. Through the network of the Medical Case Administration, the identification of



future recipients and the continued follow-up of their health needs can be easily achieved.

"Now that we have established these important relationships," says McCormick, "we will be working closely with Dubna officials to distribute many more wheelchairs throughout Russia."

## CAMBODIA

**POPULATION: 13 million; LANDMINES OR UXO ESTIMATED: 8 million; LAND AREA AFFECTED: 2,000 sq. km. (Civilian landmine and UXO incidents exceed 1,000 per year.)**

## LAOS

**POPULATION: 6 million; LANDMINES OR UXO ESTIMATED: 1 million; LAND AREA AFFECTED: 87,200 sq. km. (Civilian landmine and UXO incidents are estimated to exceed 500 per year.)**



**TOP LEFT: >>> MOBILITY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY IN LAOS. ABOVE LEFT: >>> YOUNG LAOTIAN LANDMINE VICTIM BEFORE ... AND ABOVE RIGHT: >>> ... AFTER RECEIVING HIS NEW WHEELCHAIR.**

"To see almost 300 people sitting in new wheelchairs and feeling the gratitude of the crowd is just a wonderful experience," says Hans Eide of the Rotary Club of San Mateo. "For me, this was one of the highlights of my life."

Dan Lu has many times seen the horrific injuries that landmines can cause. There are tens of thousands of people in Southeast Asia who've accidentally stumbled

across a landmine and come away permanently disabled.

As in many parts of the world, the legacy of war is often landmines and UXO. Cambodia has an estimated one in 286 amputees per capita—the highest in the world. Most of the explosive injuries or deaths have happened in the villages close to the now abandoned former military posts. These clusters of "front line" villages were abandoned during the armed conflicts, but with the cessation of hostilities in 1991 over 400,000 refugees and displaced families headed back to their former homes. The most contested areas during the fighting (and therefore the most mined) were the Northwestern provinces bordering Thailand, which had previously been the most populated and agriculturally productive.



LEFT: >>> Hans Eide making new friends in Cambodia. RIGHT: >>> Wheelchair recipients in Cambodia.

Lu, a native of Cambodia, several times led his own family through fields of mines before they finally made it to Thailand, and then to the United States. His son and a nephew died on the way. "I am grateful to now have the opportunity to give back and help the people of Cambodia," says Lu, who returned to his homeland earlier this year to help distribute wheelchairs provided by the Wheelchair Foundation and Rotary Clubs in California and Hawaii. A second distribution was held in neighboring Laos.

Rotary District 5150 in California, home to the Rotary Club of San Mateo, and Rotary District 5000 in Hawaii donated funds that were matched by the Wheelchair Foundation to provide a total of 840 wheelchairs for the distributions.

"In Cambodia, it was an extremely organized distribution and we were able to meet each recipient personally, right there," says Rotarian volunteer Dr. Jon Grant. "The logistics, compliance and dedication to get all of the recipients to the wheelchair distribution was just amazing to me."

Many of the wheelchair recipients had lost a leg (or legs) to landmines and UXO, and it is estimated that there are still millions of leftover mines and UXO remaining in Southeast Asia today. Fortunately, there are a number of prominent mine clearing organizations such as The Halo Trust and The Marshall Legacy Institute that have contributed greatly to the residents' ability to return to their homes and resume their traditional means of earning a living, which is primarily agriculture.

Governor Y. Long, interpreter Chan North, Zeoung Ley and Chao Chong assisted with the Cambodia distribution. Senghpet Vilaysak, Dr. Nao Boutta and Khampheng Vongkhanty made the Laos trip possible.

"I am thankful," says Dr. Grant, "for the opportunity to deliver these wheelchairs, and see the great improvement in the quality of these people's lives, and then to come back and share my experience with others. It helps generate more goodwill and a sense of great accomplishment."

## \*Steps Toward the Future

Through the combined efforts of Rotarians and numerous humanitarian relief organizations throughout the world, landmines and UXO are being removed, wheelchairs are being delivered to the victims as well as other needy recipients in the same geographic regions, clean drinking water is being provided, Polio and other immunizations are delivered, corrective surgeries are performed, food, clothing and medical supplies are made available, and literally thousands of other worthwhile projects are happening on a daily basis in hundreds of countries around the world.

The Wheelchair Foundation is grateful for the dedication of Rotarians who have helped provide so many wheelchairs to people who now have a better life because of their efforts.

Our most sincere thanks and appreciation to the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Defense for your global commitment to helping people with physical disabilities realize their dreams and abilities thorough the gift of mobility.

*Landmine and UXO statistics are according the U.S. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (2001) and other international agencies.*



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