



Wheelchair FOUNDATION

wheelchairfoundation.org | FALL 2026

CHANGING THE WORLD



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**PRINCETON
50TH REUNION
TRIP TO PERU**

**TANZANIA:
A WHEELCHAIR,
A GIFT OF HOPE**

**SAVE THE DATE:
SPRING GALA
MARCH 13, 2027**

MISSION & GOALS

OUR MISSION

Wheelchair Foundation is a nonprofit organization leading an international effort to raise awareness of the need and challenges of people living with physical disabilities, to promote the joy of giving, foster global friendship, and deliver a wheelchair to every child, teen, and adult who needs one but cannot afford one or does not have access to a wheelchair. For these individuals, Wheelchair Foundation brings Hope, Mobility, and Freedom.

OUR GOAL

The Wheelchair Foundation aims to deliver 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 hundreds 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 the 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.

WHEELCHAIRS COMMITTED OR DELIVERED

Afghanistan.....	7,150	Guam.....	250	Pakistan.....	4,265
Albania.....	550	Guatemala.....	13,088	Palestinian Territories.....	2,181
Algeria.....	1,480	Guyana.....	250	Panama.....	22,760
Angola.....	6,790	Haiti.....	5,660	Papua New Guinea.....	3,220
Antigua and Barbuda.....	280	Honduras.....	10,120	Paraguay.....	2,874
Argentina.....	13,396	Hungary.....	120	Peru.....	17,817
Armenia.....	3,244	India.....	2,716	Philippines.....	13,125
Australia.....	292	Indonesia.....	3,340	Poland.....	2,700
Azerbaijan.....	280	Iran.....	3,880	Portugal.....	990
Bahamas.....	5,095	Iraq.....	4,300	Puerto Rico.....	490
Bangladesh.....	350	Israel.....	8,110	Romania.....	4,341
Barbados.....	2,530	Italy.....	580	Russia.....	2,230
Belarus.....	990	Jamaica.....	6,050	Rwanda.....	2,440
Belgium.....	280	Japan.....	1,750	Saint Lucia.....	1,070
Belize.....	4,635	Jordan.....	5,022	Saint Petersburg.....	120
Benin.....	280	Kazakhstan.....	1,510	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.....	935
Bolivia.....	7,184	Kenya.....	6,070	Samoa.....	1,360
Bosnia-Herzegovina.....	2,040	Kiribati.....	375	Saudi Arabia.....	20
Botswana.....	1,958	Korea, North.....	1,352	Senegal.....	630
Brazil.....	2,305	Korea, South.....	5,700	Serbia.....	2,625
British Virgin Islands.....	284	Kosovo.....	1,300	Seychelles.....	30
Bulgaria.....	530	Kyrgyzstan.....	1,500	Sierra Leone.....	2,610
Burundi.....	520	Laos.....	1,020	Slovenia.....	110
Cambodia.....	4,100	Latvia.....	740	Solomon Islands.....	110
Canada.....	560	Lebanon.....	2,430	Somalia.....	88
Cape Verde.....	780	Lesotho.....	1,060	South Africa.....	25,090
Central African Republic.....	240	Liberia.....	780	Spain.....	500
Chile.....	12,448	Lithuania.....	1,090	Sri Lanka.....	3,170
China.....	506,267	Macedonia.....	760	Sudan.....	280
Colombia.....	14,372	Madagascar.....	1,270	Suriname.....	520
Congo, The Democratic Republic.....	205	Malawi.....	3,350	Swaziland.....	1,970
Costa Rica.....	10,863	Malaysia.....	4,040	Syria.....	641
Croatia.....	1,300	Maldives.....	10	Tajikistan.....	720
Cuba.....	1,800	Mali.....	1,060	Tanzania.....	7,053
Cyprus.....	280	Malta.....	240	Thailand.....	8,900
Czech Republic.....	597	Marshall Islands.....	140	Tonga.....	500
Dominica.....	280	Mauritania.....	100	Trinidad & Tobago.....	6,735
Dominican Republic.....	14,189	Mexico.....	189,273	Turkey.....	5,790
East Timor.....	110	Micronesia.....	1,265	Turkmenistan.....	520
Ecuador.....	12,229	Moldova.....	1,720	Uganda.....	14,377
Egypt.....	1,168	Mongolia.....	1,320	Ukraine.....	7,151
El Salvador.....	13,635	Montenegro.....	120	United States.....	46,815
Eritrea.....	250	Morocco.....	5,990	Uruguay.....	1,862
Estonia.....	500	Mozambique.....	1,660	Uzbekistan.....	1,240
Ethiopia.....	4,258	Myanmar (Burma).....	1,100	Vanuatu.....	250
Fiji.....	2,520	Namibia.....	466	Venezuela.....	5,576
France.....	560	Nepal.....	5,335	Vietnam.....	16,876
French Polynesia.....	280	Nicaragua.....	10,669	Virgin Islands (UK).....	284
Georgia.....	1,030	Niger.....	240	Virgin Islands (US).....	280
Ghana.....	3,350	Nigeria.....	1,420	Western Sahara.....	153
Greece.....	520	Northern Mariana Islands.....	410	Zambia.....	2,646
Grenada.....	280	Oman.....	280	Zimbabwe.....	3,600

TOTAL COUNTRIES AND REGIONS 150+
TOTAL WHEELCHAIRS 1,250,019

CHANGING THE WORLD is published by:

Wheelchair Foundation, 3820 Blackhawk Road, Danville, CA 94506 USA.

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Wheelchair
 FOUNDATION

A Division of Behring
 Global Educational Foundation
 FEIN 84-4053692

A Message from DAVID BEHRING



Fundraising is the lifeblood of most non-profit organizations, and the Wheelchair Foundation falls into that category. As we approach the end of the year, I would like to take the opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude to all the individuals, foundations, corporations and organizations that have contributed to our success and enabled us to provide over 20,000 wheelchairs in 2026. I want to especially focus on our two major events each year: our Annual Gala and the Drive Fore Mobility Golf Tournament.

Our "Festival of Colors" Gala in April was dedicated to advancing mobility and independence for individuals and communities across Central America. During the evening, we honored Bob Herzog and Val Nunes in recognition of their long-standing leadership, dedication and support for our golf tournament for the last 13 years. We generally select one region of the world as the focus for wheelchair deliveries at this themed event. Over 500 wheelchairs will be going to El Salvador to change lives through the gift of mobility due largely to the generous support of the Hofmann Family Foundation, Dreisbach Enterprises, JP Morgan Chase, Don Routh, John Muir Health, CA State Pipe Trades and Martha Hertelendy who also provided the wine for all of the tables.

In August we staged our 23rd Annual Drive Fore Mobility Golf Tournament at the Blackhawk Country Club. We are especially

grateful to our three Title Sponsors: Herzog Insurance Agency, UA Local 342 and CA State Pipe Trades. In addition, Val Nunes of Dreisbach Enterprises again generously sponsored the Tee Prizes and Breakfasts. We also appreciate the foursome sponsorships of John Muir Health, JP Morgan Chase, NVIDIA, AMWINS, Charter Enterprises, BMO, Star-Tam, Sheriff's Charities, Brothers Home Improvement, West Coast Events Group, Dahlin Group, Vandenberghe Properties, Carpe Data, Farmers Insurance, KB Homes and Joujou Chawla. The funds that these groups and others helped to raised that day will provide wheelchairs to help the disabled populations in La Paz, Cabo San Lucas and Puerto Vallarta.

As a Rotarian of 26 years, it is also imperative for me to recognize the support of Rotary since we started the Wheelchair Foundation in 2000. They have provided almost one fourth of our 1,250,000 wheelchairs across the world. They also serve as invaluable "boots on the ground" in many of the countries where we send wheelchairs. They not only give financial support, but they also help to organize the importation and distribution of wheelchairs as well as serving our hosts.

Finally, I will leave you with two quotations to think about during this holiday season:

**"WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET;
WE MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE."**
-Winston Churchill

**"THERE IS NO BETTER EXERCISE FOR YOUR HEART
THAN REACHING DOWN AND HELPING TO LIFT
SOMEONE UP." -John Andrew Holmes**

David E. Behring
President

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

THE WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION ROCK & ROLL GALA IS COMING
JOIN US SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 2027 FOR A NIGHT OF MUSIC, CELEBRATION
and Giving Back in Support of the Wheelchair Foundation
ROCKIN' MUSIC. EXCITING AUCTIONS. ONE FORGETTABLE NIGHT.

BRINGING MOBILITY & JOY TO THE BRONX, NY.

Contributed by Kelly Lopez

On August 21, 2026, the Wheelchair Foundation had the privilege of bringing hope, mobility, and independence to the Bronx through a special wheelchair distribution at St. Barnabas Health.

Together with the National Urban League, the New York Yankees, Trice Medical, Courage over Cancer and St. Barnabas Health, we were proud to provide 280 wheelchairs to individuals in need. This incredible collaboration brought together organizations and community partners who share a commitment to improving lives and ensuring that mobility is accessible to those who need it most.

The atmosphere throughout the distribution was filled with excitement, smiles, and gratitude. Recipients were able to receive a wheelchair that would provide them with greater independence and the ability to move through their daily lives with increased freedom and confidence. For many, the moment of receiving their wheelchair was deeply meaningful—not simply receiving a piece of equipment, but receiving a renewed sense of possibility.

Among the 280 recipients was Ricardo Rivera, whose experience captured exactly what the day was about. Before receiving his new wheelchair, Ricardo came in a worn out, small, and dangerously unsafe wheelchair. With his new wheelchair, he can now sit comfortably and safely. His excitement and gratitude reflected the feeling throughout the room: this was about far more than a wheelchair—it was about restoring independence, dignity, and the freedom to participate more fully in everyday life.

Most importantly, everyone was happy to be part of such a meaningful day. From the recipients and their families to the volunteers and partner organizations, the joy in the room was undeniable.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who helped make this distribution possible and proud to continue our mission of providing mobility, independence, and hope—one wheelchair at a time.



Steve Jones and his caregiver also met Yankee baseball players



Steve Beinke and a happy wheelchair recipient



Sonia Garcia after receiving her wheelchair, also received a signed baseball from Roy White.



WCF Team L-R Jose Rosario, Kelly Lopez, Steve Beinke, Yvette Birdsong, Scott Ford



Some of the 30+ Ambassador attendees



L-R Jose Rosario, Edwin Lopez, Yvette Birdsong, Brian Kean, Michael Morris, Debbie Lopez

BUILDING CONNECTIONS. EXPANDING MOBILITY. CREATING IMPACT.

Contributed by Yvette Birdsong

The Wheelchair Foundation welcomed ambassadors, partners, supporters, and friends in Florida for an inspiring evening centered on connection, compassion, and the shared mission of bringing mobility to people around the world.

The Ambassador Event offered guests an opportunity to learn more about the Foundation's work, meet members of the team, and discover meaningful ways to become part of its mission. The evening was filled with conversation, introductions, and the kind of energy that comes when people gather around a cause that truly changes lives.

A powerful video presentation became the emotional centerpiece of the evening. The heart-wrenching stories of individuals whose lives were transformed through the gift of mobility left no dry eyes in the room. More importantly, the presentation turned emotion into action. Guests immediately began asking how they could become involved, support the Foundation's work, and help bring mobility and independence to others.

The evening reinforced a simple but powerful message: partnerships create possibilities. Whether through community organizations, businesses, ambassadors, or individual supporters, every connection can help open the door to greater accessibility and a more independent life.

As the Wheelchair Foundation continues expanding its outreach and partnerships, the Ambassador Event marked an important step forward, bringing together people ready to move the mission forward, one wheelchair and one life at a time.

PRINCETON IN PERU

Contributed by Donna Pierce Freeman

To someone with a permanent disability, a wheelchair is more than an assemblage of metal parts. It is the gift of mobility--the vehicle by which the recipient can participate more fully in family and community life. It is the hope of attending school, the dignity of employment, the lessening of a physical burden on caretakers. A homemade sign that welcomed us said: "This chair gives us back our wings so we can move ahead with our lives."

In-person distributions are not cold and anonymous. Peru is promoting inclusivity and showing up to seat a recipient, looking him in the eye, calling him by name and listening to his story recognizes him as a precious individual whose life matters. You must be seen to be included.



Josué, a non-verbal 16-yr-old with CP brought in on a fruit vendor's cart. Woman seated: friend/neighbor. Woman standing: mother. Man: fruit vendor.

In Huancayo I met a prematurely aged widow and Josué, her non-verbal 16-year-old son with cerebral palsy. They had arrived in the bed of a neighbor's homemade motorized fruit vending contraption. It was a perilous 2 ½ hour journey. After the mutual exchange of questions and answers, the mother said: "Thank you for seeing us. Seeing us as people. As individuals. Not just the needy. Not just the disabled." Warm hugs were exchanged. She called me "mami", a term of affection and acceptance.



Mary Jane Hominda '77 telling riddles to band members in Junín.

Mary Jane Hominda, *Princeton* class of 1977, a natural connection-maker, told riddles to the members of the band who came to welcome us at the Junín distribution. To these young people '77 will no longer be a banner taped to a box. They will remember us as in-person representatives of the Class—individuals touching individuals.



All aboard the Ferrocarril Central Andino (FCCA) in Peru! One of the top Railway Engineering Wonders of the World with 68 tunnels, 55 bridges and 9 switchbacks.



Jim Shepard '78 with the happy hat-snatcher.

At a residential school for abandoned disabled children, Jim Shepherd, *Princeton class of 1978*, had his new Peruvian ballcap snatched from his head while seating a cheeky recipient. The joy on her face as she put it on her head was compensation enough. They made an instant connection.

10 DISTRIBUTIONS IN 5 DAYS



Map of Peru showing the 10 wheelchair distributions over 5 days by train and bus.

This past summer, David Behring and Princeton Alumni engaged in 10 wheelchair distributions in 5 days in Peru. They started with 2 distributions in Lima, and then proceeded with a distribution in La Oroya, Chosica, Cerro de Pasco, Junin, Tarma, Jajau, Huancayo, and Moroccho. A remarkable and memorable distribution trip completed in just 5 days!



Coincidentally wearing a tiger sweatshirt. Sister, Delesa (13 yrs.), receiving a chair. Has CP as the result of a high fever when very young.



Couple: María and Rafael at Real-Felipe Callao. He had polio at the age of 2, and she had a car accident resulting in paralysis.



Worker in Jauja grateful his coworkers will no longer have to carry him to and from his desk at the office.

GOLF TOURNAMENT: "FORE THE LOVE OF MOBILITY"

Contributed by Amanda Michel



Another year, another round of golf supporting the Wheelchair Foundation's mission of providing mobility to those in need. While the Annual Drive Fore Mobility Golf Tournament may return to the course each year, the impact reaches somewhere new every time.

This year's 23rd tournament brought together an exciting mix of new sponsors, first-time golfers, long-term supporters, and even new members of our administrative team for an unforgettable day on the green and raising nearly \$150,000!

The day got off to a memorable start as our beloved bagpiper returned to welcome golfers and set the tone for another great tournament. The tournament featured an exciting lineup of on-course games and activities, including crowd favorites like the Cannon Launcher and Cornhole. And, of course, no great tournament is complete without great food! Golfers were treated



to an impressive spread of favorites, from freshly made pizza courtesy of Soleil to savory sausage from Silva Sausage and New York Style Sausage and the always popular, burgers from infamous Fuddruckers. It's no wonder our golfers keep coming back!

To add to the event, a selection of cocktails and premium cigars were available throughout the course, giving golfers plenty of opportunities to relax, socialize, and enjoy the day between swings. A final signature to our tournament was welcoming back our Vietnam Veterans of Diablo Valley who happily hosted the Patriotic Hole.



After the tournament, golfers were invited to join us for dinner and an auction to further support the Foundation's mission. During this time, we honored one of our dear friends James Kellogg for his extraordinary generosity, loyal friendship, and unwavering commitment to the Wheelchair Foundation of over 20 years. James was presented with a plaque in appreciation for his dedication to the Foundation. We also took this time to honor and recognize our generous Title Sponsors, California State Pipe Trades, Herzog Insurance Agency, and UA Local 342 by presenting plaques to each of them as this event wouldn't be possible without their support.

We'd like to thank everyone who contributed to this impactful and meaningful event this year. To our valued Title sponsors, Silver Sponsors, Hospitality Sponsors, Tee Sign Sponsors, volunteers and staff, thank you. Your generosity, time, and partnership helped make the day a success and, more importantly, helped us continue our mission of restoring mobility and changing lives.

FROM THE FIRST TEE TO THE FINAL DELIVERY

Contributed by Amanda Michel

Two individuals that continue to show up and support our mission are none other than Bob Herzog and Val Nunes. For the last 13 years, Bob and Val have co-chaired the Wheelchair Foundation's Annual Drive Fore Mobility Golf Tournament, generously sponsoring the event and helping in any way they can.

At last year's Golf Tournament in 2025, thanks to Bob and Val, and the many others who contributed, enough funds were raised to send a container of wheelchairs to Mexico. The distribution trip was set for Spring of 2026 where donors, Rotarians, friends and staff came together for another successful distribution trip. This trip was a little extra special because it was the first time in many years Bob and Val came together to distribute wheelchairs. Not only that, but one of our Board members of many years, David Preiss, got to join us for his first ever distribution trip!

In Cabo San Lucas, through a large distribution and a few personal home deliveries, Bob and Val got to experience firsthand where the funds were really going. They got to see how their generosity was truly changing people's lives when distributing wheelchairs.



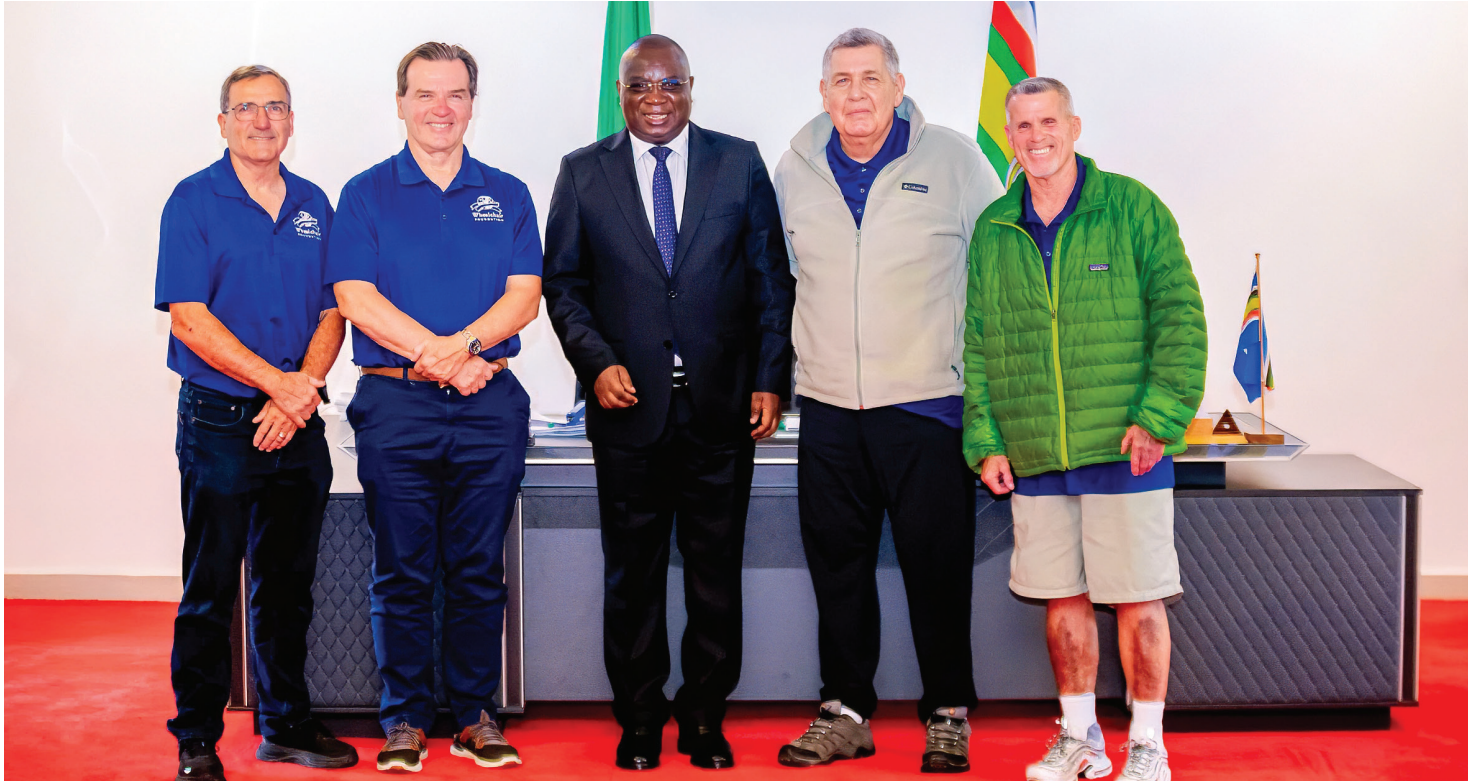
Suzie Alvarez, Val Nunes, David Preiss, Diane Herzog, Bob Herzog, recipient and her family gather around for one of our final home deliveries in Cabo San Lucas with our signature thumbs up.



Val Nunes, Steve Beinke, Bob Herzog and a happy young recipient share a special moment.

They got to feel what it was like to pick up a person and place them in a wheelchair. They got to hear the heartfelt "thank you" from recipients. They got to experience what our work truly means to us, the Foundation, and the recipients and their families to receive a wheelchair. It became an understanding of what their contributions back at that Golf Tournament actually meant. Not just a fun day out on the green, but a day that would lead them to a moment with a person whose life their generosity helped change.

What's more, just a little over a week after returning from the distribution trip, Bob and Val attended our annual Gala, where they were honored for their many years of contribution to our Foundation. Showing up once again to support our mission and generously contributing again to raise funds for another container of wheelchairs. From the first tee at our golf tournament to the final distribution in Mexico, Bob and Val don't seem to hesitate to show up for us time and time again. And with their efforts, alongside so many others who believe in our mission, a day on the golf course becomes so much more. It becomes a wheelchair, a new sense of independence, and the opportunity to move someone forward.



My brothers (Jeff, David, Tom, and me, Scott in green) and I sponsored a container of wheelchairs to help the people of Tanzania. We traveled there in July to distribute them. “Behring Brothers” was embroidered on the back of every wheelchair along with the Wheelchair Foundation logo.

BEHRING BROTHERS HONOR TANZANIA

Contributed by Scott Behring

Last July, I was blessed to take part in a Wheelchair Distribution in Arusha, Tanzania, alongside my brothers and their wives. The experience of giving back to humanity through something as simple as a wheelchair was profoundly moving. A wheelchair provides far more than mobility—it offers dignity, independence, relief, and an unmistakable act of love.

I wish everyone could experience a distribution like this. The impact is profound—not only for the recipients and their families, but for everyone who has the privilege of being there.

For me, the experience was deeply connected to my Christian faith. I felt that I was simply a small beacon of hope for people facing incredibly difficult circumstances—a reminder that tomorrow could be better and that their dignity mattered.

We traveled down unpaved, dusty roads and past small, modest homes where families lived in difficult conditions. For a person without mobility, those challenges become even greater. Often, the only way someone can get from one place to another is by being carried by a family member. It is a life marked by hardship, dependence, and heartbreak.

Then, a wheelchair arrives.

As the wheelchairs were unloaded, unpacked, and placed into the hands of recipients, something remarkable happened. Confusion and disbelief slowly turned into smiles, tears, and gratitude. Families gathered around their loved ones as they were placed into a wheelchair for the first time. The realization that they could move independently—even with limitations—brought an incredible sense of relief and renewed hope.

And that hope extended beyond the individual. Families felt the weight of responsibility begin to lift. A wheelchair meant their loved one could regain a measure of independence, while caregivers could experience relief from the physical and emotional demands of providing constant assistance.

Two recipients in particular have stayed with me.

One was a man in his 40s who had lived with a disability his entire life. Without a wheelchair, he had learned to crawl on his arms to get around. When he was placed in his new wheelchair, his face broke into a smile that was both heartbreaking and beautiful. In that moment, you could see what this simple gift meant to him.

The other was a man in his 60s who had been paralyzed after being struck by a scooter. He had known mobility his entire life—and then, suddenly, he had none. Watching him sit in his wheelchair, surrounded by his children and grandchildren, brought tears to my eyes. You could almost feel his dignity returning as he realized that a part of his independence had been restored.

I am so grateful to have experienced this distribution and to have witnessed firsthand the power of giving. In a world that can often feel filled with darkness and hardship, this experience reminded me that love, compassion, and generosity can bring light.

I truly believe Jesus had a role in bringing me to Arusha and showing me just how powerful love can be when we give of ourselves to others.

A wheelchair may seem like a simple gift, but to someone who has lived without mobility, it can represent something much greater: hope, dignity, independence, and the promise of a better tomorrow.



This ten year old boy suffered from what his mother described as “brittle bone disease”. His arms and legs were extremely thin and, from the age of three, he had a tendency to easily break bones. His mother had to strap him against a furniture dolly with cushions in order to move him anywhere. His new wheelchair should greatly improve his ability to places.



Tom, David and Jeff Behring with a recipient and her caregiving sister in Arusha. Her legs were swollen and deformed and she had not been able to walk for many years.



Our father and Wheelchair Foundation founder, Ken Behring, made Tanzania a priority, creating a lasting connection to the country that we carry forward today.



ABBY'S STORY FROM THE HEART IN EL SALVADOR

Contributed by Abby Fried & Kimberlee Reddell-Walsh

This past summer, Kimberlee Walsh, Director of Community Outreach for "From The Heart," organized a wheelchair distribution trip to El Salvador. Hosted by Rotary San Salvador Noroeste, a group of 18 students and teachers traveled throughout the country, personally delivering wheelchairs through home visits, orphanages, and community distributions. Together, they provided mobility and independence to more than 260 children and adults. Co-founded by Don and Josh Routh, the Wheelchair Foundation's "From The Heart Schools Program" gives students meaningful opportunities to learn about disability, mobility, empathy, and service. Through awareness programs, fundraising, wheelchair basketball, service projects, and distribution trips, students experience firsthand the difference they can make.

One student has carried that impact with her long after graduation: Abby Fried.

"I was first introduced to the Wheelchair Foundation through the "From The Heart" program when I was 16. In many ways, I have grown up alongside this foundation. I have returned year after year, each time a little older, carrying a little more with me and leaving with even more than I came with. When people ask my favorite part of these trips, my answer is always the human connection.

On one of the last days of our most recent trip to El Salvador, I noticed a tiny girl with bright eyes and pigtails. The moment our eyes met, she ran toward me. I knelt down, opened my arms, and she ran straight into them. I picked her up, and she immediately wrapped herself around me as though she had known me her entire life.



The From the Heart School Programs delivers a wheelchair to a recipient in El Salvador, featuring Abby Fried in bottom right corner.

When I set her down, I heard a soft voice behind me say in Spanish, 'Ella es mi hija.' She is my daughter.

It was her mother, smiling proudly. Nearby, the girl's grandmother sat quietly in a plastic chair. I sat beside her, and she began sharing their story.

Her daughter had been born with cerebral palsy and developmental limitations requiring ongoing support. She also shared that her daughter had survived sexual violence, and that little girl was born from that experience.

The grandmother was facing her own struggle with diabetes. Her condition had gone largely untreated, and circulation to her legs was failing. Amputation had become a real possibility. I realized that losing her mobility would mean far more than losing her independence—her daughter and granddaughter depended on her.

I looked at the three of them together: a grandmother carried into the distribution in a plastic chair, a mother proudly saying, 'Ella es mi hija,' and a little girl still smiling and reaching for people with both arms. I didn't know what to say. So, I just sat with them. That moment has never left me.

Don has reminded us for years that mobility is freedom. At 16, I understood that as simply the ability to move. Nine years later, I understand how much more those words hold. Mobility means independence, dignity, opportunity, and the ability to care for the people you love.

But I've also learned that the wheelchair is only part of the story. The other part is the person sitting in it—looking someone in the eyes, holding their hand, and listening long enough for them to trust you with their story. Even the briefest interaction can matter when someone feels truly seen.

That is the part I carry home with me, and the reason I will keep coming back."



Josh Routh, dedicated volunteer and Co-founder of 'From the Heart', smiles during a heartfelt distribution of wheelchairs.



CELEBRATING FREEDOM THROUGH MOBILITY

Contributed by Mia Wais
Photos courtesy of Florain



On Costa Rica's Independence Day, Wheelchair Foundation brought another kind of freedom—the freedom to move.

The streets of Belén were already filled with celebration. Marching bands played. Children carried flags. Dancers and folkloric groups filled the streets as families gathered to celebrate Costa Rica's Independence Day. And amid all that joy, something extraordinary was happening. Wheelchair Foundation was there to give 137 people the gift of mobility. Together with Rotary Club of Belén, Rotary Club Service Without Borders, and Rotarians who traveled from Texas and California, Wheelchair Foundation donated and distributed 137 wheelchairs—each one destined for a person whose world could become a little larger that day.



For someone who has lived without adequate mobility, a wheelchair is so much more than a way to get from one place to another. It can mean joining family at the table. Going outside. Returning to school. Being part of the community. Moving through life with greater independence and dignity.

And on a day devoted to celebrating freedom, that meaning felt especially powerful.

There were embraces. There were smiles. There were new friendships between people who had traveled thousands of miles to meet one another. And there were 137 moments when a wheelchair became something much bigger than a chair.

It became possibility.

**137 WHEELCHAIRS. ONE REMARKABLE DAY.
AND 137 LIVES MOVING FORWARD.**

Wheelchair Foundation believes mobility changes everything. In Costa Rica, we had the privilege of watching it happen.

BRINGING MOBILITY, RESTORING DIGNITY: SOUTH AFRICA WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTION

Contributed by Tammie Perry



100 year old recipient, happy to be in the sunshine.



Volunteer PT and new recipient.



Timothy able to go to church again and sing.

Some deliveries stay with you, especially home visits, where a wheelchair's impact is more evident. It reaches far beyond the recipient — to the caregiver, the family, the community. I'll never forget Timothy, who described how diabetes took one leg at a time, and is now slowly taking his sight. No longer able to work, he felt ashamed that he'd become a burden instead of a provider. But as he settled into his new wheelchair, something shifted, and he broke into song — his voice strong and powerful, ready to return to his church choir.

A grandfather no longer has to carry his grandson through rugged terrain to reach the doctor, or to simply play among the neighboring children. A 100-year-old woman felt sunshine on

her face for the first time in far too long. Another recipient sat in disbelief, repeatedly asking if she could really keep the wheelchair — if it was truly hers.

The community distributions were equally moving — recipients arrived in the back of pickup trucks, covered in dust from dragging themselves, and left with a chair of their own, no longer needing to be carried.

The hugs, the smiles, the tears of gratitude remind us of how much this work matters. None of it happens without our incredible volunteers on the ground in South Africa, and the donors and volunteers around the world who make every delivery possible.



OJ'S STORY: A GREAT PARTNER OF THE WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION

Contributed by Don Routh

Julius Opoi's (OJ) story is one of struggle, resilience, courage and an unwavering commitment to help others with disabilities lead a fulfilling life.

OJ was born 40 years ago in Soroti, Uganda. At the age of three he contracted Polio and has been unable to walk since. Shortly after becoming disabled, his parents were killed by rebel forces so OJ and his brother were raised by their grandparents.

OJ's only way to move around was to crawl. At 10 years old he started attending school but had to crawl more than 4 miles each way. Sometimes friends would hold his legs like a wheelbarrow so he could use just his hands.

OJ received his first wheelchair at 15, donated by missionaries from the Netherlands. He said receiving the wheelchair was a life-changing experience that gave him a new level of independence and mobility. He went on to complete high school and later earned a certificate in Journalism and Mass Communication.

OJ is also a singer and plays the keyboard. He gained notoriety in Uganda when his song 'Disability Is Not Inability' got a lot of airplay.

In 2017, Don and Josh Routh along with their friends Bill and Nat Wheeler distributed 560 wheelchairs in Uganda. When they were in



Soroti, OJ was one of their wheelchair recipients.

OJ said "Seeing how the Wheelchair Foundation was changing lives, including my own, opened opportunities I never imagined possible and gave me the confidence to believe that I too could make a difference in the lives of others". As a result, OJ was inspired to start the OJ Disability Care Foundation. The foundation provides mobility support, rehabilitation and physiotherapy services.

Don and Josh stayed in touch with OJ and by 2022 his Foundation was ready to take on the responsibility of partnering with the Wheelchair Foundation. There is significant and challenging work required to manage the import logistics and costs as well as identifying all of the wheelchair recipients and coordinating the distributions in towns and villages across Uganda. In the past five years Don and Josh have raised money for, and sent, more than 2,200 wheelchairs to Uganda and OJ has done an outstanding job of distributing them to those in need. The Wheelchair Foundation is proud to have OJ as a partner. Other donor groups, including Chair the Love in Florida, are now partnering with OJ as well.

In June, Don and Josh were scheduled to take a small group to Uganda to distribute the wheelchairs but they had to cancel at the last minute due to the Ebola outbreak. Fortunately, OJ and his team were able to distribute each and every wheelchair as planned. Don and Josh are already rescheduling the trip for 2027. If you would like to help, donations can be made to the Don and Josh Routh Projects on the website.

ALEO'S STORY

Contributed by Julius Opoi (OJ)



Meet our newest friend, Aleo Brenda, a wonderfully determined young girl from Kapelebyong District. Brenda's mother brought her to receive a wheelchair after learning about our wheelchair provision program. A Form One student at St. Mary's Comprehensive Secondary School in Kapelebyong, Brenda immediately stood out among the children who came that day.

What inspired us most was her resilience and determination. She was the only school-going child among the beneficiaries and the only one confidently communicating in English. Despite the challenges she faces, Brenda continues to pursue her education with courage and hope. As she received her wheelchair, she smiled and said, "This chair is going to simplify my life while at school!"

Those simple words carried a powerful message. To Brenda, this wheelchair means greater independence, easier access to education, renewed confidence, and the opportunity to dream even bigger.

Today, we celebrate Brenda's strength, perseverance, and commitment to her future. We are honored to be part of her journey and look forward to seeing all that she will achieve.

Every wheelchair we provide is a reminder that when barriers are removed, potential is unleashed. Keep shining, Brenda. Your resilience is inspiring us all. Thank you, Don Routh, Josh Routh, and everyone at Wheelchair Foundation.



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