A MESSAGE FROM
KEN BEHRING

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
The Wheelchair Foundation aims to deliver one 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 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.

Spring has arrived in Northern California. All of the plants and trees are blooming, and there are flowers all around. The good weather makes me smile.

Last month I was honored as the University of California, Berkeley, School of Health, International Hero for 2011. I had to give a speech, and was introduced to the crowd by my old friend, Past Rotary International President Richard King. Rick is a good speaker, and I was honored to hear what he had to say about me.

Then it was my turn to speak. I was told to talk about “why” I help others, with wheelchairs and clean drinking water. Well, one reason is because I can, and I guess the other reason has to be because I have found great reward in helping other people to smile. Giving a thirsty person a cool drink of water can give them a reason to smile. Giving a person in need of mobility a wheelchair almost always gets them smiling as well.

I would like to be able to share what I see, the excitement and wonder of discovery, when a person who is unable to move about suddenly becomes mobile and reconnects with their world. It is an experience filled with grins. These smiles are all we ask for in return for our good deeds. And smiles are always free.

Kenneth E. Behring
Founder and Chairman
FIVE KIDS IN SOUTH AFRICA CAN NOW GET OUTSIDE AND ENJOY THE SUNSHINE!

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of Pretoria School I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the five wheelchairs that we received as a donation from your Rotary club.

We have 146 learners (out of a total of 350) dependent on wheelchairs. Most of our learners are from very poor socio-economic circumstances and are unable to provide their own wheelchairs.

The state’s service in providing wheelchairs for the lower income groups is very poor. We are therefore dependent on sponsors to help us educate and empower our learners to become as independent as their disabilities will allow.

Another important factor worth mentioning is that most of our learners come to school on public transport. The taxis will not transport wheelchairs. Therefore a learner must have a wheelchair for home use and another for schooling purposes. Providing chairs to satisfy this demand is very challenging.

Please be assured that the chairs that we received will be well used and will make a huge difference in the lives of the children to whom they have been allocated.

Kindly remember our school in the future. We are always more than willing to submit motivations for sponsorships.

Regards,

Beverly Kapp,
Physiotherapist at Pretoria School, South Africa.

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TOTAL COUNTRIES AND REGIONS .................. 153
TOTAL WHEELCHAIRS ......................... 851,847
One of the first things our Founder, Ken Behring, did when he started the Wheelchair Foundation was to call on his old friend Jack Drury in Fort Lauderdale, Florida to ask for help—that was over ten years ago.

Over the years the Wheelchair Foundation has distributed thousands of new manual wheelchairs throughout the State of Florida thanks to major donors such as Publix Super Market Charities, Chatlos Foundation, BJ’s Foundation and The Harry T. Mangurian Jr. Foundation—all of which have made six figure grants to the Wheelchair Foundation.

US Navy Hospital Ship

Last year the Florida office arranged for the Wheelchair Foundation to be a part of the medical deployment of the US Navy's hospital ship, The USNS COMFORT. Jack Drury was invited earlier this year to the pre-planning meeting of the Navy for the 2011 five-month mission trip. He committed the Wheelchair Foundation to another container of 110 wheelchairs so the Navy personnel could distribute these gifts to the disabled of Haiti, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Guess who came forward to pay for that container—Yes, it was Steve Agius and District 6960.

Ken Behring to visit Florida

Because of the activity in Florida, Founder and CEO, Ken Behring is planning to visit Florida in June to thank our supporters. As part of his trip he will be the main speaker at the Rotary District 6960 Annual Conference.

“The Wheelchair Foundation has brought a lot more ‘sunshine’ to the Sunshine State.”

-Jack Drury
November 4th:

Our long time supporter and friend, Rotarian and cheese maker Rudi Harwardt from Puerto Octay, Chile, was waiting to greet us when we touched down at our first stop in South America. And although the lake and snow-covered volcano region of Chile gave us rainy days, we were welcomed with nothing but warmth. Rudi fed us delicious cheese from his factory, and we enjoyed tasty Chilean wine and seafood. What a wonderful beginning to our journey! What warmed us most though were the conversations we had with the wheelchair recipients. Taking time to listen, and to understand their life experiences, made all the difference in the world to us, and to them. One beneficiary happened to be a former policeman who had been shot in the line of duty some 20 years ago. He has needed a wheelchair ever since, but has not been able to obtain one. Another young man shared that he works as a clerk in a grocery store and was thrilled to meet Josh Routh, a member of our group who is also in a wheelchair, who also works in a supermarket in San Ramon, California, as a cashier. The more we talked, the more we connected.

November 6th:

From the Lakes Region we flew south to Punta Arenas, the southern-most city in Chile. Here, the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans meet, at Cape Horn – the historically dangerous sea passage. As we stared across the Strait of Magellan, imagining Antarctica in the distance, we could easily spot the island of Tierra del Fuego. We enjoyed a lovely evening, hosted by our partner organization the Rotary Club of Punta Arenas, in their most beautiful historic meeting place, the Sara Braun Palace. The following morning we gathered together to distribute wheelchairs to local people in need. One gentleman, who had suffered a heart attack and had been housebound since, was brought to tears when he received his wheelchair. He cried and we cried.

From Punta Arenas we embarked by bus on a long journey to Puerto Natales, the gateway town to the Chilean Patagonia wilderness. We joined the Rotary Club of Puerto Natales in a beautifully orchestrated wheelchair ceremony at City Hall. We shared in the joy of watching a happy wheelchair recipient being wheeled away home by his wife and we took turns cuddling the cute baby of another wheelchair recipient’s family. Filled with joy, we embarked on a Patagonia adventure trip. A long boat ride led to a hike that put us within feet of the face of a massive blue glacier. Determination and sheer will power afforded our own wheelchair bound Josh Routh the opportunity to be the very first wheelchair rider to reach the glacial face. Josh’s personal feat would remain a highlight of our whole trip. Later we donned dry suits to journey down a river in rafts, and ended the day with a feast at a Chilean Estancia (farm).

continued...
November 10, 2010:

DEPARTING CHILE, WE FLEW TO BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, where we were greeted by staff members of CILSA, a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting the disabled by providing wheelchairs and creating opportunities for integration. CILSA, having extensive experience serving our target population, organized a wheelchair distribution that was memorable and very well prepared. Their efforts focused on inclusion of the wheelchair recipients, with a great deal of thought given to recipient transport and accommodation. Despite the joy of receiving a wheelchair, we were constantly humbled and reminded that the poor and disabled still face many challenges and hardships in their daily lives. We worked with the CILSA staff, handing out balloons and small toys to the children in attendance, blowing soap bubbles and sharing food and drink with everyone on hand. It created an amazing environment of integration and celebration for all.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Beautiful Chilean statuary watches over the city of Santiago. >>> Josh Routh and his father, Don, at the trailhead where Josh made his challenging trek to become the first wheelchair user to make it to the glacial face. >>> The group suited up and ready for their river run. >>> Chilean wine and cheese tasting at Rotarian Rudi Harwardt's cheese factory.

BELOW: Happy husband and wife head home after receiving a new wheelchair. >>> Wheelchair supporter David Irmer with CILSA volunteers and a very happy new wheelchair recipient. >>> Wheelchair Foundation President, David Behring receives a certificate of appreciation from the disability organization CILSA in Argentina.
November 12, 2010:

Despite Our Group’s High Energy Level and our growing camaraderie, fatigue from the constant stop and go of our trip was beginning to set in. There was so little time, and so many places, so many wonderful and enthusiastic partners, but so little sleep! None the less, we knew we better get ourselves in shape and stand up straight for our final wheelchair event, a distribution with the Peruvian Defense Ministry. Many Peruvian soldiers have been wounded in the ongoing armed conflict with the Shining Path and other armed groups in Peru. Many soldiers in need have never received wheelchairs, and several with wheelchairs required replacements due to wear and tear. These particular wheelchairs we donated were financed through the generosity of Kenneth E. Behring and the Carlos Slim Foundation as part of their Latin America Mobility Initiative. After proudly singing our respective national anthems, we were all treated to a spectacular military parade featuring vintage costumes and weaponry. Our flags flew side-by-side high over the plaza as we shook hands with each of the recipients in turn. It was a great finale to our incredible adventure!
CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: Our group of intrepid military personnel on the last stop of their 11-day, three country, journey. >>> “All we ask for in return for a wheelchair is a smile,” has been our motto for years. This happy gentleman from Chile gives us both. >>> Mike Richter and Kay Collier pose with a new wheelchair recipient in Argentina. >>> “All you need for a successful hands-on wheelchair project are patience, flexibility, humor and a little energy!” They brought all of these things, and more, to Costa Rica to help the disabled and less fortunate in need of mobility. >>> Wheelchair Foundation traveling volunteers, staff and our partners from the Peruvian Defense Ministry pose for a photo following a very successful wheelchair distribution event. >>> A representative sample of the 45 Rotarians from Districts 5220 and 5230 manage to stand still long enough for a group shot, during their very busy wheelchair distribution work with our partners from Patronato Nacional De Rehabilitacion, in Costa Rica. >>> When he is not traveling the world volunteering at wheelchair distributions, fastening Rotary pins to other’s clothes or breaking trails to glaciers where no wheelchair rider has gone before, Josh Routh takes time to make friends with other wheelchair riders. Here Josh connects with another wheelchair rider who also happens to work in a supermarket, just like Josh does in his day job. >>> Going from house bound and immobile, to being given the means to move about attracts attention in Costa Rica. This scene demonstrates yet another wonderful aspect of delivering wheelchairs to people in need; for a moment, those who have been shut inside with no chance to move suddenly become the center of attention and get a much deserved dose of human contact and interest from people who are interested in hearing their stories and share sympathy and empathy for their plight. >>> Happy Birthday to Mrs. Patricia Behring who celebrated this year by distributing wheelchairs in Chile, Argentina and Peru. Mrs. Behring is seen here with a certificate of thanks from CILSA, our distribution partners in Argentina.
Our group of intrepid travelers gathered together with wheelchair recipients and Peruvian military personnel on the last stop of their 11-day, three-country journey. >>> Mike Richter and Kay Collier pose with a new wheelchair recipient in Argentina. >>> “All we ask for in return for a wheelchair is a smile” has been our motto for years. This happy gentleman from Chile gives us both a smile and a “cat’s cradle”! >>> Don and Cathi Warnock, who have traveled and worked with us for years, say “All you need for a successful hands-on wheelchair project are patience, flexibility, humor and a little energy!” They brought all of these things, and more, to Costa Rica to help the disabled and less fortunate in need of mobility. >>> Wheelchair Foundation traveling volunteers, staff and our partners from the Peruvian Defense Ministry pose for a photo following a very successful wheelchair distribution event. >>> A representative sample of the 45 Rotarians from Districts 5220 and 5230 manage to stand still long enough for a group shot, during their very busy wheelchair distribution work with our partners from Patronato Nacional De Rehabilitacion, in Costa Rica. >>> When he is not traveling the world volunteering at wheelchair distributions, fastening Rotary pins to other’s clothes or breaking trails to glaciers where no wheelchair rider has gone before, Josh Routh takes time to make friends with other wheelchair riders who also happen to work in a super market, just like Josh does in his day job. Here Josh connects with another wheelchair rider who also happens to work in a super market, just like Josh does in his day job. >>> Going from house bound and immobile to being given the means to move about attracts attention in Costa Rica. This scene demonstrates yet another wonderful aspect of delivering wheelchairs to people in need; for a chance to move suddenly become the center of attention and get action from people who are interested in hearing their stories and sharing sympathy and empathy for their plight. >>> Happy Birthday to Mrs. Patricia Behring who celebrated this year by distributing wheelchairs in Chile, Argentina and Peru. Mrs. Behring is seen here with a certificate of thanks from CILSA, our distribution partners in Argentina.
COSTA RICA!

Forty-five District 5220 and 5230 Rotarians and their friends descended upon the beautiful country of Costa Rica to bring mobility and connect with local Rotary partners and the people of Costa Rica.

WHEELCHAIR NUMBER 850,000
“Why do I do this? Because I can see the difference such a small donation can make in a human life! We all get busy with our own lives and take things for granted. This experience makes one realize how blessed we are, and really appreciate what we have.”

-Judy Lovett, Rotary Club of North Stockton, on her 6th wheelchair distribution trip!

“THE CONCEPT IS SO SIMPLE AND SO REWARDING. THE KEY IS NOT JUST WRITING THE CHECKS, BUT DOING THE HANDS-ON WORK.”

-Dr. Lyndon Low, Rotary Club of North Stockton

“To us, the most memorable moment of a wheelchair distribution is the hands-on ability to immediately change a person’s life for the better, and to experience the joy they feel with their newfound mobility. We have helped people move themselves for the very first time, and witnessed the weight being lifted from their family members who were, until now, responsible for that person’s mobility.”

-Bob Bitter, Past District Governor, District 5220, Madera Sunrise Rotary Club

Four-year-old ISABELLA, our 850,000th wheelchair recipient, has been living with her foster mother, Charlotte, for three years now. Isabella has a twin brother and eight other siblings! All live in foster care and Charlotte is determined to adopt all ten children so the family can stay together. Half of the kids are boys and half are girls. Isabella was born with a form of Spina Bifida known as myelomeningocele.

“Isabella was just a charming, charismatic, intelligent little girl. She never stopped smiling and engaged everyone who approached her. For Isabella, it was obvious in the first few minutes that having a wheelchair was going to expanded her world. Witnessing the thrill she personally experienced moving around on her own brought an incredible amount of joy to everyone present.”

-Eva Carleton, Regional Director of Operations, Latin America and the Caribbean

To check out video of Isabella buzzing around in her new wheelchair, view photos and read more about our Costa Rica trip, please visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wheelchairfoundation
GRATEFUL FOR EACH OTHER IN GUATEMALA

By Jennifer Davis

Many recipients were already there for hours, sitting patiently awaiting their new wheelchairs. The place was full, with some standing around the edges of the building and out the door. HOWEVER, the first two rows of chairs were entirely empty. The realization set in… those chairs up front were for us! Apparently, we were the honored guests. I felt embarrassed and humbled. This opportunity to give is a gift FOR me… not FROM me.

The ceremony progressed and we were now at the part to call recipient names and give wheelchairs away. We walked toward an older woman, wheeling the chair towards her. As we came closer, she attempted to stand with her cane. It was obvious that it wasn’t easy for her to maneuver, but she would do whatever it took to get into her new chair.

She sat in her chair with much help from my husband and wiggled her way comfortable. It was then our eyes met, both with tears, and both eternally grateful for the other. Language was irrelevant. A smile with tears and we both understood. Gratitude filled my heart.

Offering a wheelchair to an individual is a life-changing experience for them. In addition to the gift of mobility, it is a weight lifted for the caretaker. Many aspects of their life are changed and affected in a positive way. That is true for me as well. I am different after having the experience of giving personally and directly. To touch another human life at such a great level is awesome. I am thankful for the Wheelchair Foundation and the opportunity to participate first hand. I look forward to our next trip; it will be an honor to give again.
On February 19, 2011, Wine for Wheels marked its 9th year of providing Hope, Mobility and Freedom through its “Wheelchair Foundation Charity Ball” at the Blackhawk Museum. This year’s event, “Fijian Breeze,” included a traditional Fijian dance show by Favia ‘o Polinisia Productions, Inc. and music by David Martin’s House Party dance band and concert act. Great food by Scott’s Seafood, spectacular Napa Valley wines, fantastic auction items, and the support of emcee Dan Ashley, co-anchor of ABC7 television news, will allow us to deliver hundreds of wheelchairs for the immobile in Fiji.

Special “Honoree” recognition was given to 1. Valdimer and Belia Nunes of Dreisbach Enterprises, and to 2. Eric Rudney of Rudney Associates. They have been strong supporters since the founding of Wine for Wheels nearly a decade ago. These honorees have hosted events, volunteered countless hours, and personally experienced the emotion of Wheelchair Foundation’s mission when distributing wheelchairs across the world.

Our first annual “Volunteer of the Year,” 3. William Arendt, was also recognized. Bill and his wife Kathy are the founding hosts of Wine for Wheels and continue to be faithful supporters to this day. The Wheelchair Foundation President, David Behring, presented the “Presidents Award,” an engraved crystal globe, to 4. Martha Hertelendy and to Ron and Marianne Dreisbach for their outstanding service and support over the years.
Each year the group of volunteers grew, and the participation of Rotarians increased. We have now made nine humanitarian trips to Mazatlan and we have accomplished the following:

- Written 11 TRF Matching Grants for wheelchairs for Mexico (four specifically for Mazatlan)
- Built three parks (one specifically designed for handicapped children)
- Sent three ambulances, a bus and seven handicapped accessible vans
- Adopted, painted, installed sanitation, and donated supplies to 16 schools
- Formed an “Amigos Cities” relationship between the city of Mazatlan, Mexico and Foster City, California

Ten years ago, one of the first containers of wheelchairs that Rotary delivered was sent to Mazatlan, Mexico. It began as a group of Californians, who had been traveling to Mazatlan for many years prior to this, were inspired to put some meaning into their annual sojourn. One person in the group arranged financing and contributions to pay for 240 wheelchairs, and then Rotary International President Frank Devlyn arranged to distribute this container with members of the Mazatlan Rotary Club, the Mayor of Mazatlan, and his wife, who was the head of DIF (Integral Development of the Family).
Our most recent trip, in November 2010, was a four-day humanitarian junket to Mazatlan with 76 people, featuring 24 Interactors. Interact is a Rotary sponsored high school based program, and our Interactors were especially helpful in moving and assembling wheelchairs, and often were the most affected by the new sights and sounds. Many of the kids speak Spanish and spoke directly with the families to learn about their lives and how wheelchairs were going to impact their everyday existence. These experiences really stay with the young people and are shared with friends and families when they return home. It is truly life changing for many of them.

Our main wheelchair distribution was attended by the Mayor of Mazatlan, Foster City Rotary’s current and future District Governors, Club President and a Foster City City Council member. Smiles abounded as the recipients were given their new red wheelchairs, then posed for pictures with their families and our volunteers. The volunteers went off in small groups to bring wheelchairs to those who were homebound and couldn’t come to our central distribution location on their own.

Later in the evening, we gathered at our hotel, where everyone shared their stories of going to these homes and giving individuals their wheelchairs in person. Many had never seen this type of poverty before, or realized how a new wheelchair impacts a whole family. It was a truly great experience.
Visit Wheelchair Foundation’s Rotary web page for up to the minute information for Rotary Clubs and Rotarians!