

## Disability in the Greater Middle East

**F**rom the northern reaches of Africa, across the Mediterranean Sea toward western Asia and the former Soviet Union, the modern greater Middle East encompasses diverse populations, linked by complex geographic, historical, cultural and religious ties. Located squarely at the hub of centuries of human history, this is a highly dynamic part of the world.

**A**s in many areas of the globe, disability plays a powerful and undeniable role. In addition to the usual causes – illness, birth defects, malnutrition – disability is worsened as a result of additional aggravating situations. Political instability and chronic warring expose communities to regional struggles and armed conflict, putting civilians at risk and destroying the infrastructure necessary to a healthy life. Refugee situations introduce injury and disease. Traffic injuries and work-related accidents are prevalent. It is clear that the demand for wheelchairs is a high priority throughout the greater Middle East.

Landing, transporting and distributing a container of wheelchairs can be a risky endeavor in volatile times, but thanks to the dedication of FWM partners in the region, mobility has been restored to many. Over 17,000 wheelchairs have been gifted to the people of Iraq through the support of the United States Armed Forces. FWM is grateful to all our dedicated partners, and for the courage and commitment to the cause. ■

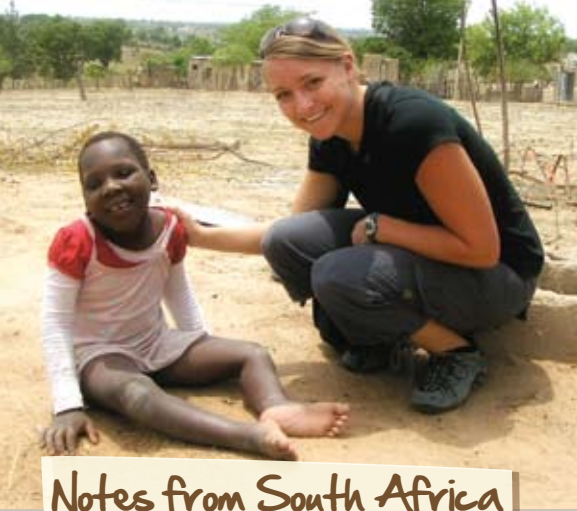
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**406,800** wheelchairs shipped **72** countries



**Free Wheelchair Mission®**  
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH THE GIFT OF MOBILITY



## Notes from South Africa

*Program Manager Whitney Blaesser travelled to South Africa last fall. While there, she visited the nearby town of Bushbuck Ridge...*

I was taken to meet a little girl named Mecryu. She is 10 years old and has been physically and mentally disabled her entire life. She smiled and I felt a special connection. There she was, in the dirt, unable to walk, and smiling. I sat down and played with her, and I knew that Mecryu is truly a special daughter of God. Without being able to talk, or walk, or interact like all the rest, she just beamed. She was so beautiful. God's light radiated from her little face. I felt so strongly that she knew the love He has for her – I believe that has made all the difference.



We didn't have a wheelchair for Mecryu that day – we were surveying the town to assess the need. I hoped we would be back, that

we could help. When I said goodbye to Mecryu that day, I told her that the next time I saw her, she would be lifted up off the ground – she would be in a wheelchair.

Mecryu changed my life. I had seen the need, but she helped me understand. People around the world find joy in the knowledge that God will provide – I am so humbled and inspired by this smiling child of God. The good news – our new partner in South Africa, Forever Resorts, followed up on my promise to Mecryu and she got her wheelchair a few months later! ■

*Whitney Blaesser*

# Build 'em, Ship 'em, Roll 'em Out!

*Manufacturing and logistics are key to the FWM model of distribution.*

The funds have been raised, the countries designated... now wheelchairs can be built and shipped to recipients waiting for mobility around the world.



## Manufacturing

FWM maintains close negotiations with manufacturers in China to build quality wheelchairs at a competitive price. FWM's main supplier is located in Zhejiang, in the Huzhou region, it is here that the metal work takes place, the hand rims are added, and additional materials are brought in and packaged. Vital to the proceedings is quality control.

**Testing** is carefully designed into the FWM model. Quality control expert Echo Zhao is FWM's independent contact in China, and his vigilant oversight helps maintain stringent standards. Zhao visits the factory several times a month, monitoring tests and overseeing results.

When 550 wheelchairs have been built, the supplier packs them into a 40-foot, ocean-going container, completes all export customs clearance and trucks them approximately 100 miles to the port of Shanghai.

In **shipping**, FWM works to keep costs low by utilizing a cooperative bargaining organization that helps smaller organizations get better shipping rates by negotiating collectively on their behalf. FWM also searches for free or discounted rates, which are occasionally available to nonprofit organizations. In these cases, FWM can hitch a ride on a vessel that is going in the same direction and happens to have extra room.

Manufacturing, quality control, shipping...efficient logistics are essential to keeping costs low and quality high as FWM works to send the transforming gift of mobility around the world!



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# Mission to Chile

*In underserved regions of the world, vulnerable populations suffer greatly from incidents and injuries that might have been easily corrected elsewhere. During a recent distribution trip to Chile, a mission group met with wheelchair recipients in the rural town of Lampa...*

**G**raciella is 64 years old. A few years back, she stepped on a sharp object. Without access to health services, the wound became infected, and Graciella lost her left foot. Her husband and brother carry her where she needs to go, but it was apparent to the team that a wheelchair was a much-needed gift.



59-year-old **Juana** was unfortunate enough to be bitten by an animal. The wound became infected, leading to a blood clot, complications of the liver, and multiple surgeries. Now almost completely paralyzed, she lives with a daughter and grandson. A wheelchair will allow Juana's family to share the world with their beloved grandmother.

It was not clear how or when **Alejandria** became disabled, but the great-grandmother maintained a quick smile and was delighted to receive a wheelchair. Her sense of humor appeared quite intact as she pointed out the tricycle that her family had used to get her to church.



Snake bites that cripple, wounds that won't heal, raw unshod feet, burns from cooking and heating, traffic accidents, unsafe conditions in the workplace... hazards are everywhere, and what might have been a simple injury is not so simple when it leads to infection, complication, amputation, and ultimately, disability or death. Without the government protection found in wealthier countries, the world can be a risky place for the poor and vulnerable, living with few resources and fewer safety nets.

*FWM thanks the Chile mission team for their compassion, generosity, and dedication to the cause.*



*"Haz todo con amor." – "Do everything with love." – Colossians 3:23*

*It's Christmas in July!*

*We're looking ahead to the holidays and thought we'd let a little secret out of the bag...*

*Holiday Greeting Cards!!*

Yes, it's true! For the first time ever, Free Wheelchair Mission will be offering boxed holiday greeting cards for friends and family! Send along the best wishes of the season while sharing the FWM story with everyone on your mailing list!

*Available September 2009*  
[www.freewheelchairmission.org](http://www.freewheelchairmission.org)



*Congratulations to the newly-crowned "Ms. Wheelchair California" our very own Alyson Roth.*

Our FWM Manager of Donor Development, Alyson is also a teacher, musician, advocate, mentor, humanitarian, environmentalist... an inspiration to all.

*Alyson, we are so proud of you!  
With love from your friends at FWM!*



**FROM DON SCHOENDORFER, President and Founder**

*Between Dreams and Prayers... We Are the Bridge*

**D**iego dreams of having mobility. He watches the day through tiny pinholes in the back of the shack while he waits for his daily meal and a chance to talk to someone, anyone. **Huang** dreams of going back to school, like she used to...but that was three years ago, before her mother was no longer able to carry her. **Yoseph** is a missionary. He dreams of the poor, and wishes for something he can take into the slums, anything, to help them, to encourage them, to gain their trust and to persuade them to open their doors. **Shankar** dreams of wheelchairs...he manages an orphanage for children with polio and wishes for wheels, so that his children could be children. Meanwhile, in our blessed country...

**Jill** is a pastor and prays for ways to spark passion in her congregation. **Bill** is a father and prays for opportunities for his children to help the poor. **Debbie** is a grandmother and prays for direction and focus for the passion God has placed in her heart to get involved with international missions.

Free Wheelchair Mission is a bridge between the dreams and prayers of many. We are a link to make each of them come true. We are a connection, and we invite you to join us on this journey. You will not see the smile on Diego's face when his family wheels him into a garden or Huang's tears when she returns to her friends at school. You will not witness the doors as they fly open for Yoseph, or experience the trust he gains in the slum. You will not see the rapture in Shankar's eyes when he sees his orphan children on wheels. And they will not see you, but they will know you love them, and we pray your gift will remind them that God loves them too.

We are the bridge. We are your bridge. ■ *Don Schoendorfer*

*Magic of Mobility*



*Don't Miss the Magic on July 28, 6pm at the Turnip Rose, Costa Mesa!*

Hurry to <http://www.freewheelchairmission.org/mom2009> for tickets to this inspirational event! It's an evening you won't soon forget!

**TRANSFORMING LIVES...ON JULY 28<sup>TH</sup>**

*"Lifting a Life" in New Mexico!*

**A**mbassador for Mobility Dennis Prickett and the Sierra Vista Community Church stoked a flurry of excitement in the dynamic southwestern town of Las Cruces – after a weekend of events, the celebrations funded an entire container of wheelchairs.



With the support of event planner extraordinaire Erlinda Portillo, Prickett, a physical therapist, rallied the forces for the "Lifting a Life One Wheelchair at a Time" campaign. From a wheelchair assembly with

Cub Scout Pack 179, to an "Oldies but Goodies" dance and the folklorico, food, and, of course...*mariachis!* of

the "First Annual Fajita Fiesta," this was a weekend celebrating the transforming gift of mobility! Highlighting the events, the reigning Ms. Wheelchair California, FWM's own Alyson Roth, shared her story with the Sierra Vista Community Church and the people of Las Cruces.

Thanks to the generosity of many, the Las Cruces "Lifting a Life" campaign culminating in the funding of 550 wheelchairs for the people of Mexico! ■



**GO ELECTRONIC!**

Our quarterly newsletter, *...mobility* is now available electronically! If you'd like to receive our next issue by email, sign up on our new website [www.freewheelchairmission.org](http://www.freewheelchairmission.org) or fill out the enclosed return envelope.



**OUR MISSION & VISION**

Our mission is to "provide the transforming gift of mobility to the physically disabled poor in developing countries, as motivated by Jesus Christ." Our vision is to "provide 20 million wheelchairs."



**Free Wheelchair Mission®**  
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH THE GIFT OF MOBILITY

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