

# Get to Know — Free Wheelchair Mission

BY AMANDA HUNTSMAN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FREE WHEELCHAIR MISSION

**"Free Wheelchair Mission is a humanitarian, faith-based nonprofit that designs and manufactures cost-efficient, durable wheelchairs for developing countries worldwide."**

According to the World Health Organization, more than 75 million people around the world living with disabilities need wheelchairs but, sadly, do not have them. This inspired founder and president Don Schoendorfer, a biomedical engineer with a Ph.D. from MIT, to build wheelchair prototypes in his garage in Santa Ana, California. Then, he gave out the first four chairs on a mission trip to India. Since then, Free Wheelchair Mission has grown and has its headquarters in Irvine, California.

In collaboration with a network of like-minded partners, Free Wheelchair Mission has distributed 1.3 million wheelchairs to people living with disabilities in 94 developing countries worldwide, providing renewed dignity, independence, and hope through the gift of mobility at no cost to the recipient. The top 5 countries they serve are Vietnam, China, India, Peru, and Mexico. On average, they distribute 177 Wheelchairs daily. In addition, they create opportunities for jobs, prayer, education, relationships, and increased community involvement. For more than 20 years, Free Wheelchair Mission has worked to close the gap by providing inexpensive, unique wheelchairs.

## SUCCESS STORY:

In 2009, Peter worked as a mason at a university in Kenya when he fell from the third floor of a building, sustaining a spinal cord injury that caused paralysis of his lower body. Peter spent three months in the hospital before going home to Gakoye Village. He lives with his parents and sister, Alice, who serves as his caregiver.

After being without work and living without mobility for over a decade, Peter received a wheelchair from Free Wheelchair Mission. Now, Peter can transfer himself in and out of his wheelchair and move about independently. And, since the wheelchair folds for easy storage and transport, Peter can regularly take public transportation into town, where he works. Having access to a wheelchair has been life-changing.



On July 21st, Free Wheelchair Mission will host their Miracle of Mobility Live, an event with in-person and virtual options. This fundraising event will help provide the life-transforming gift of mobility and include inspirational stories of transformation, musical performances, and special guests—including Mario Lopez. In addition, watch parties are being held around the country, with a local Orange County event in Costa Mesa, California.

For more information about the event, or sponsoring, visit: [www.freewheelchairmission.org/2022\\_miracleofmobility/](http://www.freewheelchairmission.org/2022_miracleofmobility/). Free Wheelchair Mission is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Federal Tax ID: 31-1781635



## OC Miracle of Mobility Live Fundraising Event

JULY 21, 2022, 5:30 PM

Join television personality Mario Lopez, Free Wheelchair Mission Founder & President Don Schoendorfer, and Free Wheelchair Mission CEO Nuka Solomon in person for this one-of-a-kind event to benefit their work in providing wheelchairs and medical supplies to the communities they serve.

*\*Offered both live and virtual*