

Providing dignity for people around the world

By Scott Walters

Imagine living in a desolate, remote area in the developing world where there are only dirt paths; no roadways or sidewalks of any kind. Now imagine you are unable to walk due to an injury or birth defect. How will you get to where you need to go?

The answer is that you would crawl in the dirt unless a friend or family member offers to carry you on his or her back.

It's these often-forgotten people that **Mobility Worldwide** helps through the gift of a unique three-wheeled, off-road wheelchair operated by hand power. Mobility carts are handcrafted in shops scattered around the US and Africa and are usually staffed by volunteers from local UM Men's ministries.

80,000 carts given to 100 countries

For 25 years, Mobility Worldwide, formerly known as PET International, has sent its mobility carts in shipping containers to more than 100 countries. Christian charities and NGOs that operate abroad accept the carts and provide them to those in need.



Scott Walters is executive director of Mobility Worldwide

Frequently, the recipients must be sought out as they are shunned by their local community or hidden away in a back room so their immediate family is spared the embarrassment of their existence.



Mobility Worldwide's vision is to end immobility in the world. They strive toward this vision through their mission of seeking to reflect the love of God by bringing mobility and dignity to those in developing countries who are unable to walk. The organization has provided about 80,000 carts through the years.

A gift of dignity

Once people are lifted from the dirt and placed on the seats of mobility carts, they are no longer looked down on by others. Suddenly they are at eye level and feel a sense of acceptance. They have freedom to go where they want to go and when they want to go. Often, this is the first time in their lives that they have freedom and with that comes dignity, self-confidence and hope. Many recipients convert their mobility cart into businesses and start to earn money by delivering newspapers, shining shoes, or selling refreshments.

Men who handcraft the mobility carts come from all walks of life. Some are retired woodworkers or metal fabricators or engineers. Others who have no experience in the vocational-technical world come and learn the joy of not only helping others but building a machine to be cherished by people who they will never have the pleasure of meeting.

Support of UM Men

Unlike most other charities, Mobility Worldwide's volunteer corps, which numbers several thousand, is comprised mostly of men who are at or near retirement. They enjoy working with their hands and getting grease under their fingernails. Mobility Worldwide is greatly appreciative of the UM Men who volunteer for our international humanitarian organization. It's safe to say that Mobility Worldwide would not exist without the support of UM Men.

Many of the volunteers have participated in missionary work at Christian hospitals or clinics in the Third World. It's not uncommon to bump into a retired physician or nurse who is working in one of the 23 manufacturing shops within the network of Mobility Worldwide. The physicians will tell you that a mobility cart is miraculous in that it provides immediate relief. No other method provides immediate assistance like that offered by a mobility cart.

A continuing need

Mobility Worldwide is now looking for ways to help even more people in need. With 70-million people around the world in need of wheelchairs (according to the World Health Organization), leaders have taken upon themselves a charge of expanding their operations by opening more manufacturing sites and by working with companies to mass produce additional cart chassis made of sturdy plastic. Mobility Worldwide will also collect other helpful devices like crutches to distribute to those in need of help but not necessarily in need of a cart.

Whatever the form of help provided, one thing is for sure. It can't be done without the dedication and Christian support of UM Men. We welcome your help whether it's your time, financial donation or talent in helping spread the word.

HAITIAN MAN WITH CART.

