**Director's Vision: 2004**

I have been challenged through several recent sermons about putting my hand to the plow and not looking back—about trusting God for the future. My pastor told a story of a young man who believed that he was called to the ministry, but his parents thought he should go to college first and get a business degree “to fall back on” in case the ministry didn’t work out for him. My pastor couldn’t make sense of this advice: if you are truly called by God to ministry then He will meet your needs. There is no need to make arrangements for a second career. I have been challenged to look at my own situation with this perspective.

For the past seven years, I have been falling back on my construction skills, taking odd jobs and working for Wheels of Hope only two days a week. If God has truly called me to ministry through Wheels of Hope, then I need to do my part: get out and talk to people, churches and material donors about why this ministry needs more than a two-day-a-week Director.

The timing is good. I have taken care of things on the home front in the last two years when equipment donations were down, by building an apartment onto my home for my aging mother. This has made it easier for Lynda and I to care for her as I Timothy 5 requires: "But if any widow has children ... let them first learn ministry at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable to God.”

**What next?**

My vision for Wheels of Hope is one of steady growth. As I phase out carpentry, and invest my time in spreading the word about how the gift of a wheelchair can impact lives and soften hearts to understand God’s love and care, I expect the ministry to grow. I expect more donations of both finances and equipment to come in, and more volunteers to recondition the chairs and help with office work, grant writing and publicity.

Volunteers are the most important part of Wheels of Hope. They recondition 95% of the wheelchairs we distribute. I would be able to train new local volunteers. Our Board of Directors is all volunteer: from the treasurer who keeps our books to the secretary who maintains our website, to members who simply spread the word and pray. I would like to see an increase in board members to help direct Wheels of Hope, share the work and vision, and pray.

I would also work to help write grant proposals for supporting disabled people in the countries where we set up repair shops; and for obtaining gifts-in-kind here, such as a new trailer, an overseas shipping fund, office space, etc.

With the increase of reconditioned equipment to distribute, we can supply more to partnering ministries. The result would be more opportunities to share the gospel either directly or via other ministries, and eventually, a growing need for in-country repair shops.

Seating technicians, physical therapists, and others would have more opportunities to establish repair shops in developing countries. Wheels of Hope would have increased funds to employ the disabled people they train in developing nations to recondition equipment, such as Juan Carlos Gomez, who is our full-time employee in Honduras.

The end result: more lives will be reached and touched and transformed through Wheels of Hope! I have a vision to see people with all types of disabilities not having to rely on hand-outs or the government. People with disabilities in developing countries are the last to receive help. I dream of a Christian-centered community with mostly disabled people providing for their own
Collection update
In the spring of 2002, Invacare Corporation (a wheelchair manufacturer in Elyria) suddenly stopped giving donations. Because wheelchairs from an employee wheelchair-lending program showed up for sale at a flea market, Invacare made a policy not to give any equipment away. In the year preceding this shutdown, we received over 900 wheelchairs from Invacare. With no donations over the next nine months, it looked like the end for this source of blessing.

During this time, Patrick Rimke spoke with Ron Thomas, seeking his help to get equipment again. Out of the blue, Patrick got voice mail from Ron, saying he would be in Canton the next day.

Patrick went down that day to help Karen Schreena (Hope in Motion) load a truck of sport wheelchairs for Guatemala. She had driven over from Indiana. That morning, Doug Tell, our Thailand Director, who was home for his grandmother’s funeral, called to see if he could stop by to pick up some footrests for Thailand. All this was unusual, because the warehouse is usually closed on Thursdays.

The Lord was up to something that no human could orchestrate. Ron and David Flynn dropped in, just in time to see a truck loaded with equipment for Guatemala. Then Gene Shishler showed up with a fresh load of donated chairs from Invacare! Doug was gathering footrests. These men were very favorably impressed with the amount of Invacare “product” we were actively receiving and redistributing to the far corners of the earth!

During lunch, Ron and David got to hear first-hand overseas accounts of how Invacare equipment changes lives. Wheels of Hope presentations don’t get any better than that! We were truly humbled by how God moved to bring it all together.

Since that meeting, Ron and David have slowly reestablished donations to Wheels of Hope, in spite of the “No donations” policy ... even with another crisis in 2003.

Corporate Relations had received a letter from Thailand, addressed to Invacare’s CEO. The author had severely criticized Doug Tell of religious proselytizing. This gentleman was reacting to the Christian literature and Bibles that the Thai Buddhist government allows Pioneers of Hope to distribute with the wheelchairs and equipment. However, this misunderstanding became an opportunity for Invacare to interview the Thai professionals that Doug works with. All acknowledged Doug’s faith as his prime motivator to serve the disabled. For four years, Doug and the Pioneers team in Chiang Mai have meticulously inventoried every shipment, and helped with every distribution, winning the favor of the government officials involved. These Thai professionals had nothing but praise to offer on behalf of Doug and the program.

We praise the Lord for Invacare’s reply to our accuser: “Wheels of Hope has the full support of the Thai government, and Invacare Corporation supports their efforts whole heartedly in helping people with disabilities in Thailand.”

In the end, instead of losing all credibility and donations, God used this letter to give Wheels of Hope more integrity in the eyes of the decision makers at Invacare.

The future? Expand resources—Wheels of Hope recognizes the providence of God in providing wheelchairs from many different sources, and hopes to expand collection from all of them, including: home medical supply stores; rehabilitation hospitals and schools; nursing homes, hospitals and individuals.

Private donors are our most enthusiastic contributors. Often, a children’s chair comes from the family of a young patient who has outgrown it. Or a family loses an elderly parent, and learns that we collect equipment for those less fortunate. These families feel blessed to become a blessing to others with their equipment.

Spread the word!
If you know of someone who has a wheelchair, or someone who works for a home medical store or rehab school or hospital, please let them know that Wheels of Hope will accept donations and recondition them for those who would otherwise do without.

Have them contact Patrick or Lynda Rimke at home at 330-794-0815 or e-mail Patrick at patrick@wheelsofhope.org.

Director’s Vision —continued from page 1
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support. I see them repairing, building, selling and giving away wheelchairs, growing food or coffee for sale, creating artwork in many different media. Most importantly, I see men with disabilities becoming pastors and training other pastors, both able-bodied and disabled.

We share this dream for Bolivia with Friends of the Disabled. They have plan for building a rehab center and training facility for disabled people. They have the building plans drawn and are applying for funds to accomplish this. They also will help us train and envision disabled and able-bodied Hondurans to achieve the same dream though our repair shop in Santa Rosa.

Please pray for me, that I might have the right mix of wisdom and faith to move Wheels of Hope forward into all the work that the Lord has ordained on behalf of the hurting world He loves.
Bolivia - Friends of the Disabled

In June of 2003, Patrick helped distribute 90 wheelchairs with Friends of the Disabled, training physical therapists in proper selection and fitting. During the previous year, Judy and Alberto Nunez had given a seminar about disability in Santa Cruz. Afterward, the host church caught the vision and made great efforts to welcome the disabled. They installed ramps, remolded bathrooms and started reaching out to the disabled in and outside the city. The result? Over 160 people came to receive walkers, crutches, canes or wheelchairs. Of these 160 people, 109 made professions of faith, or renewed their walk with the Lord.

We shipped 155 wheelchairs to Bolivia in September of this year: 82 from Wheels of Hope and 42 from Friends of the Disabled, along with crutches and walkers and related equipment. A team of volunteers from Friends of the Disabled joined with Doug Tell and volunteers from his Adult Bible Fellowship at Chapel in Green. We loaded a 40-foot container in only 1.5 hours! This load will be distributed by Friends of the Disabled in November, during Thanksgiving week. What a Thanksgiving it will be for those who receive mobility, and the message of the hope that we have in Jesus!

Thailand - Pioneers of Hope

We are preparing more wheelchairs to ship to Thailand in early January. Doug Tell is currently in Ohio on furlough and would like to help unload it here, and then be able to help unload it in Thailand in early March. At the present time, we have almost 75 chairs ready. We would like to ship 25 children's chairs but we don’t get many of these. Please pray that we get more in time.

Doug relates: "To date (since 2000), we have received and distributed seven, forty-foot containers full of medical aid for the poor and needy... it is a joy to share with the people who are difficult to reach...

Government workers are very interested in hearing why we do this work. I have lots of opportunities to share with them, as well as with disabled, poor people and their caregivers. The message is simple, but powerful. We do this work because we are Christians, thankful to our God, Yahweh, and for what Jesus did for us. Then I share the Gospel.

"2 Corinthians 4:5 states: 'For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.' This verse may be short, but has a wealth of meaning, and is a powerful basis for our work among the Thai people through the wheelchair project."

Doug shares one highlight, Aak’s story: "About a year and a half ago, my mom and I visited Aak and his wife, Jinda, at their home. After only about two months of weekly visitation, I led them both to the Lord, though is was hard to tell if they really understood. Especially in light of the fact that Aak can’t speak or write (due to his stroke), I had no way of hearing back from him. But they did accept the Lord; though it took an additional two months before they took all the idols out of their home.

"At that time, Aak couldn’t sit on a motorcycle, their only means of transportation; so I began taking them to church on Sunday mornings... Amazingly enough, they not only went to worship and to have lunch at the church, they also climbed to the second floor in the afternoon to study the Bible!

“They continued this for many months before they began a cell group in their home. They are the only believers in their neighborhood. They now meet each Friday, led by a member of their church. This story began with the giving of a wheelchair to Aak. Praise the Lord!”

Of the thousands who have received equipment, Aak has sought the reason for the compassion behind the gift. We commend Doug for making himself available in the spirit of I Peter 3:16 which says "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give the reason for the hope that you have, with all gentleness and respect.”

Honduras - Teletón and CAMO

In the spring of 2003, Patrick and Lynda Rimke were privileged to host Pat and Sarah Simons as volunteers
in Honduras. Sarah was first inspired to collect wheelchairs when she heard Joni Eareckson Tada talk about the need on the radio. Sarah has been collecting wheelchairs, and Pat has helped deliver them to the Canton warehouse ever since.

Although wheelchairs are given away weekly from our Teletón repair shop in Santa Rosa, Pat and Sarah got to experience more than just giving away a wheelchair. They experienced first hand, the daily struggles that Hondurans face.

Sarah was quickly invited by CAMO to work in the town hospital. A team member encouraged her to visit a young, female patient who had no desire to walk. By the end of the week, the patient was walking, thanks to Sarah’s heartfelt prayers and tender encouragement.

Tragedy struck the family of our translator, Nuria, the day we arrived. Patrick and Lynda shed tears with Nuria as she grieved the sudden loss of her father and uncle in a terrible accident. They watched the community rally to this family’s side, visiting them daily for a week of collective sorrow. They witnessed the local Pastor’s Association empty their pockets to help with the family’s sudden expenses. On the last day, they saw the owners of a private, Christian school offer free tuition to Nuria’s nine younger siblings.

Without a translator, conversation became rather entertaining between the team and our employee, Juan Carlos, and his boss, Oswaldo. Somehow we managed to understand that Juan had been working 6-hour days for four hours’ pay over the last several months. Juan Carlos received a well-earned bonus that week. Once home, we sought our Board of Directors for a full-time salary. Juan Carlos has worked full-time from July of 2003 to the present.

Recent reports from CAMO’s director, Kathy Tschiegg, have indicated a change in objectives for Juan Carlos’ work. Teletón is now receiving a record number of wheelchairs in need of repair. So, instead of reconditioning wheelchairs that we supply, Juan is busy keeping already distributed wheelchairs spinning for recipients in the area. We would like to hire a helper for Juan, so that reconditioning could continue. About 50 wheelchairs are awaiting reconditioning in the shop.

Kathy has utilized another resource, the Joni and Friends: Wheels for the World program in Ohio, to provide already reconditioned wheelchairs to Honduras. The Joni and Friends Ohio Area Director, Margaret Matasik, has been on past Wheels of Hope/CAMO missions trips and helped train Teletón’s physical therapists during past distributions. We are thankful that Margaret can help fill the endless need for wheelchairs in Honduras with wheelchairs that have been reconditioned in U.S. prisons.

We look forward to returning to Honduras in the spring of 2005 with Judy and Alberto Nunez (Friends of the Disabled.) Judy specializes in training local churches to continue to minister beyond the gift of a wheelchair. She will speak to the Pastor’s Association, and conduct a seminar to train lay people as disability advocates. Please pray with us for community transformation in Santa Rosa, similar to what has already taken place in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. We desire to see many churches redirect priorities to touch those with special needs, giving birth to a covenantal disability community, where believers can love one another as Jesus has first loved each and every one of us.

Hope in Motion

Created by Patrick and Lynda Rimke for Wheels of Hope, a registered tax-exempt non-profit founded in 1997 to redistribute medical equipment to the needy in the world’s developing nations.

Learn more at www.wheelsofhope.org
Write us at 1942 Oakes Drive, Akron, Ohio 44312 or e-mail Patrick Rimke at patrick@wheelsofhope.org
This newsletter can also be freely downloaded from our website: www.wheelsofhope.org