

THE MISSION: Provide wheelchairs to individuals who do not qualify for other assistance, and who could not obtain such equipment without financial aid.

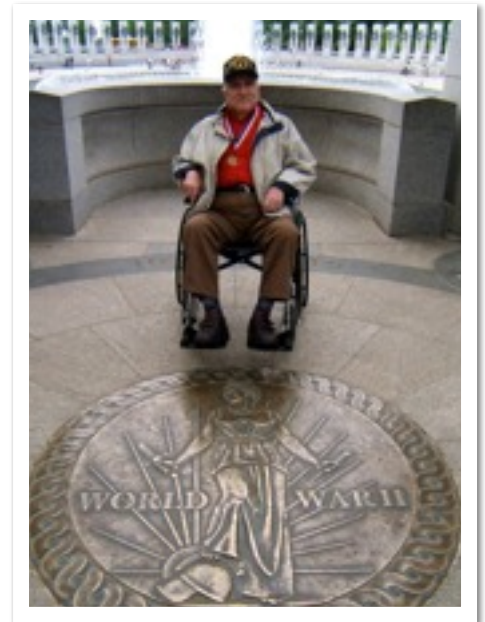
Assisting over 1,000 times!

This summer marked an important milestone for Alternatives in Motion. In July we were able to provide mobility assistance for the 1,000th time. In fact we're now up to 1,048...but who's counting? So what does this milestone mean?

During our early years, Alternatives in Motion raised money to purchase brand new manual and power wheelchairs for individuals in need. At the time keeping track of how many people received assistance was as easy as counting the number of chairs donated to individuals each year. Since then the organization has evolved by developing a unique wheelchair donation program that has reduced costs and allowed us to offer assistance in many other ways. Instead of just providing manual wheelchairs and power wheelchairs we started donating walkers, scooters, tub/shower benches, and other mobility aids that make life easier for individuals with disabilities. As time went on we began receiving calls from previous recipients in need of routine maintenance or repairs to the equipment originally provided by Alternatives in Motion.

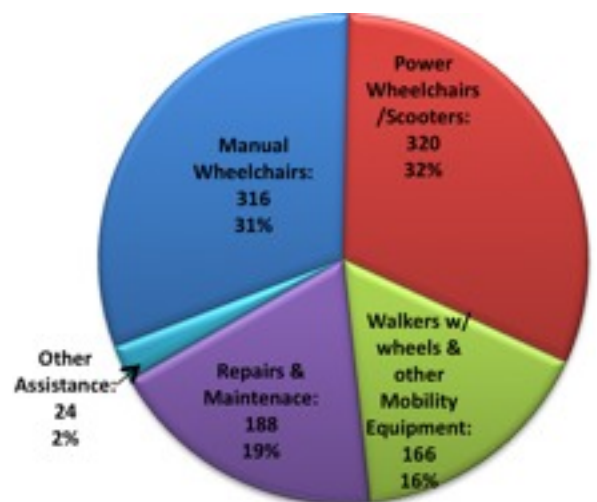
As our mobility equipment knowledge, and inventory of new and gently used mobility equipment continues to grow, we are able to do many of these repairs in house at a substantially reduced price that allows us to better utilize our resources. Today, instead of just counting the number of wheelchairs we have placed, we also keep track of the number of times we assist each individual with their mobility needs. This is an important statistic in the big picture of things because it demonstrates our commitment to not only getting people mobile but keeping them mobile as well. After all a broken wheelchair is about as useful as not having a wheelchair at all.

This year, former wheelchair recipient Andrew Iciek graciously volunteered over 400 hours of his time to go through every recipient record since Alternatives in Motion was founded in 1995. His work was amazing. Most notably Andrew determined that we have assisted 673 total individuals from 133 Michigan cities and 21 other states! Interestingly enough as he dug further into the files he determined there were 153 individuals that received assistance two or more times. One recipient has been helped 17 times with routine repairs and maintenance to keep his wheelchair in motion. These individuals represent 43 different medically diagnosed disabilities and range in age from 11 months to 95 years old! It is only with the generous help and support of our donors that this amazing milestone is possible. Thank You!



Bernard Salas, sits in a manual wheelchair, borrowed from Alternatives in Motion, at the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC.

Assistance by Type:



Life on the Farm

By Matt Chapman

Every now and then life has a way of introducing you to people who make you stop dead in your tracks and look at things from a different perspective. For me, that person was Ellen, one of our recent recipients in Northern, MI who needed a rugged power wheelchair that could withstand daily use on her small farm. With the wheelchair delivery taken care of by Wright & Filippis, I made arrangements to stop by Ellen's house one weekend on my way up to Traverse City. I had talked to her on the phone a few times and was excited to meet her.

I figured it would be a short visit and I'd be back on my way north. After a tour of the farm, the gardens, and a few minutes of chasing her chickens around the yard, she invited my wife and I inside for a glass of iced tea and a piece of fresh zucchini bread. We talked for a long time and throughout our entire conversation she kept reiterating how thankful she was for the chair. The next Monday she called me crying and said, "I feel terrible because I didn't even tell you that the only reason I can do all this stuff on my farm because of the wheelchair." I was touched by her compassion and told her that she didn't need to tell me that because I already knew. After all, that is the reason for our mission!

It was a great visit and Ellen made sure to load us up with farm fresh eggs, cucumbers, and zucchini before we left. Since receiving the wheelchair, Ellen has made three donations to Alternatives in Motion to show her thanks for our organization, a touching show of support from a very special recipient.

Mobility in The Republic of Malawi

Some of our longtime friends and supporters may remember hearing of how we helped Clement, a native of Malawi (Southeast Africa) in 1998 and then again in 2006. Clement has had some amazing accomplishments since we initially helped him out.

Campaigning from his wheelchair he was elected to parliament and became a minister in the government of Malawi. From there he has been spearheading projects to dig new wells, buying a herd of cows, and teaching the members of his village how to grow and distribute their food.

Through his dear friends Jim and Sandy Rademaker, from The Malawi Connection in Grand Rapids, Clement asked for a small power wheelchair to improve his mobility around the huge parliament building and to use in his village. Jim and Sandy agreed to deliver the wheelchair on their upcoming trip to Malawi and taught Clement how to use it, how to charge it, and how to make any necessary repairs in the event of an equipment malfunction.

In Early November, Jim and Sandy sent back these pictures of Clement. The smile on his face tells us everything we need to know! While 99% of our wheelchair placements take place inside the U.S., with the majority being in west MI, it is an honor to be able to help Clement because of his strong ties to Grand Rapids and his huge heart for the residents of Malawi. There is no doubt that with the help of his new power wheelchair, Clement will continue to *Move the People of Malawi Forward!*



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Mackinac Bridge Walk, 32 Years & Counting

In 1972 Marv started a tradition of walking the Mackinac Bridge on Labor Day. Since then he has participated in the event a total of 32 times. In fact, he's so proud of his tradition he has a custom license plate and a decal on the back of his truck with each of the years he walked the bridge. With his enthusiasm for the event, you can imagine how he must have felt when he was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a serious disorder that mistakenly attacks part of the nervous system causing muscle weakness and paralysis.

Despite being able to walk short distances, Marv wasn't sure he was strong enough to make the trek across the Straights of Mackinac. After getting permission from the Mackinac Bridge Authority to bring a power scooter to the event, Marv called Alternatives in Motion to see if we could help. We had one scooter left in our warehouse, so with a new set of batteries, and a little bit of hesitation, we sent Marv on his way north hoping the scooter would make the five mile journey without breaking down. A few weeks after the event, Marv returned the scooter and said it worked great! It was a proud moment for our staff when Marv showed us the year 2011 had been added to the back of his truck. We were happy to help Marv keep his streak alive for another year!



Marv, with his family, and about 30,000 other friends, behind him at the 2011 Mackinac Bridge Walk



Joyce

Two weeks before the start of ArtPrize 2011 Joyce contacted Alternatives in Motion to see if we could repair a wheelchair she received after a friend passed away. Her insurance wouldn't cover the cost of the repairs on the chair because they did not initially purchase the chair for her. Joyce wanted the chair fixed so she could leave her apartment in downtown Grand Rapids and travel to one of the many ArtPrize venues in her neighborhood.

We looked at Joyce's chair and determined there was a problem with one of the motors, a costly repair that would not have been possible had we not had an inventory of old motors in our warehouse. We replaced the motor and got it back to Joyce just before ArtPrize. Unfortunately, a few weeks later one of the motors again went bad, this time causing permanent damage to the chair. Thankfully a generous family had just donated an almost brand new power wheelchair that was exactly like the one Joyce received from her friend. We recycled her old chair and delivered the new chair to her apartment. Joyce was very happy to have a working chair again and uses it to travel to doctors appointments, restaurants, and the Goodwill store near her home. This is just one more example of how we are "Moving People Forward" through used equipment donations!



A Manual Wheelchair for Church,

By George Ranville

Early this summer we received a hand scribbled application for a wheelchair from Michael in Alexandria, Virginia – a long way from our Grand Rapids operating base. Liz filed it away, thinking that a delivery to Virginia would be too expensive to happen. But, as things turned out, my daughter landed an internship in the Washington DC area and would be living with friends in Alexandria.

Liz pulled Michael's application from the file, with barely legible handwriting. I had to guess at what his phone number was but I dialed my best guess, and I got Michael on the line the day before leaving for DC. He was difficult to understand but I was able to determine he has Parkinson's (explaining illegible

handwriting), and that yes, he still needed a foldable wheelchair. I packed a wheelchair, that would hopefully fit Michael, into one of the cars, and we headed east.

After unpacking my daughter into her new living quarters, the only thing left in the car was the wheelchair scheduled for delivery the next morning. I gave Michael a confirming phone call and headed off to his address just off Glebe Road. A friend answered the door and I met Michael's wife and chatted with her in the living room. After about 10 minutes, Michael made it down the stairs. With a grin he sat down in the wheelchair and it fit him perfectly!

Regarding funding, Michael stated his request for a manual wheelchair had been denied after he had been provided with a walker earlier in the year. Unfortunately his physical ability had deteriorated too much to use a walker – he now needed the wheelchair. His research on the internet for help led him to Alternatives in Motion. When I asked him where he would go with his wheelchair he happily answered "to church on Sunday!" We at Alternatives in Motion were more than happy to be a part of getting Michael Epstein to his local Baptist Church on Sunday, 700 miles away in Virginia.

2012 Wish List:

Below is a list items that would be a tremendous benefit to our organization. Please call (616) 493-2620 if you have an item you would like donate. Thank you for your support!

- Used Van w/ Wheelchair Ramp or Power Lift in Good Condition
- Master Appliance Butane Solder Iron (UltraTorch, UT-100SI)
- Cordless Electric Drill (Drill bits, Socket bits, Screw bits, etc)
- Husky Large Tool Bag or Tool Tote
- Stackable Plastic Tubs/Containers
- Cleaning Supplies. (Disinfectant, scrub brushes, magic erasers, etc.)
- Compact Electric Upholstery Cleaner
- (2) New or Gently Used MacBook Pro Laptop or iMac Desktop Computers
- (1) New or Gently Used Laptop or Desktop Running Microsoft Windows 7 or Windows XP Professional (2009 or newer)
- Multi Line Small Business Phone System (Call for more information)
- Volunteers to help with our wheelchair recycling efforts
- Digital Projector w/ Screen



With the help of her new power wheelchair, Sandra was off to the store by herself for the first time in months

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