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NEW MOBILITY

2021 CONSUMER GUIDE:

How to Reinvent Yourself



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Paul Moran

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CONSUMER GUIDE

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The smarter technology gets, the more overwhelming it is. But the right products and setups put you back in control of your home and hobbies. MIKE FRANZ offers some choices to get you started.

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Sometimes the most useful gadget is also the simplest one with the least moving parts. Engineer STEFAN HENRY shares his strategies for finding the best tools to make everyday life smoother and more enjoyable.

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Get fit without breaking the bank. BEN CLARK draws on his 10 years of experience creating YouTube adaptive fitness videos and budget-friendly workout solutions.

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**NEW MOBILITY IS THE
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**PRESIDENT & CEO: VINCENZO PISCOPO
VP OF PUBLICATIONS: JEAN DOBBS**

EDITORIAL

**PUBLISHER: JEAN DOBBS
EXECUTIVE EDITOR: JOSIE BYZEK
EDITOR: IAN RUDER
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: SETH MCBRIDE
EDITOR EMERITUS: TIM GILMER
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT: BOB VOGEL
CORRESPONDENT: AARON BROVERMAN**

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Toll-free 800/404-2898, ext. 7203

ADVERTISING SALES

718/803-3782
MANAGER, CORPORATE RELATIONS:
MEGAN LEE, EXT. 7253
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BULLY PULPIT

By Ian Ruder

REINVENTING YOURSELF

When our staff was thinking about themes for this year's consumer guide, two ideas kept finding their way back into the discussion: reinventing yourself and getting out of a rut. The two seemed to go hand-in-hand and are a perfect fit for our final issue of 2020.

After a year that has often felt like a never-ending rut, we're all ready to dig our way back to some sense of normalcy. It turns out that nine months of off-and-on quarantines, political unrest and natural disasters can wear you down. Who knew?

It's funny to think back on the early days of the pandemic when lots of people — myself included — tried to find a silver lining in the increased time for self-improvement. Little could we have known that between balancing personal care, mental health and all the unpredictable necessities of day-to-day life, finding time for anything but survival would feel like an accomplishment.

Nine months later, I have cleaned every cabinet and every corner of my home, cooked all the recipes that had been gathering dust in the "try some day" file and gone through more kitschy Zoom backgrounds than anyone should in a lifetime. And that's not even touching on how much I would love to go to a live concert or get together with all my friends. Hell, I'd give anything to watch a cheesy summer movie in a packed theater.

Every new year promises a clean slate, but on the heels of what we've been through, 2021 feels especially opportune for fresh starts. Until a vaccine arrives, our hands are somewhat tied. But if you feel like you're finally ready for something new after nine months of monotony, we've got you covered.

To inspire you and to personalize our consumer guide, we broke down our annual product listings into seven categories and asked a peer from our community to

help each section. Some of these experts are familiar New Mobility contributors, others have established their expertise elsewhere, and a few are writing for the first time. Think of them as guides to the Consumer Guide.

What unites these guides — and what I think makes this issue stand out from previous consumer guides — is their ability to tap in to their lived experiences and draw out insights that we can apply to improve our lives. One of the guiding tenets of New Mobility is that nobody knows mobility

"I can't imagine where I'd be today if not for the countless ideas and suggestions I've received from fellow wheelchair users."

disability better than the people who live it, and I believe this new format embodies that approach.

None of our guides are trying to sell you anything, or convince you to buy a specific product. They're simply trying to share products and ideas that have worked for them in the hope that they might inspire or make a difference for you.

I can't imagine where I'd be today if not for the countless ideas and suggestions I've received from fellow wheelchair users. I've heard the same from enough of my friends in the community to know that our collective knowledge is one of our greatest strengths.

I'm equally certain that after 2020's relentless barrage, we can use all the strength available to us. I hope something in this issue — be it a product or a piece of advice — inspires you to do that thing you've been putting off or make the upgrade you've been debating.

NEWS FROM UNITED SPINAL

UNITED SPINAL APPOINTS NEW CEO

On October 27, United Spinal Association's board of directors appointed Vincenzo (Enzo) Piscopo president and CEO. Piscopo, an experienced professional in diversity, inclusion and social causes, began his tenure on November 16. He replaces James Weisman, who is retiring after 41 years of service to the disability community as an advocate for disability rights and accessible transportation. "As we approach our 75th Anniversary next year, we are grateful to have Enzo continue United Spinal's legacy of providing our members programs and services that maximize their independence and enable them to remain active in their communities," says Weisman.

Piscopo, a wheelchair user who was paralyzed from a herniated disk in 2010, previously worked at The Coca-Cola Company for 25 years in a variety of strategic roles both in the U.S. and internationally. In his most recent position as the community and stakeholder relations director at Coca-Cola, Piscopo managed and cultivated company relationships with disability, veteran and Hispanic organizations and advocates for these communities.

"With the help of United Spinal's talented staff and dedicated chapter leaders, I remain committed to advancing opportunities for people with disabilities, strengthening their voice and empowering them to have a positive impact in their community," Piscopo says. "I'm looking forward to building on the amazing work Jim did to take this organization to the next level."

Piscopo has based much of his work on the belief that people with disabilities are assets for corporations because of their resilience, perseverance and creative problem-solving skills. "For corporations to hire us is not only right, but also smart," he says.

Piscopo is also the founder and former executive director of the Wheels of Happiness Foundation, which helps people with motor disabilities in disadvantaged areas of the world. He now sits on the board of directors of the organization, as well as on the boards of Respectability and Friends of Disabled Adults and Children. Born in Venezuela to Italian immigrants, Piscopo lives with his wife and two of their four children in Atlanta. He has a bachelor's degree in economics, an MBA from Carnegie Mellon University, and a master's in creativity from Buffalo State College.



Vincenzo Piscopo with his service dog, Martina.

COLUMNISTS

MAT BARTON • JOSH BASILE
SHERI DENKENSOHN • MIKE ERVIN
MIKE FRANZ • BROOK MCCALL
TEAL SHERER • TODD STABELFELDT
REVECA TORRES • KATE WILLETTE
KARY WRIGHT

CONTRIBUTORS

KIM ANDERSON • CHRISTIAAN BAILEY
LAWRENCE CARTER-LONG
MICHAEL COLLINS • RORY COOPER
DEBORAH DAVIS • JENNIFER FRENCH
ALEX GHENIS • RICHARD HOLICKY
GARY KARP • PAULA LARSON
REGAN LINTON • LILLY LONGSHORE
KATE MATELAN • BEN MATTLIN
ASHLEY LYN OLSON • KENNY SALVINI
ERIC STAMPFLI • MITCH TEPPER
ANTHONY TUSLER • KIRK WILLIAMS
CORY LEE WOODARD
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BACKBONES helps people with SCI/D and their families connect with their communities by creating events and experiences that promote awareness and engage people of all abilities.
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unitedspinal.org/our-story

ALLTRACK SERIES

Life is unpredictable...
Your mobility devices
shouldn't be.

NEW COLOR SCHEME

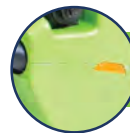
Coming December 2020, Amylior will unveil a brand-new color scheme for the entire Alltrack Series! All models will feature a sleek black frame and a vibrant new palette of painted shrouds.



Cobalt Blue



Habanero Metallic



Sublime



Bubble Gum Metallic



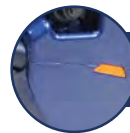
Candy Red



Onyx Black Matte



Cabernet



Indigo Blue



Scan for more information



TECHNOLOGY

The tools you need to work and play hard.

“A lot of things have changed over the course of the past two decades when it comes to technology. One area where this is especially true is the evolution of smart home technology.”

A C5-6 quad who lives in Michigan, Mike Franz has a degree in political science and a paralegal certification from Oakland University. He is a freelance writer and dedicated fan of the Detroit Lions, Tigers, Pistons, and Red Wings.





MAKING TECHNOLOGY Work For YOU

BY MICHAEL FRANZ

I've been fascinated by technology my entire life. I'm the guy who needs to read about and buy all the new gadgets as soon as they are available. After my spinal cord injury, technology took on an entirely new role for me. I was still interested in all of the new stuff, but now I wanted to find ways that it could make my life easier.

My first experience with how technology could help me in my post-SCI journey occurred while I was still in the hospital following my accident. I was 16 years old and planning on returning to school about a month after discharge. The thought of going back to my classes was daunting for many reasons, including figuring out how I would get my

work done. I could barely turn a page in a book — how was I going to be able to put my thoughts and answers on paper?

DRAGON NATURALLY SPEAKING

Dragon NaturallySpeaking is voice recognition software that works with Windows computers and allows the user to type using only their voice. It is the first piece of technology I recommend to someone who is newly injured, as it can be their key to regaining independence, completing school, finding a job, or simply posting on social media. With so much of the world being digital, it is important to find a way to be able to participate, and Dragon allows anybody to join in.

The technology specialists in my rehab's engineering department introduced me to Dragon. The first editions were relatively slow, inaccurate and somewhat frustrating to use. It took several hours to train the computer to learn my voice and for me to dictate effectively. For those who have never used dictation software, it can be challenging to learn how to speak what you would normally write or type. Fortunately, over the years, computers have gotten more powerful, and Dragon has gotten faster and more accurate. Now when I dictate, the words appear almost instantaneously, and most of the errors that occur are typically my fault instead of the computer's.

Dragon has made so many things possible for me personally, academically and professionally. I have used it to write everything from short emails to 30-page term papers, and without it



Mike Franz loves playing *The Legend of Zelda* with his Xbox Adaptive Controller.



ABILITIES EXPO

Available from Abilities Expo
323/363-2099 or abilities.com

Featured annually in eight North American cities, the free, three-day Expos provide the disability community with access to the latest products, cutting-edge tech, resources, informative workshops and adaptive activities like sports, dance, service dogs demos and so much more. Abilities live events and online resources are designed to help individuals with disabilities increase their independence and push their limits.

Abilities EXPO



MOUNT'N MOVER MOUNTING SYSTEMS

Available from BlueSky Designs
612/724-7002 or mountnmover.com

The Mount'n Mover movable mounting systems offer unique features specifically designed to promote independence and access. Mount phones, trays, speech devices, laptops and cameras on wheelchairs, tables and more. From simple mounting solutions to our motorized Pow!r mount for complex needs — do more with a mount that moves!



E-Z PULL DOOR CLOSER

Available from Swervin Earl Productions Inc.
941/456-0815 or e-zpulldoor.com

An assistive device that allows wheelchair, walker and scooter users to close a door behind them when the doorknob is out of reach. Easy to install. Made from clear polycarbonate, so it blends in with any decor. Invented and produced by a T9 para vet!



GIRAFFE BOTTLE

Available from Giraffe Bottle
630/922-5010 or store.giraffebottle.com

The Giraffe Bottle Hands-Free Drinking System allows users with various abilities to stay hydrated. The system is designed to be flexible and easy to use. The solution is great for desks, wheelchairs, beds, tables and more. Helps people with disabilities, injuries or other conditions including cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis.





this article would have taken much longer to complete. The standard version of Dragon NaturallySpeaking is available for \$150 at shop.nuance.com.

XBOX ADAPTIVE CONTROLLER

Gaming is an activity that people of all ability levels can participate in and have fun doing. Whether someone is looking for a new hobby or trying to find a way to play again after their injury, the Xbox Adaptive Controller opens the world of video games to everybody.

I loved video games as a kid, and gaming was one of the things I missed the most after my injury. I tried to use some of the first sip-and-puff controllers but could never get the hang of them and quickly gave up. As I gained more strength and movement in my arms, I tried arcade-style joysticks with varying degrees of success, but none ever allowed me to play what I wanted anywhere near as well as I wanted. Gaming became something I thought I would never fully enjoy again.

“Dragon has made so many things possible for me personally, academically and professionally.”

When Microsoft introduced the Xbox Adaptive Controller in 2018, I knew it would be a game changer for me and many others with disabilities, as it provides a foundation for gamers to customize a controller to suit any need they may have. The base controller is built with 19 3.5 mm jacks that can be connected to a wide variety of third-party devices that allow the gamer to play. Whether the player needs large or small buttons, different sized joysticks,

or unique arrangements to accommodate strength or mobility differences, nearly anything is possible.

In addition to the versatility in how it can be customized, the Xbox Adaptive Controller works with a variety of platforms. Although it is officially meant to pair with the Xbox and PC, there are adapters that allow it to be used with Sony PlayStation and Nintendo Switch. I was able to hack my controller for the Nintendo Switch so I could play the most recent edition of the Legend of Zelda — my favorite game series — which I had not been able to play for almost 20 years.

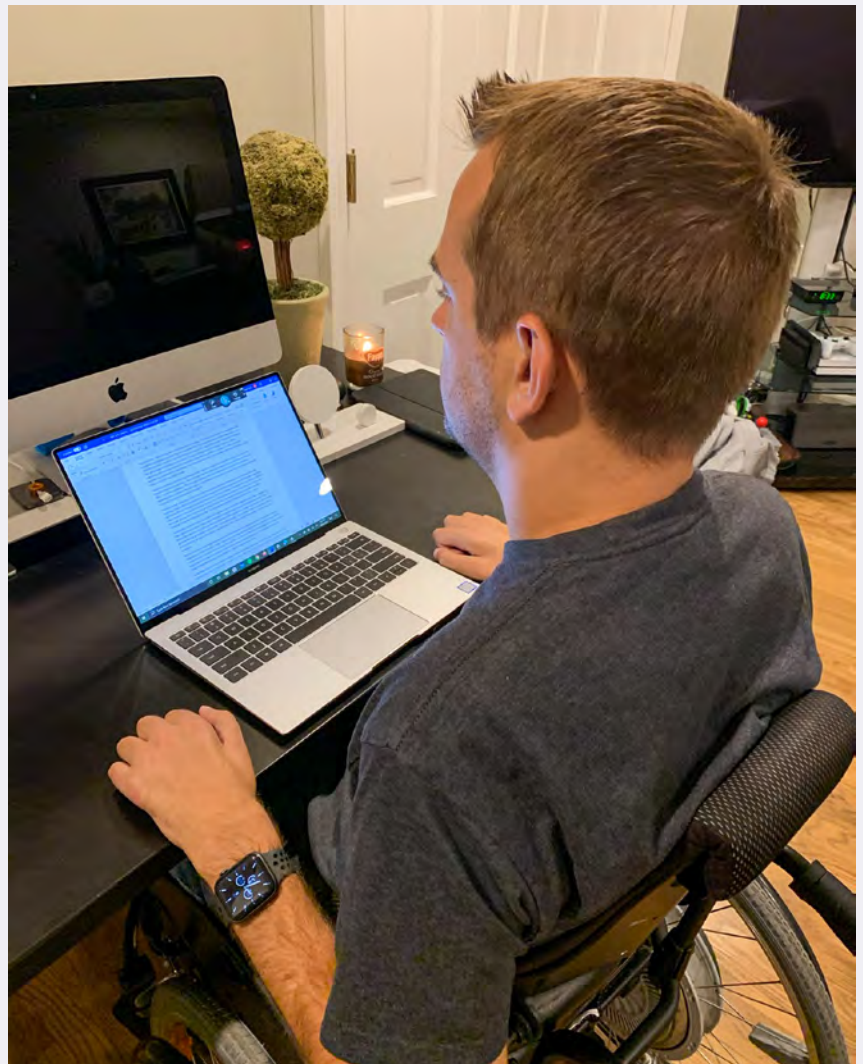
Video games and esports offer many opportunities for disabled gamers to join online communities and compete with peers or simply have fun with their

friends and family. Disabled gamers have both joined and formed professional esports teams as well as competed individually and found success in tournaments. Personally, I have spent many hours playing games online with my dad and siblings, especially since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Although there have been times when I have probably spent too much time playing a game, I am beyond happy to have the opportunity to do so.

The Xbox Adaptive Controller is available from Microsoft and various retailers for \$99.99.

SMART HOME DEVICES

A lot of things have changed over the course of the past two decades when it



Franz writes using Dragon NaturallySpeaking.



JAMB HANDLE

Available from ALBS Products
951/309-9292 or albsproducts.com

The Jamb Handle is a new door hardware design that enables the closing of doors from the opposite side of the door frame with little effort and reduces the risk of falling or banging up the door while trying to pull it closed behind you.



LUCI

Available from LUCI
800/621-5824 or luci.com

LUCI is the first true smart technology accessory for power wheelchairs. By adding hardware and software to riders' new and existing power chairs, LUCI enables wheelchairs to "see" their environment and prevent tips, collisions and falls before they happen. The result is unparalleled stability, security and connectivity.



MODULAR METAL MOUNTING ARM KIT

Available from MOGO Mounts
630/922-5005 or mogomounts.com

The Modular Metal Mounting Kit from MOGO Mounts provides a rigid arm support system that is perfect for wheelchair or powerchair device mounting. The flexible joints lock arm-segments into place and the modular metal system is perfect for medium-weight applications, such as tablets or small AAC devices. Shown with tablet holder and pro clamp, sold separately.



MODULARHOSE 12" PHONE HOLDER

Available from ModularHose, 630/922-5005 or modularhose.com/assistive-technology

The ModularHose Arm with Phone Holder is flexible and fits most phones with or without a case. Designed for devices 2.25" to 4" wide. The flexible arm can be adjusted and the length can be easily customized by adding and removing ModularHose pieces. Plus, the arm is compatible with a variety of ModularHose accessories.





KEEPMVN WHEELCHAIR MOBILE APP

Available from University of Pittsburgh
412/392-7374 or upmc-sci.pitt.edu/keepmvn

The University of Pittsburgh Model Center on Spinal Cord Injury has developed a free mobile app for your smartphone or tablet that allows you to record and track wheelchair breakdowns and repairs, as well as the distance traveled in your wheelchair. You may also be eligible to use the app as part of a research study and receive compensation.

WHEELCHAIR MAINTENANCE APP

We are interested in learning more about wheelchair repairs:

- What parts are failing?
- What maintenance are you doing yourself?
- How long does it take to get repairs completed?
- Are you facing consequences while you wait for repairs?

You may be eligible to participate in a research study using a wheelchair maintenance app and receive compensation for your time if you:

- 1) Use a wheelchair as your primary means of mobility



comes to technology. One area where this is especially true is the evolution of smart home technology. When I was newly injured in the early 2000s, smart home technology as we know it was still many years away. I had experimented

“I never imagined a day when I could independently control virtually every piece of electronic equipment in my house using my voice or smart phone.”

with environmental control units, but they were expensive, and although they were sophisticated for the time, they were quite limited in what they could do. I never imagined that there would soon be a day when I could independently control virtually every piece of electronic equipment in my house using my voice or smart phone.

Amazon Echo was released in March 2014, and I ordered one the first day it was available. The device that would soon be known colloquially as Alexa became the centerpiece of



CRT ADVOCACY

Available from NCART
716/839-9728 or ncart.us

NCART is a national non-profit association of suppliers and manufacturers of Complex Rehab Technology. The organization works to ensure that federal, state, and private coverage and reimbursement policies allow individuals with significant disabilities to have adequate access to the specialized and individually-configured CRT products and supporting services they depend on. Visit www.ncart.us for more information..



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a growing network of smart home devices that would make difficult tasks easy and impossible tasks possible once more. Using voice commands, I can control any compatible device from almost anywhere in my house. The days of needing to ask for help to adjust the thermostat or turn on a light were over.

One of the best smart home devices that I have purchased is the Nest Thermostat. It can be controlled either with Alexa or through the Nest app on my iPhone. For anyone with a spinal cord injury who struggles with regulating their temperature like I do, a smart thermostat is a priceless investment. After a short period, the thermostat learned my routine and how I adjust the temperature throughout the day. For example, in the colder months, the thermostat automatically turns the furnace on around 7:30 in the morning so it is warm enough for me to do my bowel program and shower. Nest also allows me to change the temperature from anywhere in the house. It may be hard to understand the importance of temperature control when your temperature regulates itself normally, but being able to control the thermostat has greatly improved my quality of life.

Much like controlling a thermostat, turning a light on or off is something most people take for granted. Before smart switches and smart plugs were available, there were countless times when I was lying in bed and needed

someone to flip the switch for me. Now, with devices like the Leviton Smart Switch, and the wide variety of smart plugs on the market, it is simple to control everything from ceiling lights to desk lamps. Adding a smart switch or a smart plug is a cheap and easy way to make one's home safer and more accessible.

Building out a network of smart home devices is both fun and a good

way to rediscover independence. The beauty of smart home devices is that they are relatively affordable and can be purchased one at a time or all at once. Anyone looking to build a new home or modify an existing one should consider making their living space smart.

Smart home devices are manufactured by many companies and can be found at retailers like Amazon, Target and Walmart.

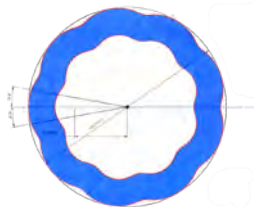
MI

ZCATH

Disclaimer - The Food and Drug Administration has not yet evaluated this product.



*Artistic Rendering



Cross-section view of interior and exterior scallops of Zcath's revolutionary design.

Awarded Multiple Patents in the USA and Europe

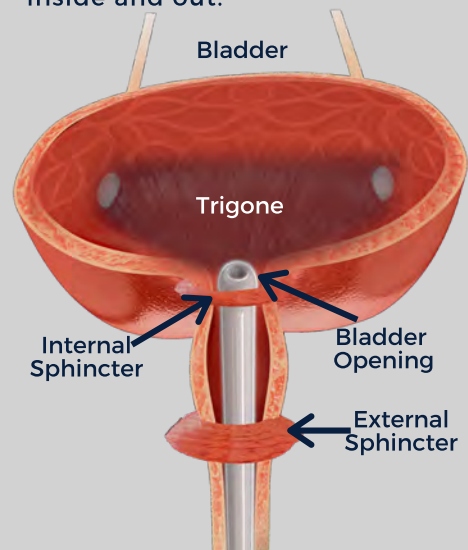
ZCATH DESIGN FEATURES:

The patented ZCATH catheter is a revolutionary intermittent urinary catheter with a molded open tip and a single entrance opening, which eliminates eyelets.

The opening has a smooth bulbous design.

Rounded smooth scallops reduce body contact and provide grooves for lubricant.

The entire catheter is molded inside and out.



The opening at the top allows the catheter to be located at the lowest part of the bladder.

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For **SAMPLES**, when they become available or to receive a call from Philip Dye, the Inventor and Founder of Zcath, Call 844-ZSAMPLE (844-972-6753).

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A woman with short dark hair, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt over a white t-shirt, is seated in a wheelchair. She is reaching up with her right arm to touch a yellow book on a tall blue metal shelving unit. She is looking up at the book with a hopeful expression. The background is a blurred hospital corridor with blue walls and doors.

Have you been told you have to “live” with your wound?

We offer hope.

PAM Specialty Hospital of Denver is a nationally recognized program with a **90% success rate in wound healing**. We focus on healing Stage 3 and 4 wounds that have been resistant to healing with traditional therapies – such as Wound Vac and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy.



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Contact admissions at 303.264.6800.
Learn more at PostAcuteMedical.com.

TOOLS

Innovative and adaptive gear to make doing what you love easier.

“The prospect of living independently or even just improving your quality of life can be super-daunting, but with the right tools, both are attainable.”

Stefan Henry is a mechanical engineer and businessman with a passion for helping people through innovation. A C5-6 quadriplegic, he cofounded Level the Curve to develop adaptive products for people with disabilities and is active in the New York City SCI community.



FIVE TOOLS to Increase Your INDEPENDENCE at Home

BY STEFAN HENRY



Stefan Henry and Eli Ramos co-founded Level the Curve to develop products for wheelchair users.

As a C5-6 quadriplegic who lives independently in New York City, I have a deep appreciation for tools that empower me to do the things I want to do and live the life I want to live. And as a mechanical engineer and the CEO of Level the Curve, a company focused on making adaptive products for people with disabilities, I'm constantly working to understand other people's needs and to devise solutions that address them.

A good tool doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. It just has to effectively do what you need it to. For example, one of the best tools I own is the wooden sliding board I use to transfer. I still have the same one I got when I left

rehab 15 years ago. It's such a simple device, but without it, I can't get out of bed.

I've always had a creative spark and a desire to invent things to help people, and when I got injured I shifted my focus to developing tools and solutions for people with disabilities. I saw the need for innovative solutions that didn't break the bank. It was disheartening that even seemingly simple cuffs and devices were often beyond my budget.

I got a degree in mechanical engineering and started Level the Curve with some friends to fix these problems. We focus on user-first and universal design and take pride in taking the time to talk with people to figure out their problems and how we can solve them.

Our EZ Adapt Eating Tool grew out of this philosophy. I saw that one of my good quad

EZ Adapt Eating Tool





friends was having a hard time holding utensils and eating. He needed something, I made it, and now he uses it all the time. That we came up with a solution that works for lots of other people too is an added benefit.

Following this same approach can help you find and devise the tools you need. You don't need a degree in mechanical engineering to come up with great solutions, and these days, thanks to the internet, it's easier than ever to connect with engineers and fabricators to bring your visions to life.

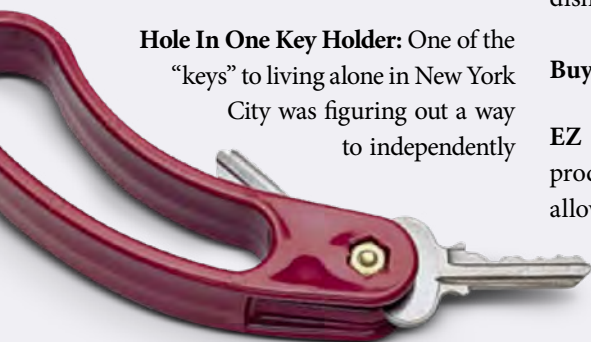
If you're having trouble finding tools that work for you, take advantage of all the knowledge and lived experience of



Homecraft Reflex Knife

our community. Find a mentor or a peer who has been rolling around longer than you and see what works for them and what they suggest. A good occupational therapist can also be a great source for finding that one-in-a-million object that you can only find on one website in the deepest, darkest corners of the internet.

The prospect of living independently or even just improving your quality of life can be super daunting, but with the right tools, both are attainable. Never stop working to make things better and always be on the lookout for problems that need fixing and tools that might get the job done. Here are five tools that have made a huge difference in my life.



Hole In One Key Holder

Hole In One Key Holder: One of the "keys" to living alone in New York City was figuring out a way to independently

access my house. Before I found the Ableware Hole In One Key Holder, sometimes it would take me half an hour to open the door or get my mail. Using this makes it easy to place and turn the key in the lock. If you can raise your arm and fit your hand inside the appropriate part you don't even need wrist function to be able to use it.

Buy It: <https://www.amazon.com/Ableware-Hole-In-One-Key-Holder-Red/dp/B00ETA8SY2>

Homecraft Reflex Knives: With my limited hand function, handling knives is hard and sometimes unsafe. The Homecraft Reflex knives solve that problem with an easy to grip, contoured handle, a sharp blade and a design that minimizes how much force you need to cut. The stainless steel knives are lightweight and can be used safely with one hand.

Buy It: <https://www.healthproductsforyou.com/p-homecraft-reflex-knives.html>

Kitchen Spread Board with Spikes: I've been cooking a lot in order to save money and be safer during quarantine, and this spiked cutting board has been essential. Holding food down and cutting is really difficult for me, as I can't put much pressure downwards and whatever I'm cutting is constantly sliding around. The spikes hold whatever I need to cut — like onions, chicken or apples — and make it much easier for me to make dishes, like my signature garlic shrimp.

Buy It: bit.ly/39hmVSy

EZ Adapt Eating Tool: The signature product of my company's EZ Adapt line allows anyone with limited dexterity to independently use an array of utensils without any assistance. The design was inspired by the needs of my quad friends who

wanted something functional, affordable and sleek. With our eating tool I can place utensils and pick up food with ease.

Buy It: levelthecurve.com/ez-adapt/eating-tool



Broadlink RM4 Pro

Broadlink RM4 Pro: Since we're all spending so much time at home these days, why not make it as easy as possible to control everything in your home? My Broadlink infrared remote controller has made my life 10 times easier in quarantine. Depending on which model you buy, you can control up to 15 or 20 devices all from an app on your cell phone. I can work my air conditioner, televisions, humidifier and more. I use it every day.

If you connect with Alexa or Google Home you can turn stuff on using your voice alone.

Buy It: amazon.com/BroadLink-Universal-Learning-Entertainment-Compatible/dp/B083LBMX64

I hope you find these products useful! If you'd like to ask me more questions, you can contact me at stefanhenry@levelthecurve.com. Check out my company and message us if you want adaptive devices created to fit your needs at www.levelthecurve.com.



Kitchen Spread Board with Spikes



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VetsFirst is a program of United Spinal Association that assists veterans and their eligible family members in obtaining the benefits they are entitled to, deserve and need.

Our Mission

VetsFirst leads the way in advocating for veterans living with disabilities and ensuring they achieve the highest level of independence and quality of life.

Our History

As a program of United Spinal Association, VetsFirst has a long and illustrious history assisting and representing veterans and their eligible family members. United Spinal—a VA recognized veterans service organization—strives to ensure the organization remains an instrument for veterans.

About VetsFirst

VetsFirst brings to bear seventy years of expertise in helping America's veterans with disabilities, their spouses, dependents, survivors and other eligible family members receive health care, disability compensation, rehabilitation and other benefits offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. We supply direct representation, proactive legislative and regulatory advocacy, individual support and counseling services, guidance on education and employment, timely news and information and valuable self-help guides.

VetsFirst advocates nationally for all generations of veterans, including individuals living with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. Our advocacy efforts go far beyond offering words of support and encouragement. We take this fight to Capitol Hill to bring attention to issues that matter most to the men and women who proudly served our country.

Timely Support

We connect with thousands of veterans and active military servicemen and women annually through our call center and online help desk, **Ask VetsFirst**. Our staff takes the time to address each inquiry, offering guidance with questions on military separation, claims appeals, and state benefits. Visit <http://helpdesk.vetsfirst.org/> to submit your questions and receive quick response from our knowledgeable staff.

Valuable Resources

In addition to providing individual support and counseling services, VetsFirst offers timely news and information across the spectrum of issues presently impacting the veterans community, including state benefits, separating from the military, as well as exclusive feature stories on military health care and VA funding and compensation.

Our Core Beliefs

VetsFirst's priorities are based on three core principles that will improve the lives of veterans with disabilities.

Community Integration and Independence— We support policies that help veterans with disabilities reintegrate into their communities and achieve independence.

Timely Access to Quality VA Health Care and Benefits—

We support improved access to VA health care and compensation and pension benefits that are the lifeline for many veterans with significant disabilities.

Rights of Veterans with Disabilities— We believe that discrimination against disabled veterans that produces barriers to housing, employment, transportation, health care, and other programs and services must be eliminated.



www.vetsfirst.org

FITNESS and SPORTS

Get fit and healthy and live the life you want.

“When it comes to fitness, we need to use equipment in different ways to make sure we can get maximum benefit without having to spend lots of money.”

Ben Clark is a quadriplegic personal trainer from the United Kingdom who runs Adapt To Perform, a popular YouTube channel dedicated to health and fitness for wheelchair users. Over the past 10 years he has come up with many creative ways for wheelchair users to get fit and healthy.





MAXIMUM WORKOUT on a MINIMALIST BUDGET

BY BEN CLARK

As wheelchair users, keeping fit and healthy is more important than just looking and feeling good — it can help us live a happy, independent life. However, the fitness industry isn't geared toward people with disabilities as much as we'd like. That's why when it comes to fitness, we need to be a bit more creative and think outside the box. This requires using equipment in different ways to make sure we can get maximum benefit without having to spend lots of money.

Following is what I consider essential gym equipment that can be used at home or in conjunction with conventional gym equipment to help you get fit and healthy and live the life you want. I have tried to avoid things that are unnecessarily expensive and instead focus on what I think is truly essential.

ACTIVE HANDS

Active Hands gripping aids are go-to pieces of equipment for anybody that has any limitations in their hands. Founded by quadriplegic Rob Smith who needed a way to lift weights in the gym, the company offers various products to allow exercises that would otherwise be difficult to do.

I first came across Active Hands a decade ago, just 10 months after my accident. When I met Rob at a sports event, he showed me the gripping aids and explained how they worked. I knew instantly they were a game changer for me. I lived in the gym pre-injury, but until finding the Active Hands, I didn't know how I was going to manage now that I was a quadriplegic.

Since then, the team at Active Hands has made a variety of aids to help in



Ben Clark works out using Active Hands.



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different circumstances. My personal favorite are the D-Rings as they're a great way to connect to the cable machine — my favorite gym equipment — allowing me to do almost every exercise I need.

My recommendation to anyone who needs that extra grip is to always get the gripping aids first, as combined with a set of dumbbells you can do so much from your own home. Then after that, purchase the D-Rings if you have access to a gym or cable machine.

- Active Hands: activehands.com

RESISTANCE BANDS

Going to the gym isn't always an option, whether that's because your local one isn't accessible, you're away on holiday or you simply do not like going. This doesn't mean you have to give up on fitness altogether — nor does it mean you have to compromise.

Resistance bands are fantastic and probably the most underrated pieces

of fitness equipment. So what's so special about them? They have all the functionality of a cable machine but can fit in your pocket. I always have one when I'm traveling so I never have the excuse to skip my exercises

I can tie a resistance band to a table leg, bed post, door handle, my wheelchair or even just get my girlfriend to hold the end. Then I have the ability to work all my muscle groups. This means I'm not reliant on anything else, and I don't have to transport weights around.

Resistance bands come in multiple forms, but my favorite is the looped version. The main reason is that they're easy to tie on securely, which gives me peace of mind, but the loops also allow me to get some strong resistances ideal for certain exercises. I personally don't like TheraBands as they usually break easily and don't attach well, despite every physical therapist ever giving them out like candy.

- Resistance band options: tinyurl.com/y3rxfrhf

BROOM HANDLE

When coming up with cardio workouts for wheelchair users, most avenues lead to either pushing a wheelchair or using a handcycle of some sort. However, this isn't for everyone, and if you don't use a manual wheelchair, it might not even be an option.

I had a client who uses a power wheelchair a few years ago who was in a situation whereby they couldn't access a handcycle. Therefore, we needed to be creative and come up with an alternative solution to get some cardio workout in. That's when I came up with the broom handle workout. Using this simple piece of equipment, or something similar, we can get in a great workout that adds some variety to keep things interesting.

I usually use the broom handle in conjunction with interval training — multiple exercises done for various amounts of time — to get slightly different workouts in. These workouts have become popular among my clients



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You don't need expensive equipment to get a good workout. Here, Clark uses a broomstick.

and in my community, as they're low-cost and quite fun. You can also increase intensity as you get stronger and fitter by adding wrist weights or using a heavier pole.

If you need a guide on how to plan an interval training workout, I have plenty on my YouTube channel, Adapt to Perform.

• Sample broom stick: amzn.to/3l3uwa5

HONORABLE MENTIONS

There are some items that I personally love using and are deserving of an honorable mention, despite not being essential.

The SkiErg by Concept2 is my favorite way to do cardio. Not only is it a great workout, but it also exercises the opposite of muscles that we usually use when pushing our wheelchairs. This has a positive impact on our posture. These are getting more popular in gyms due to being used in CrossFit

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competitions. I asked my gym to get one, and it quickly became the most-used item in my gym.

• SkiErg: concept2.com/skierg

The HIIT interval timer app really helps with a workout, as I just type in the intervals and the rest periods and it tells me when to rest and go. This is really useful when you're struggling and forget to look at the clock. This app, and others like it, are available on your phone's app store.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WORKOUT

In my many years of training myself, and as a qualified personal trainer, I've come to realize you don't need fancy equipment that costs a fortune to get good results. The three items above plus a couple of dumbbells of different weights allow you to get a great workout in and keep things interesting with a variety of routines. Even if you have access to a gym, having some equipment on hand at home is really handy.

NM

If you need extra help or guidance on how to use this equipment effectively or how to program it into a workout, you can come check out my YouTube channel: youtube.com/adapttoperform



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HEALTH

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“Living with paralysis can make maintaining optimal wellness more challenging, but there are plenty of options that can support your health and healing.”

A long-time wheelchair user and mobility industry professional, Kristina Rhoades is a life coach, writer and motivational speaker based in New Mexico. She's passionate about holistic health and enjoys teaching on the principles of mindfulness and meditation.



PRODUCTS & PRACTICES for BETTER HEALTH

BY KRISTINA RHOADES

Our health is one of the most important factors when it comes to our quality of life. Sometimes, living with paralysis and managing related conditions can make maintaining optimal wellness more challenging, but the good news is that there are plenty of options out there that can support your health and healing. Whether you're new to the rolling life and trying to find balance or just looking for a way to feel better, the following products and practices can help you along on your journey.

ACUPUNCTURE, YOGA AND THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE

Acupuncture, adaptive yoga and therapeutic massage usually involve a practitioner or instructor. The internet is a great resource for finding these services in your local area. When searching, be sure to read reviews and also call to verify the location is accessible. Some practitioners may even offer special sessions or have unique knowledge for people with spinal cord injuries or limited mobility.

Acupuncture is a complementary medicine practice that originated in China and has been practiced for thousands of years. A majority of acupuncture treatments used today are still based on Chinese medicine and the belief that disease and illness are a result of disruptions or blockages of energy within the body. Today, acupuncture is increasingly being used in Western medicine and hospital settings.

If you've never tried acupuncture, you may be wondering what it can help with. While pain is often the reason that people seek out the treatment, there are many other benefits. Because acupuncture



Photo by Hunstock/Getty Images Disability Collection

Adaptive yoga is a great way to reduce pain and increase range of motion.

ture can release tension and create a calming effect, reduced muscle spasms can be a welcome benefit experienced by people with paralysis. It can also help with stress management, improved sleep, allergies and women's health.

While the cost for acupuncture can vary, the typical fee per session ranges from \$50 to \$100, depending on location and if the practitioner is certified in Chinese medicine in addition to acupuncture.

Adaptive yoga is another great option to support your overall wellness. Benefits can include increased flexibility and muscle strength, improved respiration and energy, a more-balanced metabolism, weight reduction, and circulatory health. An instructor who has experience guiding wheelchair users in their practice may assist us in stretching and repositioning our bodies to achieve a greater amount of movement.

Again, prices for yoga will vary, av-

eraging \$15-\$25 for group sessions and between \$30 and \$70 for one-on-one. If cost or transportation is an issue, try searching YouTube for "adaptive yoga" and you'll find all sorts of videos geared towards those who practice from a seated position. Remember, *any* movement can be good for your body. Find more articles about adaptive yoga at newmobility.com/?s=yoga.

Another practice to reduce pain and improve range of motion is therapeutic massage, which can be covered by health insurance or workman's compensation in some cases. Therapeutic massage can release tension, relax muscles, increase blood and lymph circulation, and impart a sense of calm. It can also improve or alleviate many symptoms related to SCI, including spasms, pain, poor digestion and more. For a disability-specific article about massage, see newmobility.com/2012/09/massage-and-disability-an-alternative-therapy/



PROBIOTICS AND CBD

It can be overwhelming trying to decide which supplements we should include in our wellness routine. There are two, though, that can have significant benefits for conditions that are often related to SCI and paralysis: probiotics and CBD. But how do you select the best and most effective products?

Probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts that are beneficial for our bodies, especially our digestive systems. Often called “helpful” bacteria, probiotics help fight off “harmful” bacteria, creating more wellness and balance within our bodies. And, while probiotics can be good for just about everyone, they are especially important for people who have been on antibiotics often in their life. When antibiotics are introduced in our system, they attack *all* bacteria — including the good stuff that we need to maintain optimal health and a strong immune system.

When shopping for a probiotic, the most important factors to consider are

the quality of the product and choosing the right strain. The most common probiotics come from two groups of bacteria, *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*. Consult your doctor or naturopath to see which strains would be most beneficial for your body and needs. The average price for a month’s supply of quality probiotics is around \$20. Two good brands are Zentastic and Earth’s Pearl, both containing multiple strains, as well as options that include “prebiotics” and digestive enzymes. For more on probiotics and SCI/D, read “The Pros of Probiotics” at newmobility.com/2018/09/the-pros-of-probiotics.

CBD stands for cannabidiol, which is derived from the hemp plant and has no psychoactive effects. It can be applied topically or consumed orally and is known to help with anxiety, insomnia, chronic pain and more. But, again, it can be hard to weed through all the brands that are available to find a quality product. Some people have tried a brand that contains very little CBD,

only to come to the conclusion that it doesn’t work. However, not all CBD products are created equal.

Here’s what to look for when deciding on a brand of CBD. First, always consider where it is grown. What methods are they using to process the oil from the hemp plant and what ingredients are in the oil? *Hemp oil is really all it should contain.* Is the CBD product tested by the US Hemp Authority? Go for the highest quality raw materials and extraction methods. Learn more in “CBD and SCI,” newmobility.com/2019/08/cbd-and-sci.

MEDITATION

A huge part of our overall well-being is dependent on our thoughts and emotional state. That’s probably why meditation has been practiced in cultures around the world for over 5,000 years. Common types of meditation include mantra meditation (reciting a sound or phrase), mindfulness meditation (focusing on something specific, like breath) and spiritual medi-

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tation (often incorporated in religious prayer). Published studies and scientific articles have documented mental and physical health benefits, including decreased pain, better immune function, and less anxiety and depression. At the very least, calming our minds reduces stress, which we know can be a trigger for illness and disease.

Even spending just five minutes a day sitting in stillness and focusing on your breath is a great place to start. Some people find it easier to focus and ignore intrusive thoughts when listening to calming music or a voice-guided meditation. Download an app, check YouTube or your music streaming service of choice to explore a variety of audio and video recordings that can support your meditation practice. An award-winning app called Calm includes meditation tools that are helpful for new or seasoned meditators and only costs \$12.99 per month, with discounts for yearly and lifetime subscriptions.



Kristina Rhoades models meditation.


APPLE WATCH

Think of the Apple Watch as a tiny personal assistant that is committed to helping support your wellness journey. As you set healthy goals for yourself, like drinking more water, getting more sleep or physical activity, you can utilize apps and tools on your Apple Watch to hold yourself account-

able and track your progress.

Did you know that you can turn on the “accessibility feature” to track *pushes* instead of *steps*? Apple also included two wheelchair-specific workout types in the watch’s Workout app! Check out all mobility features here: www.apple.com/accessibility/watch/mobility. The Apple Watch starts at \$279. NM

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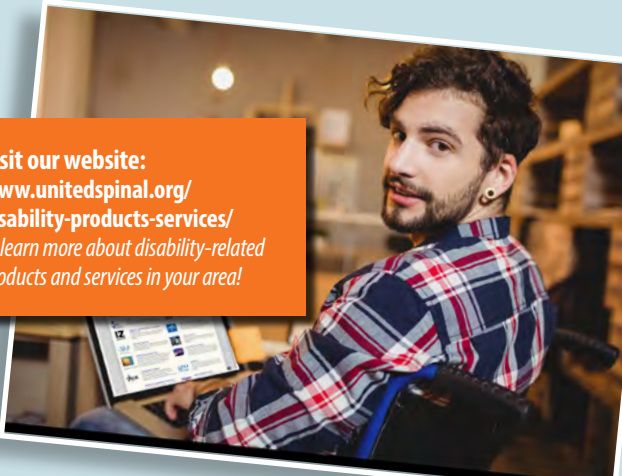
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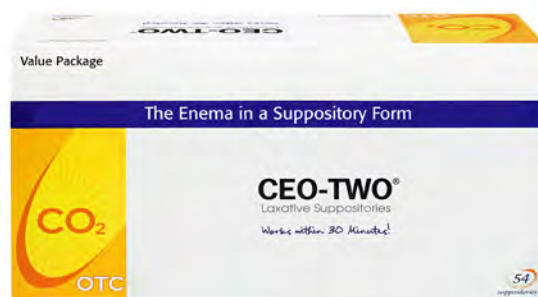
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Onli hydrophilic intermittent catheters are easy to use. No need to apply lubricant — prehydrated and ready to use right out of the package. The catheter provides a balance of flexibility and rigidity for ease of insertion. Funnel length and sliding gripper (on 16-inch catheter) help provide better control.



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With 100% No Touch Protection, whatever you touch won't touch VaPro catheters. VaPro catheters are designed to help protect against germs throughout the entire catheterization process. VaPro Plus Pocket catheters include an integrated 1000mL collection bag and pocket-sized packaging for easy transportation and discreet usage.



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Available from The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis
305/243-7108 or themiamiproject.org

The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis is dedicated to finding effective treatments and improving the quality of life of individuals with spinal cord injuries. To be considered for current and future research studies, please visit our website to fill out a digital intake form or call our offices and request a copy of the form by mail.





MULTICHAIR MC6000

Available from Nuprodx Inc.
707/934-8266 or nuprodx.com

The Multichair 6000 enables all bathroom activities with just a single transfer. Made in the USA of anodized aluminum, it won't rust or corrode and can last for decades. Locking cantilever armrests and waterproof padded cushions add comfort, and the removable connector bridge operates with minimum effort. Modular construction provides many sizing options, and customization is available.



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THE WOUND HEALING INSTITUTE

Available from PAM Specialty Hospital of Denver
303/264-6800 or postacutemedical.com

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561/369-1700 or conceptsinconfidence.com

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UNITE 2 FIGHT PARALYSIS

Available from Unite 2 Fight Paralysis
888/564-2228 or u2fp.org

U2FP is governed and staffed by people with a personal connection to paralysis. We focus on helping our community to understand the science, to mobilize and advocate for cures, and to bring key players together to advance therapies as quickly as possible. We are the Voice of the Cure!



ZCATH CATHETER

Available from Zcath Mfg., Inc.
844/933-2284 or zcath.com

The patented ZCATH catheter is a revolutionary intermittent urinary catheter with a molded open tip and a single entrance opening. This design eliminates the need for eyelets. The scalloped exterior tubing reduces body contact and provides grooves for lubrication. The entire catheter is molded inside and out.



*Artistic Rendering



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MOBILITY and SEATING

The right equipment and accessories to customize your ride.

“These days there is a plethora of wheelchair accessories to refine your chair and improve your life. Here are my favorites and why I prefer them.”

NEW MOBILITY Senior Correspondent Bob Vogel is our go-to expert on many topics, including mobility products such as cushions and wheelchair add-ons. A para who writes from Sacramento, California, when he's not trying out new gear, he'll likely be sailing, scuba diving, mountain hand-cycling or playing in the water with his service dog, Killy.



REFINING Your MANUAL WHEELCHAIR

BY BOB VOGEL

Choosing the right chair and accessories has been crucial for my mobility, health and self-esteem since my rehab days as a T10 para back in the mid 1980s. My first vital refinement to my ride was something that literally saved my butt — switching cushions after my nightly mirror-skin-check revealed the early stages of a pressure sore. I had initially requested a ROHO cushion suggested by my SCI peers, but it was nixed by my physical therapist, and I was sent home on a block of memory foam with a cover. Despite constant weight shifts, I soon developed a tiny ischial sore. I stayed off my butt and successfully advocated for the cushion that had been recommended by my peers. The sore healed and, thanks to using proper cushions and extreme vigilance, I haven't had one since.

These days there is a plethora of wheelchair accessories to refine your chair and improve your life. Here's a list of my favorites and why.

CUSHIONS

The most important wheelchair accessories are proper cushions. There is a wide range of excellent cushions on the market. With help from a seating specialist, pressure mapping and mirror-skin-check, you'll find the right one for you.

For me, choosing the right cushion has become more important as years go by because I've developed a slight curve in my spine — my left ischium is lower than the right — and despite putting on a few pounds, my butt is skin and bones.

My primary cushion of choice is a high-profile ROHO Quadtro Select by Permobil. The key to this cushion is that the air cells are divided into four



The waterproof ROHO Quadtro Select is great for drip-drying in between scuba dives.

quadrants controlled by two “memory-control” buttons. The green button opens the memory valve so air can flow between quadrants, enabling a custom fit. I push it, then lean back and to my left to create a deeper immersion for my left ischium, which helps protect my skin and compensates for my spinal curve. Pushing the red button locks the

quadrants’ “memory” into place. I’ve used this cushion for over a decade, and nightly checks confirm zero redness or hot spots.

Because ROHOs are made from high-quality neoprene, they are waterproof. This makes cleaning a breeze and is a bonus when I hop in my chair after a swim with the dogs or drip-dry between



Bob Vogel plays fetch with his dogs before going for a swim. With his FreeWheel, the high grass is not a barrier.

dives on scuba trips. My back-up cushion is also a Quadtro, and I use it on my car seat. Additionally, I have a two-chamber custom ROHO on my handcycle.

“The most important wheelchair accessories are proper cushions.”

My other wheelchair cushion is a Custom 2 Cushion by Ride Designs. The company uses a unique computer scanning system to create a custom-shaped, breathable, lightweight cushion that protects my skin by offloading pressure from sensitive areas. The cushion also provides outstanding postural support, putting my spine into a straighter position to help alleviate my lower back pain. This is especially important to me on long days when I’m working at the computer, as sitting for long periods with minimal movement can cause back pain. Using the Custom 2 Cushion reduces this pain.

Also, I learned early on that the Custom 2 provides so much postural

support at the hips that I need to do a weight shift and move my butt sideways prior to leaning to the side to pick things up off the floor. Failure to do so puts a lot of strain on the few functioning lumbar discs I have below my rods, which go from T6 to L2.

Another important skin protection accessory is the ROHO adaptor pad, a 9.75-by-13.5-inch cushion made of one-inch closed cells that easily fits into a daypack and, since there’s no air valve, doesn’t need adjustment. I use the adaptor pad to protect my skin on shower benches and airline aisle chairs, and I drape it over the edge of bathtubs for transfers.

Last but not least for protecting my

butt is the Jay Protector, a water-proof cushion that attaches with leg and waist straps like a climbing harness. It is great skin protection when I’m sailing, off-road mountain biking — especially when I decide to get off my handcycle and go for a swim — or going upstairs at friend’s houses, stair by stair on my butt.

POSITION AND PROTECTION

As soon as I had the opportunity to try out my first pair of rigid side guards, I was hooked. Now, they are an integral part of my chair as they enable a snug fit in my wheelchair. Case in point: I wear a 34-inch pants waist, and I fit perfectly into a 14-inch-wide chair.

In addition to enabling a snug fit, rigid side guards help keep you centered in your chair, and protect clothing from dirt, water, and “wheel wear.” Also, they help prevent side-to-side movement, which may reduce tissue shear, thus helping avoid skin breakdown. In a perfect world, side guards should be ordered as an on-chair accessory. However, they can be added and easily installed on many chairs. MSRP prices start around \$120 a pair — but you can often get them for less when you order through an online company such as Sportaid or DME Hub

MORE EFFICIENT PROPULSION

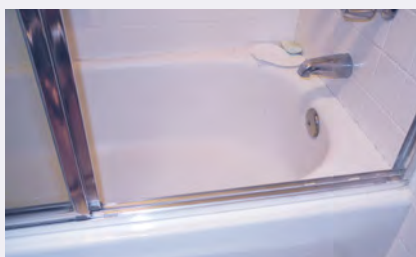
Switching to an ergonomic hand rim helps add pushing and stopping power, and can alleviate hand and wrist strain. There are quite a few good push rim options.

CUSHION	MSRP	COVERED BY MEDICARE
Jay Protector	\$235	No
ROHO Quadtro Select	\$482	Yes
ROHO Custom	\$654	Check with Provider
ROHO Adaptor Pad	\$120	No
Ride Custom 2	\$1,614	Yes

Some wheelers with limited hand function are fans of RibGrips. These are ergonomic wheelchair hand rim covers made out of soft rib discs that provide good traction and wear resistance with an MSRP of \$149.99.

My push rims of choice are TC (for Tactical Control) hand rims by Spenergy. TC rims have an embossed texture surface, kind of like a small diamond plate, which is a secret of their performance. They provide great traction for pushing, good braking power on downhill, are easy on the hands and don't cause friction heating. Also, they're lightweight — 1.1 pounds for a 6-tab 24-inch rim. They don't leave marks on skin or clothing, are easy to clean and are made of stainless steel, which is significantly tougher and more scratch-resistant than aluminum push rims.

After two years of pushing my TC rims, they still look new. And I have yet to have a hand-slicing bur appear on the rim, something that happens all too



A towel and ROHO Adaptor Pad draped over sharp edge shower door tracks protects skin during transfers.



often when aluminum push rims brush a rock, curb or fall during car transfers. The MSRP is \$399 per pair.

Another push rim option to consider, especially if wrist or hand pain is an is-

sue, is the Natural Fit Surge LT, recently purchased by Permobil. The key to the Surge LT is an oval shape that provides a wider area to grab, which is easier on the wrist, fingers and thumb, and provides a



ZING

Available from Altimate Medical, Inc.
800/342-8968 or zingstanders.com

Zing represents a full line of single and multi-position pediatric standers. The unique multi-position standers (or MPS) pivot two directions, providing an unmatched therapeutic opportunity to go from supine, vertical and prone in one motion — no transfers, flipping pads or adjustments to the stander other than the tray angle, if desired.



ALLTRACK R3 HYBRID

Available from Amylior Inc.
888/453-0311 or amylior.com

See how our new colored shrouds can personalize your Alltrack! Inspired by our customers, we develop a power chair that never stops evolving. Explore the possibilities. One look and one test ride will convince you! The design, stability, and easy handling will seduce you from the beginning.





greater surface area for easy braking. At the top of an LT rim is a Gription Strip — a rubber strip for superior pushing traction with minimal effort. Made out of aluminum, LT rims weigh 1.25 pound per rim and MSRP is \$340 per pair.

PROTECTING SHOULDERS

An essential accessory for extending the life of my aging shoulders has been the SmartDrive power assist by Permobil. Weighing 12.5 pounds, the SmartDrive quick-connects onto the back of a rigid or folding chair and provides propulsion, with a driving range of 12.3 miles.

The SmartDrive saved my shoulders the week it was unveiled. In 2012, I was working an annual international trade show held at a hotel and venue notoriously known for what seems like miles of sand-like padded carpeted surfaces. That was tough enough when I first attended as a young supercrip, but that year, experiencing my first serious twinges of shoulder arthritis and rotator cuff irritation, I feared my shoulders would be cooked. Fortunately, I was given a SmartDrive demo for the duration of the show. I was hooked and have used a SmartDrive ever since.

The SmartDrive has three control options. The first is a push button mounted on your chair that you push to start and stop. The second is a PushTracker wristband that communicates with the motor via Bluetooth. You double-tap to accelerate, tap again when the desired speed is reached and double-tap to stop. The third option is the new PushTracker E2, which, in addition to controlling the SmartDrive, is a multi-functional device that's similar to a combination of a FitBit and SmartWatch.

The SmartDrive enables me to take my dogs on long walks and the top speed of 5.5 mph is plenty fast to keep the pups at a steady trot while we head to town to check the mail or grab some groceries. It is also great for racing through airports with a lapful of luggage and, when removed, fits into the overhead compartment of airliners.

Although I worked at keeping

my shoulder muscles balanced and stretched, I feel that if the SmartDrive had been available 20 years earlier, my shoulders wouldn't be nearing their expiration date. As a physical therapist (or anybody into fitness or building muscle) will tell you, it is important to provide a day or two of rest to let broken-down muscle fibers recuperate and rebuild. Unfortunately, without devices like

the SmartDrive, our shoulders and arms never get this time, thus start to develop irritations that lead to weakened areas, injury and breakdown. I predict wheelchair users who are incorporating the SmartDrive into their wheeling lives at an early stage are going to get many more years or decades of mileage out of their shoulders. MSRP \$7,131, Medicare approved.

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Vogel transfers to a sling seat wearable cushion to protect his skin while sailing.

SMOOTHER, FASTER, SAFER

Another accessory that has become indispensable for me is the FreeWheel, a 12-inch bicycle wheel that quick-connects to rigid and folding wheelchairs. The magic of the FreeWheel is that it lifts the front casters a bit off the ground and extends the wheelbase length, which makes the chair super-stable in front and provides the smooth, terrain-absorbing ride of a bicycle tire.

I originally got a FreeWheel for going on off-road trails, sand, gravel and snow. It certainly excels in these environments — especially when you need a

push from a nondisabled person, which can cause your front casters to dig into soft terrain and you to fly out of your chair and face plant. The FreeWheel doesn't dig in, hence no more flipping forward into the slush, sand or mud — a friendly push to the back of your chair powers the FreeWheel right through.

What really surprised me about the FreeWheel is the outstanding ride and reduced rolling resistance it provides in urban environments. Along with my SmartDrive, the FreeWheel is my go-to attachment when I head out the front door. The FreeWheel relieves the worry of catching casters on cracks or uneven

pavement or that high-speed caster flutter. As for high speed, Killy, my service dog, loves that it's so stable I can let him flat-out run. A friend recently paced us with his car at 20mph and the ride felt smooth and stable.

I wish the FreeWheel had been invented earlier because it would have prevented my two separate femur fractures, both caused by catching my casters on something and flipping forward. MSRP is \$659 and it is generally a cash item, one that lasts and lasts. I've had mine since 2012, and it still works like new.

Last but not least, the FreeWheel is a must have for anybody with an infant or child who is still young enough to ride in their lap. I wish it had been available when my daughter, Sarah, was young. It would have certainly made the late-night pushes across the carpet to change diapers easier. Not to mention, it would have prevented the several times my casters caught, flipping Sarah and me forward, requiring Hollywood stuntman-type aerial moves in order to land on my back with Sarah softly on my stomach.

Most of the items in this article can be found at a discount in the online retailers in the resources list.

nm

RESOURCES

- **DME Hub:** dmehub.net
- **FreeWheel:** gofreewheel.com
- **Jay Protector:** sunrisemedical.com/seating-positioning/jay/wheelchair-cushions/protector
- **RibGrips:** ribgrips.com
- **Ride Designs:** ridedesigns.com
- **ROHO by Permobil:** permobilus.com/products/seating-and-positioning-by-roho/
- **SmartDrive by Permobil:** permobilus.com/products/tilite-manual-wheelchairs-smartdrive-power-assist/smart-drive/
- **Spinergy:** spinergy.com
- **Sportaid:** sportaid.com
- **Natural Fit Surge LT by Permobil:** sportaid.com/the-surge-wheelchair-handrims.html



COMPANION POWER ASSIST

Available from CHEELCARE, 647/800-2680 or cheelcare.com/products/cheelcare-companion

Unique features of the Companion power add-on for manual wheelchairs:

- Easy quick-connect and disconnect (user friendly) (<10 seconds !)
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WEATHERBREAKER™ CANOPY

Available from Diestco Manufacturing 800/795-2392 or diestco.com

DIESTCO MFG's Weatherbreaker™ Canopy is the original and most universal canopy in the industry. No other product protects you better from the sun and rain, and mounts to more makes and models of wheelchairs and scooters than the Weatherbreaker™ Canopy. Proudly made in the USA.



SOFTECH CUSHION

Available from Aquila Corporation 608/782-0031 or aquilacorp.com

SofTech is a custom fabricated pressure sore healing/prevention cushion which automatically changes pressure points while offloading as needed under sores. SofTech has all system components inside the cushion and includes a wireless remote control.



H-STYLE HARNESS

Available from Bodypoint 206/405-4555 or bodypoint.com

Get strong but cost-effective shoulder positioning with the new Bodypoint Essentials H-Style Shoulder Harness. Maintaining good upper body posture can lead to better function, help correct or prevent spinal deformity, and improve comfort and safety. Our new design has a clean appearance, improved ergonomic shape and increased adjustability.





ETHOS

Available from Ki Mobility
800/981-1540 or kimobility.com/Product.action?productName=Ethos

The road is rough. The ride doesn't have to be. Navigate city streets, cruise the backroads or tackle cobblestones. No matter where you go, let Ethos take you there. Ethos delivers unrivaled ride quality and performance, packaged in a strikingly sculpted design that is unlike anything you have ever experienced.



GENUINE GEL BATTERIES

Available from MK Battery
800/372-9253 or mkbattery.com

MK Genuine Gel Batteries – Used for over 35 years by most major wheelchair manufacturers in their premium complex rehab power mobility products. Quality. Durability. Reliability. Longest battery life. Don't settle for imitations. Demand MK Genuine Gel batteries.



JAMB HANDLE

Available from ALBS Products
951/309-9292 or jambhandle.com

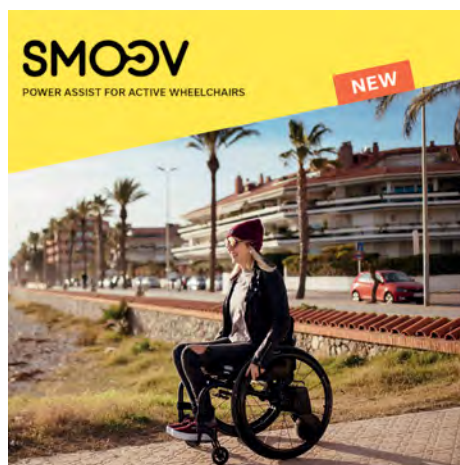
The Jamb Handle is a new door hardware design, which enables the closing of doors from the opposite side of the door frame with little effort and reduces the risk of falling or banging up the door while trying to pull it closed behind you.



THE SMOOV ONE

Available from Alber - USA
888/426-8581 or smoov.com/

SMOOV by Alber is a rear-mounted power-assist solution for active wheelchair drivers. It is portable, easily docking and undocking for on-demand power. It has a maximum speed of 6 mph, distance of 12 miles and handles slopes with some variation due to the weight of the drive/chair, temperature and terrain.





LIBERTY HANDICAP RAMP

Available from National Ramp
845/358-0350 or homeaccess.nationalramp.com/ramp-styles/aluminum-solid-ramp/

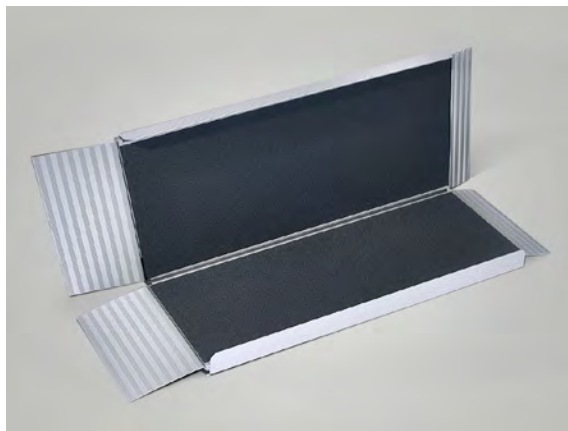
The Liberty Series™ solid aluminum ramp is a no-maintenance access solution for those who need a bit of assistance to full-time powerchair users. The slip-resistant treads and continuous handrails provide reliable support with a lifetime guarantee. Available in 36-inch and 48-inch widths, your ramp is only a phone call away.



FREEDOM FOLDING RAMP

Available from National Ramp
845/358-0350 or homeaccess.nationalramp.com/ramp-styles/folding-ramp/

The Liberty Series™ solid aluminum ramp is a no-maintenance access solution for those who need a bit of assistance to full-time powerchair users. The slip-resistant treads and continuous handrails provide reliable support with a lifetime guarantee. Available in 36-inch and 48-inch widths, your ramp is only a phone call away.



IBOT® PERSONAL MOBILITY DEVICE

Available from Mobius Mobility LLC
833/346-4268 or mobiusmobility.com

The iBOT® PMD utilizes advanced electronics, sensors, battery technology and software so you can go where you want to go. Traverse sand, snow, mud, curbs and inclines with terrain-following Four-Wheel Mode. Move and interact with others at standing height in Balance Mode. Climb stairs in Stair Mode.

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Available from Motion Composites
866/650-6555 or motioncomposites.com

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Available from Q'Straint
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RIDE® CUSTOM ACCUSOFT™ CUSHION

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866/781-1633 or ridedesigns.com

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RIDE® JAVA® CUSHION

Available from Ride Designs
866/781-1633 or ridedesigns.com

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ASSURED COMFORT HI-LOW BEDS

Available from Assured Comfort Beds, Inc.
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Assured Comfort® Hi-Low Adjustable Beds are perfect for those requiring therapy, allowing the bed surface to be raised for therapist convenience or allowing for easier transfers in and out of bed. Three models in twin, full, queen and split-king sizes. Foundations may retrofit an existing bed frame. Made in USA.



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Available from Sunrise Medical
800/333-4000 or SunriseMedical.com

The QUICKIE power portfolio continues to expand to meet the needs of more clients, now the highly popular C-Me option is available on the Q500 M. With C-Me, clients can achieve the independence they are looking for. Drive up to 3 mph while elevated up to 12 inches without needing to stop while transitioning.



SUREHANDS LIFT & CARE SYSTEMS

Available from SureHands Lift & Care Systems
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833/846-7737 or terrainhopperusa.com

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LEARN WHEELCHAIR MAINTENANCE

Available from University of Pittsburgh
412/392-7374 or upmc-sci.pitt.edu/maintenance

The University of Pittsburgh has developed a free on-line training program on wheelchair maintenance for manual and power wheelchair users, caregivers, family and friends. Wheelchair users with spinal cord injury who complete the training as part of a research study will be eligible for compensation and a free toolkit.



SANDCRUISER BEACH CHAIR

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When he's not drifting the streets of suburban Philadelphia, Randall Duchesneau is an accessibility specialist at the U.S. Access Board, where he provides training and assistance to the public on the ADA accessibility standards. A C5-6 quadriplegic, Duchesneau is an active SCI mentor and a founding member of the United Spinal Association Greater Philadelphia Chapter.



ROCKING My MINIVAN

BY RANDALL DUCHESNEAU



Randall Duchesneau and his customized Chrysler Pacifica

It may not be a Maserati, but my customized Chrysler Pacifica with BraunAbility conversion is something I can not only use, but enjoy. It expresses my personality, gives me the freedom and independence of being back behind the wheel, and brings a smile to my face every time I see it in the driveway.

It took me 10 years from the time of my injury to learn to drive, pick out my ride and make it my own. Here's how I did it.

LEARNING TO DRIVE (AGAIN)

Learning to drive again can be a long road, and for me, a C5-6 quad who uses a power chair, it took several years. It can also be expensive depending on the level of adaptations you need. It's worth inquiring with your state Voc Rehab to see if they will help pay for driver training and vehicle modification. Another option is to set up a fund through a site like Help Hope Live, where people can provide tax-deductible donations to your campaign. It's kind of like GoFundMe, except it's a reputable nonprofit for people with SCI and contributions are tax-deductible.

Once your funding is secure, finding the right driving instructor is essential. Talk with your peers, ask the staff at your local rehabilitation hospital or check the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists member directory to find instructors in your area. Be sure they have worked with people at your level of injury and have the appropriate driving equipment available for you to use.

I signed up for driver training courses through Moss Rehab in the Philadelphia area as soon as I was out of inpatient rehabilitation. The first system I tried was the electronic gas and brake by Electronic Mobility Controls. It had a mini-steering wheel that sat in front of my chest. Turns out this is a pretty common setup for high-level quads and requires very little strength and mobility to operate. It's like using a joystick on a power wheelchair. This system works for many people, but it requires costly adaptations to the vehicle and I wanted to explore other options. I also was having a difficult time not being able to "feel the brake." I'd try to slightly touch the brake but often came to a screeching halt.

The next system I tried was the Scott Driving System, which is a purely mechanical adaptation that would allow



Duchesneau's van has a fold-out ramp to allow for more headspace.

me to still feel the vehicle and gauge how much pressure I was putting on the brake. This system was unlike anything I had seen or heard about before. It allowed me to drive using just my right arm by “airplane-ing” — making a similar motion to the one kids make when they turn their arms into airplanes and pretend to fly around the room. Due to my injury I could airplane right, but could not always airplane left (I can supinate, but can't pronate my arms). The Scott Driving System is a really interesting and clean interface, but not the right one for me.

It's important to make sure we have regained as much strength and functional independence as we can, because that dramatically influences the level of vehicle modifications we need. Trying the Scott Driving System helped me realize I needed to get a lot stronger before taking up driving again.

Ten years and several stints of outpatient physical therapy



Red calipers amplify the cool factor of the customized rims.

later, I tried again. This time I was able to use a regular-sized steering wheel with a tri-pin grip. They were able to put the steering wheel on “reduced effort,” which makes it easier to turn. So as long as I was able to make the motion of turning a full-sized steering wheel, I no longer needed the steering

column modified for a mini-steering wheel. In addition to reducing my needed modifications and costs, this would make it much easier for nondisabled drivers to drive my van and help out on long trips.

While attending an Abilities Expo to do more research, I discovered Drive-Master. This system uses a mechanical pull/push gas/brake with a modified vacuum braking system that requires less effort to depress the brake pedal. Since I'd strengthened my left arm through physical therapy, I wanted to give it a shot. I visited Drive-Master's headquarters in Fairfield, New Jersey, and they let me try their vehicle. I had not been able to find this specific braking system at any of the local adaptive driving schools, and I wanted to try it.

I'm so glad I did. The controls fit under the steering column and there was still plenty of clearance for my knees. I could depress the brake with my arm fully extended with movement from my shoulder, so I didn't need the use of any



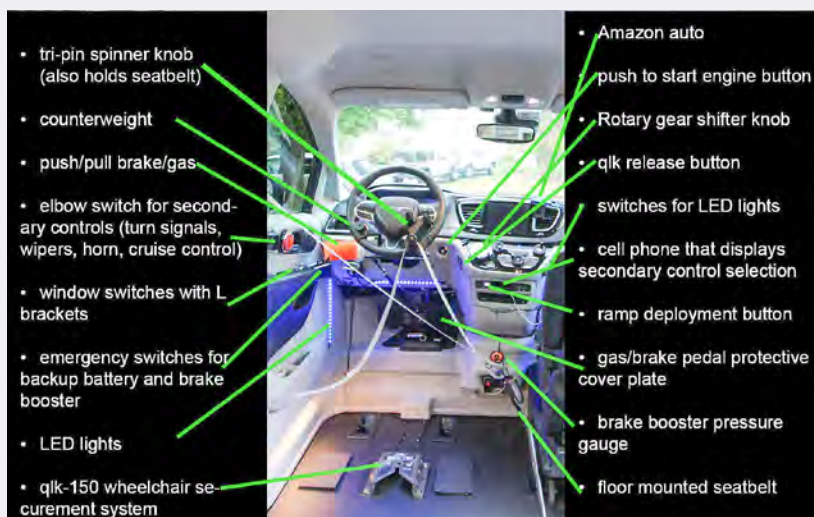
The Drive-Master system works well for Duchesneau.

triceps. The brake was easy to push and hold, I could feel the vehicle, and I no longer had any concerns about stopping short. I was finally comfortable behind the wheel.

FINDING MY RIDE

The first time I went to a mobility dealership, I was shocked at the cost of an accessible vehicle. I couldn't help but think I could get a Maserati for the same price. With many different types of accessible vehicles, options, and features, what did I need to know before making such an important decision? I realized I needed to do my homework before deciding on such an expensive purchase.

There are more interesting choices today than there ever have been for people who want to roll into their vehicle. A great way to start is by attending an Abilities Expo where you can talk with vendors and check out an array of accessible minivans, SUVs, pickup trucks and more. The next in-person Expo is scheduled for Los Angeles in March.



This graphic shows all the features of Duchesneau's dashboard and steering system.

As a power chair user, I narrowed my search to minivans, which generally fall into two categories: rear- and side-entry. Rear-entry offers better ground clearance at the cost of fewer interior configurations and limited space. Most importantly, it's not possible to drive from your chair in a rear-entry vehicle. Side-entry is more common, thanks to the room and options for wheelchair users who want to drive, either from their wheelchair (like me) or by transferring to the driver's seat.

At the Abilities Expo I tried several vehicles, but when I rolled

into the Chrysler Pacifica with BraunAbility conversion, I instantly knew it was the one. The center console touch screen was easy to reach and could control both media and climate. The rotary gear shift dial was easy to manipulate and didn't require hand function like grasping or pressing buttons. Plus, the blue lights of the display and the curved dash made it feel like I was sitting in a spaceship. On top of that, it was large and spacious, and I was able to pull up further under the steering wheel and with greater ease than in other conversions I tried. Having spent years getting in and out of a wheelchair van multiple times a day, I've learned that the convenience of getting in and out quickly and without having to worry about hitting things and maneuvering in tight spaces is well worth it.

I chose the "foldout" version, where the ramp is inside the vehicle next to the passenger side sliding door. This makes it impossible to use that sliding door without deploying the ramp, but also gives you extra floor-to-ceiling height. I went with the foldout ramp because I sit very high in my wheelchair and need as much extra headroom as possible. The in-floor ramp model is a great option for those who don't need the extra 2 inches of height and prefer the wider ramp it comes with.



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CUSTOMIZING MY RIDE

In July I bought my Chrysler Pacifica. After almost 14 years with a spinal cord injury, I finally had a vehicle I could drive independently. It felt like a fresh beginning, a new chapter in my life. I was excited!

When I was in high school, I was very into aftermarket modifications for my Toyota Celica. I had customized my ride with a VeilSide body kit, carbon fiber hood, neon under glow, an Xbox, and a number of performance modifications. Owning an accessible vehicle I could drive reignited that passion inside me. I started exploring the Pacifica forums to get an idea of what aftermarket modifications were available for a minivan. Here's what I learned. Hopefully it will give you some ideas if you're interested in tricking out your ride.

Window tint: My spinal cord injury makes it difficult for me to regulate my body temperature, and my skin can quickly turn red in the sun. I was surprised to find that there is now a "ceramic tint" that has better heat rejection and UV blocking capabilities than traditional window tint. I decided this was worth paying more for. I tinted just the front windows to match the factory tinted side and rear windows, which ended up being about 20% visible light transmission. If you have concerns about the legality of tinting in your state, talk to your local tint shop to get a better idea of what's technically legal and what might get you a ticket. Aesthetically it was a huge improvement, and a noticeable difference in the summer heat. I definitely recommend going with ceramic tint if you live in a sunny, hot-weather state.

Rims: Aftermarket rims are a subjective style choice, and normally putting rims on a minivan would be laughable, but I think I was able to do it in a very tasteful way that gives the vehicle a much more aggressive look without being tacky. Rims are generally the most expensive modification, but I had just gotten a bonus at work, and was able to justify the expense to myself. These days some online websites sell rim and tire packages with a fitment guarantee, which I highly suggest unless you really did your homework. The forums have lots of examples of people putting rims on their rides, so you can get a good idea of what size to go with and how it will look. The Pacifica comes stock with 17, 18, or 20-inch rims depending on which trim you got. People on the forums had no problem putting 22-inch ones on their Pacificas. I ended up going with 22-by-9-inch rims with 265/35R22 tires. And, of course, with bigger rims I had to at least get the brake calipers painted red.

To learn more about wheel sizing, check out wheel-size.com. The site even has a handy calculator to compare your original setup to your modified setup and give you a better idea of clearances, overall diameter, side wall thickness and so on. It's an awesome tool if you want to geek out.

Lights: For a final touch, I got a Govee Dreamcolor interior LED light kit on Amazon (\$34.99) that I can control with my phone. It lets me do all kinds of silly things, like change colors and bounce to the music, but they're actually really helpful for seeing the floor of the van when it's dark — especially if I drop something.

Car detailing and protection: As I went down this rabbit hole, I found videos on car detailing from YouTuber Pan TheOrganizer to be quite helpful. There are tons of car washing and paint protection products out there, promising everything from a couple of months to seven years of protection. I ended up getting Turtle Wax Ice Seal N Shine since it had amazing performance test results, is easy to apply, lasts over six months, and only costs a couple of bucks. I'll consider putting on a longer-lasting ceramic coating someday. You can DIY a ceramic coating, but there's lots of prep work involved and you need a garage to let it cure for at least 24 hours. Unfortunately, my garage is full of medical equipment.

Insurance and Amazon Echo Auto: I signed up with Nationwide, which has a pay-per-mile program and an option to add extra coverage for vehicle modifications. Insurance ended up being a lot cheaper since I'm not driving that many miles yet. It also came with a free Amazon Echo Auto — think Alexa for your car. Amazon Echo Auto connects simultaneously to my vehicle's speakers and uses the data from my phone. Unlike other options that might require me to press a button on the steering wheel, or unlock my phone screen, Amazon Echo Auto lets me make calls, play music, and so on completely hands-free. This is great because I currently do not take my hands off the steering wheel or gas/brake lever even for a second. Amazon Echo Auto has made the entertainment part of driving much more independent and enjoyable for me. NM



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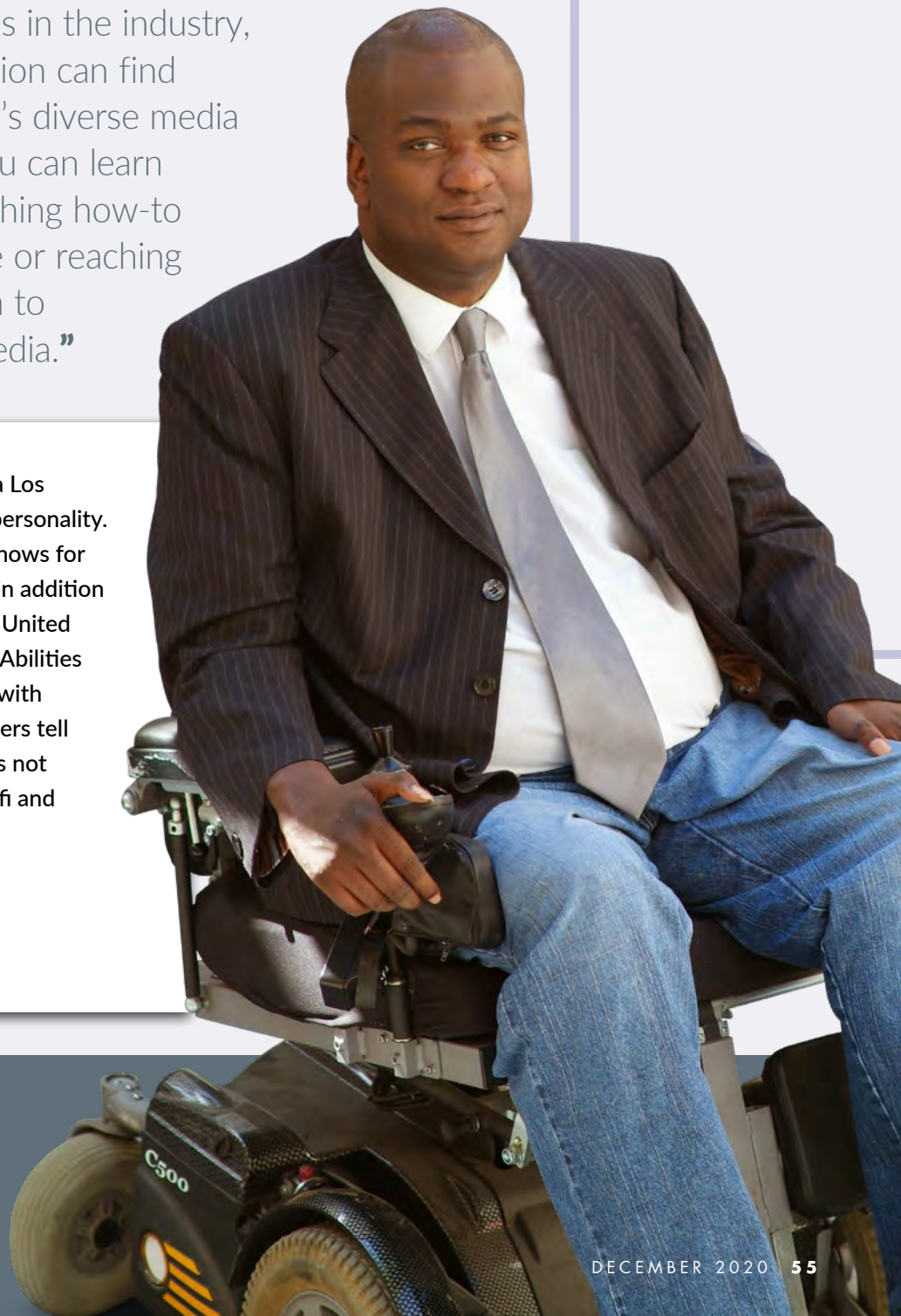
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“Thanks to technology and widespread changes in the industry, anyone with a passion can find their place in today’s diverse media landscape. Now you can learn everything by watching how-to videos on YouTube or reaching out on social media to members of the media.”

Paul Amadeus Lane is a Los Angeles-based media personality. He hosts two weekly shows for ABC KMET 1490 AM, in addition to regular podcasts for United Spinal Association and Abilities Expo. He loves talking with people and helping others tell their stories. When he’s not working, he enjoys sci-fi and pop culture.



MAKE YOURSELF a MEDIA MOGUL

BY PAUL AMADEUS LANE

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a member of the media so I could get my voice out and share the stories of other people. Before I was paralyzed, back in high school in the early '90s, I took adult radio and TV production classes to start learning what it took to run, operate and host radio and television programs.

Many years later, after my injury, I decided to apply to the Academy of Radio & Television Broadcasting in Huntington Beach, California. When I first contacted the school about attending, they weren't sure that I would be able to do what was needed to graduate. Instead of focusing on all the things I could do, and all the skills I brought to the profession, they got hung up on the difficulties I would face splicing audio tape — working a razor with my quad hands was a dangerous proposition. I assured them that I was willing to take the risk and eventually we found a path forward. Long story short, I graduated and got my first job at CBS Radio at KFWB in Los Angeles as the news production assistant.

That was my route to joining the media, but your journey will inevitably be different — and likely easier. Thanks to technology and widespread changes in the industry, anyone with a passion can find their place in today's diverse media landscape. Now you can learn everything by watching how-to videos on YouTube or reaching out on social media to members of the media. The way technology has evolved, with a good computer setup and a few additional tools you can build your own home studio setup and churn out high-quality videos, podcasts or whatever you want to do.

We have reached the time where you



Paul Amadeus Lane sits at the controls of his media command center.

no longer have to be hired by a TV or radio station to make money and build a career in the media. There are a number of streaming options that can be monetized, and many streaming stars are making more money than people in traditional media jobs.

I keep busy with a healthy mix of old and new media work. I host two

weekly shows for the local ABC radio affiliate — the Entertainment Zone and the Tech Zone — both of which are available on streaming video. I also host two regular podcasts, United Spinal's United on Wheels, and Abilities Zone for the Abilities Expo (yes, I have a thing for zones). Between the four shows, I probably spend 30 to 40 hours



Lane uses his platform to amplify voices of fellow wheelchair users.

a week prepping, interviewing and editing — all from the cozy confines of my bedroom-turned-studio.

One of the things I love about what I do is using my voice to talk about whatever I want. You can do the same. If you want to talk about the challenges that you face every day, you can do it. If you and your caregiver want to do a show

“Anyone with a passion can find their place in today’s diverse media landscape.”

together about your working relationship, you can do it. If you want to do a show about how much you love your pet and some tricks that you taught him, you can do it.

GETTING SET UP

Let’s talk about putting your home recording/podcast studio together. The first thing you’ll need to do is create an area for recording. If you want to record video, it makes sense to invest in a green screen. It will make using a virtual background in programs like Skype and Zoom easier and it will give you more flexibility with your video production. I bought a simple 9-by-15-foot

muslin backdrop for \$32.99 on Amazon, but there are tons of options that will work well. I attached my screen to the ceiling via a hospital curtain track, and I was set.

Next, you want to work on your lighting. Light rings weren’t a thing when I built my setup, so I invested in a number of LED lights. But today you can get a great light ring with an adjustable tripod, mount for your phone and multiple modes for different lighting needs, all for less than you’d think. I recommend the UBeesize line as it has a number of options for under \$50.

With your studio set up, the next decision is how you want to record your show. There are tons of apps and programs to handle the basics. If you have limited or no hand dexterity, I recommend StreamYard. For hardware, I use a Logitech C920 webcam. It offers great HD quality at a reasonable price (\$79.99). It’s also easy to setup and use — simply plug and play. If possible, it’s worth investing in a dedicated camera even if your laptop or computer has one built in.

In my opinion, your audio recording setup is even more important than the video. I always think back to what the comedian Sinbad told me a few years ago when we did a show together at the Consumer Electronics Show. He said as long as the audio sounds good, people will watch. If you use your built-in web-

cam or phone microphone you will end up with a hollow sound.

A USB microphone will give you decent quality along with easy, fast setup. I decided on an Audio Technica BP40 (\$399). It sits in a table microphone stand holder that’s attached to my workstation desk. This keeps the microphone in the proper position and makes it easy for me to just drive up in my wheelchair. You’ll also need a pair of headphones, though some mics come with them as a combo.

With these four tools, you’ll have everything you need for around \$500. That’s not cheap, but it’s not too bad for good, quality electronic equipment. If you think you want to go down the podcast/media route, but aren’t sure and want to hold off investing, you can definitely get started with nothing more than your cell phone. The quality won’t be as good as it would be if you were using professional equipment, but it’ll get the job done. Sinbad gave me some more sage advice. He said to give your platform room to grow, start off small and upgrade over time — allow your followers to see how far you have come.

The most important thing, should you decide to embark on this path, is to not let anyone discourage you. We all have a story to tell and there is always someone willing to listen, especially if that story is well told. I’ll be watching and listening. NM

Tune in to the Entertainment Zone and the Tech Zone on Amazon.com or I Heart Radio, and find episodes of United on Wheels at unitedonwheels.blubrry.net, and Abilities Zone at paulamadeuslane.com/abilitieszone.

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Meet New Member Crystal Stewart

Age 44, from Charlotte, North Carolina

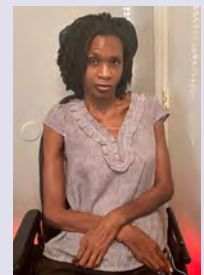
Transverse Myelitis

Customer Service Representative

Why I joined United Spinal: I joined United Spinal Association because I love NEW MOBILITY magazine. It is a wonderful resource for things you may need but never knew existed!

What is the one disability-related product you couldn't live without?

My power wheelchair. I can get out of the house and go shopping, to the bank, hair salon, library and anywhere locally via the bus. It has even allowed me to travel to Nicaragua, where I stayed for 4 months.



Meet other members or join United Spinal at unitedspinal.org

LAST WORD

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WHEELCHAIR CONFIDENTIAL

NUDE AWAKENING

After a long day of delayed flights and BS, I ended up stuck with an unexpected overnight at a sketchy airport hotel. Exhausted, I fell asleep naked on one of the double beds. At some point, a spasm launched me off the edge of the bed and I landed sideways, lodged between the mattress and the nightstand. Naked and by myself, I took stock of things. I am a C7 with crap hands, and only one was free. My one chance was to reach my phone and call for help.

Hotel reception sent a guy, and as he entered, I looked down to take stock of things. It wasn't good. My balls were caught in my wheelchair spokes. The dude went straight to pull the chair away and I quickly interjected, "WAIT! WAIT! WAIT!," just in the nick of time. Then I said, "Stranger sir, please lift my balls off the spokes first." He did, and I was OK, but I almost lost the boys that day.

Jules Strand



PLEASE REMAIN SEATED





Standards



Features



Technology



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