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(BULLY PULPIT)

Maybe she was secretly
becoming lonely and sad, yet
no one had eyes to see it.



Invisible Disability

Take me to the alley
Take me to the afflicted ones
Take me to the lonely ones that
somehow lost their way

— from Gregory Porter's 2016 CD,
"Take Me to the Alley"

We live in an imperfect world of disease and disability where nonprofit organizations are dedicated to promoting understanding, advocating for treatment and finding cures. But no one truly comprehends the underlying psychological and emotional causes of the invisible disability of addiction — how it brings the brightest down and crushes the fragile promise of happiness. And most importantly, how it can happen to anyone, even those closest to us.

I learned today it happened to someone who I once thought was invincible. Not only were we close, in our early twenties we talked of marriage — but our lives took different directions.

Growing up she was a bright, happy, uplifting presence. Her smile and laughter lightened the mood of everyone around her. She was strong, pretty, talented and steadfast, grounded in her own confidence and her family's faith in God. She grew into a brilliant pianist whose music moved hearts and engendered joy. At the age of 25 she married an older man, respected and powerful, had two precious sons and lived an idyllic life in an upscale community.

And yet, something was, apparently, not right. It might have been a mysterious unmet need that gradually bled off her sense of contentment in her world. It may have been an emotional wound that festered in the quiet of night. Perhaps it was the strangling tyranny

of great expectations that slowly closed off her future. Or the loneliness brought on by the success of her husband. Maybe it was all of these things. Or none of them. Maybe, beneath the smile and laughter, she was secretly becoming lonely and sad, yet no one had eyes to see it.

The high school homecoming queen who never touched alcohol started drinking at some point. While her husband traveled widely on business, she raised their boys in an environment of unfettered opportunity, yet they began to display symptoms of discontent. One drank heavily; the other became addicted to heroin. Maybe she blamed herself and guilt took root. Maybe that is how — contrary to the bright promise that lit her way from the beginning — she herself became an alcoholic.

And then came the slow but inevitable decline that took years, perhaps decades. Looking back, the real tragedy for those of us who shared our youthful lives with her was that we knew nothing of her struggle in later life.

No matter the cause of her decline, no one could have predicted what I learned about her today, so many years later — how she degenerated from alcohol to something worse, until, at 72, she died on the street of a heroin overdose, homeless. Sad, shocking, unthinkable.

Neither the details of her death nor my speculation on what might have led up to it were included in her obituary, and rightly so. But the absence of the whole truth in those final words — as painful as it is — exposes an escalating failing in our national culture that is larger than any single life: denial is consuming us.

— TIM GILMER

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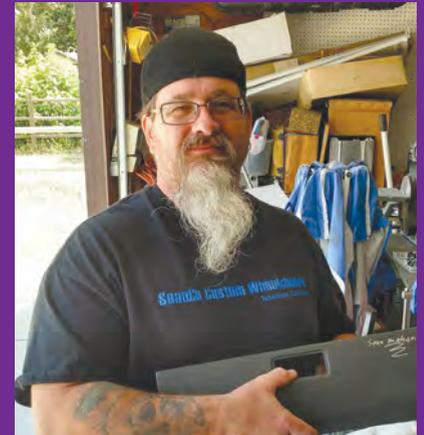
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BY IAN RUDER



Editor's Note: We were shocked and saddened to learn that on September 23, Sean Mahaney died in a three-vehicle crash while riding his motorcycle to a fundraiser for a local non-profit. Fortunately, SeanCo will live on (www.seancowheelchairs.com). "We're definitely not going away," said Sean's wife, Donna. "We've got way too much at stake." Friends of the family have established a GoFundMe to help his family: www.gofundme.com/we-will-miss-you-sean-mahaney.

It takes quite a bit to steal the stage from a 6-foot-five-inch tall musician decked out in gold chains and jewelry, but when Atlanta rapper 2 Chainz took the stage in Tucson, Arizona, this August his custom wheelchair did just that. With bubblegum-pink tires, gold spokes, a pink frame that included four big chain links and a place for the rapper to rest his injured leg, pics of the wheelchair went viral. 2 Chainz Instagram post received over 66,000 likes and was shared widely across all social media platforms.

That's the kind of publicity most companies would kill for, but for Sean Mahaney, the founder of California-based SeanCo Customs and the creator of the iconic chair, it presented a conundrum. "I'll take the publicity," he says. "But I absolutely hate the fact that I've got to tell people they have to wait six months if they want a chair." That six-month wait

is a product of two major factors. One, SeanCo is turning out some of the coolest, most unique chairs on the market, so of course lots of people want them. And two, as of right now, SeanCo is basically a two-person team: Sean and his wife Donna, and they only work on one chair at a time.

Mahaney started building custom chairs about three years ago when confronted with the steep cost of buying a sports chair for his step-daughter who has spina bifida. "There was no way I was going to be able to afford \$3,000-\$5,000 for a basketball chair for her," he says. "In my mind, it never really made any sense that I could go to Wal-Mart and buy \$100 bike for one of my kids, but I have to spend \$1,500 for a piece of junk bike for my other kid. It just wasn't right."

With a background working on race cars and show cars, including a stint on

the reality hit, *Pimp My Ride*, Mahaney adapted quickly to working with wheelchairs. "I ended up building a basketball chair for her, pretty much out of scrap parts I had laying around and old chairs I dug up," he says. "We sent her to a week-long sports camp with it and just got an incredible reaction out of it. Everybody thought it was a professionally-built chair and done by a regular wheelchair company. And, I'm like, well, maybe I can do something like this ... it just kind of took off from there. The next thing I know, every spare minute I had while I wasn't working my regular job was building wheelchairs."

He quit his full-time job two years ago to focus on SeanCo. Business has been good. He just took a deposit on his 80th chair and is hoping to increase production in the near future. Here are the stories behind a few of his ultra-custom builds.

ADAPTIVE TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY



OBI ROBOT

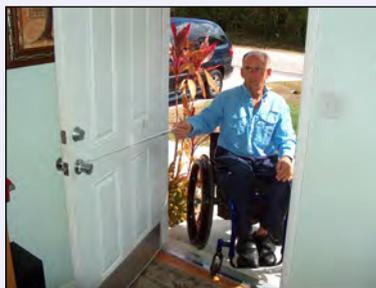
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DENNIS' CHAIR

This cherry red beauty was designed for a child who could only use one arm to help him get around and work on the farm where he lived. Mahaney tracked down some German spokes that would allow the user to push using one arm and added the big handle at the back so the kid's parents could push him if they needed to. Mahaney tacked on headlights that run off a USB rechargeable battery pack, built in a detachable front wheel that provides off-road freedom similar to the FreeWheel, and added a basket where the user could carry farm goods. "There was a lot of brainstorming on how they wanted everything," says Mahaney of the parents. "They actually shipped me a bucket that they used to put feed in for the animals, so I would make sure to build that basket big enough for the bucket."



CHAIR WITH MOTORCYCLE SEAT

Mahaney takes pride in building chairs that are as functional and well-built as they are attractive. He designed this chair around a novel seating system aimed at improving the posture of the user, who has cerebral palsy. Mahaney modeled the seat on a saddle seating system used in Europe. He got a custom-built motorcycle seat from another company, added high-end memory foam and a custom core cushion and a deep contour back that works with the seat to keep the user in position. "That was a fun one because it essentially started by building the seat itself and then we built the wheelchair around the seat," he says. "We probably had five or six fittings to make sure that everything was in the right position."



CRUE'S CHAIR

When insurance told Crue's parents that he didn't need a wheelchair because they could just push him in a stroller, they turned to SeanCo to get him the wheels he needed. "His dad had made a couple of things and played with stuff on wheels and saw that the kid just took off as soon as you put him in something," says Mahaney. "He's one of the most fearless kids I've ever met in a wheelchair at that age." Getting the suspension right for a fearless 3-year-old with spina bifida took some thinking. "There's pretty much no other company that's running a true shock without the suspension system for kids that light. But the way our unique style of suspension is, I could play with the positioning and pretty much make the shock think that a 20-pound kid is 200 pounds."

2 CHAINZ CHAIR

Mahaney was driving home at 2 a.m. on a Friday night when he got an email titled "2 Chainz" from the rapper's assistant explaining that 2 Chainz had broken his knee and needed a wheelchair to complete his tour. They had rescheduled five dates already, but wanted the chair for a show the coming Wednesday. "I sent a message to my wife knowing perfectly well she wouldn't know who 2 Chainz was (Sean did). I said, Google him, this is serious."

By 3 a.m. Mahaney was getting 2 Chainz measurements and design wishes. It had to be pink. It had to have 2 Chainz logo on it. And it had to have the same gold spokes 2 Chainz had seen on another rapper's chair. Mahaney came up with the chain link frame and added some other design flourishes after perusing 2 Chainz albums and social media.

Mahaney finished the chair in the nick of time, rented a van and drove it to Arizona, handing it to 2 Chainz hours before the show. "He was blown away," says Mahaney. "The thing fit him absolutely perfect. Everything was great right from the start." Mahaney was equally impressed by 2 Chainz and his entourage. "These guys were not at all the stereotypical rappers," he says. "I was really impressed at how professional and courteous they were." **MI**



ADAPTIVE TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY



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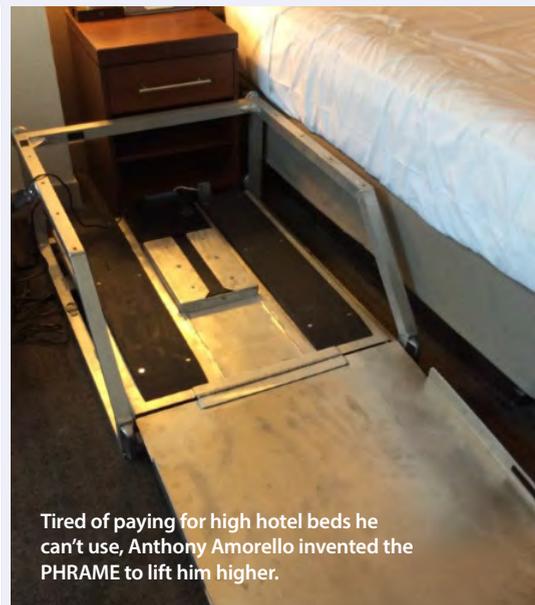
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AN END TO TOO-HIGH HOTEL BEDS?

BY ALEX GHENIS



Tired of paying for high hotel beds he can't use, Anthony Amorello invented the PHRAME to lift him higher.

Like many wheelchair users, Anthony Amorello is frustrated by the trend of hotels having higher and higher mattresses. He remembers better days, back when he was injured 44 years ago, where hotel beds with fancy mattresses didn't tower over him and his wheelchair. As a C5-6 quad who uses a sliding board to transfer, the higher mattresses make getting into and out of bed nearly impossible.

His frustration came to a head in 2010 when he visited Hawaii with his wife and kids and stayed in a luxury resort that cost over \$400 per night. "The beds were on a platform in addition to their 28-inch mattresses," he says. It was impossible to make the transfer from his manual chair. In the end, Amorello and his wife slept on rollaway beds for two weeks, while their kids shared the king-size hotel bed. "That's when I realized I've got to change this."

He called the Department of Justice and asked if they could do anything related to the Americans with Disabilities Act. They said no. "You've got all these things [such as sinks and doorways and showers] that are covered under the ADA," he says, "but hotel furniture is not." Calls to the American Hotel &

Lodging Association weren't helpful either, as officials recommended that hotels remove bed frames and box springs. But as Amorello knew first-hand, that doesn't guarantee a good height — and because new mattresses are so soft, he'd just sink into them and have a hard time transferring out.

Finally, Amorello took things into his own hands by designing a brand-new lift that brings wheelchairs up to bed height. "My brain is an adapting brain," he says. "I came up with this design that will solve everybody's problem." The product, called the Portable Hotel Room Accessible Mattress Equalizer (PHRAME), is a storable electric lift that can be rolled next to a hotel bed, raising a wheelchair-sized platform 13 inches so a guest can easily transfer to and from the bed. It weighs around 110 pounds, has four wheels and is about the same size as a rollaway cot, like those the Amorellos had to sleep on since the bed in their expensive hotel room wasn't accessible.

"If you take it to a hotel room, put it next to the bed — boom, the bed becomes accessible. You just back your wheelchair onto the platform," says Amorello, and an easy-to-use remote controls the electric lift. It can be set a little higher than

the mattress for transfers into bed, and a little lower to get back into a chair. Amorello wants to market the PHRAME directly to hotels when it goes into full production. The size is a great selling point: it can be put in storage just like an extra cot and easily pulled out for any customer who uses a wheelchair. There is no standard for hotel bed heights, but the PHRAME's vertical lift means it can work with virtually any chair and bed, meeting every customer's needs no matter the hotel.

The PHRAME is in prototype stages and Amorello is refining it. A patent is pending. He is encouraged by great feedback from social media, online forums, and responses to a YouTube video put up online. Some people have even thought of using it for other purposes, such as working on truck engines or transferring to snowmobiles. In the end, though, Amorello's goal is clear: with the PHRAME in hotels, "people can travel and feel confident that they'll get to a hotel and won't have to sleep in their chair." It will enable travel for business, vacation and more — and the ability for wheelchair-users to be independent no matter where they go. Find out more at bedphramelift.com. ■

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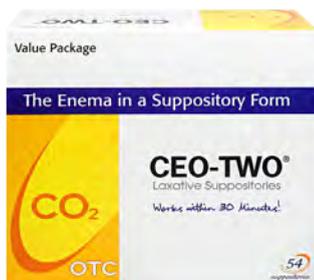
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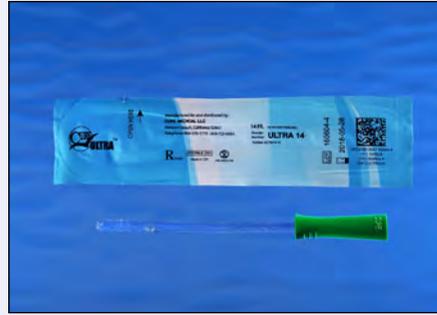
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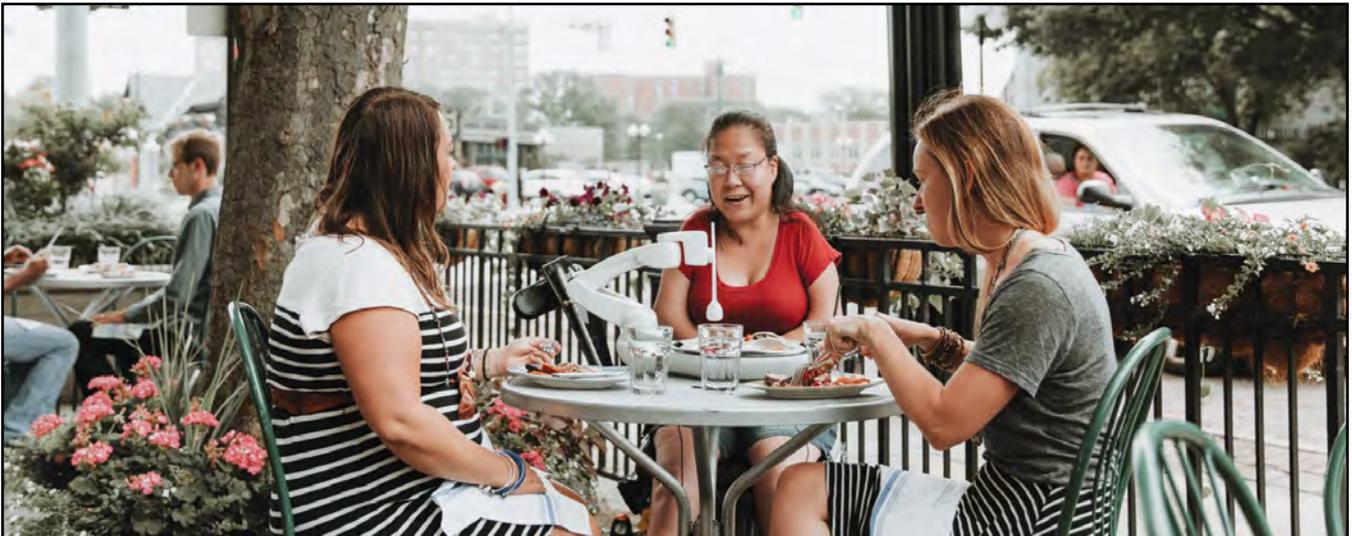
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GLIDEWEAR SKIN PROTECTION UNDERWEAR IS SHEAR GENIUS

GLIDEWEAR UNDIES FOR HER

BY KATE MATELAN

Ah, the beauty of skin breakdown, that inevitable part of chair life. As an active C7-T1 quad, I know it too well. I'm constantly popping in and out of my chair, sliding around, and putting my thin-skinned lower back to the ultimate test.

I've found a lot of shearing workarounds — rotating in leggings, switching from cheeky underwear to a lacey boybrief, even using Mepilex patches on my typical breakdown spot. On top of that, I am a gal with style — that means jean seams, layered clothing, and underwear of all shapes and material types. Add it up and you can guess what happens: shearing. So when I was presented with a pair of women's GlideWear Skin Protection Underwear, I put them to a true test.

GlideWear makes a number of products using its patented low-friction fabric to reduce shearing and friction. These comfortable, nylon/spandex yoga-like black women's shorts just hit the market on the heels of a men's version. There are a lot of similarities between the two, except the men's shorts have a moisture-wicking front panel with catheter access flap and come in a different color. The shorts are designed to protect at-risk skin using the company's patented, dual-layer "silk-like" fabric. The breathable fabric also keeps your skin dry and cool. Plus, the shorts are machine washable — a huge perk for wheelers.

Before the shorts arrived to try, I was in full skeptic mode. There was a lot of: "Oh, the XS will never fit my petite frame. I'll be swimming in the shorts, as I do most non-petite sizes! The upper thigh — sigh — it's going to gape around my atrophied muscles like all shorts." At \$54.99-\$59.99 per pair for the men's shorts (women's pricing not available at press time), the shorts are not cheap. I was interested to see whether these were



Kate Matelan says GlideWear is awesome, but wishes the undies worked better with her personal sense of style.

worth the price tag.

I wiggled them on myself like I would a pair of leggings, wearing them over my regular underwear. I was pleasantly surprised by the fit. The built-in control of the waistband was snug enough to stay up without cutting into my atrophied stomach muscles. The lines were clean, the fabric in the upper leg was fitted (not clingy either!), and the style required no yanking after transferring back into my chair. Believe me, that's a first.

I read the product description afterwards and figured out why they fit my atrophied frame — the design, a tapered thigh contour, already took that into consideration. And why did they not ride up? The non-binding thigh cuff was specifically included to keep them in place. The lightbulb totally turned on for me at this moment.

I tried the shorts around my place, out for rolls, and in a variety of other planned ways. One evening I rolled in a little late from work, only to find my trainer waiting for me. I bolted upstairs and didn't want to waste any time changing. I knew we'd be working on my back and stomach and my shorter summer dress would provide quite the show. The GlideWear shorts were clutch — I slid them over my underwear and under my dress. Bo-

nus? Unknown to me, my back was getting rubbed during the exercises and the shorts prevented any wear and tear. I had a little mark on my uncovered upper back, but nothing where I normally shear.

I'm not all sunshine and rainbows about the shorts. I can't wear them under my skinny jeans and they stuck out underneath several skirts and dresses. You could also see their outline under more fitted dresses, pants and skirts, which is a wardrobe no-no in my world. The high back panel gives you coverage, but it may stick out above your waist when underneath other clothing. I didn't love that part because I don't want anything peeking out when I'm bending and exposing my back. But, I understand the need for a higher back and the skin benefits it does provide.

My final verdict: the shorts material and construction is awesome. The design took into consideration some really important factors that you can't find in mainstream shorts, let alone adapted ones. However, I would only wear them as casual shorts (with a cute racerback tank) or during a workout session. If the same material came in a more traditional underwear-like style, I'd probably find more uses for it.



GLIDEWEAR UNDIES FOR HIM

BY BOB VOGEL

I'm 57 and in my 32nd year as a T10 complete para. I still do mirror-skin-checks every evening, and had adopted wearing cycling shorts in lieu of traditional underwear to avoid marks from the cotton seams. I'm also acutely aware that shear is as great or a greater threat to tissue injury than pressure because it can cause a deep tissue injury.

The GlideWear shorts at the Tamarack booth caught my eye at the International Seating Symposium last March and I decided to give them a try. My summary: they're great! They fit well, don't bunch up and a mirror check reveals no seam marks. I also like the way the material wicks away moisture so they stay dry.

I noticed the most important aspect of GlideWear when I first wore them. When I lean from side to side or forward in my chair, my butt pivots, although I am still secure in my chair. I realized that before GlideWear, even by leaning sideways or



Given Bob Vogel's active lifestyle, undies that don't shear are butt-saving.

forward to pick something up, I was putting sideways pressure on fragile tissue and tiny capillaries, something the shorts help reduce. I like the way they fit, like the way they perform, and feel more secure knowing I have an edge against shear.

GlideWear's shorts have a 30-day,

100 percent money-back guarantee and a one-year warranty. Available at glide-wear.com for \$54.99-\$59.99.



GlideWear looks like yoga shorts and fits well under most clothing.

HEALTH & HYGIENE



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RELIEVING FOOT PRESSURE WITH SHOE FIXES

BY ALEX GHENIS



Although at first glance these shoes appear to be laced up, they are actually fastened with a zipper that goes along the upper part of the shoe.

Many people wouldn't expect footwear to be a big concern for people who can't walk, but wheelers know — if you don't move your feet all day, you've got to make sure that things fit just right. Additionally, if you can't move your fingers that well, it can be tricky to get your kicks on and off and in the proper place. Finding shoes that fit both these bills — fitting right and being easy to use — can be difficult. Here are two solutions that may spare your feet and your mind.

SHOE SURGERY: STOPPING THE SORES

Since my injury 13 years ago, I've had pressure sores all over my body. Over time I've learned to avoid most types, but recurring sores on my feet were impossible to figure out. I can't move my feet, and can't exactly do a pressure release. I could never find shoes that didn't cut off circulation by my left ankle or right Achilles. It seemed that every shoe curled in on the back and put pressure right where it shouldn't go: where my heel meets my

calf. No matter which shoes I tried — my old skating shoes, some leather Doc Martens, even some fleece-lined Ugg sneakers — they dug in the back of my heels.

IF YOU'RE HAVING PROBLEMS FINDING FOOTWEAR THAT FITS, OR IF YOU HAVE SHOES YOU LOVE BUT DON'T QUITE WORK, A VISIT TO YOUR LOCAL COBBLER COULD BE A SOLUTION.

There was always some broken skin and sometimes much more.

It turned out that the solution wasn't another product, but an old-school innovation. Instead of returning the Doc Martens, I asked the owner of the store I bought them from if he knew where I could get them adjusted. He pointed me toward my local cobbler. If you didn't

know, a cobbler is a specialist who helps people replace worn-out shoe soles, restore leather, and make small modifications.

The store owner had been working in the shoe business for 20 years but said she hadn't dealt with my situation before. Together, we worked to find a solution. At first, we tried just stretching the leather on both sides — pulling the left ankle out sideways, and stretching back the right heel — but that didn't quite do the trick. The next step for my shoes was a little bit of surgery: cutting away part of the left shoe's outside-ankle area and expanding the right shoe with some brand-new leather. I had to leave my Docs at the shoe shop for a couple of days, but when I came back, things fit perfectly. My attendant and I made sure there was enough room to avoid pressure, and within a couple of weeks my skin had healed up just fine. I did the same thing with my other shoes and everything has been great ever since.

If you're having problems finding footwear that fits, or if you have shoes

HEALTH & HYGIENE



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Available from *Eat Well, Live Well With SCI*, www.eatwelllivewellwithsci.com





Rediscovering the local cobbler meant Alex Ghenis got to both relieve dangerous pressure on his ankle and keep his Doc Martens.

you love but don't quite work, a visit to your local cobbler could be the solution.

BILLY FOOTWEAR: DESIGNED BY A QUAD, FOR EVERYONE

Comfortable shoes are important, but it's no good if you can't put them on. Plenty of people with disabilities don't have the dexterity to tie a shoelace, which means having to ask for help. But for people who want to do their own routine, or just change shoes midday, what's the alternative? Flip-flops? Loafers? All seem like shoe types that might leave something to desire.

Billy Footwear is solving that problem. Billy Price and Darin Donaldson started the company in 2015 and now feature a line of fashionable, functional shoes that use zippers instead of shoe laces. The venture spawned out of Price's experience as a C5-6 quad of 20 years. Although he learned plenty of independent living skills in rehab, putting on shoes was always a problem. "You can use alternatives like bigger shoes or shoes with smooth tops, but you can see something looks different," he says. "I wanted shoes that looked normal."

Price and Donaldson, who knew each other from high school and recon-

nected in a chance encounter in 2012, originally teamed up to produce a pair of adaptive ski gloves. Donaldson had launched Swootz.com, a successful women's footwear line, in 2011, and the duo had always discussed the idea of building shoes. "Darin, being the entrepreneur, pushed to think bigger and create a solution that would not just work for me, but would also be fashionable enough for mainstream," Price says. They were developing a prototype and seeking opportunities when a recruiter from the Oxygen network reality show, *Quit Your Day Job*, who had seen the adaptive gloves, got in touch and asked if they would be a part of the show. "Our timeline was accelerated by the show — it was a rather chaotic time between March and June of 2015 — but it truly was the catalyst to get us moving, regardless of how haphazard some of the steps were."

The shoes range from sneakers to hightops and cover men's, women's and children's designs. The zippers themselves blend in above the toes, looking almost like a line of stitches around the front of any other pair of sneakers. Price

considers them "universal design," because they can be worn by people with and without disabilities — and many nondisabled folks even prefer them to shoes with laces. Parents have been especially receptive, as they are easy for children to put on.

So far, the shoes have gotten rave reviews. After the children's line expanded to a total of 12 models, Nordstrom started carrying the shoes in brick and mortar stores at the beginning of August this year. The shoes are also available online at www.Nordstrom.com and www.Zappos.com. Price said Zappos was particularly excited, and has showcased the shoes in a new department, Zappos Adaptive.

"We get great delight from adding value to others," says Price. He sees Billy Footwear as helping to dissolve the line between adaptive and non-adaptive clothing. "Although we can satisfy the adaptive market, we are not constrained by it. Our customer target is everyone! We are all equal. And by design, our shoes embody that belief." MI



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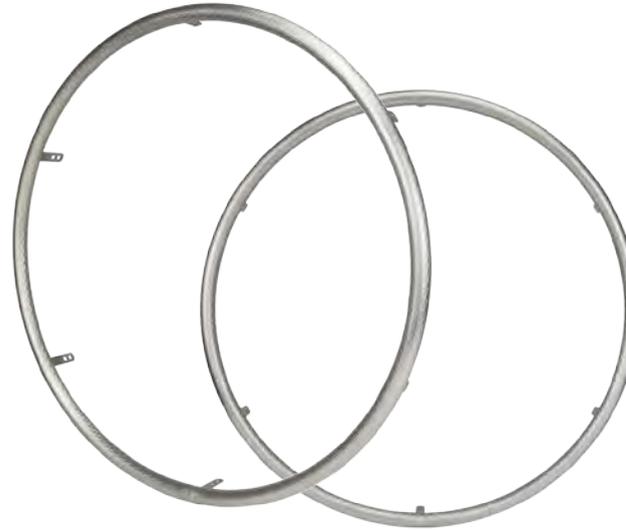
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The Stainless Steel Tactical Control Pushrim on the left displays almost no signs of wear after over two years of everyday use.

These standard aluminum pushrims on the right display 6 months of regular wear.



SPORTS & FITNESS

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SEVEN BUDGET-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS FOR A

The best exercises are the ones you're actually going to do, and for many that means being able to get a workout in without leaving home. Fortunately, getting into a regular fitness routine as a wheelchair user doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. All it takes is a little bit of knowledge and a few readily available fitness products to set up a home gym capable of delivering functional, balanced strength and keeping you healthy and energized for the long haul.



This is a representative selection of exercise equipment that can be used by a wheelchair user with limited grip strength and balance for a variety of workouts: from light range of motion and shoulder stability routines, to muscle-building and strength exercises, to high-intensity circuit training and cardio intervals. Start with light weights until you have mastered form and figured out how to best stabilize yourself. YouTube and SCI-Ex (an adaptive fitness app from the Shepherd Center) are great resources for researching both specific exercises and how to combine them into workout routines for different goals.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE HOME GYM

BY SETH MCBRIDE



1 Theraband: A must for a home gym. Theraband is light, cheap and it comes in a variety of resistances (\$11.65 on Amazon for a combo pack). Hang it from a hook and you can do lat pulldowns. Tie it around a doorknob and you can do a rotator cuff maintenance routine. Loop it around your back and you can do chest presses. Its elasticity also works for upper body plyometric workouts. The flat bands allow those with limited grip strength to wrap the ends around their hands and wrists for a secure grip. Theraband also sells handles that easily attach to both their tubing and flat bands, as well as door attachments if you don't have a good wall to put a hook into. Not for heavy lifting, but great for warming up, Theraband is useful for focusing on form and quality with your reps, and for high-pace, high-rep cardio intervals.

2 Active Hands Gloves: The Active Hands company makes a variety of gripping aids, but the most bang for your buck is the general-purpose model. They're strong enough to support your body weight, make dumbbells a lot more functional and less dangerous, and can even be used for gripping a handcycle pedal. The only problem is that it's difficult (though not impossible) to strap both hands onto objects at the same time. For linear motions with a dumbbell, cable handle, over even pullups, a good pair of lifting hooks make for a quick, easy attachment to lift with both arms at the same time.

3 Kettle Bell: Kettle bells make a good free-weight for chair users because they are more stable in your hand than a traditional dumb bell. A simple 15-pound kettle bell (pictured) lets someone with limited grip strength do bicep curls, shoulders shrugs, overhead presses, and triceps extensions, among other exercises, without any additional gripping aids. Nice for doing circuits where you want to be able to transition between exercises quickly. Typically available from 5 to 60 pounds, a kettle bell in the 10- to 25-pound range would be the most versatile for chair users with balance issues.

4 Bowflex SelectTech Dumbbells: Bowflex weights let you lift from 5 to 52.5 pounds at the turn of a dial, taking up less space and costing a lot less than a similar range of traditional dumbbells. With that kind of range, you can do a wide variety of exercises, and you don't need to buy heavier weights as you get stronger. Many dumbbell exercises can be done directly from your chair, or lying down on a mat or a bed, depending on your strength and stability. SelectTech dumbbells are available from Bowflex for \$299 a set, and an additional \$139 for the stand pictured here.

5 Wrist weights: A good pair of adjustable wrist weights allows you to do almost any lifting movement. These, from All-Pro, are technically sold as ankle weights, but close tight enough to use on the wrists (\$35 each on Amazon). They are adjustable from 2.5 to 10 pounds each, with a padded, durable construction, and strong, easy to use Velcro closure. You can't lift heavy, but they are great for doing circuit training and getting your heart rate up. Double bonus: They also make a good pair of wheel blocks if you don't have brakes.

6 Lighter wrist weights: A pair of 1- to 2.5-pound wrist weights (\$26 on Amazon) is good for shoulder exercises as well as bending over your lap and mimicking your push stroke. When done in timed intervals, this can provide a good high-intensity cardio workout that engages the muscles that get neglected when you're actually pushing.

7 Medicine Balls: From a sitting position, medicine balls make for a great addition to a functional strength circuit: Bounce them on the floor, throw them against a wall from different angles, even squeeze them for static strength building. From a prone position, you can do chest passes or overhead throws, as well as range of motion exercises to build functional flexibility. Pictured here are 4, 8, and 12 pounds (\$20 to \$40+ each on Amazon, depending on weight).



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ADAPTIVE INDOOR SKYDIVING – THE SAFER ADRENALINE OPTION

BY TIFFINY CARLSON



Indoor skydiving is like experiencing a very long freefall, says Damon Boiser.

Damon Boiser became internet famous in 2012 as, unofficially, the first wheelchair user to land in his wheelchair after tandem jumping from a plane. Boiser, a 41-year-old C6 quad, recently took a love of skydiving to a new venue: indoors. On one of his mainland trips, the Hawaii native gave indoor skydiving a try at iFLY Seattle. The experience did not disappoint. “It gives you the chance to float, like in a skydiving free fall, but for much longer,” this skydive connoisseur says. At iFLY Seattle, he was able to do awesome stunts. “We did a high fly for their first time ever. That’s where you fly to the top of the tunnel and down.”

The first indoor skydiving wind tunnel — the Levitationarium — was built in 1978 in Montreal, Canada. Since then several other indoor skydive facilities have been built, including The Vegas Indoor Skydiving tunnel in 1982, and Skyventure Orlando in 1999. Skyventure changed its name to iFLY in 2005 and has expanded

to 27 locations in the United States.

Josh Basile, a C4-5 quad and founder of Determined2Heal, a nonprofit that offers adaptive adventures to people

with spinal cord injuries, heard about it through a friend who also has an SCI and went indoor skydiving for the first time in May 2016. “Indoor skydiving sounded

OUTDOOR SKYDIVING

Despite indoor skydiving’s surge in popularity, traditional skydiving remains a favorite among wheelchair users.

Joe Dailey, a 52-year-old C5-6 quad from Minnesota, made his first jump in 2014 in California with Skydive Perris. “Anytime I can do something without my chair, it gives me a sense of freedom and a sense of normalcy. I was no different than any other diver who jumped that day.”

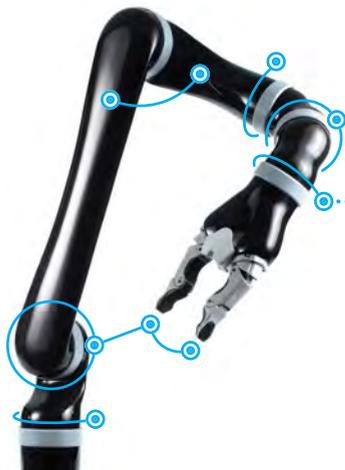
Dale Elliott, a 41-year-old T10 paraplegic, is the first person with paralysis to become licensed to skydive solo in Australia. He has jumped hundreds of times. “I even made a pair of pants with D30 foam in the butt area, which allows me to prevent injury when I land.”

Amber Ryan Marcy, a 36-year-old C6-7 quad from Michigan, has jumped 10 times. “I loved skydiving so much that when I was Ms. Wheelchair Michigan in 2009, I had an event that helped offset the costs for people with disabilities to skydive.”

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crazy adventurous but at the same time very doable and safe,” he says.

Basile, who has always been a thrill-seeker, did have a brief moment of fear before his first flight. “When you first are turned on to your stomach while in the air and you are looking down, you feel like you’re going to fall face first, but you don’t.” Thankfully, he says, the iFLY team are pros. “Certain skilled instructors use a particular technique to hold onto the skydiving suit material of the participant’s arm to help minimize the wind force.” Boiser also loved the staff at iFLY Seattle, but he admits there was one drawback. “The free-fall moves you can do in the tunnel have to be exact, so you don’t hit the wall. In skydiving, you have

the whole wide sky to turn in.”

In 2016, iFLY hosted its first All Abilities Night at iFLY Portland after an employee who had a child with a disability suggested the idea. The event sold out in 24 hours, and later that year Determined2Heal hosted its very own East Coast All Abilities Night. CBS covered the event, spreading the word to over one million homes. The success of the segment, titled “Leaving wheelchairs behind to take flight,” led iFLY to expand the event to iFLY tunnels across the country.

All Abilities Night offers discounted flights to people with disabilities. Flights are reduced from \$69 to \$39. This price includes two flights, plus the cost for all of the gear — suit, helmet and goggles.

If you need assistance getting dressed, make sure to bring someone. iFLY does have staff on-hand to assist holding participants during flights and getting people in and out of the chamber safely.

“It is such an incredible perspective change,” says Basile. “I’m always facing forward while I’m driving around in my power wheelchair. With indoor skydiving, I’m facing down and seeing the world from a new vantage point.”

If you live near Washington, D.C., or plan on being in the area, you can sign up to fly by emailing Determined2Heal@gmail.com. If you live anywhere else in the country, go to www.iflyworld.com/find-a-tunnel. **MM**

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An advertisement for Outrider USA featuring a person riding a three-wheeled adaptive electric vehicle on a dirt trail. The background shows a scenic mountain landscape. The text 'RIDE BOUNDLESS' is in large, bold, orange and white letters, with 'ADAPTIVE ELECTRIC VEHICLES' below it. At the bottom, it says 'OFF-ROAD | ALL-TERRAIN | ROAD QUAD & PARA-READY' and 'OUTRIDERUSA.COM' with a red arrow pointing to the right.

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SOFTWHEEL ACROBAT: A SOFTER RIDE

BY SETH MCBRIDE

I was skeptical of SoftWheel's Acrobat wheels when I first saw them. Suspension built into a wheel? It seemed like a gimmicky sort of idea, something that's good for marketing copy, but unlikely to function well in the real world.

Admittedly, part of my skepticism was due to my own ignorance. *How does that even work? I thought. Does the rim flex? Seems like that would be pretty sloppy for pushing.* It took me until I actually pulled a demo pair of Acrobats out of the box to realize how they work: *Aah, the hub flexes within the rim. That makes a lot more sense.* I felt pretty dumb, but also a little excited to try them.

I've been thinking about getting a suspension chair ever since I spent the better part of a year in Latin America, where sidewalks are full of gaps, cracks, and bumps, and I spent a lot of time dropping off curbs. All that jarring put my low back in a state of continual dull ache. I began to regret not bringing a chair with suspension. But suspension adds weight to a chair, and chairs with it are typically bulky in the wrong places when you pull your frame in and out of your car on a regular basis. South America is one thing, but given the drawbacks, suspension seemed unnecessary for the States.

Recently, my wife and I bought a house in a neighborhood with a distinct lack of curb cuts and numerous uneven sidewalks. I take my dog and 6-month-old son for a lot of walks and there are plenty of days that my back would appreciate a softer ride.

The first thing I noticed when I pulled the wheels out of the box isn't necessarily a positive: they're heavy. At 4.8 pounds for the aluminum version, they're almost three times the weight of a Spinerigy Spox wheel. SoftWheel, however, claims that their wheels are actually more efficient to push than a regular wheelchair wheel. They even have graphs to prove it.

I can't vouch for the accuracy of the graphs, but in my testing, the force required to push my everyday chair with the Acrobats on both flats and hills felt very similar to pushing with Spinerigy's.



McBride noticed a much smoother ride after a couple of days of breaking in the suspension on the Acrobat wheels.

Considering they have three shock absorbers built into each wheel, that's a pretty impressive feat of engineering.

The weight is more noticeable when I break my chair down to put it in my car. But even though they're heavier than my regular wheels, it's not like lifting 5 pounds into my car is a strain, and it's definitely less of a pain than lifting a frame with suspension built into it.

The folks at SoftWheel told me the wheels would take a few days to break in, but I actually noticed the suspension as soon as I took them for a roll and dropped off a curb. It was a whole lot less jarring than it normally is. For the first few days, I only noticed the suspension for curb-sized drops or hitting larger bumps at speed.

As the wheels broke in, the ride did become noticeably softer. All the bumps, cracks and drops on my daily pushing routes were noticeably smoothed. All in all, the wheels performed exactly as I'd hoped. By switching wheels, my chair felt like it had built in suspension. When the

time came to wrap up the demo, I didn't want to take them off and send them back.

Which brings us to price. You can get a pair of base model Acrobats from NuMotion for \$1,800. That's a lot of money for a set of wheels, especially considering you can get pair of Topolino carbon fiber wheels that weigh 1.3 pounds per wheel for just under \$1,000. Whether or not Acrobats are worth \$1,800 is situational. If you spend a lot of time wheeling over rough ground, or if you have significant pain issues that a softer ride would benefit, they're certainly cheaper than buying a wheelchair with built-in suspension. And they offer the same benefits with less downsides than a suspension frame.

NuMotion offers a free 10-day demo of Acrobats. If you're thinking about upgrading to a softer ride, they're definitely worth a test. The general public can purchase SoftWheels directly from NuMotion, 877/876-5332; www.shopnumotion.com, and veterans are invited to purchase them from Ki Mobility, 715/254.0991; www.kimobility.com. **MM**

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Available from National Coalition for Assistive and Rehab Technology,
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PUSHRIM OPTIONS FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

BY BOB VOGEL



Studies have shown that manual wheelchair users push an average of 2,000 to 3,000 times a day. That takes a toll on the upper extremities, especially hands and wrists. The good news is there are a variety of pushrim options that offer superior propulsion through ergonomic design, increasing pushing power and reducing the stress on hands and wrists. In addition, these pushrims help keep your hands clean by eliminating the need for “tire grabbing” while pushing. Here is a list of some pushrim options.

GEKKO BY CARBOLIFE

CarboLife offers a variety of pushrims to accommodate different hand sizes as well as coated handrims for limited hand function. CarboLife handrims are shaped like a rounded upside-down triangle. Of note are the GEKKO handrims that feature a strong replaceable rubber strip integrated into the profile of the top of the rim. This enables easy traction for pushing and at the same time, the smooth sides provide no-burn braking on hills. Also, CarboLife rims are fully sealed. The average pushrim has one or more small holes drilled into the rim to vent expanding heat that occurs during manufacturing, and they are also an aggravation for the user because they let in sand and water, which not only makes an aggravating noise, but messes up floors and carpets when the goop drips out.

Jim Munson, 50, in his 33rd year as a T10 complete para, is a rehab sales specialist for Invacare who recently started

using GEKKO handrims. “In the first week of using GEKKOs, I noticed a significant decrease in my hand and thumb pain,” says Munson, from Brighton, Michigan. “I attribute this to the wider profile and rubber traction strip that gives plenty of torque going up ramps and hills and eliminates having to grab my tires, which also keeps my hands clean. The sides give me a large efficient braking surface going downhill with no heat buildup. And it’s great not having drill holes — no more getting sand or water in the rims or the annoying rattling slushing that goes with it.”

Available through CarboLife and on select models of Kuschall USA wheelchairs, suggested retail is \$462 per pair.

RIBGRIPS

RibGrips have set a new standard for pushrims for wheelers with limited hand function. Brandon Handle, co-founder of RibGrips, in his 20th year as a C5-6 quad, explains that three people worked for five years to perfect the design. The key is coating the rim with ergonomic ribs, which are soft discs made of a latex-free rubber/plastic blend that offers superior grip for pushing and stopping, even when wet. They are available in four colors — blue, red, pink and black.

Chris Cook, 55, in his 37th year as a C6 quad, has been using RibGrips for a little over a year. “I don’t have full hand grip, so I always used to wear gloves to push plastic coated handrims,” says Cook, from Walnut Creek, California. “RibGrips have such great traction that

I no longer need gloves to push. They are also great at slowing and stopping when using a series of quick on/off ‘tap tap tap’ motions — something that is a bit of a learning curve. They have such great traction I can push straight up my driveway — which is about the same angle as an ADA ramp. With my old rims, I would have to traverse back and forth to make it.”

Suggested retail is \$259.99 per pair.

SPINERGY TC STAINLESS STEEL HANDRIM

TC stands for Tactical Control. TC pushrims are made from lightweight stainless steel with an embossed texture for better grip when pushing. Spinergy claims that the TC stainless steel is extremely tough and scratch resistant and doesn’t burn when going down hills. The surface is also easy to clean and doesn’t mark your skin like aluminum rims do when the anodizing starts to wear. And Spinergy now plugs the small vent holes in their rims.

Spinergy sales manager Ryan Baker, 45, is in his 26th year as a T6 para and has been using TC handrims for the past two and a half years. “The rims have a knurled texture that gives better pushing traction so you don’t have to grab the handrim and the tire,” says Baker, from Carlsbad, California. “Also, they generate almost zero friction heat when slowing, going downhill. After two and a half years of hard use, they still look good as new, with none of the typical scratches, scarring and burrs that I got with alu-

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Available from National Registry of Rehab Technology Suppliers, 800/976-7787; or www.nrrts.org

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Chris Cook

minum pushrims. And they don't leave black marks on my hands the way aluminum rims do when the anodizing starts to wear."

Suggested retail is \$399 per pair.

SPINERGY FLEXRIM

The FlexRim uses a urethane material, rather than metal tabs, to secure the pushrim to the rim, and the urethane material provides extra traction for pushing. The material also flexes, enabling the chair to compress an extra inch or so when squeezing through tight doorways.

Nick LiBassi, 46, in his 21st year as a T10 para, has been using FlexRims for four years. "They make pushing more efficient because of the traction you get on the flex strip," says LiBassi, from Rochelle Park, New Jersey. "And even in wet weather the flex strip provides a solid grip. I used traditional pushrims for 16-17 years and I believe that it caused carpal tunnel and tennis elbow to the point where I was considering surgical intervention. When I talked with another wheelchair user about FlexRims, I de-



Nick LiBassi

ecided to give them a try. Within three or four weeks of using the FlexRims, I noticed a reduction in pain — both in my wrists and elbows. Today, I can say that I have virtually no problem with either carpal tunnel or tennis elbow."

Suggested retail is \$1,270 per pair.



Thea Rosa

SURGE BY OUT-FRONT

The Surge is an oval shaped handrim that comes in two sizes and features a Gription Strip, a rubber strip that goes around the top surface of the handrim. The Gription Strip provides easy grip when going uphill, and the smooth oval side surface provides no-burn braking and control when descending hills.

Thea Rosa, 50, in her 13th year as T12 incomplete para, has been using Surge pushrims for a year. "I love the feel, it is more natural in your hand. The soft gel-like grip on top of the wheel provides better grip for pushing," says Rosa, from Sacramento, Calif. "And I have more control over the wheels for slowing down and stopping on hills."

Suggested retail is \$315 per pair. 

RESOURCES

- CarboLife, www.carbolife.de/en/products/handrims
- Kuschall, www.kuschallusa.com
- RibGrips, www.ribgrips.com
- Spinergy, www.spinergy.com/content/wheelchair
- Surge by Out-Front, www.out-front.com/surge_overview.php

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443/745-1788; or www.sandhelper.com



WHEELCHAIR ADD-ONS TO MAKE COMMUTING EASIER

BY SETH MCBRIDE

I like my car. I love road trips, and my life as a wheelchair user would be a whole lot less convenient if I wasn't able to drive. But I also live in a city, Portland, Oregon, where the car is quickly falling down the pecking order of convenient modes of transport.

There are countless occasions in my everyday life where it would be much simpler, and more enjoyable, to not have to get in my car. Parking is a pain in any neighborhood I might actually want to visit, narrow streets make for stressful driving, and sunny days are for soaking up some vitamin D.

I have relatively strong arms for a C7 quad, but Portland has hills. Most times I want getting from point A to B to be pleasant rather than a serious workout.

Towing my wheelchair behind my handcycle isn't a great commuting option. If I ride somewhere, then I have to deal with getting back in my chair. Then, where do I lock up an enormous handcycle on a busy city sidewalk? Using my handcycle to commute is technically doable, but it's enough of a pain that I don't want to deal with it.

There has to be a better way. In talking with a few fellow wheelers, I found that there are a few options that can make commuting for a manual wheelchair user more functional.

SMARTDRIVE MX2+ BY MAX MOBILITY

The SmartDrive MX2+ (\$5,990 from a variety of DME retailers) is a power assist device that attaches to the back axle of most manual wheelchairs. It's controlled by a Bluetooth wristband. It can either keep you rolling at the speed you're pushing, reducing the amount you need to push to maintain speed, or it can provide independent power to get you up hills or ramps.

Pros:

Unobtrusive: It sits behind your chair



Max Woodbury says his Stricker power assist handbike is "amazing."

frame and doesn't extend beyond the rear wheels, so maneuvering in tight spaces isn't compromised. Its out-of-the-way design means that it can stay on your chair, instead of having to detach it when you get somewhere.

Powerful: The motor has enough power to get most people up steep hills and ramps, and with the new wrist bracelet, you can tap your wrist to start the motor from a stop, a nice feature if you don't have the strength to get started on a hill, or if you're trying to hold onto something while going up a ramp.

Cons:

Bracelet functionality: In practice the Bluetooth connection between wrist and motor proves twitchy, at best. In my time testing the SmartDrive, the motor was constantly shutting off when I wanted it to keep going. Other wheelers I talked with have experienced similar issues. For long-distance regular use, the tendency

to lose connection to the motor could prove frustrating.

Maximum speed: Top speed for the Smart Drive is basically a fast walk, good enough to make zipping around a compact urban area, neighborhood, or small town easier, but not quick enough to make long-distance treks efficient. The positive side of this low max speed is that it lets you stay on sidewalks if where you live doesn't have good cycling routes.

Verdict:

This is a fine device that would be useful for someone commuting in certain situations. For instance, someone who lives in a hilly area within a few miles of work or the businesses to which they regularly want to roll. It's most useful to those with limited arm strength for whom hills are a significant deterrent to community mobility, or those who like pushing places but worry about long-term wear and tear on their shoulders.

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A motorized trike attachment such as the Firefly can be a great option.

MOTORIZED TRIKE ATTACHMENTS

These attachments, which turn your everyday manual chair into an electric motorized trike, aren't seen that often in the U.S., but are commonly used all over the world. Their worldwide popularity makes sense — in places with denser urban areas, rough roads, and less of a car-culture, they make a great option for a chair-user to get around. Davinci, a United Kingdom company, TriRide, an Italian company, and Batec Mobility, a Spanish company, each have multiple interesting options if you can get a hold of one. The most popular version readily available in America is the Firefly by Rio Mobility (\$2,395 from Bike-on.com).

Pros:

All-terrain: By lifting your front casters up off the ground and replacing them with a single, 20-inch front wheel, a motorized trike lets you travel at speed over a variety of surfaces. Gravel, grass and bumpy roads are all a whole lot more manageable with a bigger wheel up front and something other than your arms powering it.

Speed and range: The Firefly has a top speed of 12 mph and an estimated range of 15 miles. That's plenty to go cruising around town and still be able to make it home without having to recharge mid-trip.

Cons:

Hand function required: The way the

Firefly is setup — regular brake levers and a thumb throttle — means that you need decent hand function to be able to operate it. It wouldn't take a lot to be able to set it up more quad-friendly controls, but it would take some figuring as there's no quad option currently available in the United States.

Passive: There's not much active about using a motorized trike attachment. For me, a big part of enjoying chair commuting is to get the blood flowing a little bit, and you don't have that option here.



The SmartDrive can save wear and tear on your shoulders.

Verdict:

If getting somewhere with convenience is your only concern, then a motorized trike attachment is a great option. They're functional, versatile, and easy to use. Hills, rough roads, or fatigue don't have to be deterrents to using your chair to go out.

ATTACHABLE HANDCYCLES

Attachable handcycles have been around for a long time, but they've mostly been sold as recreational devices. If you're just looking to go out for a ride, they make a rather poor alternative to a lay-down or semi-recumbent handcycle. But for going to do something other than just ride, attachable handcycles have a huge advantage — when you get where you're going, you can unhook yourself and voilà, you're sitting in your regular wheelchair. Rio Mobility makes both a power-assisted version, the eDragonfly (\$2,895), and a non-assisted base version, the Dragonfly (\$1,795). The Electro Drive Lipo Smart Tetra Wheelchair Bike Handcycle (\$7,500) from Stricker is an excellent, though pricier option with quad-friendly power assist.

Pros:

Variety: If you have the strength and live in a fairly flat area, a simple model is about the cheapest mobility device you're going to find. If you need the power assist to

MOBILITY & SEATING



OUTDOOR WHEEL PACKAGE

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or www.whill.us



make commuting more functional, there are options starting at a still reasonable \$2,800 for a power-assisted DragonFly.

Maximum Speed and Range: For a power-assist model, you'd have a similar speed and range as a motorized trike attachment. But with a handcycle, at least you can still pedal if you run out of juice.

Shoulder Health: Anyone who regularly uses a handcycle knows how well they work your back muscles and help open up your shoulders from the constant forward push motion of everyday chair use. Using a handcycle attachment as a means of community mobility lets you get your heart pumping a bit and works to balance out your shoulders and keep them healthy in the long term. Even if the SmartDrive lets you push less than you normally would, you're still having to push to go anywhere.

RESOURCES

- Bike-on has a good overview of the attachable models available in the United States here: bike-on.com/handcycles/attachable-handcycles. The site also sells many cycles, often with discounts from the manufacturer's price.
- SmartDrive MX2 by Max Mobility, www.max-mobility.com.

Trike Attachments

- Firefly Electric Handcycle by Rio Mobility, riomobility.com.
- Davinci, www.davincimobility.com/wheelchair-attachments.
- TriRide, www.trirideitalia.com/en/about-us.
- Batec Mobility, batec-mobility.com/en/our-handbikes/models.

Attachable Handcycles

- Dragonfly (non-power assist) by Rio Mobility, riomobility.com.
- eDragonfly (power-assisted pedal model) by Rio Mobility, riomobility.com.
- Electro Drive Lipo Smart Tetra Wheelchair Bike Handcycle by Stricker, Bike-on.com.

Cons:

Maneuverability: Even though they're shorter in length than a regular handcycle, an attachable model is still awkward to maneuver in tight spaces. Going into any businesses, you're probably going to want to detach it and leave it outside, which means finding a space to park and lock it up.

Verdict:

Here is what Max Woodbury — a C5-6 quad who uses a Stricker power assist

model for everything from going to a date night dinner with his wife to commuting to work — told me when I asked his overall impression of his attachable handcycle's functionality: "It's amazing."

Clear enough. It lets you get the blood flowing a little, keep your shoulders healthy, and ride with your kids or non-disabled friends without making them slow down for you, all while being able to detach and stay in your everyday chair when you get where you're going. **MI**

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VetsFirst

a program of **United Spinal Association** 

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

AUTOMOTIVE RESOURCES

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AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS & SERVICES



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NMEDA provides adaptive transportation solutions for you, your family, and your caregivers. NMEDA's Quality Assurance Program (QAP™) dealers provide in-person evaluations, custom vehicle modifications, and 24/7 emergency assistance to keep you safe and confident on the road. If you need a wheelchair accessible vehicle or adaptive driving equipment, take the guesswork out of the equation and insist on NMEDA QAP.

Available from National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association,
800/833-0427 or www.nmeda.org



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Available from Rollx Vans, 800/956-6669 or
www.RollxVans.com



BED, BUS AND BEYOND

BY IAN RUDER



“Yes I bought a bus”

John Whitbread has been a wheelchair user for 33 years, and for much of that time he has been looking for the perfect vehicle to go camping in with his wife, who also uses a wheelchair. He looked at RVs, but couldn't find a good one that wasn't cost-prohibitive. He looked at trailers and toy haulers, but the ramps were too steep and they didn't seem convenient. Finally, he settled on something a little more unique — a bus. “I decided I'd get a bus that came with a wheelchair lift and make the insides the way I want them,” he says.

After years of looking, he found his ideal bus — one with a side lift instead of a rear entry — on eBay. In January 2017 he bought it, flew to Atlanta to pick it up, and drove it home. Once he got the bus home, he got to work. “I stripped down all the seats and took out all the nails, took everything off the floor, cleaned it as much as possible, coated it with some Henry waterproofing and laid down some tongue in groove plywood,” he says. “It was cheap, only a couple hundred bucks.”

From there, he installed a bed at the back of the bus and has plans to build cabinets above the wheel wells and a small kitchenette. With two wheelchairs, maximizing floor space is key. “I can't have an aisle. I need space for my wife and I to pass each other in chairs, and that's it, it's just going to be as wide open but accommodating as possible.” For now, Whitbread is not planning to install plumbing or heating but says that could change.

Keeping costs down has been a priority, though Whitbread admits that if he had all the money in the world he would paint the bus black with chrome trim and alloy wheels. That would definitely change how others perceive the bus. “When I drive it around, people behave around me like a school bus,” he says. “Kids start waving at me.”

With only 130,000 miles, the bus should be good for a number of big trips once Whitbread is finished. He says Mexico, where his wife is from, and Canada, where he is from, will both be on the destination list, as will a number of shorter trips for disability-related events and the like. He is already looking to what's next. “I'm just going to try to do as much of it myself as I can and spend as little money as possible and if somebody wants to buy it, I'll sell it and then start again,” he says. “I would sell this one and go get another one and do it again for myself. I've got so many more ideas now.”

MI



AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS & SERVICES



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DISABILITY SERVICES

All of the adaptive products and tools in the marketplace are useless to us without the services and organizations that bring them to us. Here is where and how you can get them.



ABILITIES EXPO

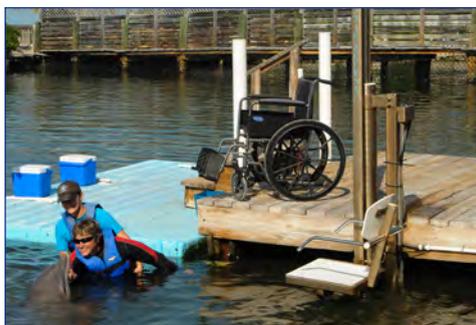
Abilities Expo is the go-to resource for the disability community. In eight cities across North America, the Expo features the latest products and services for people with disabilities, informative workshops and fun, inclusive activities like adaptive sports, wheelchair dancing, service animal demos and more. Admission is free!

Available from Abilities Expo, 310/405-1317; or www.abilities.com

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NOT SO SECRET AGENTS TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR NEXT ACCESSIBLE TRIP

BY LILLY LONGSHORE

I have searched high and low over the years for accurate information on wheelchair accessible worldwide travel destinations. I finally hit the accessible travel jackpot when I came across three travel agencies that provide services specialized for wheelchair users. They are all great options if you are looking for help booking your next trip. To help you choose who is best for you, I asked the founders of each service some basic questions.

JOHN SAGE, SAGE TRAVELING

Sage Traveling's John Sage, a T4 para, has visited well over 140 cities in Europe since his 2001 injury. In 2008, frustrated with not being able to find accurate information about accessibility on the internet, he decided there had to be a better way to plan a wheelchair accessible European trip. Drawing from his first-hand experiences as a wheelchair user and adding to them with numerous calls to hotels and tourist sites, he launched Sage Traveling in 2009.

New Mobility: Tell us more about how you started your traveling agency.

John Sage: After I got hurt in college I thought my hobby of traveling to Europe was off the table. As a disabled person, I put a huge amount of effort into planning my trips, sorting through out-of-date and inaccurate online information ... so I started a how-to website on accessible travel. When I transformed it into a trip planning website in 2009, my business took off.

NM: Why use your travel service?

JS: We provide reliable, first-hand accessibility information and are one of the only global travel agencies that plan trips, cruises, and excursions for disabled travelers. I personally go to each destination to research and gather reliable accessibility information — I'm the guinea pig. I measure and take thousands of photographs, visit a bunch of hotel rooms and restaurants, and evaluate and modify tour routes to get a good feel for each des-



John Sage helps travelers like George Hedger (above) get the most out of their European trips.

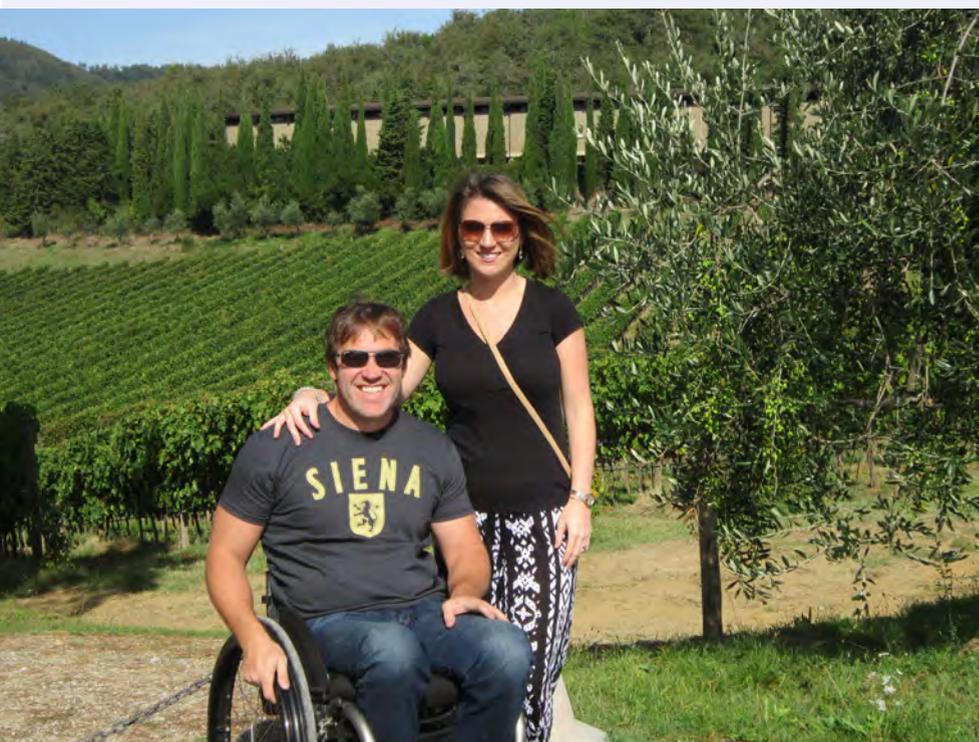
tinuation. We then can advise people on how best to allocate their valuable time. People leave their homes for experiences. That's our focus. We want to help people make the most of their vacations.

NM: Can you give us any examples of special arrangements?

JS: Last year during our group trip to Paris, the Seine River was at flood stage. We

“As a disabled person, I put a huge amount of effort into planning my trips, sorting through online information ... and so I started a how-to website on accessible travel.”

had a dinner cruise planned but the boats could no longer fit under the bridges. So instead, with the group's agreement, I had an employee rearrange things. We spent the evening at the Moulin Rouge — seating and accommodations for all. Then, on the day we were to visit the Louvre, it was closed to evacuate works of art from the basement. We quickly arranged



John Sage has personally visited over 140 cities in Europe since his 2001 injury. He augments his personal experiences with detailed research to provide the most useful accessible travel info he can.



Katya and Mohammed Abbas enjoy Sage's "Full Accessible Rome Experience."

tours to the Monet and Rodin museums instead. I am very familiar with the accessibility at both locations and knew it would work. Another couple who were traveling without our support ended up leaving Paris early — they couldn't make the changes like we did.

NM: What exotic places and array of excursions have you arranged?

JS: We do anything from hot air balloon rides in Tuscany, to snorkeling in Cozumel, to wine-tasting in Rome. I got back last week from a research trip to Munich, Salzburg, Zurich, Interlaken, and Lyon. We will now offer some great new mountain destinations — that's not easy to find in a wheelchair. We figured out a way to visit Hitler's Eagle's Nest mountain hideaway. We have a boat tour in Zurich; gondolas to see mountaintop glaciers in Interlaken; and in Lyon, we figured out wheelchair accessible transportation to get to the Notre Dame Basilica and the Roman ruins.

NM: What is the average cost of a trip?

JS: Our eight-day group trip to London and Paris in July 2017 was \$6,356 per person. We will offer a 10-day group cruise of the Mediterranean in 2018 for \$5,639, if booked early. Although we do some escorted trips, customizing family and couples' vacations is our primary service.

NM: What are your favorite places?

JS: Two of my favorite European cities are Florence and Barcelona. I especially like the smaller European towns, too.

NM: What other services do you provide?

JS: In addition to arranging the step-free accommodations, accessible vans, roll-in shower, etc., we do things like obtain permission to use the elevator to get to the

top of the Acropolis. We anticipate what our clients might want before they even know to ask for it. We advise clients on really cool experiences that are wheelchair accessible.

Our 24/7 emergency support service makes us unique, too. A client can call at any time if there is a problem — anything from a train strike, where's my driver, or a broken leg — we can help.

NM: Any final tips?

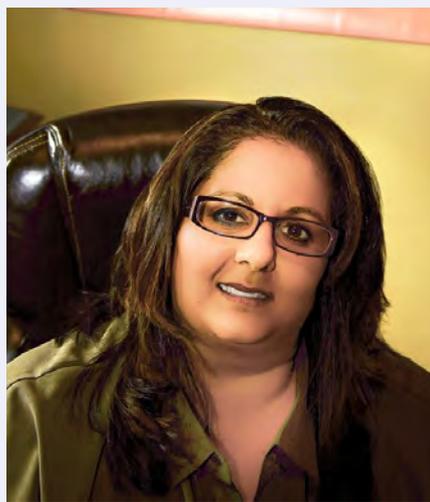
JS: Most people can do more than what they think with a disability. It just takes the right amount of planning.

TARITA DAVENOCK, TRAVEL FOR ALL

When Tarita Davenock was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, her doctor recommended a job change. She has always loved traveling and already had 11 years of travel agency experience, so it seemed natural for her to take the next step and establish her own inclusive tourism business. Davenock, who serves as vice chair of the Standards Council of Canada — Canada's version of the National Council on Disability — has now been in the travel business for 22 years.

New Mobility: Tell us about your experience working with travelers with disabilities.

Tarita Davenock: My agency has arranged over 5,000 trips globally for clients with many different disabilities, including those with spinal cord injuries, autism, diabetes — to name a few. Each client is unique, as is each disability. We have contacts all over the world to help



Tarita Davenock

get needs met at each destination.

NM: Can you share a few examples of special arrangements?

TD: I have arranged what I call "sexy undies" (Depends) to be delivered to a client's stateroom on a cruise so she didn't have to fill her entire suitcase with them. For multiple destinations, we find services or companies that can deliver the needed equipment or product to the resorts or hotels for our clients. One family wanted to take their autistic child to Disney World. We arranged reduced crowd contact and lower light exposure to ensure a smooth trip for the family. My post-doctorate is in behavioral and cognitive psychology, which is instrumental in this planning.



One of Davenock's satisfied cruise customers reenacts the famous scene from *The Titanic*.

NM: What exotic places and array of excursions have you arranged?

TD: You mean the funky stuff? We helped one gentleman who uses a wheelchair to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. He had his own climbing team but we arranged the other aspects of the trip. I can also arrange an African safari and trekking. But if you just want to sit and drink wine, we do that, too.

NM: What other services do you provide?

TD: We find where to repair mobility equipment during a trip. We do anything from family trip planning to getting tickets to *Wicked* on Broadway or to Wimbledon, ensuring wheelchair accessible seating.

NM: What is the cost for a trip?

TD: It depends on the number of people in the group, your travel requirements and the dates. For examples, on bret-approved.com, our travel partner (like TripAdvisor but accessibility-focused), a

DISABILITY SERVICES

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seven-day Iceland trip starts at \$4,820, and a six-day Scottish Lochs and Highlands trip starts at \$1,290.

NM: What are some of your favorite places?

TD: The South Pacific, Hawaii ... the world is so beautiful, I can't pick just one.

NM: Can you give us some travel tips?

TD: I have 10,000! Plan well in advance and pick a destination that suits where you are in life. Bite off what you can chew and no more. If you've just been diagnosed with MS or a spinal cord injury, give yourself time to get back into traveling — start with small trips.

MIRIAM ELJAS GOLDMAN, ACCESSIBLEGO

Miriam Eljas Goldman vividly remembers businesses telling her mom, a wheelchair user with multiple sclerosis, that they were accessible, only to get there and find out they weren't. Goldman figures if this could happen to her mom, an advocate who improved accessible transportation in Silicon Valley, it could happen to anyone. She says this is what inspired

her to create accessibleGO, a full-service accessible travel platform that provides searches, reviews and bookings of accessible hotels, cruises, transports and destinations domestic and world-wide.

NEW MOBILITY: Tell us how your mother inspired you to open an accessible travel agency.

Miriam Eljas Goldman: When I was 12, my mom was diagnosed with chronic-progressive multiple sclerosis. Growing up, I remember her going from a cane to a walker and eventually to a wheelchair. One very distinct memory I have of the issues that we dealt with as a family was during a visit to the theater. We called ahead and they told us we could get in with a wheelchair, no problem. We got there and there were steps. Then the manager goes to this broom closet and pulls out a cracked piece of plywood that we were supposed to use as a ramp — and this was years after the ADA was passed! I didn't want to put my mother and her heavy wheelchair on that, but my mom said, "Let's just go!" She was very adventurous.

I was well aware of these issues grow-

ing up. I always wanted to do something in that space of helping persons with disabilities. Not until this year did the travel website idea crystalize. As a starting point, my partner Jeff Schlanger and I selected the top 20 U.S. cities based on annual number of tourist visits. Our travel platform website has been up and running for about one month now.

NM: What does your travel service offer that others may not?

MG: We have a number of features on our site and we believe these combined components create a secret recipe for self-planning a truly accessible vacation.

We have the Booking Engine, defaulted to the ADA setting, where you can actually book an ADA room in any of our 20 U.S. cities. We will add more geographic regions in the future. Our cruises booking has been very popular. We include all cruise lines that leave from U.S. ports and provide detailed accessibility information for each cruise line.

Second is the Trip Planner, a directory of service providers for each city like taxis, tour companies, equipment rental,

DISABILITY SERVICES

MOBILITY ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

Our Vision
Mobility Roadside Assistance™ wants to be the best roadside assistance program in the United States and Canada, focused on the mobility challenged population at large. We want to be your go-to provider for mobility roadside assistance. Your safety is our priority.

Available from Mobility Support Solutions, 425/922-0990;
or www.mobilityroadsideassistance.com



**United Spinal
Association**
Spinal Cord Resource Center

SPINAL CORD INJURY RESOURCE CENTER

When someone is spinal cord injured or diagnosed with a spinal cord disorder, there can be a great deal of uncertainty and an overwhelming amount of questions. The Spinal Cord Resource Center connects people living with SCI/D with information, resources, and support.

Available from Spinal Cord Injury Resource Center,
800/962-9629 or www.spinalcord.org



Miriam Eljas Goldman says her mom, Emma, is the inspiration behind her travel agency.

and attractions that are accessible.

Third is our Content feature, which is a cheat sheet guide of each destination. It's an overview of the city's accessibility and things to do as a quick read, like the "Top 10 Things to Do" in each city. We also include the best times and seasons to visit.

Last is our Community feature where you can read/provide reviews,

similar to TripAdvisor but for the disabled community.

NM: What exotic places and array of excursions do you offer?

MG: We are a travel platform, not a tour company. Our focus is to offer à la carte services so people can pick what they want and do it. We are providing tremendous information to easily plan your own accessible trips. We are developing relationships with hotels and cruise lines so we can offer guaranteed vs. requested accessible bookings. Also, reviews will be a key component. Our goal is to get as much data and as many reviews as possible to help a disabled person create their own trip the way they want.

NM: What other services do you provide?

MG: Ours is a unique, do-it-yourself idea. Content and community make our site different from others. Our goal is to offer a condensed online site where you can read reviews, choose accessible rooms and attractions, and book all of it online at one place. We will perfect a mobile app in the future after we gather feedback.

NM: What is the cost for a trip?

MG: There is no charge to the consumer other than the built in commission that we receive from booking.com — we are part of The Priceline Group Partner Network which owns booking.com.

We will be adding discounted packages in the future — something like New York hotels, tickets to Liberty and dinner. The idea is still to pick what you want, but a package would be one option.

NM: What is your favorite place to travel?

MG: The Bay Area in California. I grew up near there and I do love it!

NM: Any travel tips?

MG: Live life to the fullest.

NM

RESOURCES

- Accessible Go, 888/621-2568; www.AccessibleGo.com
- brettapproved, www.brettapproved.com
- Sage Traveling, 888/645-7920; www.sagetraveling.com
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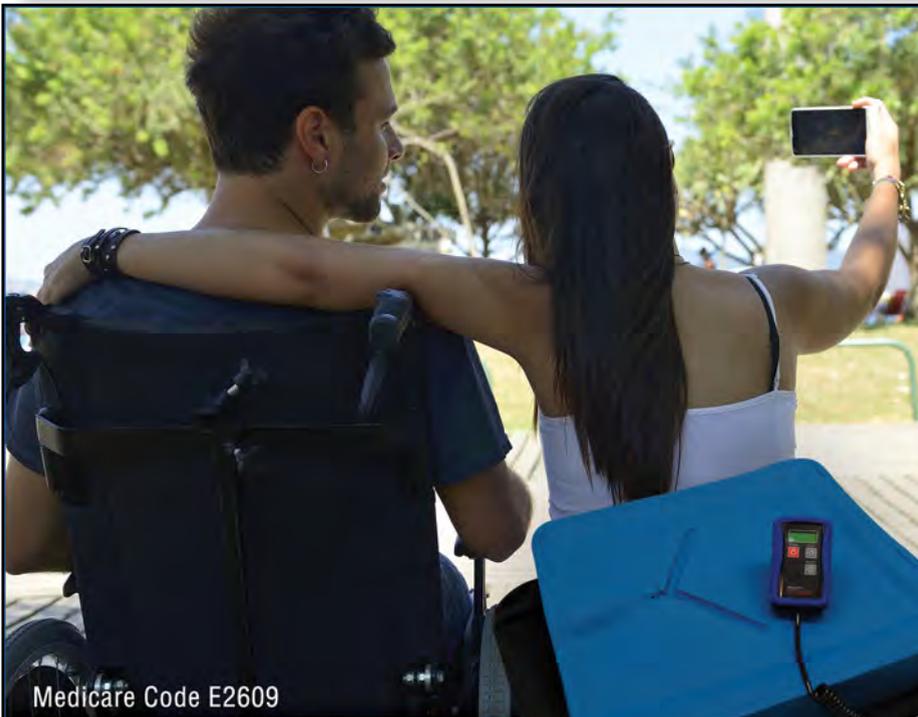
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DISABILITY MEDIA

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NEW MOBILITY MAGAZINE

New Mobility offers a fresh take on wheelchair lifestyle and recreation while also examining the tough issues facing people with disabilities. The colorful monthly magazine presents its unique mix of travel, relationships, personality, health and advocacy with award-winning writing and design. Regular columns for 2015 include a new one featuring the latest wheelchair products.

Check out our blogs on www.newmobility.com and look for us on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest!

Available from *New Mobility*, www.newmobility.com or 800/404-2898, ext. 7260.



DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

You don't have to feel awkward when meeting someone with a disability. United Spinal Association's most widely used brochure, *Disability Etiquette* provides practical tips and information on effective ways to interact with people with disabilities. The brochure is a great resource for businesses, schools, organizations, staff training and disability awareness programs.

Available at www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette



FOUR SUBSCRIPTION-WORTHY WHEELCHAIR-USING YOUTUBERS

BY JOSIE BYZEK

YouTube is the new Netflix, rising in popularity as traditional television and cable give way to all things streaming. And since anyone can post a video, it's extremely accessible for people with disabilities to create their own channels that others can subscribe to.

Following are four of our faves.

FUNNY GUY ZACH ANNER

Speak or type Zach Anner YouTube into your favorite browser, pull up the comedian's channel and try not to laugh.

His current schtick is called "Work-out Wednesday" and number 27 in that series, "Surf's Up" starts out like this, "Today we're in Nicaragua and since I'm in a wheelchair we're going to be trying a sport that I've only heard about in conjunction with the word 'accident' — surfing."

And what ensues is three minutes of slapstick humor as Anner, who has cerebral palsy, is shown being thrown into the ocean and onto a surfboard while cracking jokes the whole time about the sea, Brook Shields for some reason, volcanoes and of course, the Hoff.

To join Anner's over 350,000 subscribers, check him out at youtube.com/user/ZachAnner/videos.

AARON "WHEELZ" FOTHERINGHAM

As you'd expect, Fotheringham's channel has the largest collection of videos of wheelchair users flying through rings of fire, backflipping, dropping into halfpipes, hand-standing and general grinding.

It's skater culture to show the lands that didn't stick, and Fotheringham delivers. One spectacular "fail" clip shows him barreling down a ridiculously high, long ramp tagged Nitro Circus. It tilts him back up, he somersaults through the air, the crowd goes wild, he lands on his wheels, but then ... well ... he keeps somersaulting. Ouch.

WCMX is now an established sport and is still growing. Many of these videos,



Sitting Pretty Lolo offers an engaging mix of entertaining and practical segment.

besides being fun to watch, show techniques as well as the type of gear you'll need and where to get it. It's relatively inexpensive to get started, although if you like it, you'll soon dream about a custom Box Wheelchair (www.boxwheelchairs.com). Fotheringham's channel is youtube.com/user/AaronFotheringham.

SITTING PRETTY LOLO

This wide-ranging vlog follows the adventures of Lolo, a woman in her 20s, who was diagnosed with ALS at 14, and has produced some of the most interesting clips on life as a person with a disability.

Some, like "Wheelchair Bumps," are funny/not-funny looks at such underreported subjects as your chair constantly being jostled while you're on a date; some share frustrations, such as "Things Not to Say to a Person with a Disability"; and some are downright useful, such as "Top Three Accessibility Hacks at Home."

"An accessibility hack is a product designed and made not necessarily to be accessible, but happens to be, depending on what you need it for as a person with a disability," she says, giving the most succinct definition of the term we've heard so far.

For example, she uses her spin brush to remove her make-up, as it's intended, but also to wash her face. "I use a lot less arm motion and it's not a heavy product

so it's easy to hold in one hand." For the other two, log on to her channel at bit.ly/2gMjHkU and look for her on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as well.

PARALYZED LIVING

"Get busy living or get busy dying," reads the subhead on Brian Kinney's YouTube channel, Paralyzed Living. Remember Kinney? He shared his wedding photos and romance with us in February 2015's "To the Altar and Beyond," and a year later about the mechanics of sex in "The Ejaculation Affirmation."

My only complaint — Brian, are you reading this? — is that there hasn't been a new video since February's "Abdominal Binder for Higher Level Paraplegics and Quadriplegics." That video is a good example of the type of practical topic Kinney covers that maybe wouldn't come up in a NEW MOBILITY editorial brainstorming session, but should. These binders make transfers easier, stiffen up core stability, create a slimmer look and may even help with breathing.

Kinney's site has 12,568 subscribers and is organized into sensible playlists like, "Travel with a Spinal Cord Injury" and "Home Modifications After a Spinal Cord Injury." Check it out at youtube.com/channel/UCsj_HWErsT4PDgIcM-seatw.

MM

DISABILITY MEDIA

KILLS ON WHEELS

"If you see one film about a Hungarian hitman in a wheelchair this year, make sure it's this one." – The Guardian. Opens October 20 at the Village East Cinema in New York before expanding to select cities. Available on DVD and iTunes in January 2018. For more information, visit www.kinolorber.com/film/killsonwheels

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ReelAbilities

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ReelAbilities Film Festival brings together the community to promote awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people with different disabilities. ReelAbilities Film Festival showcases films, conversations and artistic programs to explore, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience.

To organize a ReelAbilities' film festival in your city, visit reelabilities.org/our-programs.

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With over 5,000 videos touching on all aspects of living with paralysis, Spinalpedia is a powerhouse of information provided by people with spinal cord injuries for people with spinal cord injuries. The social mentoring network's goal is to ensure no one with an SCI is isolated and all can return to being active members of their communities.

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BUILDING AN ACCESSIBLE MAP FOR EVERYONE

ALEX GHENIS



Cristina Fransisco is a local guide for Google Maps in the Dominican Republic.

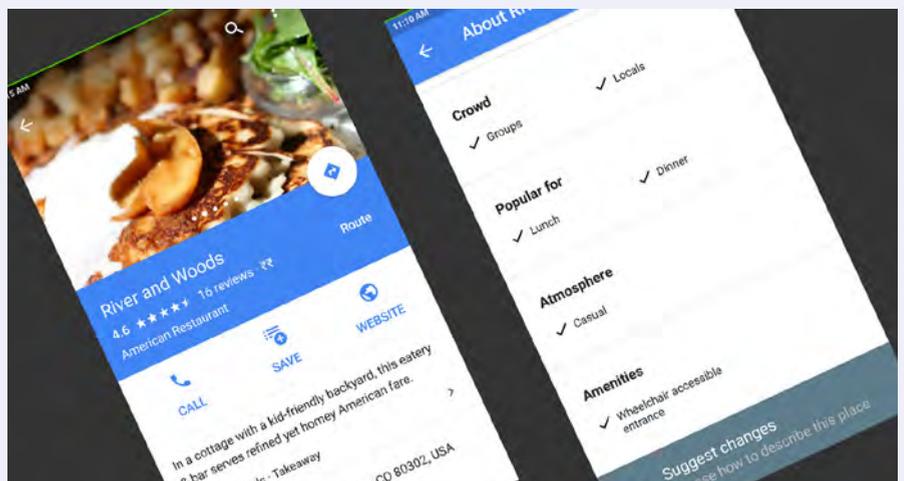
Figuring out whether a location has the access you need can be hard. Whether you're looking for a café, a bookstore, or even something like a park, you can sometimes call ahead, but there's no guarantee that the person on the other end will know the ins-and-outs of accessibility. (Elevator size? Door width? It's a lot to know). Many small companies have worked to gather and share accessibility information online, but none have been able to reach an audience broad enough to have an impact on a widespread scale. But now an internet giant — Google — is changing the game. A new update to the company's famed Maps application makes it easy for anyone with a cell phone, tablet or computer to share detailed accessibility information about everything from entryways to elevators. Based on an early trial, it could finally provide the solution to providing accurate access information.

Google relying on users to provide information is not new. Users have long

been able to mark down "features" such as types of payments accepted or whether there are good discounts. This was already part of the Maps application — but as of July, users can easily mark down accessibility features as well. It isn't just "accessible" or "not accessible," either; the company recognizes that there's more to accessibility than a front entrance, so checkmarks include entryways, eleva-

tors, seating, restrooms and parking lots. Maps now gives accessibility its own category, making it easier for people with, or without, disabilities to find important information — and easier for information-adders to get straight to the point.

Users can mark down a business's accessibility features by using the Google Maps application on Android phones. The company provides instructions on



its website (blog.google/products/maps/building-map-everyone). After a recent visit to a Berkeley restaurant, I figured I'd give it a try. It was plenty easy. All I had to do was open the Maps application and select the main menu, then tap "Your contributions." That showed another page with a section near the top titled "uncover missing info," which gives a map with businesses nearby. I clicked "accessibility" just above the map, then selected the restaurant, and the app let me answer questions such as "has a wheelchair accessible entrance," "has a wheelchair accessible parking lot," or "has a wheelchair accessible restroom." I clicked the ones that fit the business, and that was that. You can also add photos to highlight difficult to describe features. There are other categories too, such as food-conscious and child-friendly features, in case you want to contribute even more. Select, click, and done.

The new accessibility features are also available through the desktop version of Maps. Just search for your destination and click the description with a right hand arrow on it. This will open the "about" tab with more information for a number of options, including accessibility. You can't change the features or contributions from your desktop, but if you see something that's missing, you can go on your phone, open Maps, and make a contribution. It's virtually guaranteed to help someone with a disability find out more, and maybe make the right decision for where to plan their outing.

To help expedite the growth of accessible information available on Maps, Google has incorporated the new accessible features into its "local guides" program (maps.google.com/localguides). The program invites users to rate and review locations, take photos, add new places, edit details, answer questions, and verify information about businesses or other areas, such as parks. People who sign up for local guides can build up "points" by adding more information, with different levels and badges as they keep contributing. The local guides webpage even says that "higher levels also lead to special perks and early access to Google features." As more guides focus on accessibility — or as more people who care about accessibility sign up as local guides — the amount of information on access will grow. MI

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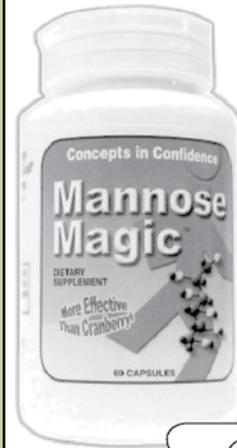
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The Krist Law Firm, P.C., www.houstoninjurylawyer.com

Michigan Auto Law, www.michiganautolaw.com

personal-injuries/back-injury/spinal-cord-injuries

Rare Patient Voice, www.rarepatientvoice.com

Trusted Mobility, www.trustedmobilityrepair.com

For more information on how you can support United Spinal and become a business member, please contact Megan Lee at mlee@unitedspinal.org or 718/803-3782, ext. 7253.

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REAL-LIFE ACCESS SYMBOLS

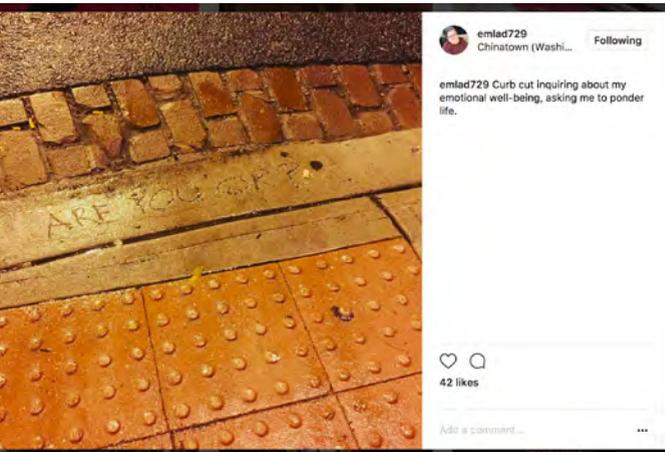
“We all recognize the typical symbol on accessible bathrooms and parking spaces, right? It is of a weird stick-like person sitting in a 20th century asylum-looking wheelchair. Well, on a parking space it kind of looks like somebody in a wheelchair had fallen sideways and somebody made an outline of it with white spray paint. How funny would it be to align one’s body and wheelchair on top of this symbol? This is what we had to do.”

— Roxy and Madeline, globerollers.wordpress.com



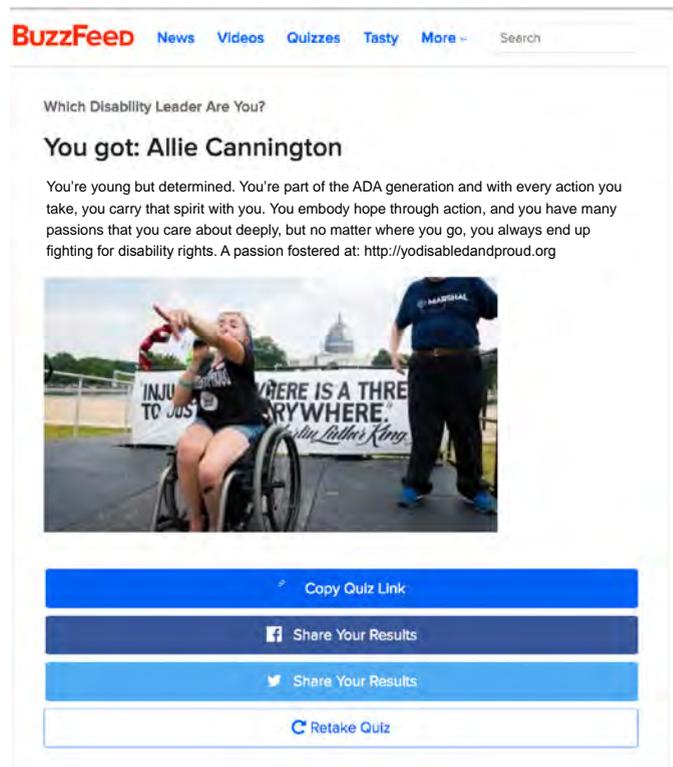
YO! BUZZFEED QUIZ HONORS NEW LEADERS

The good folks at Youth Organizing! Disabled & Proud put together a BuzzFeed quiz that lets Facebook denizens see what 21st century disability leader they are. So far here at NEW MOBILITY we’ve scored ADAPT organizer Anita Cameron, Disability Visibility Project’s Alice Wong, filmmaker Dominick Evans and social justice organizer Allie Cannington. Take the quiz at buzzfeed.com/yodisabledandproud/ and learn more about Yo! at yodisabledproud.org.



THANK YOU FOR ASKING

Rooted In Rights Editor Emily Ladau Instagrammed this photo of “Are you OK?” carved into a curb cut while visiting Chinatown in Washington, D.C., and we’d like the introspective vandal to know that yes, yes we are.





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