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Cover and Contents Illustrations by Doug Davis
“So, instead of sitting on a cushion filled with air, you want me to sit on a solid, hard ‘cushion’?”

If you’ve lived any part of your life in a wheelchair, there is probably a product that changed your life, and if you’re lucky, there is a good story behind how you discovered it or what it did for you. My product story starts with me asking my most-trusted physical therapist the above question.

Picture me, with a blank look on my face, as if my brain had just exploded, trying to comprehend what she had suggested. I had been sitting on a high-quality, air-filled cushion for the first four or five years after my injury, and while it wasn’t perfect, my skin had been consistently OK. Most importantly, an air cushion made perfect sense — if you want to avoid pressure, what better way could there be than to float on air?

A hard cushion? That made no sense to me.

I have zero sensation, a fact driven home by my one previous experience with a pressure sore. I ended up sitting on a hard metal surface for an unknown number of days because I had no idea the cushion I was sitting on had deflated. Now my PT was telling me to trust a solid piece of hard foam to protect my most precious skin for the 14-16 hours a day that I am up and about. After years of everyone hammering home the importance of pressure relief and how quickly sores can develop, you can see why I wasn’t exactly excited about the idea.

A hard cushion? That made no sense to me.

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My PT expected my response and explained that the new seating system would be built from a 3-D mold of my body in a seated position. The result would be a personalized seat and back orthotic that would offload my weight from the bony prominences and areas most likely to break down from pressure to the fattier areas that could handle it — like the thighs. The setup would have the added benefit of aligning my spine and posture, which she promised would also help to alleviate pressure problems.

That all made sense, but I still couldn’t wrap my head around the idea of sitting on something hard with no give. My PT introduced me to others who had made the switch and let me talk with the orthotists who would actually make the system.

I’d be lying if I ever said I felt 100 percent confident I was doing the right thing, but my gut eventually felt like making the switch made sense.

After a trepidatious first few days of physically and mentally adjusting to the new setup, it was smooth sailing. My skin looked better than it ever had. My anxieties disappeared, and within a month it was like nothing had happened. Sixteen years later, I’m on my third iteration of the same system and haven’t had as much as a blemish, much less a sore.

I feel lucky that I found the perfect product.”
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The first ramp I ever built on my own worked, but it was a piece of crap. Two pieces, actually. It consisted of twin lengths of particle board shelving material, duct-taped on the single step of my college apartment and extending into the grass beyond a narrow access sidewalk. It was fine during the dry fall months. When the winter rains came, I found myself with a slip and slide into a mud-pit.

Over the intervening 15 years, through supervising the construction of a dozen or so subsequent ramps of varying height and complexity, I’ve managed to learn a few things. Building a good ramp isn’t that complicated, provided you know what you’re doing, but it gets expensive quickly if you’re paying a licensed contractor or buying a premade ramp to go up more than a step or two.

So, what’s our motto here? DIY to the Rescue.

Dimensions
There are a variety of online guides to ramp building, and they provide construction techniques in much greater detail than we can here. But for dimensions, most feature phrases like “you have to have a minimum of,” and “a maximum ramp slope is 1:12,” meaning each inch of vertical rise requires 12 inches of ramp length. That’s because they’re following ADA guidelines for access ramps.

The ADA guidelines are a great place to start to familiarize yourself with the basics and dimensions of ramp construction, but remember that ADA guidelines are one-size-fits someone. Depending on chair width/length and strength, you can get by with platforms that aren’t as large and slopes that aren’t as gradual as ADA guidelines mandate. By the same token, if you have limited function but use a manual chair and want to be able to wheel into your house with a bag of groceries on your lap, a 1:12 slope may be too steep.

Dimensions can be tough to visualize, and changes difficult to make after construction. So, if you’re unsure of sizing for platforms, switchbacks or even a comfortable ramp width, an easy prototyping method is to grab some sidewalk chalk and a tape measure, and sketch out your ramp layout on an empty parking lot. That way you can test how your chair moves within its constraints.

As long as you’re building that ramp for you, and not public access, you can typically design to whatever specs work for you. My current ramp is 30 inches wide and features one platform connecting two sloped segments, both of which are in the range of 1:8 to 1:9 for slope. It’s steep, but doable for me, and because of porch height and yard layout, any lesser slope would’ve required multiple switchbacks and removing existing landscaping. For me, a steeper ramp was less of a pain than a complete remodel of a yard that we only plan to live in for a few years.

If you have friends in chairs who you might want to have over, think about them, too. My wife had to partially deconstruct the railings on our current ramp so New Mobility’s newly minted editor could navigate the tight platform in his power chair, and he still almost died. Corollary note: Ian has excellent driving skills, and is not particularly vindictive — I, fortunately, still have a job.
Exterior Considerations

A door access ramp needs a platform, somewhere flat to unlock, lock, open and close the door without you fighting to keep your chair from rolling away. I’ve had door ramps without a platform; it’s not something you want to deal with. If you already have a porch or some sort of landing platform that’s large enough to back up, close the door and turn your chair around on, great. If not, build one.

Wood is by far the easiest ramping material to work with for the DIYer. You’re going to want to buy treated lumber for any exterior ramps. It will cost more in the short term, but save you in the long run, as even parts of the ramp that are going to be undercover can deteriorate fairly quickly in a rainy climate if they’re made of untreated wood. Any parts that are exposed to the elements should be stained or painted to prevent sun and/or water damage and resulting rot.

If you live somewhere with real weather — rain, ice, snow, frost, etc. — giving your ramp some sort of texture for grip is vital. Grip tape works, but can be expensive to cover any sort of distance and isn’t the most visually appealing. Another option is an adding an anti-slip additive to paint, available at home improvement stores, and painting the surface of your ramp.

In locations that get a significant amount of snow, it’s worth considering using a grated metal for the ramp surface. While metal is more difficult to work with, a grate provides some inherent traction and allows snow to fall through instead of immediately accumulating.

Lastly, aesthetics. If you care about looks, it’s difficult to build a DIY ramp on a tight budget that complements the exterior of a house. The cheapest building choices are the most utilitarian, meant to be covered by finishing materials. If you have the option, building a ramp inside a garage is worth considering for a couple of reasons. One: Who cares what it looks like? It’s in your garage. Two: It’s protected from the elements, so you can build out of cheaper, untreated lumber.

It is possible to install a functional ramp on a budget — you just need a plan and a friend or relative with some carpentry skills. Make sure to check your local building codes to ensure legality, as some apply to ramps once they reach a certain height.

If DIY isn’t an option, there are programs across the country to supply free ramp construction services to those who need them.

Resources
- Ramp Building Overview: lowes.com/projects/build-and-remodel/build-a-wheelchair-ramp/project

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IZ ADAPTIVE RELAUNCHES

BY JOSIE BYZEK

After disappearing from the fashion scene for about a year and a half, IZ Adaptive roared back on Sept. 24 with new carriers and an expanded line of inclusive clothing.

Founder Izzy Camilleri couldn’t be happier. “We are super excited and happy to be back! We look forward to serving our clients again and reaching new ones, and plan on continuing to introduce new products and categories moving forward,” she says.

Camilleri calls response to the relaunch warm, and even relieved. “We’ve had comments on our social media platforms such as, ‘This is the happiest news I’ve ever received in my entire life,’” she says. “We’ve been told how good the quality of our products is and how well they’ve lasted.”

Many New Mobility readers concur. Upon learning IZ was coming back in a July 3 News article about the September relaunch, Lisa J. Maheu-Gauthier commented: “I’m so glad that you are back. Your jeans are incredible, the fit is perfect for someone in a wheelchair.”

A few of the changes this time around are sizes up to 3XL, what the company is calling “more accessible prices” — ranging between $25 and $425 — and new carriers, as the clothing will be available through Zappos Adaptive and Macy’s. Following are some of the new fashion offerings, from classic to comfy. Look to izadaptive.com for ordering information and updates.

“I’m so glad that you are back. Your jeans are incredible, the fit is perfect for someone in a wheelchair.”

Model Anthony Lue is shown with IZ Adaptive founder Izzy Camilleri.
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Anthony Lue, who has an SCI, models the two-piece suit. As with most of Izzy’s inclusive designs, this suit jacket is cut to look and feel best on a seated person, as are the pants. The front zipper fly is longer than traditional pants and also features a pull tab to provide easier access. The waistband closes with a hook and bar in the front, and has a bit of elastic in the back for comfort.

Anita Kaiser models the seated jegging. Jeggings are beloved for combining the classic look of denim with the unequaled comfort of leggings. These are cut higher in the back and lower in the front to provide the most natural, comfortable fit while seated. Also, they feature pull-tabs and a fully-elastic waistband to make it easier to get in and out of them.
Anthony Lue, Bryan Cuerrier and Anita Kaiser are wearing IZ Adaptive seated sweat pants, which are cut with wheelchair users in mind and have pull tabs to make it easier to dress. Lue’s also features a fly to make it easier in the bathroom. Both Lue and Kaiser have SCIs and Cuerrier lost part of an arm, half of one leg and his full left leg to a flesh-eating disease.

Chris Channon models the seated pea coat. This coat showcases what makes IZ Adaptive so valuable, as it’s cut to look and feel best on a seated person, which eliminates bulk or bunching in the front. Other features include magnetic closures. Channon, who has a spinal cord injury, is also modelling seated chinos, featuring a full elastic waist and a fly with a removable pull tab. There are also tabs at the sides to help with pulling up the pants.
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I’m often asked by my clients, what’s the best diet to follow? My immediate answer is not to follow diets because they don’t work. What does work, however, is establishing healthy, life-long eating habits. And consistent, healthy eating patterns are even more critical for people with mobility impairments who are at high risk of developing obesity, Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Studies demonstrate one of the healthiest approaches to eating for both those with and without disabilities is the Mediterranean diet. The diet is built on eating lots of fruits, vegetables, fish, whole grains and healthy fats, and less dairy, sweets and meat. Processed foods, refined sugars and bleached flour are out, while fresh produce, natural sugars and whole grains are in.

Because of all this, Mediterranean cuisine is high in fiber and healthy mono and polyunsaturated fats, and low in refined sugar. The healthy fats help prevent high cholesterol and atherosclerosis, the fiber balances blood sugar levels to help maintain a healthy weight and the absence of refined sugar reduces the risk of Type 2 diabetes. Mediterranean eating habits can also reduce the risk of developing neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease, ease osteoarthritis pain and help prevent and/or decrease healing time of pressure sores.

On a recent trip to the beautiful island of Sicily, whose cuisine falls under the Mediterranean diets, I learned that Sicilians have an increased life expectancy compared to their Italian mainland counterparts. Moreover, this population has an exceptionally high number of centenarians. A human longevity study showed that two key factors determine longevity: genetics and environment. The latter of these two includes nutrition. But what is it about the Sicilian diet that is seemingly so beneficial for us?

Their long health may have something to do with the many rulers the island has had in its long history. Sicily has been conquered by a multitude of nations, including the Romans, Greeks, Spanish, Moors, Normans and Phoenicians, among others. This turnstile of ruling cultures over the centuries has heavily influenced their Mediterranean-style diet, making it exceptionally unique. For example, raisins, nutmeg, clove and saffron are common ingredients used in Sicilian dishes, but not typically found in Mediterranean recipes.

The Sicilian dish called Caponata is a delicious, tangy example of this distinct cuisine — and this eggplant-based dish has a vast array of health benefits for people with a multitude of disabilities. For instance, eggplant is high in fiber to help maintain regular bowel routines for individuals with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis or spinal cord injuries who...
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CAPONATA

5 tablespoons olive oil
1 1.5 pound eggplant, unpeeled, cut into half-inch cubes
1 medium onion, cubed
4 large garlic cloves, chopped
1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes in juice
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons drained capers
2 tablespoons raisins
1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
Toasted pine nuts

Heat oil in heavy, large pot over medium heat. Add eggplant, onion and garlic cloves. Sauté until eggplant is soft and brown, about 15 minutes.

Add diced tomatoes with juice, and raisins, then red wine vinegar and drained capers. Cover and simmer until eggplant and onion are very tender, stirring occasionally, about 12 minutes.

Season caponata to taste with sea salt and pepper. Mix in fresh basil.

Transfer caponata to serving bowl. Sprinkle with toasted pine nuts. Serve warm, at room temperature, or cold. (Caponata can be made two days ahead. Cover and chill.)

Serve Caponata cold or warm as an appetizer, side dish or snack!

“One of the healthiest approaches to eating for both those with and without disabilities is the Mediterranean diet.”

have neurogenic bowel. Vinegar supports digestion, which is vital for people with long-term health conditions who experience chronic pain or stress, which in turn impairs digestive function. For those with limited mobility, vinegar also supports bone health by enhancing calcium absorption. Lastly, the eggplant, tomatoes, garlic, raisins and olive oil make up an army of antioxidants to help protect us from one of our biggest disability-related enemies: cardiovascular disease.

So start including some Mediterranean-Sicilian meals in your regular menu and eat your way to a long, healthy and happy life!

One of the healthiest approaches to eating for both those with and without disabilities is the Mediterranean diet.”
Last year’s flu season was so terrible that it was the first labeled as “high severity across all age groups” by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hospitalizations were also sky-high, and it’s estimated 80,000 people died from the flu or flu-related illnesses, surpassing a decades-old previous record of 56,000.

For people with multiple sclerosis, catching the flu carries an extra risk of setting off an exacerbation. “Any of these infections can provoke an MS relapse, and as you get older, your ability to fight some of these infections becomes diminished,” says Kathy Costello, associate vice president of healthcare access for the National MS Society. Both the NMSS and United Spinal Association are members of the MS Coalition. “Your immune system doesn’t respond as [robustly] as when you’re younger.”

But given that our immune systems are compromised because of MS, we have a few extra considerations when lining up at the grocery store for our vaccine.

Choose the Deactivated Dose
First, the long-standing advice that people with MS should avoid a live, or attenuated, dose still stands. “Since most of the shots are inactivated, or dead, this isn’t hard to do,” says Costello, who also sees people with MS as a nurse practitioner at John Hopkins. While the risk of a relapse from a live dose is very small, “the inactivated flu vaccine has not been identified as a cause of MS or relapse.” She names known risk factors such as genetic predisposition, exposure to Epstein-Barr, being around smoking, low vitamin D — but vaccines do not make the list.

If you have any concerns about either type of vaccine, bring it to the attention of your health care provider. The bottom line is the risk with the inactivated vaccine is very low, and the risk of a flu-triggered relapse is higher. The live vaccine is not recommended because there is a slight risk that it could provoke the immune system, causing an exacerbation.

Vaccines May Interact with Certain MS Drugs
Although inactivated flu vaccines are considered safe for people with MS, if you’re taking one of the newer disease-modifying therapies, you’ll want to double-check with your neurologist. “All of our knowledge has to be looked at in light of what DMT someone is taking because of the powerful affect some of these have on MS,” says Costello. “Some vaccines may actually be dangerous.” Vaccines should be taken six weeks before starting Lemtrada, as well as Ocrevus.

She says the advice has changed because of the power of these newer treatments, some of which suppress the immune system and are also used to fight forms of cancer. “With interferons, the timing didn’t matter, but now that we have treatments that have bigger effects on the immune system, it’s very important to pause and ask.”

This all sounds daunting — should people with MS get the flu vaccine or not? Well, yes, you should get it. Unless you’re on or starting a new treatment, in which case you ought to speak with your neurologist about it.

“These are important rules to follow,” says Costello. “You don’t need to remember the rules, but if you’re on a DMT, or going on a DMT, you need to have a conversation with your prescribing neuro.”

All of this information and more is available on the National MS Society’s website at nationalmssociety.org/Living-Well-With-MS/Diet-Exercise-Healthy-Behaviors/Vaccinations.
**HEALTH & HYGIENE**

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The CH7000 is a multipurpose workout machine with a centralized weight stack. This allows the machine to be space efficient, without compromising stability. Dozens of exercises can be performed using the hi/mid/lo independent pulleys. Fully adjustable to any user. Stations include chest press/military press, dual-function, lat pull, seated row, and much more.

Available from Apex Designs, 800/851-1122 or www.apexeq.com

SPECIALIZED WORKOUTS

Push to Walk is a nonprofit organization that provides individualized workouts and resources to people with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy and other forms of paralysis to optimize current quality of life and prepare for future medical advancements. Free initial evaluations to those who qualify.

Available from Push to Walk, 201/644-7567 or www.pushtowalknj.org

VITAGLIDE

VitaGlide is back! One of the most popular exercise machines used to develop upper body strength offers new features: independent arms; greater range of resistance; interactive software to track distance, time and resistance; better accommodation for power/specialty chairs; and the Glide Factor — a proprietary feature for goal setting.

Available from VitaGlide, LLC, 305/514-0514 or www.vitaglide.com
An estimated 6 million people are active scuba divers, and thanks to organizations like Diveheart, a growing percentage of those divers are people with disabilities. “We have more experience than any other organization in the world in areas of adaptive scuba therapy,” says Jim Elliott, founder and president. And, in fact, the shop he built is a worldwide leader in adaptive scuba training and therapy, having trained thousands of people with disabilities, adaptive scuba instructors and buddy-divers.

Perhaps the group’s success is due to its philosophy that adaptive training should be no different than what others receive through nationally recognized training agencies. “Diveheart instructors have specialized knowledge, training and experience to teach people with all types of abilities,” says Elliott. “This qualifies them to assess specific needs for assistance with scuba-related activities and how to address those needs.” He adds, “Diveheart instructors also teach disabled divers to perform their own ‘scuba needs assessments’ to identify the degree to which they may require assistance. The goal is to build a relationship where disabled divers are comfortable working with their instructors and adaptive dive team members.”

Diveheart Makes it Easy
Taking the plunge to learn scuba diving requires adaptation to an entirely different environment than being on good ol’ terra firma. Freed from the confines of gravity, it opens up a three-dimensional, weightless environment underwater.

Bill Bogdon took the plunge in 1991, 21 years after he became a paraplegic as an infant. “Scuba diving is a great equalizer,” he says. It brings “a euphoric feeling like you’re on top of the world.” His scuba diving adventures have taken him to places like Cozumel, the Cayman Islands, Bonaire, the Bahamas (where he did shark dives) and Bonne Terre Mine in Missouri. In 2006, while attending a scuba diving show in Chicago, he met Jim Elliott and learned about Diveheart. Today, he sits on the organization’s board.

“Diveheart made it so easy for me to try scuba diving,” says Chris Block, a 32-year-old engineer paralyzed in 2017. “They were great, and scuba diving is one of the most amazing things I’ve ever done.” Not long after his initial dive experience, Block learned about a Diveheart Cozumel trip, and once again experienced Diveheart’s support. “They helped me raise the funds to travel to Cozumel where I saw so many of the things underwater that I fantasized I might see.”

Diveheart hosts a plethora of activities, taking place from Cozumel, Mexico, to Key West, Florida. To find out how to get involved, go to diveheart.org or call 630/964-1983.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. Where can I find additional information about Diveheart?**

A. A good place to start is the Diveheart website at diveheart.org. You can also email training@diveheart.org or info@diveheart.org. If you would like to speak directly to Diveheart, call them at 630/964-1983.

**Q. How much does a Diveheart Scuba Experience (try scuba) cost?**

A. Normally, Diveheart Scuba Experiences (try scuba) are free of charge. Contact Diveheart at 630/964-1983 for more information.

**Q. How much does a Diveheart Adaptive Diver course cost?**

A. There are many variables involved in
taking an actual certification course, so it’s important to work with your Diveheart Instructor to determine the actual cost of certification training.

Q. What course components make up a scuba course?
A. Scuba training is made up of three general components — academic development (often conducted as online independent study), pool/confined water training (this is where you master the skills of scuba training) and open water dives (this is where you demonstrate your ability to use the skills learned in the pool/confined water in an actual dive setting, which could be the ocean, a lake, a quarry or any body of water that represents open water conditions), all of which require successful completion in order to earn a scuba certification.

Q. Do I have to purchase my own dive equipment for my training?
A. The sooner you own your own gear, the sooner you’ll start to feel even more comfortable on your dives as you become more familiar with your own gear. Dive centers often require students to purchase a mask, fins and a snorkel for training, while the rest of your gear is either provided as part of your course costs or can be rented to complete the training. For divers with SCI, the fins would not be required, but you may want to consider swimming mitts if you have use of your arms and hands.

Q. How much does scuba equipment cost?
A. Like the cost of scuba training, there are many variables associated with purchasing scuba equipment, including styles, features, adaptations, etc., and there is a range of prices available. If maintained properly, though, scuba equipment can last a lifetime. Diveheart will help disabled divers to find creative ways to help fund their training, equipment and travel needs. This might include jointly fund raising, finding possible scholarships and setting up “fund me” sites, all of which can help to lessen the actual costs associated with learning to scuba dive.

Q. Will I be required to get my physician’s approval to scuba dive?
A. Yes. All scuba students are required to complete a medical history form supplied by their instructor. You’ll then take that form to your physician who will evaluate your individual medical history to determine if there are any medical concerns that would prevent you from safely diving. There are many resources available to help your physician make an informed decision.

“I saw so many of the things underwater I fantasized I might see.”

Ian Brown, a T4 para, suits up for a dive in Cozumel, Mexico.
Other Options
Diveheart is a great resource, but it’s not the only adaptive scuba organization in the sea. Following are two more well-respected programs to help you get suited up and wet:

Adaptive Adventures
Adaptive Adventures offers scuba programs in both its Colorado and Midwest locations and has sponsored trips to Florida, Mexico and Honduras. To get started, inquire about its “Discover SCUBA Diving” experience, where participants are offered the opportunity to experience the thrill of flying underwater with the potential to continue on to achieve scuba certification. For more information, contact Matt Feeney, Adaptive Adventures’ scuba manager, at matt@adaptiveadventures.org or call 303/679-2770. The organization’s website is adaptiveadventures.org.

Handicapped Scuba Association
Beginning as a research project at the University of California-Irvine in 1975, the Handicapped Scuba Association’s training programs for people with disabilities utilize teaching techniques developed from more than 30 years of continuous research and feedback. The group runs 10 training centers worldwide, including one in New Jersey and one in far-flung South Africa, and classes teach everything from basic diving skills to instructor training courses. Go to hsascuba.com for more information or look up the group on Facebook.

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There's a growing body of research to show that gait training — the process of bearing weight and bringing your legs through the motion of walking, whether or not you have the function to do so volitionally — is beneficial for all sorts of secondary complications of spinal cord injury, from reducing spasticity to improving circulation to preventing bone density issues and even helping in the recovery of function. The problem with gait training is that it's expensive. Robotic treadmill systems, like those available at major rehab and research centers, cost in the six-figures range, and lower-tech options typically require multiple trained therapists, which quickly adds up if you want to pursue gait training with the kind of frequency that is required to see any benefit.

Enter the Spartan by Renegait, a simple but effective apparatus — essentially a hinged control arm that connects to the user's legs at three points — that allows a single operator to effectively bring the user's legs into a walking motion. "The physical therapist or the trainer, whomever, grabs at the handles. Depending on how they move the device, it cleverly controls what the hip, knee, and ankle are doing," says Daniel Campbell, the creator of the Spartan.

Campbell, an engineering student at Arizona State University and C6 quad, came up with the idea for the Spartan from his own experiences with gait training. After finishing rehab, Campbell did aggressive physical therapy at a clinic in Chicago and saw significant return of motor and sensory function. When Campbell decided to move to Phoenix for school, the therapy options he found in Phoenix at the time were mostly small clinics that didn't have the resources or manpower for consistent gait training. Campbell noticed a decline in his recovery, which gave him the impetus to design a product to make gait training easier and more cost-effective.

After talking with some local therapists, he came up with the base concept for the Spartan, made out of supplies he purchased at Home Depot. "The first version was pretty crude, but it worked. It was proof of concept," says Campbell. "I brought it to Touchstone [his physical therapy clinic in Phoenix], and the PT used it with me. People saw it and they were interested, and at that point, it just took on a life of its own. I realized this could help a lot of people, not just me."

After a long period of development, with everyone from stroke survivors to a C4-5 quad to low-level paras having tested the device, the Spartan is set to go on sale this month. Campbell sees both clinicians and home users as markets. "The first people who ever used the Spartan on me were my parents. They're untrained, not PTs. They picked it up pretty fast," he says.

As the Spartan only controls the gait motion, users still need support. For those with the strength to hold themselves up with their arms, the Spartan can be used with a rolling walker. People with higher level injuries sometimes need to be supported with a ceiling harness, and Campbell says that some with more trunk and leg function are able to use it with a basic walker, like you can buy at a pharmacy.

Campbell hopes that the Spartan is able to bring the benefits of gait training to more people than current options can. "A lot of devices have so many indications and contraindications, and they work for a narrow population, whereas the Spartan … if the person’s joints have integrity and they’re able to stand upright, then they can use it. It works for people with extreme spasticity. It works for short people, very tall people, overweight people. It works for all different shapes and sizes," he says.

The Spartan will soon be available for ordering. For more information, including pricing when it’s available, please visit renegait.com.
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Like most longtime manual wheelchair users (53 years and counting), I have been dogged by chronic shoulder pain for decades — rotator cuff tears, acromioclavicular joint pain, frozen shoulder syndrome. I have managed to stave off shoulder surgery by occasionally easing up on activity, accepting help loading and unloading my chair from my vehicle, having periodic cortisone injections and getting physical therapy when symptoms worsened. Also, recently, chronic low-dose opioid use has given me some relief.

I have also found that regular at-home workouts with bands or hand weights and stretching exercises can help balance out harmful effects of overused muscles, reduce pain and partially restore healthy functioning shoulders — but only if I am dedicated, consistent and know how to engage specific underused muscles. Studies have shown that another helpful activity is reverse wheeling: taking time to regularly wheel backwards up a moderate incline, but there is only so much of that you can do.

But what if a wheelchair existed that could be propelled by pulling back on the rims instead of pushing forward?

As a graduate student in mechanical engineering at Florida International University in 2004-2006, Salim Nasser, 43, a C5 quad since 1994, designed the first reverse wheelchair propulsion system aiming to do just that. In 2010, his design won a national design contest sponsored by NASA. Rimas Buinevicius, a successful entrepreneur, read about Nasser’s design and contacted him in 2011 after spending four months in a wheelchair from a broken leg. Nasser and Buinevicius co-founded Rowheels in 2011.

I contacted Rowheels to see if I could get a pair of demo wheels to attach to my TiLite TR rigid chair for a trial. Since my purpose was to see if it would work for not only me, but also other active lifestyle wheelers, I requested contact info for other Rowheels users so I could have a more diverse group to report on. None of the Rowheels users I interviewed have received any form of compensation from Rowheels, nor have I.

Three Users Weigh In
Anthony Maleski, 41, uses a wheelchair as a result of a traumatic brain injury in 2008. After eight years of wheeling, he developed pain in his shoulders and elbows. “I purchased a set of Rowheels LX wheels and put them on my Quickie GT a little over two years ago. After a while, I decided to go to the high gear wheels. I like to go fast and keep up with everyone else around me,” he says. “The wheels have helped with the pain quite a bit.”

He uses a Rough Rider with mountain bike wheels as a second chair in rough terrain. “I mainly use my Rowheels on my Quickie around the house and most of the time when I’m out in civilization. In my small house, it’s easier to move and turn around and get out of tight spots and corners. You can wiggle out. You have more options.” He says it’s fun using the chair in his home, mainly because his kids are so fascinated by it. “I have four kids, and they are always wanting to use it. Whenever I get out of the chair, there is a contest to see who gets to use it.”

In 2016, Andy Imlay was working long days at a theme park in his wheelchair. Imlay, 39, has cerebral palsy and was taking 150 mg/day of tramadol, an opioid, for moderate to severe shoulder pain. He came across the Rowheels website, asked for a demo, and has been using his HX wheels on his TiLite Aero Z since then. “I’m happy to report that as of a month ago, I no longer take any pain meds,” he says. “I absolutely think it has everything to do with the Rowheels. And I’ve lost some weight. The high gear wheels cause me to pull back harder.”

He says going up ramps is a little tricky,
so he uses anti-tip bars and the push-pull method — pushing the tires forward on the down stroke for an “after-boost” after pulling back on the rims to go forward. “The demo chair had the LX wheels and I almost flipped the chair over,” he says. “The HX model is better suited for me. It’s best to be careful and gentle.”

Loading the chair into his four-door 2014 Dodge Avenger is a little more difficult due to the added wheel weight, but he can do it. If someone rides with him, they usually help him stow the frame and detached wheels in the rear seat.

Dee Majeski, 49, lives in Racine, Wisconsin, and has partial paralysis from a surgery complication four years ago. She has some mobility but uses her chair full-time. She started getting shoulder issues after a couple of years of wheeling. “I saw something on Facebook about Rowheels, so I got a pair. The most amazing thing is I had started having rotator cuff issues, and now I don’t have any shoulder issues any more. Probably only after about two months I started getting better.”

Majeski runs 24-by-2-inch knobby tread solid Kenda tires on her HX wheels. Laminate flooring compensates for the difficulty the knobbies add to indoor pushing and the knobbies are worth it outside. “I love being outdoors with my dog. I don’t get stuck in ruts when I go off in grass.” She says the wide knobby tread also helps in winter. “We get a lot of snow here sometimes.”

She also uses the push-pull method for going up ramps. She drives herself and loads her chair into the back of her small Ford Ranger pickup that has suicide doors. “I can stand a little, so I use grab bars to help pull myself into the front seat.”

Dee Majeski says her rotator cuff issues started to improve after using HX Rowheels for two months. Now she has no shoulder pain at all.

I got outside on a quarter-mile track, I began to get the hang of it.

Wheeling became easier, but responsiveness and velocity were disappointing. I concluded that the LX wheels are not for me, mainly because they are geared too low for my use, which includes outdoor wheeling at moderate to high speeds. Ideally, I would have liked to try out a pair of the HX wheels over a longer period of time — in order to get used to the counterintuitive wheeling technique.

Other drawbacks: I found that popping wheelies is limited to jumping a 2-inch threshold or bumping up a very small curb. Also, both LX and HX wheels are relatively heavy, so loading them in a vehicle is more difficult.

On the plus side, the braking system, once you get used to it, works fairly well. Brakes are activated by pressing inward on the rims with your hands, wrists or forearms. This causes pressure to be applied to the wheel rims by three hard-rubber stops mounted on the inside of the hand rims.

But the overwhelming benefit is the propulsion system’s preventative and therapeutic potential. Rowheels has succeeded in developing a unique line of products that have been shown to relieve shoulder pain by strengthening opposing muscles that are activated by pulling instead of pushing.

**My Take**

Rowheels sent me a pair of LX wheels to demo in September 2018. In my brief two-week trial, I discovered what many longtime active wheelchair users experience. Getting used to reverse propulsion is not easy. It takes time to overcome decades of ingrained muscle memory. In my home, I spent lots of time running into door jambs and making wrong-way turns. My ineptness was both frustrating and comical. But once

**Purchasing**

Majeski, a veteran, had her Rowheels covered by Veterans Affairs. It took Imlay a year to get his wheels through Easter Seals. Maleski said his wheels were covered by a University of Pittsburgh Medical Center plan. But my call to Numotion to check on insurance funding didn’t get a response. Luke van den Langenberg, a sales engineer for Rowheels, says distribution is more likely through National Seating and Mobility. Both LX and HX wheels currently sell for $3,000 a pair. The new Rowheels 1.0 wheelchair with fixed LX wheels $999 will most likely be an out-of-pocket cost.
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Operation Independence: VMI and our Select or Authorized Dealer Network are offering disabled veterans a $1,000 rebate toward the first-time purchase of a van with a new VMI conversion. The vehicle purchased must be converted for wheelchair access by VMI and purchased from a VMI Select Dealer. The Veteran can receive a check for $1,000 from VMI or choose to have $1,000 taken off their invoice at the Select Dealer. Checks take 60-90 business days. Rebate is available through VMI Select or Authorized Dealers and is valid from 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018. It is payable upon end user delivery.
Another innovative chair that aims to reduce shoulder strain and increase mobility is the Grit Freedom Chair, which uses levers as the primary means of propulsion. The Freedom Chair is designed as an off-road chair, with knobby, mountain-bike-style tires standard and a single, over-sized pneumatic front caster that copes well with soft surfaces and bumpy terrain.

The lever system is intended to mimic the benefits of bicycle gearing, while eliminating the complicated components — the higher you push on the lever, the lower (easier) the gearing. So when you’re going uphill, you can push on the top of the levers to ease the strain, and if you’re on the flats you can push toward the base for speed. An added benefit of the levers, for off-road use, is that any mud, sand or other grime isn’t transferred from the wheels to your hands.

Originally designed as an everyday option for countries that don’t have well developed road or sidewalk systems, the Freedom Chair is simple and utilitarian, made with standard bicycle components and easily repairable without specialized tools. The simple design does mean that there is not much built-in adjustment for seating position, so expect to play with cushions, strapping and padding for everything from leg stability to trunk support, depending on your level of function.

The Freedom Chair also has a bit of a learning curve, as pushing, turning and braking are all different with the lever system. Reversing is particularly tricky, as you have to remove the levers from their housing, pull back on the wheels like a normal manual chair and then reinsert the levers when you’re ready to move forward again. If you try to back up without removing the levers, they’ll block against the wheels.

The Freedom Chair is most functional on wider paths where there is room to maneuver and weave back and forth up steeper sections. The Freedom Chair really comes into its own on soft surfaces, like sand, gravel and mud. The optional, wider beach wheels, when combined with the large front caster, float over terrain that would swamp a typical everyday chair.

The Freedom Chair starts at $2,995 and comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee. There is also a thriving Facebook community of Freedom Chair users, who are more than happy to share riding tips, chair modifications and any other kind of support to help you maximize your experience.

— Seth McBride
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Of all the reasons to want an off-road chair, romance might not be the first that comes to mind. But for Todd Lemay, a wheelchair user with osteogenesis imperfecta, it was a missed romantic opportunity some 20 years ago that motivated him to move beyond the pavement. He was living in Arizona, dating a girl from the Midwest who had never seen the ocean. “I was pretty high on life at the time ‘cause I got my own car and I can drive and I got a girl,” he says. They drove to San Diego. “We got to the beach and went to the end of the parking lot, and I’m like, ‘Well there you go, there’s the beach, there’s the ocean.’ And after about 10 or 15 minutes of enjoying it from there, she said, ‘Hey, do you mind if I go and walk along the beach?’ I went from cloud nine down to cloud two, ’cause now she’s able to go down on the beach by herself and I’m missing that moment.”

Even though that girl is now his wife, that missed experience is something Lemay never forgot. About five years ago, he was looking online for a power chair that could get him on the beach, and he came across the Terrain Hopper — a four-wheel drive mobility vehicle that looks closer to an ATV than it does to a power wheelchair. The company that made it was based in the United Kingdom. It took some negotiations to get them to send one to the U.S., but once it got to him, it was everything Lemay was hoping for. “I took it on the beach, I took it hiking with friends, I went out with my nieces and nephews and just had a great time,” he says.

Lemay liked the vehicle so much that he approached Terrain Hopper U.K. about becoming a U.S. distributor of the vehicles, and after a long process, Terrain Hopper USA recently started production out of Phoenix.

Firsthand Hopping

I was in Arizona last year, and went to the factory to check out the Terrain Hopper. It’s a well-designed, exceedingly capable machine. It sits high and has plenty of ground clearance to overcome rocks, roots and whatever else you may find in your way.

The seat is stable and comfortable. The transfer into the Terrain Hopper from a typical manual wheelchair seat height is raised and there is a gap you’ll have to clear, but for anyone who can transfer up into a small SUV it shouldn’t be an issue. For anyone who needs assistance for a transfer, there is good clearance on the side of the vehicle. Whatever your function, it’s certainly less wonky to get into than a recumbent handcycle.

The Terrain Hopper is super stable and there’s virtually no learning curve. You point it where you want it to go, and it goes. The standard steering option is via handlebars, with brake levers and a tiller that you push forward for throttle and backward for reverse. For those without the arm and hand function to operate handlebars, there’s the option to add a joystick control. Lemay says they’re currently adapting a Terrain Hopper for a customer so he can drive it with his chin.

When I took one out, there was a steep hill covered in loose rock and sand. I climbed and descended the hill a few times, and not once did I feel out of control or like the machine was close to tipping. Part of this is because the braking system is automatic, similar to a power chair. As soon as you let off the throttle, it starts to brake, so never feels like it’s going to get away from you. At one point during testing I tried to climb the steep hill slowly, and the tires started spinning in the loose dirt. I released the throttle and reversed down the hill the hill with ease. At the bottom, I took a longer run and made it back up without issue. Problem solved.

The ease with which the Terrain Hopper handles steep slopes and rough
Thanks in part to its long wheelbase, the Terrain Hopper does well on slopes that confound most power chairs. Ground comes down to a couple things: a long wheelbase compared to track-style chairs and true four-wheel drive, with each wheel having its own electric motor. “We can go up 35 degrees, we can go down a 45-degree slope. We actually have driven them down stairs before,” says Lemay. Each wheel is independently suspended, which is crucial when navigating rocky, uneven terrain. It has a top speed of 12 mph, with a higher torque mode for rough ground, and the standard battery will get you 12 miles, depending on terrain.

Of course, this kind of engineering comes at a price. The Terrain Hopper starts at $18,000, and the price climbs further once you begin to add the multitude of options that are available to customize it. Luckily, there are options for those who don’t have an automobile’s worth of cash lying around. Terrain Hopper USA is offering the option to finance through a credit union, spreading payment out over seven years. A payment in the range of $250 a month is more feasible for the gainfully employed.

Additionally, one of the cooler things that Terrain Hopper USA is doing is working with philanthropic foundations and individuals to get vehicles donated to local nonprofits that offer adaptive rec services. Ability 360, PVA Arizona Chapter and Barrow Neurological Institute are all going to have Terrain Hoppers available for use. The company is open to working with organizations across the country. As a model for increasing access to these types of cool but pricey vehicles, trail events and gear-locker type rental programs, run by local nonprofits, may be the best option available.

However it comes about, if you get a chance to go for a trek in the Terrain Hopper, take advantage — the rougher the ground the better.
**MOBILITY & SEATING**

**LIGHTWEIGHT FOAM MOBILITY RAMP**
Making it over pesky thresholds or up short steps just got easier thanks to the lightest foam threshold ramp on the market, available exclusively from Discount Ramps. Its impressive 800 lb. capacity can accommodate even the heaviest power chairs, while an innovative polyurethane coating provides world-class grip without scuffing interior floors.

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**LIFTKAR PT**
LIFTKAR PT is a battery-powered, attendant-operated portable Stair Climber. No home modifications required. Indoor and outdoor use on angled, curved or spiral stairs of any stair material: carpet, wood, steel or concrete.

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**VELOCE**
The Veloce offers unrivaled strength and durability through the use of cutting edge carbon fiber technology. The Veloce has revolutionized how people view folding wheelchairs. No longer do you have to sacrifice the ease and simplicity of a folding chair for the performance of a rigid chair. Transfers and transport are simple, and the ride is second to none.

*Available from Motion Composites, 450/588-6555*  
or http://www.motioncomposites.com/en/welcome-to-motion-composites-website/
I’ve been writing about products in New Mobility for nine years. Each entry is a challenge, not from a writing or content perspective, but from a relevancy one. Innovations should be new, cutting edge. However, that can be difficult to do in the mobility industry. Mobility manufacturers understandably tend to hold new products intensely close to their chests until public release because regulatory processes can make giving out product information and firm launch dates challenging. This makes it tough for journalists like me — although I have my connections — to get true scoops for rightfully tech-hungry readers like you.

But, not this article, my friends! I have two products so hot that they’re almost certainly still in the oven as you read this.

**Getting AMP’d Over Power Assist**

Power assist systems for ultralight manual wheelchairs have been around for almost two decades in various incarnations. Most, however, worked under the same principle: You give the propulsion wheels a push, the power assist technology engages and gives a much-needed boost. This helps tremendously with fatigue over distance, as well as with strength limitations on varied terrain. Nevertheless, they had the same drawback: They still required some level of propulsion, which meant having some notable strength, range of motion and coordination. This is where Method Mobility’s forthcoming AMP (assistive manual power) comes in.

The AMP takes the propulsion factor out of power assist, and truly does the work for you. The AMP consists of a power base with two drive wheels that sit underneath your rigid or folding manual chair. Extending from the power base is a wheel cradle on each side to seat your push wheels. The wheel cradles rotate on an arm between forward, center and back. To dock to the AMP, once the arms are adjusted to the overall width of your chair, you simply back into the cradles, rotating them to center, which lifts your rear wheels slightly off the ground.

Now, here’s the wild part, as the AMP is activated, the wheelchair’s rear wheels are literally self-balancing over the AMP power base, with the cradle arms providing input. Think about how with a Segway or child’s balancing board, you lean for directional propulsion. With the wheelchair balancing on the AMP power base, a slight forward movement of the hand rim tells it to go forward, a slight rearward pull returns to stop, and a slight rearward pull engages reverse, all by tilting the cradle arms. To steer, traditional push-pull movements are used. What’s vital to note is that there aren’t actual push strokes involved, just very fine, almost effortless hand movements. The elimination of push strokes, as well as programmability from very fine hand input movements to larger motor skill movements, allows use by the widest range of ability levels.

The AMP has a top speed of 8 mph, a range of 8 to 16 miles based on terrain and a recharge of two hours. Bluetooth technology connects the user to the system.

Are you ready to grab one of your own? At present, the AMP is due to launch sometime in 2019. Its innovators are two ex-Quickie development guys who know their way around these projects, so they’re finishing up the legal and regulatory processes. However, they do state that when released, the AMP will be notably less costly than existing systems. Keep an eye on their website and Facebook for updates!

**Truly Live, Wireless, Power Chair Diagnostics Via the Cloud**

Have you ever had an issue with your power chair, where you thought, I wish my provider could see this right now, and I could avoid waiting for a service call? Or maybe you simply wondered what a symbol on your hand control screen meant? Well, Quantum Rehab is presently rolling out Interactive Assist, the first live,
BREEZE HANDICAP RAMP
National Ramp’s aluminum mesh modular ramps restore your freedom with the ease of getting into and out of your home. Our ADA-compliant, lightweight, no-maintenance solution allows snow and water to pass right through the aluminum mesh surface. The aluminum mesh, modular ramp systems feature the safest walking surface in the industry and are an affordable choice for accessibility solutions.

Available from National Ramp, 845/358-0350
www.nationalramp.com

MOTIVATION MULTISPORT CHAIR
Motivation Multi-sport wheelchairs are the premier entry-level, court-based wheelchairs — tough enough to be used across a wide range of sports and activities, be it basketball, tennis or lacrosse. These durable chairs utilize two sport mini caster wheels at the front and one sport anti-tip wheel in the rear to provide good maneuverability on multiple court surfaces.

Available from Numotion, 800/500-9150
or www.numotion.com

TILITE PILOT
Watch your kid soar in the ultra-lightweight TiLite Pilot. The TiLite Pilot is an easy-to-adjust pediatric manual wheelchair that utilizes lightweight carbon seating and frame components combined with revolutionary built-in forward growth to maintain an optimal seating position. Finally, a chair that moves and grows with your child.

Available from Permobil, 800/736-0925
or www.permobilus.com

PERMOBIL CONNECT
We live in a world where connection is everything. Your chair should be no exception and now features the same level of technology that you’ve come to expect in your daily life. Connecting users and service technicians through a single intuitive platform improves communication and helps you be better prepared for the unexpected.

Available from Permobil, 800/736-0925
or permobilus.com
cloud-based system where a provider can view and adjust some settings on a user’s power chair remotely.

The way Interactive Assist works is that Quantum has invested in its own secure, regulatory-compliant cloud. The user downloads an Android or iOS app onto their phone, and then the power chair and phone link via Bluetooth, using the cloud to connect live with the provider. The provider then views all aspects of the power chair for troubleshooting, simple adjustments or to address user concerns. Where Interactive Assist excels is in the area of full, live data, with the capability to make some system alterations. There are other apps on the market for data collection and analysis, but none that give a live, interactive service capability.

Quantum’s Interactive Assist is free to users with compatible power chairs.

A Tradeoff
Alas, we find ourselves in a Catch-22. If I share innovations that are already on market, you can get them, but they’re not the freshest of the fresh. However, if I share with you the freshest of the fresh, you can’t get them yet! To warp a cliché, I’ll leave you with a question to ponder on your own. What’s better: one innovation in the hand or two in the bush?

Resources
- Method Mobility, methodmobility.com; facebook.com/MyChairPower
- Quantum Rehab, quantumrehab.com; 833/745-3835

NM discloses author-product relationships when appropriate. Accordingly, Mark E. Smith is the general manager of public relations for Pride Mobility/Quantum Rehab.
MOBILITY & SEATING

EDGE 3 POWER CHAIR
Featuring upgraded SRS (Smooth Ride Suspension), the Edge 3 provides a smooth, comfortable ride and advanced stability. Optional iLevel® is available at 4.5 mph with up to 12 inches of power adjustable seat height. Standard features include front and rear LED fender lights, a USB charger and drive wheel color accents.

Available from Quantum Rehab®, 866/800-2002 or www.quantumrehab.com

ASSURED COMFORT® BEDS
Assured Comfort® Hi-Lo Adjustable Beds promote wellness! Choose from three models in twin, full, queen and split-king sizes featuring quiet, remote control operation. Electric Hi-Lo foundations adjust mattress heights. Assured Comfort® foundations can typically retrofit an existing bed frame, or choose from our line of headboards and footboards. Made in Virginia.

Available from Assured Comfort Beds, Inc., 866/852-2337 or AssuredComfortBed.com

LIBERATOR SOLAR POWER CHAIR
Solar Mobility’s suspension system absorbs all jarring and friction to give you an ultra-smooth ride that’s easy on your back and joints. It relieves pressure where you would normally feel it most! The air-cooled seat provides all day comfort, relieves aches and pains, eliminates painful skin ulcers, shear factor and surgeries that result from such wear and tear on your body.

Available from Solar Mobility, LLC, 509/851-3611 or www.solarmobilityllc.com

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Sportaid has been a supplier of durable medical equipment for 30 years. Specializing in custom wheelchairs and sports equipment for the active person, but providing medical supplies, cushions and parts for all manufacturers as well. Exceptional customer service and discounted prices set us apart from the others.

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Available from Stealth Products, LLC, 800/965-9229 or www.stealthproducts.com

STIMULITE CONTOURED XS CUSHION
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Available from Supracor, 408/432-1616 www.supracor.com

QUICKIE Q700 M SEDEO ERGO
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Mission Style / Espresso

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MOBILITY & SEATING

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Available from Wheeleez, Inc., 707/751-3999
www.wheeleez.com

MODEL CI
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Available from WHILL, 844/699-4455 or whill.us

THE ZOOM
The Zoom expands the experiences of individuals with limited mobility, getting them into nature areas where other vehicles cannot take them. Zoom has a four-wheel drive designed for use in rough terrain. The Zoom makes it possible to increase the freedom of people who wish to be more independent in their daily life.

Available from Zoomability Inc., 215/917-0403
www.zoomability.com

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Available from Teladoc, 800/835-2362
or www.teladoc.com
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Available from Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, 800/255-9877 or www.fcausdriveability.com

DARIO’S DIGITAL HAND CONTROLS

With DARIO’S — the digital accelerator ring and main hand brake — a paraplegic driver can keep both hands on the wheel. KEMPF offers a lifetime warranty and features nationwide, free at-home pick-up and delivery of the vehicle to be adapted, and at-home service. All KEMPF products are VA accepted.

Available from KEMPF Inc., 888/453-6738 or www.kempf-usa.com

QLK-150

The next step in independent wheelchair securement, QLK-150 offers more options and features than any other docking system on the market. Wheelchair drivers and passengers pay a premium for the freedom to drive, and they deserve a system that looks, feels and behaves like a part of their vehicle.

Available from Q’STRAINT, 954/986-6665 or www.qstraint.com/qlk-150
With a new wheelchair accessible van likely to set you back upwards of $60,000, a good used van at a lesser price can be an appealing alternative. Whether via personal ads, online listings or a dealer, the used van of your dreams is probably out there, waiting for you to roll in. The trick is sorting through all the nonsense to find it and then confirming it really is everything you thought it was.

Finding the Right Van

Listings for used accessible vans for sale by individuals can be found virtually anywhere and are common at Disabled Dealer, which serves as a marketplace for all types of new and used equipment needed by the disability community. Some mobility equipment vendors host listings from private individuals on their websites. Michael Holmstrom, director of marketing at Blvd.com, an online mobility vehicle marketplace, says they will even help individuals by assisting with drafting their ads prior to posting. The company also welcomes listings for used vans from other dealers, which gives the company a relationship with about 100 local offices. Blvd.com currently has over 3,000 new and used accessible vans listed for sale on its website. Other locations where used accessible vans can be located include Ebay, Craigslist, Auto Trader magazine and the website of the Kelley Blue Book, in addition to many other locations.

Another option that alleviates most of the work and many of the concerns about buying a used accessible van from a private party is to purchase a certified pre-owned vehicle from a mobility equipment dealer. These are vans that have either been taken in as trades on purchases of new vehicles or purchased outright by the dealership for the purpose of refurbishing and reselling them. Purchasing a used van from a dealer that specializes in mobility equipment sales and service has many advantages.

Specialized dealers are often staffed by savvy wheelchair users, like Jemal Mfundshi, a C6-7 quad, who knows the ins and outs of different models and options better than most.

He has been helping customers of Performance Mobility (now United Access) in Portland, Oregon, for almost 20 years and points out that each of the refurbished vans they offer for sale undergoes a thorough evaluation, is appraised to determine its value for possible financing, has new floor covering installed, and undergoes a thorough mechanical review with repairs completed wherever necessary.

That entire certification process can take about 20 days. Performance Mobility (now United Access) requires each wheelchair user who intends to drive or ride as a passenger in the van to take a needs as-
assessments to ensure the van will work for them. Besides the height of the user and weight of the mobility device, a needs assessment will also determine if a buyer needs a driving evaluation due to changing hand controls or the method of driving the vehicle.

Many mobility equipment dealers are part of a network that specializes in a particular brand of vehicle or region of the country. Eddie Rivera, co-owner of Absolute Mobility Center in Woodinville, Washington, points out that his company is part of a nationwide network of BraunAbility dealers. That provides the dealership with advantages that may not be available to smaller, independent dealers. Besides selling new vans, they receive pre-owned vans from BraunAbility after they have been repaired and refurbished. These vehicles are sold with a three year, 36,000-mile warranty on all conversion components. That warranty is then honored by all members of the BraunAbility dealer network, which can provide peace of mind when traveling at a great distance from the dealership that sold the vehicle.

The services provided by the companies listed above are just a few examples of the types of services available from mobility equipment dealers when shopping for a used accessible van. When you combine the inventories of such dealerships with the number of vans available from private sellers, there are a surprising number of used accessible vans out there. Now you know how to find them.

**The Inspection**

Once you’ve found the used van of your dreams, it’s critical to make sure it really is everything you thought it was. If you’re buying from a reputable dealer, there is a good chance they offer extensive inspections, guarantees and/or warranties. As an example, Scott Andrews, the director of sales and marketing for Rollx Vans in Savage, Minnesota, says that each of the pre-owned vehicles Rollx offers for sale receives a 171-point inspection in order to allow the company to guarantee satisfaction and offer a 30-day warranty.

If you decide to buy from an unknown individual, it is even more important for you to do your due diligence. Make certain that the seller is legitimate. If the seller claims to be a business, is there an actual store or business location where the van can be inspected and repaired?

Personal ads placed online may not be the vehicle and any assistive devices like lifts or ramps and the remote controls and switches that operate them. Also, are those items still available if replacement is necessary?

The next step when buying from a private party is to obtain an independent mechanical inspection from a certified mechanic. Some insurance carriers, like the American Automobile Association, operate facilities that make those types of inspections available to their members. A mechanic can check braking systems, suspension, engine compression and that all lights are working. They can also learn if there are any manufacturer’s recalls in effect for the particular vehicle and can check the van’s computer record to see if there are indicators of repeat breakdowns of a component.

Some final considerations include whether the driver’s or passenger’s mobility devices will fit in the van, as wheelchair width and weight might require replacement of a wheelchair lift in order for the vehicle to work for you. Some private sellers offer their vans with hand controls still in place; make sure that those are professionally installed and safe for your needs. Will a nearby mobility equipment dealer be willing to service or repair the vehicle? Some may restrict their services to vehicles that were purchased from them originally. If an outside entity like a bank, credit union or government agency will be providing funding for the purchase or paying for subsequent modifications, are they willing to provide that support for a used van?

Once you’ve checked off all these boxes, you should be ready for that long-awaited date with your dream van.

**Resources**

- Blvd.com
- Carfax, [carfax.com/vehicle-history-reports](http://carfax.com/vehicle-history-reports)
- Disabled Dealer, [www.disableddealer.com](http://www.disableddealer.com)
- National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association, [nmeda.com](http://nmeda.com)
AUTOMOTIVE RESOURCES

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VANS
For over four decades, Rollx has been the nation’s premier manufacturer of accessible mini, full-size, and previously owned vans. Rollx is a direct manufacturer with an inventory of over 200 vans in stock. Check out www.RollxVans.com to find out the latest inventory, pricing and rebates, or call 800/956-6668.

Available from Rollx Vans, 800/956-6668 or www.RollxVans.com

VANTAGE MOBILITY INTERNATIONAL
VMI is a leading manufacturer of wheelchair accessible vehicles built on Toyota, Honda and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) chassis. The company has advanced the mobility industry for 30 years with a robust portfolio of minivan and SUV conversions, as well as platform lifts. VMI’s vehicles are available nationwide through authorized dealers.

Available from Vantage Mobility International (VMI), 855/864-8267 or www.vantagemobility.com

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Is the threshold of your stall shower preventing you from rolling in? Is access limited by a narrow shower door? With the new MULTICHAIR 6000RS, you’ll be able to get into your existing stall shower without spending $1,000s on bathroom remodeling costs. Nuprodx’ exclusive compact modular design allows the system to fit showers of nearly any size. Log on to www.nuprodx.com to see the entire range of shower and commode systems that will improve the quality of life for users and caregivers alike. Nuprodx, the one system that can last a lifetime. Proudly made in the USA!

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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

CARECURE COMMUNITY

With over 70 forums covering every conceivable topic, and almost 20 years of archives, Rutgers’ CareCure is the closest thing to an authoritative Wikipedia for the SCI/D community. Ask questions, share tips, find resources — whatever you do, expect responses from other people with SCI, expert nurses, clinicians, researchers and more.

Available online at sci.rutgers.edu

CURB FREE WITH CORY LEE

Worried about accessibility in your dream destination? Then make your first stop Curb Free With Cory Lee. In five years, wheelchair user Cory Lee Woodard has built the web’s best accessible travel site, with tons of helpful reviews and enjoyable stories about his many wild excursions.

Available online at curbfreewithcorylee.com.
MIAMI PROJECT TO CURE PARALYSIS
The Miami Project is dedicated to finding more effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure for paralysis resulting from spinal cord injury. To participate in research, please visit our website or call and request an intake packet.

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

ACCESSIBLE TAXI SERVICES
The Accessible Dispatch Program gives New York City residents and visitors with disabilities greater access to green and yellow wheelchair accessible taxis. This citywide service is available to passengers with disabilities with no extra fees. The program offers a service area that accommodates pick-ups and drop-offs in all five boroughs.

Available from Accessible Dispatch, 646/599-9999 or www.accessibledispatch.com

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

VETSFIRST
VetsFirst is a program of United Spinal Association that assists 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. VetsFirst connects with thousands of veterans and active military servicemen and women annually through its call center and online help desk, Ask VetsFirst.

Available online at www.vetsfirst.org
Every week or so, Joshua Weston and Isaac Banks get together to discuss their lives and experiences as two men living with disabilities on the podcast, Man vs. Wheelchair. The two good friends met years ago at a camp for kids with muscular dystrophy and have stayed in touch despite moving thousands of miles away from each other and going their separate ways. Banks is married and has three kids, and Weston is single. They guess that they haven’t gotten together in person in almost 10 years, but every time they settle down in front of their respective computers to record their show, the time and distance disappear, and they quickly find themselves in the middle of interesting, often passionate discussions of life with a disability. Their podcast is a shining example of the potential that the recent democratization of podcasting could offer for people with disabilities, both for would-be content creators and the rapidly growing numbers of listeners.

In case you haven’t been listening, podcasts are all the rage these days. A recent study found that one-third of Americans ages 25-54 listen to podcasts on a monthly basis. They’re available for download everywhere, from Apple’s Podcasts app, to Google’s Play store, to seemingly every content-producing website. Why? From the listener side, they’re the perfect format for our on-the-go, multitasking populace — short, audio-only entities that can fill the down time on the ride home or some spare minutes before bed. From the producer side, they’re easy to make. A good podcast can be as simple as a recorded phone call or as complicated as slickly produced segment that wouldn’t sound out of place on NPR. All you need is a good recording device, one or two good microphones and a little computer savvy, and you are well on your way.

That’s how Banks and Weston got started. Both have backgrounds in audio production, and when they decided to start a podcast, all they had to do was buy some good, cheap microphones online and then log onto their computers and chat.

“When Josh and I got together and started talking about this, it was what can we offer with our experiences of being disabled, to share with people that are maybe lacking in relationships or lacking in determination or skillsets or anything? What can we do to share?” says Banks.

“We have the same attitudes about disability and about life, and both of us really wanted to make an impact,” adds Weston. “We had this idea about changing the mindset around disability. I call it reframing disability — the idea of turning your disadvantage into an advantage.”

That approach comes through in each of the 11 episodes currently available online. Episodes are on the shorter side (usually about 15-30 minutes) and tackle a singular topic, ranging from employment to dating to self-esteem. The conversations are fun, thoughtful and full of insights and ideas that listeners with and without disabilities will benefit from.

“Everything we talk about, even the romantic and intimate parts of it, all ties into having a healthy mindset,” says Weston. “That’s always been our number one goal — to get people into a healthy mindset, where they understand that even if your body doesn’t perform the way we would want it to, your mind can reframe things into a positive light.”

You can find the Man vs. Wheelchair podcast at manvswheelchair.podbean.com or on Apple and Google’s services. Here are some other disability and SCI/D podcasts worth checking out. All of them are available via Apple and Google’s apps, and the below sites:

**PUSHLiving Podcast**
PUSHLiving.com was already one of the web’s best sites for well-written blogs, interviews and much more when site founder Deborah Davis had a simple idea
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while interviewing a guest for an article she was working on. “Her voice was so unique and so personable,” recalls Davis. “I thought, ‘This would be so much better if people could actually hear her.’” That’s when Davis decided to supplement the long-form interviews she posts on the site with podcasts of the interviews.

Now 18 episodes in, Davis has mastered the art of making enjoyable conversation and has amassed a diverse lineup of subjects with something for every type of listener. She takes the time to pre-interview guests, and the reward is crisp back-and-forths. The podcasts are well produced with music, sponsors and clean sound. “They’re really fun to do, and frankly I always learn something,” says Davis.

Episodes at pushliving.com/podcast-2

Disability After Dark

Relationships and intimacy are always a conversation starter, and for my money, nobody is leading franker and more enjoyable discussions than Andrew Gurza — the web’s self-proclaimed “number one queer cripple.” Gurza is quick-witted, funny and not shy in the least. Be ready for anything — one of the episodes I listened to was a great conversation with a “pleasure professional” with CP.

Episodes at andrewgurza.com/disability-after-dark

United on Wheels: Wheelchair Lifestyle Podcast

Proof that anyone can host a podcast these days, United Spinal Association pegged me to lead its entry into the podcast arena. Through our first five episodes, I’ve enlisted a rotating group of United Spinal staff and members to tackle air travel, relationships, advocacy, MS and common misperceptions about living with SCI/D. I’ll be the first to admit that it has been a learning experience, but the depth of knowledge and the insights shared by my peers and colleagues have made everything about this a blast. Let us know if there are any topics you’d like to hear us take on and keep listening as we get even better at this.

Episodes at unitedonwheels.blubrry.net

U2FP Curecast

Matthew Rodreick, the executive director of Unite 2 Fight Paralysis, and Kate Willette, now New Mobility’s research columnist, host this must-listen show for anyone looking to keep up on the latest in SCI research. The power duo knows their stuff and does a great job of keeping the jargon to a minimum as they talk with a never-ending line of interesting movers and shakers in the research community. (Full disclosure, I met Willette when I was a guest on the podcast.)

Episodes at u2fp.org/get-educated/curecast.html

United Spinal Association knows that disability is a shared experience that affects you, your family, friends and communities. Fortunately, we are stronger together, and United Spinal brings decades of expertise to help: information, peer mentoring, advocacy and much more. Become a member today and Share the Journey.
For more information on how you can support United Spinal and become a corporate member, please contact Megan Lee at mlee@unitedspinal.org or 718/803-3782, ext. 7253. Acknowledgements on our website, in New Mobility, in United Spinal e-news or any other United Spinal publication should not be considered as endorsements of any product or service.
If you have searched on the internet, you have probably discovered that there are hundreds of websites offering advice and services related to spinal cord injury or other types of paralysis. It can be a bewildering endeavor, with lots of dead ends and conflicting information, but don’t get discouraged. Most of us who are living successfully with paralysis also started out with zero knowledge of where to turn.

Thankfully, there are strong peer support networks and professionals dedicated to helping us adjust to our new realities. The secret is to find them and take advantage of the deep knowledge base and support systems created by people who came before you.

**National Resources and Support**

United Spinal Association can provide you with a wide variety of paralysis-related resources through its national Resource Center. Join the organization for free and get rapid, personalized response to your questions about insurance, rehab, home modification, driving, working and more. United can also connect you with chapters and peer support groups, some of whom meet solely online — great if you live in a small town or rural area. Call 800/962-9629 or visit unitedspinal.org. Here are a few popular United Spinal links:

- United Spinal Resource Center, unitedspinal.org/spinal-cord-injury-resources
- United Spinal chapter list, unitedspinal.org/united-spinal-association-chapters
- Online support groups, tinyurl.com/yb7fosvn
- Grants, tinyurl.com/ybnsbzxw

Joining United Spinal also gets you a subscription to New Mobility, written by and for active wheelchair users. Search past articles at newmobility.com.

**Rehab-Specific Resources**

Serving Southern California and the Rocky Mountain region are two editions of *Spinal Cord Injury: The First 90 Days*, by Sam Maddox. It is an excellent introduction to all things SCI with particular emphasis on getting the rehab you need and deserve. While the general info applies to any part of the country, the resources and rehab centers are curated by region. Visit scifirst90days.com.

For a directory of “model systems” — national leaders in medical research and SCI care that are known to provide the highest level of comprehensive services — visit msktc.org/sci/model-system-centers.

**Addressing Ongoing Health Issues**

For very specific health questions related to spinal cord injury or brain injury, try Craig Hospital’s team of dedicated nurses, available by phone Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mountain time. Nurse Advice Line: 800/247-0257 or 303/789-8508.
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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 include the popular Gear Hacks, Research Matters and Reframed — and watch for a couple of new offerings in 2019.

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. 7203.

CINEMABILITY: THE ART OF INCLUSION

Cinemability: The Art of Inclusion, a look at the history of disability portrayals in entertainment, has been updated with footage from new shows and movies and rereleased October 5. Directed by Jenni Gold, the documentary is hosted by Jane Seymour and features interviews from 24 performers, including Jamie Foxx and Geri Jewell.

Available from Gold Pictures, goldpictures.com/films/cinemability/, Amazon, iTunes or Google Play.
Since Josh Basile and Brittany Martin Déjean co-founded SPINALpedia.com in 2007, users have uploaded more than 10,000 videos and helped make the site one of the web’s most definitive portals for everything SCI-related. The never-ending, mostly-homemade videos are organized by injury level, making it easy to find other users with similar ability levels tackling dozens of topics, from basics like getting dressed to extremes like adapted skydiving. In addition to videos, SPINALpedia offers peer mentoring with thousands of knowledgeable SCI community members and also organizes Washington, D.C., area adaptive adventures promoting the importance of taking adventures on wheels.

To help you get started digging through the site’s video archive, we asked Basile and Tiffany Carlson, SPINALpedia’s executive director, to share some of their favorites.

Video No. 1: How to do Shoulder Extension Exercises Using Theraband
One of the best uses of SCI how-to videos is to share workout tips. In this MedStar National Rehabilitation Network clip, Ms. Wheelchair Maryland 2010 Shannon Minnick demonstrates how to do shoulder extension exercises using a simple, affordable and lightweight Theraband. While Minnick, a C6-7 quad, is shown working out in a gym, this exercise can also be done at home since Therabands are high-resistance latex bands that can be tied around immovable objects.

These exercises are good for paraplegics, too. After years of pushing a manual wheelchair, many people eventually run into shoulder issues, and this video, paid for with a grant from the United States Department of Education, shares tools to stave off shoulder issues.

Watch: spinalpedia.com/video/7E21Y674ybN

Video No. 2: Quadriplegic Independence
First Pete Brady became a C3-4 quad during his freshman year at the Edinboro University, part of the Pennsylvania state system of higher education. Then he became an expert on adaptive technology for college students. In this video, he reviews three pieces of tech indispensable to his educational career:

- **The HeadMouse**, a hat that works a hands-free mouse via a dot on its bill that also interfaces with an Orby switch. With this setup, he uses an onscreen keyboard (orin.com/access/headmouse). Brady notes that Dragon voice recognition software is good when he has to write long essays and doesn’t want to type letter by letter (nuance.com).
- **Sonocent**, an app that records lectures, “is not just a normal recorder,” says Brady. “What you’re able to do is not only track class, but as slides roll, you’re able to type and split it up.” It allows color labeling, too. He shows you what it looks like at the 2:23 minute mark. “I can upload all my notes right to my computer and I can listen to them and go through really quickly and get only the things I need from class.” (sonocent.com)
- **Quadstick**, a mouth-powered device that allows people with limited arm movement to play Xbox and PS4 games at competitive levels — extremely important for many college students who live in the dorms (quadstick.com).

Watch: spinalpedia.com/video/7E2DYbmA1bN

Video No. 3: Cleaning Upholstery on a Manual Wheelchair
In this video, Lindsey B., a paraplegic with spina bifida, shares how she cleans her wheelchair upholstery — something one of her followers asked her to show.

She gamely transfers into a dining room chair and demonstrates how she cleans it all, from the seat to the backrest.

She first covers the basics, pulling off her Roho cushion, unzipping it, and pull-
ing out the air cells. “It’s pretty nice because you can just literally throw the cover in the washer,” she says, reminding that if your cover has Velcro to not wash it with other items it may stick to. She also demonstrates how she handles her older Jay cushion, noting she won’t wash the wooden insert as you want, she notes that the more you use it, the faster it’ll wear out.

As you wish to wash each piece separately, and the seat sling cannot be removed so must be spot-cleaned. She adds Downy Unstopable to the backrest along with her regular detergent although you may wish to wash it all as much as you can and will wash it in the shower. “There’s nothing really special you need to do,” she says, although you may wish to wash each piece separately, and the seat sling cannot be removed so must be spot-cleaned.

She thoroughly explains each aspect of cleaning chair upholstery, showing how the fabric backrest can be pulled off to throw in the washer. “There’s nothing really special you need to do,” she says, although you may wish to wash each piece separately, and the seat sling cannot be removed so must be spot-cleaned.

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NEW SEATING!

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NEW SEATING!
Emily Shryock just wanted to get to work at her job in the disability services office of a local university near her Austin home. But by 9:05 a.m. on August 20, her path had been blocked three times by Bird Scooters — and she’d had enough.

“Another day in paradise,” she posted to Facebook. “Folks need to realize not everyone has the privilege of being able to walk around these obstacles to continue on their way to work, school or play!”

Nearly 3,000 people shared her post when lovewhatmatters.com invited her to write about these “dockless mobility devices” that increasingly block city sidewalks. Since there aren’t always designated places to park some of these new toys, “they have ended up on sidewalks, ramps, yards and other inconvenient places,” wrote Shryock. “The folks who charge the scooters at night and place them out in the morning had chosen one strip of sidewalk to set up three scooters perpendicular to the sidewalk — effectively blocking anyone from using the sidewalk without forcing them to go over or around the scooters.”

As a testament to what a pain these devices are for many more people than just Shryock, her story has been picked up by local radio and television stations, and other websites. Whether her plea will impact companies like Bird, Lime, GOAT and Pace whose users carelessly block the sidewalks remains to be seen.

Here are some of the comments from her Facebook post:

**Dana Gruber:** I know that the city is still trying to figure out the specific rules that the scooter companies have to follow. I see the benefits, but they all just got dumped on Austin without any planning or collaboration. I see them blocking sidewalks constantly. And the bike community isn’t very happy either because people also leave them in bike lanes and at bike locking spots.

**Julie Fritz:** They dumped them in Indianapolis, too, but the city rebelled and they removed them for a period of time until the city could figure out some regulations. People were so upset about them being abandoned all over town that quite a few ended up in the canal nearby!

**Lisa Constantine:** You are too nice, I would have tried to knock them over.

**Nicole Ondrush Bennett:** As a person who charges these once in awhile, this post is helpful. I feel like I put them out well out of the way of obstructing anyone’s way, but seeing this also really confirms why it’s so important to MAKE SURE to keep them out of the way! I’ll share this on the charger pages I belong to. Hopefully it will bring more awareness to how important it is to place them correctly.
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