

# WHIRLWIND



## Wheelchair

### WHAT'S INSIDE

- Whirlwind Moves to Berkeley
- Introducing RoughRider America
- Ebola Halts WPAC in Sierra Leone
- Hand Cycles and RoughRiders in Ethiopia
- 25th Anniversary of the ADA

**AND MORE...**





## Dear Friends and Supporters,

The year 2013–2014 proved momentous for Whirlwind, with both positive and negative outcomes that might be best summed up by the old adage, “What the left hand giveth the right hand taketh away.” Indeed, this past year has been a roller coaster ride that fortunately is ending on an upswing.

As of July 1, Whirlwind is no longer a program at San Francisco State University. We are now located across the Bay in Berkeley. Please note our new address and contact information below. We have divided our work into two parts—income generation and our traditional nonprofit activities. The income-generating activities are performed by a private company, RoughRider® America, LLC. Net profits from RoughRider America will go to support Whirlwind’s nonprofit efforts. This arrangement frees us to explore many new opportunities, but as with many a birth, the joy has not come without considerable pain. In the process of separating Whirlwind from SF State, the University gave our largest wheelchair customer the right to purchase our RoughRider® wheelchairs without paying us anything. This resulted in a dramatic decline in our annual income. Thus we are now in a significant rebuilding phase.

We successfully completed our USAID project “Wheelchair Provision and Assembly Centers (WPAC)” on June 30, establishing WPACs in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone has brought Sierra Leone, and the WPAC we helped set up there, to a halt. The Nigeria WPAC has been mostly unaffected by the Ebola crisis and is actively developing new markets. To learn more about recent developments in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, please read the story on page 4.

By far and away the most challenging task ahead of us is transitioning to a new generation of leadership. We are currently developing a strategic plan to begin that transition, but like many organizations that started up in the 1960s and ’70s, it is proving difficult to find younger people who share our vision of disability rights and, specifically, leadership by persons with disabilities. Ultimately, our success in that endeavor will determine whether Whirlwind, as a disability rights and assistive technology organization, will survive in the field of international development—a field dominated by groups with charitable, religious, and typical humanitarian missions.

As is customary at this time of year, we ask for your financial support. This year, more than ever, your help is essential to our ongoing work and to ensure that our work will continue long after we have left it to others to carry on. Remember: *As you help Whirlwind you help change the world.*

Sincerely,

**Marc Krizack**, Executive Director



## The End of an Era: Whirlwind Leaves SF State

Whirlwind left San Francisco State University (SFSU) on June 30, 2014 as a result of a new university administration with a new strategic plan. In separating Whirlwind from the university, SFSU gave our largest customer the right to buy RoughRiders directly from the factories without paying anything to Whirlwind. This decision by SFSU placed Whirlwind's financial viability in jeopardy. Having survived this serious setback, we are now under the 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsorship of People United for a Better Life in Oakland (PUEBLO). This permits Whirlwind to rebuild and resume its important work as a nonprofit organization. To learn more about PUEBLO, please see page 6.

Just as we're excited by the opportunities this new era brings, we're also very proud of all that Whirlwind accomplished in its 27 years at SFSU. While there, the RoughRider design was continually refined by numerous engineers, students, interns, volunteers, and rehabilitation professionals. The wheelchair building class at SFSU, which was led by Ralf Hotchkiss (WW's chief engineer and founder) and Bob Incerti (WW's San Francisco operations manager), taught hundreds of students how to build a RoughRider using basic tools, simple materials, and a variety of metal-working techniques. Whirlwind-designed wheelchairs were distributed to more than 95,000 people around the world, transforming their lives in countless ways. Most of the countries where people received RoughRiders during that time are listed at right.



*Students in SFSU's wheelchair building class celebrate the completion of the RoughRider they built together under the instruction of Whirlwind's Ralf Hotchkiss and Bob Incerti (at left in a light blue shirt).*

## A New Beginning: Introducing RoughRider America

Whirlwind has separated its earned-income activities from its traditional nonprofit work. Wheelchair sales are now handled by RoughRider America LLC (RRA). Net profits derived from RRA's wheelchair sales will go to support Whirlwind's nonprofit work. This allows Whirlwind to direct its resources solely to furthering its nonprofit mission, no longer burdened by the demands of managing a complex international wheelchair supply chain. In turn, RoughRider America can focus on generating much needed income, undistracted by activities now handled exclusively by the Whirlwind non-profit. This hybrid system allows both RoughRider America and Whirlwind to concentrate on what each does best.

Sales of the RoughRider® have been strong since Whirlwind left SFSU, partly due to orders that were placed on hold when SFSU decided in late 2013 that it would no longer process Whirlwind's wheelchair sales. Fortunately, several state and national parks have ordered RoughRiders, and RoughRiders will again be available in the US in early January and can be purchased at [www.whirlwindwheelchair.org/customize-order](http://www.whirlwindwheelchair.org/customize-order)

## With Your Help...

Your donations have made it possible for individuals in the following countries to receive RoughRiders®. This means access to education, employment, recreation, travel, and the many other significant rewards improved mobility provides.

Afghanistan	Malaysia
Albania	Mexico
Argentina	Mongolia
Armenia	Mozambique
Belarus	Myanmar
Bolivia	Nepal
Bosnia and Herzegovina	New Guinea
Cape Verde	Nicaragua
China	Nigeria
Colombia	Pakistan
Cote D'Ivoire	Paraguay
Czech Republic	Peru
Dominican Republic	Philippines
Ecuador	Moldova
Ethiopia	Rwanda
Fiji	Samoa
Georgia	Saudi Arabia
Ghana	Sierra Leone
Guyana	Slovakia
Haiti	South Africa
India	Thailand
Indonesia	Tibet
Israel	Togo
Jamaica	Trinidad and Tobago
Jordan	Turkey
Kazakhstan	Venezuela
Kenya	Vietnam
Laos	Ukraine
Macedonia	United Arab Emirates
Madagascar	Uruguay
Malawi	Zambia

## Wheelchair Provision and Assembly Center Updates

### Ebola Crisis Halts WPAC in Sierra Leone

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa has brought the Wheelchair Provision and Assembly Center (WPAC) in Sierra Leone, one of Africa's hardest hit countries, to a standstill. This WPAC, which was set up under our recently concluded USAID-funded project, is run by our local partner Mobility Sierra Leone (MSL).

The fear of Ebola combined with the government's measures to combat the deadly epidemic have all but closed down commercial activities in Sierra Leone and have cut commercial links to neighboring countries. When the nature of the threat was first recognized, MSL staff went to work, but had nothing to do. Then, in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus, the government mandated a three-day period during which everyone was forced to remain in their homes. Since business in Sierra Leone has come to a virtual halt, MSL has been unable to meet its sales goals. One order for 100 wheelchairs has been put on hold until the Ebola epidemic ends, while an order for 25 chairs for Ghana was lost to a competitor. All commerce with Liberia, which is in MSL's market area, has also been suspended.

Although MSL has not been able to develop its wheelchair sales and provision business, it has not been idle. When the government began an Ebola "Sensitization Campaign" to educate the public about the disease and how to prevent its spread, the special needs of those with disabilities were not addressed. MSL stepped in and, with the support of Finland's Abilis Foundation, has been leading the government's sensitization campaign within and for the disability community. MSL used radio communication, which is often the most reliable means of reaching people in remote locations. To listen to the radio message that MSL produced about the WPAC, please click on <http://tinyurl.com/pofkujl>



*Mobility Sierra Leone Director Lamin Mansaray (center) with co-workers before the Ebola outbreak. Fortunately, MSL staff has escaped Ebola thus far.*

PHOTO BY LAURA HARRINGTON



*MAARDEC Director Cosmas Okoli (center) and co-workers riding RoughRiders, Lagos, Nigeria*

### WPAC in Nigeria: Business as Usual

Having largely escaped the Ebola virus, our WPAC partner in Nigeria, Mobility Aid and Appliances Research and Development Centre (MAARDEC), has been able to continue with all of their activities including wheelchair provision and assembly. They were also recently awarded a grant from MTN, the cell phone and Internet giant, to purchase 550 wheelchairs in the coming year.



## Hand Cycle Testing and RoughRider Manufacture in Ethiopia

Whirlwind's new hand cycle, designed to be used as a mobile shop for income generation, is now being tested in Ethiopia. Cheshire Services purchased 50 hand cycles—five for each of the 10 provinces in Ethiopia—with funds provided through International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC).

Cheshire Services is a nonprofit organization that provides orthopedic and social rehabilitation services for children and young adults with disabilities in Ethiopia. The charity was founded in 1962 by British war hero Lord Geoffrey Leonard Cheshire at the request of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie's grandchildren.



*Ralf Hotchkiss, Whirlwind's chief engineer, tests the Whirlwind hand cycle prototype in San Francisco.*



*Cheshire Services wheelchair assembly staff proudly display the first RoughRider they made.*

Hand cycle testing is the last phase of a project to set up a wheelchair import, assembly, and distribution system based on the WPAC (see page 4) model. The testing will provide valuable feedback on how the hand cycle performs in the differing environments of each province and help Cheshire Services determine where the hand cycle fits in the mix of mobility products they can offer. The hand cycle testing was originally planned to take place in Nigeria and Sierra Leone with funds from Whirlwind's WPAC grant from USAID. Unfortunately, our departure from SFSU made that impossible (see page 3).

IOCC and Cheshire Services are also currently exploring the feasibility of manufacturing RoughRiders® locally. High shipping costs to Addis Ababa (Ethiopia's landlocked capital) and rising wages in China give local manufacture an edge over importation. In fact, Chinese wages have risen so much that some Chinese companies are moving their operations to Ethiopia.

## RoughRider® Power Add-On



*RoughRider outfitted with power add-on*

The Georgian Coalition for Independent Living (GCIL) in Tbilisi, Georgia has advanced to the second prototype generation of a power add-on to the RoughRider®. The first prototype worked well, but a problem with some of the motors turned out to be due to a plastic gear. GCIL chairman Giorgi Dzeladze visited China this past summer and arranged with the manufacturer to make the motor with a steel gear. The new motors are now being tested. We hope for a satisfactory outcome by next Spring. The unit will be the lowest cost power add-on available and will extend the range of people who can use the RoughRider to include those who cannot push the chair themselves. This power add-on will be available for chairs sold outside the US.



*Motors in rear hubs allow for quick conversion between manual and power modes.*



## Sinking Roots in the Community



*Ralf and volunteer Jerry Alexander at Whirlwind's new shop in Berkeley, CA*

Whirlwind's new fiscal sponsor is Oakland, California-based People United for a Better Life in Oakland (PUEBLO). Until now, Whirlwind's local community work consisted mostly of 25 years of wheelchair-building classes at SFSU and 10 years of volunteer wheelchair repair at San Francisco's Project Homeless Connect.

PUEBLO's community-based programs serve low-income clients and include vocational training, sustainable food production, neighborhood safety, and police accountability. Their sponsorship provides Whirlwind with new opportunities to work with other local nonprofits and grassroots organizations. To learn more about PUEBLO, visit [www.peopleunited.org](http://www.peopleunited.org)

## RESNA's Do-It-Yourself Competition

Whirlwind is providing \$500 in prize money for an international competition to design low-cost, Do-It-Yourself (DIY), assistive devices. The competition is sponsored by the International Special Interest Group (I-SIG) of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). The



competition winners will be invited to attend RESNA's annual conference in June 2015. As the top rehab

professional association in North America, RESNA was granted special consultative status at the United Nations last year.

In Whirlwind's 35 years of work in the US and in developing countries, we have seen that the most creative ideas and best solutions for overcoming barriers and facilitating both simple and complex tasks have often come from people with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. Unfortunately, most of these solutions remain unknown to the wider disability and rehab communities. International wheelchair projects, for example, tend to focus on provision of basic equipment and wheelchair provision services. They seldom address the need for ensuring that a wheelchair user can function effectively in daily life at home, school, or work.

RESNA's competition is open to all, with any type of assistive technology for anyone with any type of disability. To learn more, visit [www.resna.org/about/leadership/committees/special-interest-groups-signs/international-sig](http://www.resna.org/about/leadership/committees/special-interest-groups-signs/international-sig)

## RoughRider® – The Chair of Choice



*Using the theme 'Push Your Limit', the BII Maybank Bali Marathon 2014 had a total of 4,464 runners from 49 countries, with the most participants coming from the host country, Indonesia. A specific category for disabled participants was introduced this year, with 40 "wheelchair runners" competing in the 5K run.*



## DREDF's 35th Anniversary

PHOTO BY WILL HENDERSON-NOLD



Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) with (from left) DREDF's Marylou Breslin, Arlene Mayerson, and Susan Henderson, and (far right) Whirlwind's Marc Krizack at DREDF's 35th Anniversary Celebration. Harkin, who was guest of honor along with Congressman George Miller, was the Senate author of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. A longtime champion of disability rights, Harkin is retiring this year after 40 years in the House and Senate.

The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) played a critical leadership role in developing and enacting the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). DREDF provided legal expertise to members of Congress, was a key member of the political strategy team, and coordinated a grassroots effort that involved national, state, and local groups comprising all constituencies within the disability community. To learn more about DREDF, visit [www.dredf.org](http://www.dredf.org). To learn more about the legacy of Senator Harkin's many initiatives supporting disability rights and independent living, visit [www.harkin.senate.gov/disabilities.cfm](http://www.harkin.senate.gov/disabilities.cfm)

## ADA's 25th Anniversary

2015 is the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and disability rights activist Frank Barham will be on a roll—a 302 mile roll to be exact. A wheelchair rider for 34 years, Frank will push himself in his everyday wheelchair along the path of Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman's historic 'March to the Sea,' when Sherman burned a swath from Atlanta to Savannah. Frank, who plays chromatic harmonica in his band, Brazilian Fusion, chose Sherman's path for symbolic reasons. "I would like to 'burn' the minimizing attitudes that continue to haunt and limit people with disabilities. However, *this* time, the 'fire' will be my music, the ADA Legacy Tour, and a sheer determination to help my brothers and sisters with disabilities."

Starting at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta in Spring 2015, Frank will roll 30 miles per day. Along the way he will also stop to perform, promote his new CD, and raise funds to support Whirlwind's work. He will be joined by the ADA Legacy Tour, a traveling exhibit about the disability rights movement and organized by disability rights groups. For more about the ADA Legacy Tour go to [www.adalegacy.com](http://www.adalegacy.com). To check out Frank's music, go to [www.youtube.com/user/fireinsoul123](http://www.youtube.com/user/fireinsoul123)

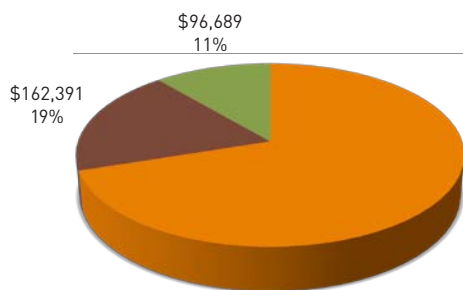
*Frank Barham, founder of the social justice project, Wheel 2 Live, playing harmonica on Brazil Day in 2014.*



## Financial Breakdown

### Income July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014

- Wheelchair Sales
- Government Grants
- Donations & Foundations

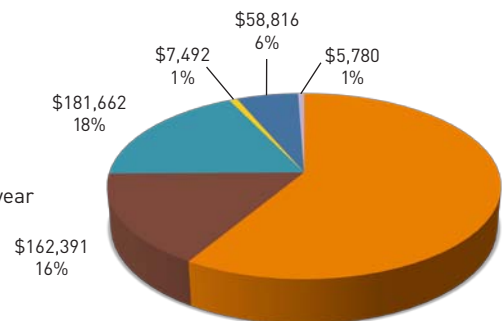


Total Income = \$862,327

### Expenses July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014

- Wheelchair Sales (Cost of Goods Sold)\*
- Government Grants
- Non-Grant Personnel
- Non-Grant Travel
- Other Non-Grant Expenses
- Non-Grant Administration

\*includes obligations from prior year



Total Expenses = \$1,006,403

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Recorded July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

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