

## Wheels are Turning at Luke Commission Clinics

The Luke Commission has leaped into a new adventure, while taking health care to the far corners of Swaziland. Dr. Harry and Echo VanderWal and many Swazi friends couldn't be more excited!

Wheelchairs! These are now rolling to the mobile clinics, along with medications and eyeglasses and free treatment for everyone.



Echo and Big Sipho start unloading PET wheelchairs delivered to The Luke Commission home base in Manzini, Swaziland.



Unpacking wheelchairs donated to The Luke Commission for needy patients is a joyful task.

One 42-year-old man has been crippled from polio since childhood. For the first 29 years of his life, Themba Dlamini crawled on his hands and knees. In recent years, he has hobbled around on a homemade pair of crutches held together with wire.

Then The Luke Commission came to Themba's rural community of Jabulani (Shiselweni) and fitted him with a new wheelchair, donated by a United States company that specializes in making wheelchairs for rough and rugged places. For instance, the tires are solid-core rubber and will not pop when they roll over Swaziland's long, large thorns.



This man's life is about to be transformed...



Jacob helps this man get rolling. TLC is grateful to Personal Energy Transportation for making wheelchairs for rugged terrains.

Last year a representative from PET (Personal Energy Transportation) International learned of Lions Harry and Echo's medical missions in Swaziland. This summer dozens of wheelchairs arrived to be distributed by The Luke Commission.

"It was a piece of the puzzle that had not been put into place until now," said Lion Echo VanderWal. We're very grateful to PET for supplying us with just what's needed here."



Cedarville University volunteers and VanderWal boys put together new wheelchairs.



Cedarville nursing students assemble PET wheelchairs in their "spare" time - all part of a clinic day.



Here you go, dear friend. It's a whole new world for you...

Themba could not be more thankful, either. "Providing me with this wheelchair has made me feel more like a human being," he said. "Ever since I got this wheelchair, there is overwhelming joy inside me, and I must confess that I have never felt such happiness in my life."

The night Themba received his new "crank" wheelchair, one he can maneuver with his strong arms, Lion Echo was returning from a homestead where she had treated a bedridden patient. About 5 kilometers from the clinic site, she saw Themba, his wife, and five children walking home.

"Even in the dark, it was unbelievable to see the smile on this man's face in his new vehicle of independence," said Lion Echo.

There's more! A handicapped man, about 30 years old whose right side has been paralyzed since birth, exclaimed when he first sat in his wheelchair: "This car is really going to help me. I'm a businessman! Now I can carry my tomatoes and onions."



The thrill of being mobile for the first time in his life is almost more than this Swazi could fathom.



PET wheelchairs are designed for the unforgiving African bush. This is a "crank" chair operated by the patient himself.

Who gets the coveted wheelchairs? "We are just launching our program now," Lion Echo explained, "but over time we'll go back to people we've identified at previous clinics."

Lion Echo continued, "These chairs are intended for the neediest of the needy. We explain to the Swazis that our donors have parameters which must be met."



Crowds gather to celebrate this Gogo's gift from Jesus - a Pull-PET wheelchair.

Whenever a wheelchair is presented, Lion Harry speaks to the crowds gathered. This is what he says:

"These wheelchairs are made by people in the States. We do not understand why things happen to us - why we cannot walk, why our bodies do not work right.

"This chair will carry you from place to place. Every time someone asks about your chair, you can tell them where you got it," concludes Lion Harry.

One gogo (a respectful title for grandma) bubbled when she sat in her new "pull" wheelchair. "Now when I get up and eat my breakfast, I don't need a strong man to take me to the toilet, just a small boy to pull me."

And the stories continue. Lion Echo looked up at one clinic to see an old woman struggling down the mountainside with a boy on her back. She could barely walk under her heavy load.

"I almost cried," said Lion Echo, "I knew I had put been in that place with exactly what we needed to help her."



From Grandma's back to his own chair...



Joy unspeakable...

The 8-year-old boy had cerebral palsy. His parents had died, and his grandmother cared for all his needs. He could not speak, and the VanderWals were not sure if he knew what was happening.

"But when I took him off his grandmother's back and sat the boy in his new chair, he gave me a look of pure joy. He knew his life had changed for the better," Lion Harry said.



Happiness reflects in the eyes of Swazi children, as one of their own received a free wheelchair.



Dr. Lion Harry helps a jubilant child in to his new chair.

The 70-year-old Gogo Ngwenya later told Lion Echo that her back hurt all the time. She worried about how she was going to cope when the child got bigger.

"Today has been the greatest day of my life," Gogo Ngwenya said. "I thank God for sending you to our country and for providing me with such a wonderful wheelchair. Now moving my grandson from place to place is more simple for me."



A row of assembled PET wheelchairs are ready to take to TLC mobile clinics in remotest sections of Swaziland.

Everything does not work out perfectly, of course. One woman could not be fitted for a wheelchair because her knees would not bend. Another day, the VanderWals gave away the wheelchairs packed on the trailers before a 13-year-old girl arrived late at a clinic. She has been pushed around in a wheelbarrow her whole life.

"But we'll follow up and make sure she gets the chair best for her," said Lion Echo.