

Mission: Mobility

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On June 16 Don Schoendorfer, a California-based engineer, will end a two-month bicycle trek across the U.S. designed to raise money to distribute wheelchairs for free in developing nations. Beginning his ride in New York in April, Schoendorfer, founder of Free Wheelchair Mission, hoped to raise \$670,000 to distribute 15,000 wheelchairs through partnerships with Christian and humanitarian groups. To date the organization has raised \$379,398 , but with roughly 130 million people worldwide in need of wheelchairs, Schoendorfer said every donated wheelchair has the potential to change a life. “A common explanation for why you can’t walk in developing nations is because God hates you. It’s your caste, your card, your karma,” says Schoendorfer, who attends Mariners Church in Irvine, Calif. “So there’s a real spiritual disability there too.” He says the idea to build low-cost wheelchairs came 30 years ago when, during a visit to Morocco, Schoendorfer saw a woman crawling across the road because she couldn’t walk. The image haunted him and eventually inspired him to found Free Wheelchair Mission (), which has distributed more than 210,000 wheelchairs at a cost of \$ each. Unlike other global needs, Schoendorfer says mobility is a problem Christians can easily help solve. “It’s a real neat thing for me to see that with \$, you can help change someone’s life.” **–Adrienne S. Gaines**