

# WHIRLWIND

Wheelchair



Your donation changes lives around the world. We all thank you.

## Whirlwind in Transition

**A**FTER 25 YEARS of calling the San Francisco State University campus home, Whirlwind is relocating to new facilities in Berkeley and Oakland. We also now have a new fiscal sponsor—PUEBLO (People United for a Better Life in Oakland). Please visit [www.peopleunited.org](http://www.peopleunited.org) to learn more about this innovative organization and the exceptional programs they sponsor. A full report on Whirlwind's transition, and the new opportunities it presents, will be featured in our next *NewsNotes*. Here are a few examples of what our future holds:

- **design and development of new products** that meet Whirlwind's high-quality standards,
- **resumption of much-anticipated RoughRider® sales** in the US and Canada,
- **ongoing design refinement** of the 2010 RoughRider®,
- **continued participation in efforts to develop appropriate wheelchair standards** for developing countries, and
- **support advocacy efforts** of local disability organizations in other countries.

### Please note our new contact information:

Whirlwind Wheelchair, 2703 Seventh Street #134, Berkeley, CA 94710  
(510) 204-9333 (office), (510) 326-5639 (mobile)

## USAID WPAC Grant Updates



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Whirlwind's Wheelchair Provision and Assembly Center (WPAC) partners, Mobility Sierra Leone and MAARDEC in Nigeria, are rapidly establishing themselves as leaders in the local assembly and provision of wheelchairs in western Africa. Whirlwind's Laura Harrington recently returned from working closely with both groups, assisting them in their search for ways to become self-sufficient enterprises. Governments, organizations, third-party payers, and businesses can partially or fully fund RoughRiders® for use by active disabled people through our innovative WPAC program.



As part of its WPAC project, Whirlwind is also developing a new hand-powered cargo tricycle that can be used to generate income. Designed by Whirlwind's Aaron Wieler, this new tricycle provides a fast, stable ride to small-business owners who often need to transport heavy loads on crowded streets. A range of accessories, such as a sunshade and cargo boxes, will also be available. For more information about our WPAC grant, contact [marc@whirlwindwheelchair.org](mailto:marc@whirlwindwheelchair.org).

*Aaron Wieler and some friends test ride the hand-powered tricycle he designed as part of the USAID-funded WPAC grant.*

## SFSU Science Building Closure



PHOTO BY RALF HOTCHKISS

*The Science Building at SFSU, home to the WW office and workshop, was unexpectedly closed January 10.*

The Science Building at SFSU—home to Whirlwind’s office and workshop for 25 years—was closed “until further notice” on January 10. The building’s unexpected closure, prompted by the detection of toxic substances (asbestos, lead, mercury, and PCBs) throughout, posed a major disruption for Whirlwind. We were not permitted access to the building for more than three weeks. With no computers, phones, files, or shop, our ability to function was severely limited. We were finally allowed to retrieve some items in February and March, but many of our most valuable pieces of equipment and essential tools were off limits until mid-April.

Many assisted us during the closure. Ray Grott, Director of SFSU’s Rehabilitation Engineering Technology Project and longtime Whirlwind colleague, generously offered to share his on-campus trailer so that we could resume operations. The department of Design and Industry granted us access to their workshop. This was especially helpful to the engineering and design students who were working with Ralf Hotchkiss on two projects. Fortunately, Aaron Wieler was able to continue building his WPAC hand-cycle prototypes at the TechShop in San Francisco. We are very grateful to those who helped us during this challenging period.

## RoughRider® Fan Mail

“I’ve been a polio para, full-time wheelchair user for about seven years. I used crutches and braces for 54 years before that. I have a place in Hawaii that I call a ‘farmette,’ where we mostly grow fruit trees and ornamental plants. My RoughRider® is my faithful yardwork chair. Those great front casters and mountain-bike rear tires let me roll over pretty much



*Don Haynie tends to his ‘farmette’ in Hawaii with his son, Seth.*

any terrain, especially some big gravel the former owners used for mulch. I also find the wheel lock system very useful for working on hilly places, where I need to set the locks quickly, intuitively, and often. The locks seem more ergonomic than the ones on my everyday chair. Very often, when I switch back to my everyday chair, I need a little time to readjust and stop reaching for those easy Rough Rider® wheel locks! Thanks for inventing such a great ride!” —DON HAYNIE



## Connecting with Project Homeless Connect

Whirlwind is in its ninth year of providing free wheelchair repair to homeless people in San Francisco through the city's model program Project Homeless Connect (PHC). Every other month, the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium is filled with thousands of homeless people receiving services from a host of volunteer organizations and municipal agencies.

Whirlwind's Homeless Connect effort is led by lifelong SF resident Bob Incerti, who unfailingly organizes each event's logistics and volunteers. Whirlwind staff and volunteers have fixed 728 wheelchairs, plus countless walkers and canes. They have also refurbished and given some 100 free wheelchairs to those whose chairs are beyond repair.

We've also made some good friends. Ralf Hotchkiss first met Rodney Bell a few years ago when Rodney was starring in an AXIS Dance Company performance. AXIS is an innovative ensemble that features performers with and without disabilities.



*Volunteers B.J. Rolph and Eric Crizer help Bob Incerti (front left) repair a walker for a PHC client.*

Ralf and Rodney reconnected by chance at PHC. In the time that had passed, Rodney had become homeless—and a client of Homeless Connect—due to a fire. Rodney now has a home and fixes wheelchairs with Whirlwind as a PHC volunteer.



*Above: AXIS Dance Company performers Rodney Bell and Sonsheree Giles.*

*Right: Rodney and Ralf at a recent Project Homeless Connect.*



Tax-deductible donations may be made by check, credit card, or at [whirlwindwheelchair.org/donate](http://whirlwindwheelchair.org/donate)  
**IMPORTANT:** If you opt to donate by check, please make the check payable to Whirlwind Wheelchair.

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