



**Transcription for
ABC7 Morning News Whirlwind Wheelchair**

Kristen Sze: 20 million people around the world need wheelchairs, but actually 98 percent don't have them. Hundreds of Iraqis who have lost their mobility have recently regained it though, through a unique wheelchair developed in the Bay Area but tough enough for the conditions in developing countries. We visited San Francisco State University, where engineers are spreading the freedom of mobility around the world.

Kristen Sze: These wheels may be spinning, but they're certainly not spinning their wheels in this lab at San Francisco State University. Students and teachers here are transforming lives in the developing world one spoke at a time.

Ralf Hotchkiss: People need a chair that they can go over unpaved roads a considerable distance every day: to get to school, to get to work, to raise a family — to do what they have to do.

Kristen Sze: Professor Ralf Hotchkiss became paralyzed in a motorcycle accident more than three decades ago. A chair he created for himself evolved into Whirlwind, a line of wheels tough enough for developing countries. Hotchkiss and his team of engineers put each design through the roughest of conditions, in the lab and on the rocky shores around San Francisco Bay. They have to, to ensure these chairs will travel in countries like Mexico, Vietnam, Nicaragua, South Africa, and Iraq.

Ralf Hotchkiss: We're working with the people in each one of those countries to design chairs that are just as strong as possible.

Kristen Sze: Strong is key, because these chairs are used overseas on unpaved roads, mud and sand; places with no bus lifts, sidewalks, or handicapped ramps. In addition, Hotchkiss knows the chairs need to be affordable. They use simple, locally-produced parts made stronger through clever engineering, such as a long wheelbase and wide solid rubber front caster wheels and mountain biking rear tires.

www.whirlwindwheelchair.org



Ralf Hotchkiss: You can take this chair to any good blacksmith, any good bicycle repair person, almost anywhere in the world — even a small village — and they can remake any part of the chair simple enough.

Kristen Sze: The San Francisco State team has now taught small shops in 45 countries how to produce different models of Whirlwind chairs. Recently, hundreds of the latest model, the RoughRider, were given out to Iraqis for free, thanks to money raised by Hotchkiss's foundation, Whirlwind Wheelchair International.

Ralf Hotchkiss: We hope that enough people will become builders of this chair that it will be available in almost every developing country.

Kristen Sze: In San Francisco, Kristen Sze, ABC 7 News.

Kristen Sze: That's me. Hotchkiss has started a foundation, Whirlwind Wheelchair International, to help buy these chairs for people who need them. If you'd like to help, or find out more, go to our website, abc7news.com, for a link to their site.

Eric Thomas: So the first thing he did was go right and get a patent for that, right?

Kristen Sze: No, actually. You would think, but he didn't; because he would love it if everyone would take his idea and replicate it in factories around the world so more people can get access to these chairs that are so sturdy, and hardy, and can withstand all the conditions.

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