March is Wheelchair Collection Month!
Let us make man in our image,” God says in Genesis 1:26. And, oh, what a beautiful image it is. We reflect God in the way we create beauty, love selflessly, and judge fairly. We love telling this to people who have Down syndrome – we want intellectually impaired kids and adults to gain confidence that, despite their challenges, they reflect the awesome God of the universe. What good news! Yet as good as it is, it is not good enough.

To learn that you reflect the image of God is a high and glorious truth, but it is not a particularly hopeful one. John Piper puts it this way, “Every human is made in the image of God, which means that God’s enemies are created in his image, unrepentant rebels are created in God’s image… to focus on helping people feel created in God’s image is not a saving effort. There is a spectaculantly higher, more hopeful message. When we offer Christ, we invite people to be not the created image of God, but the recreated child of God — a new creation in Christ.”¹

What great news! This is what the Gospel of Jesus offers to all people – whether they have Down syndrome or are champions on Jeopardy; use a wheelchair or can bound up three flights of stairs; are blind or have 20/20 vision. At Joni and Friends, we believe that although sin has terribly marred the God-image that people bear, it can be fully restored in those who embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And your prayers and gifts are enabling Joni and Friends to share this life-transforming message all over the world to people with all types of disabilities. Especially those with an extra chromosome. It’s something we celebrate on World Down Syndrome Day this month, and God bless you for celebrating with us through your partnership!

You Shared the Gospel with an Entire Village Through a Wheelchair!

On day two of our Wheels for the World™ outreach in Haiti, Buon Louis’s grandmother cradled him in her arms as he waited for his turn to be fitted for his very first wheelchair. Buon Louis contracted typhoid fever when he was only two months old. Now a young man, Buon Louis has lived a life of suffering due to his severe disabilities. And since his dear grandmother could never afford a wheelchair for Buon Louis, he has spent his life flat on his back, waiting for someone to come to his rescue.

That’s exactly what you did when you sent a sturdy new wheelchair to Buon Louis! After several hours of fine-tuning his wheelchair to ensure it fit him properly, Buon Louis was placed in his new seat of comfort and dignity. No longer would he need to lay in the dirt! No longer would his aging grandmother have to carry him from place to place! Buon Louis had been unresponsive when he arrived at our Wheels for the World distribution, but when our team secured him in his very own wheelchair, Buon Louis smiled brightly! “You’ve given my grandchild the greatest gift you could ever give him after Jesus!” declared his grandmother. And as they heard the Gospel and embraced the love of Jesus, their entire community looked on in amazement. Sitting proudly with his safety harness on and finally able to see the world from his new vantage point, Buon Louis shows everyone the tangible love of Jesus! Thank you for sending the love of Christ to “the least of these” all over the world!

Buon Louis and his grandmother weren’t the only ones who learned about Jesus on our Wheels for the World distribution in Haiti. Your love and prayers sent 213 wheelchairs to children and adults with disabilities during that trip, and 645 people heard the Gospel as a result, with 20 people accepting Christ on the spot! Through your faithful partnership, lives have been changed for all eternity! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy.

JEREMIAH 20:13

Scan here to watch Buon Louis’s story!
Every Wheelchair You Send Opens Hearts to Jesus!

Ning arrived at our Wheels for the World outreach in Thailand with her daughter, Pleng, in her arms. “Could this be the day,” she wondered, “that my precious child might finally receive her much-needed wheelchair?”

Pleng is 12 years old and has cerebral palsy. When she was a baby, her parents took Pleng to many Buddhist temples in hopes of getting her healed. But the healing never came. And because they were Buddhist, they believed Pleng’s disability was a curse and the result of bad karma due to her mother’s sins. Ning has carried that shame and burden in her heart every day since her beautiful daughter was born.

Before receiving a wheelchair, there was never anything for Pleng to smile about. For Pleng and for millions of disabled children like her all over the world, life is filled with loneliness and suffering. But your love and prayers sent Pleng her very own wheelchair – giving her the gift of mobility and putting a huge smile on her face. And along with her wheelchair, Pleng received an even greater gift... a Bible in Thai!

Pleng and her family once lived in darkness and despair – desperate for a wheelchair; desperate for the light of Christ!

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

ISAIAH 9:2

Pleng and her parents weren’t the only ones whose lives were transformed through this Wheels for the World outreach in Thailand. 230 children and adults received wheelchairs, and 641 people heard the Gospel!

Joni and Friends President, John Nugent, giving Pleng her first Bible in Thai! When you share the salvation message with families living with disability, it’s not just “Good News” – it’s the best news they’ve ever heard!
With your steadfast partnership, we plan to deliver over 10,000 wheelchairs to children and adults living with disability this year. And with each wheelchair comes the gifts of a Bible and the Gospel. But families suffering under the strain of disability and poverty aren’t the only ones impacted by Wheels for the World.

When you donate a used wheelchair to Joni and Friends, that wheelchair is restored to like-new condition by inmates at one of our partner prison restoration centers. Wheels for the World gives inmates the chance to give back to society by helping others. And through their service, the hearts of prisoners are restored by the love of Christ.

Visit joniandfriends.org/chair-corps or call 818.707.5664 to learn how you can donate a wheelchair and send hope, mobility and the Gospel to people all over the world!

March 21st is World Down Syndrome Day!

World Down Syndrome Day is a global awareness day set aside to recognize and celebrate the many ways people with Down syndrome (also known as Trisomy 21) make the world a better place. It’s on the 21st day of the 3rd month to remind us that it’s the triplication (or trisomy) of our 21st chromosome that causes Down syndrome.

When asked why someone was born with a disability, Jesus said, “This happened so the power of God could be seen” (John 9:1-3). People with Down syndrome – like all people – reflect the power of God as his image bearers. Thank you for celebrating that truth on World Down Syndrome Day and every day!
Felicity has a variety of disabilities. She's non-verbal, has a visual impairment, intellectual disability, and developmental delays. Her mother, Stephanie, remembers when Fefe, as Felicity is lovingly called by her parents, started having seizures as a baby. “I was in shock. My husband, Justin, was distant, and I thought my baby was going to die.”

Fefe is eight years old now, but as Stephanie explains, “Our lives have never gotten back to normal.” And last summer, Stephanie hit her breaking point. She sought help wherever she could – she even took Fefe to the local Department of Mental Health office to ask them if they’d take her... permanently. They refused and turned Stephanie and Fefe away without help.

“I felt alone and desperate. I called every place I could think of. I cried, I yelled, I begged. I even took her to the hospital begging for help. Everyone was ‘sorry,’ but no one had answers.” Demoralized and feeling like she had no support from her husband or community, Stephanie reveals, “My marriage was falling apart, and my other children were distant. I wanted to run away. I needed help.”

Stephanie and Justin got the help they so desperately needed at our Marriage Getaway. “At Marriage Getaway we enjoyed a time of worship that still gives me goosebumps and tears. Marriage Getaway started healing our marriage. Justin now has an amazing relationship with Felicity. He helps me with her like never before. She loves him and has become a true Daddy’s girl. Justin now checks on me and makes sure that my heart is doing ok after a hard day. Our marriage has never been better!”

God is doing miracles through Marriage Getaway and your faithful prayer support! Thank you for your commitment to saving families struggling under the strain of disability!

Jaisha is 23 years old and has Dandy Walker Malformation, which is a cyst in the back of her brain that’s caused hydrocephalus, seizures, and developmental delays. She’s non-verbal, exhibits autistic behaviors, and has required multiple brain surgeries. Her single mom, Denise, carries the weight of caring for Jaisha 24/7 alone.

Denise, Jaisha and her niece Nadia arrived at Family Retreat desperate for healing, and they were not disappointed. “Family Retreat is not just a retreat or camp we attend every year. It’s a network of people praying for us, showing God’s love with kindness, empathy, and compassion. They provide resources and support groups that blossom into friendships. We experience isolation and carry heavy burdens. But how beautiful it is when God sends people through Joni and Friends to help us carry those burdens. It sure makes the load a bit lighter,” explains Denise.

When Susannah was born with Down syndrome six years ago, doctors told her parents, Ricardo and Maria, “You have a special child, and there is nothing we can do for her.” They brought her home and loved her, but never taught Susannah to walk. Ricardo’s dream for his daughter was that she might someday have a customized walker that could help her take her first steps.

And that’s exactly what you gave Susannah during our Wheels for the World distribution in Guatemala! Our volunteer therapists and mechanics created a walker perfect for Susannah’s needs, and once she was secure with her safety harness in place, little Susannah took her very first steps of her entire life! Soon she started moving around at great speed with a look of wonder and amazement in her eyes.

You gave Susannah the freedom of mobility that day, and when her parents heard the Gospel, they received true freedom in Christ!
We gratefully acknowledge contributions given in memory or in honor of loved ones to further ministry in the disability community. To give a gift in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion, visit joniandfriends.org/donate or contact Joni and Friends at 818.707.5664.
Run With Endurance

This bold painting by Joni Eareckson Tada captures God's gift of power and majesty to the horse, reminding the viewer to “…Run with endurance the race God has set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

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