

Iowa KCs Partner with Wheelchair Foundation

The Iowa Knights of Columbus has recently joined the efforts of the California based Wheelchair Foundation in funding the purchase of lightweight, foldable and easily repaired wheelchairs for distribution to persons in need to developing countries around the world. The non-profit foundation was started in 2000 by Kenneth Behring, former owner of the Seattle Seahawks, and widely known philanthropist. Mr. Behring, upon reaching a point in his life when he had accomplished about everything he hoped; decided to fly around the world in his private jet delivering medicines and other humanitarian needs to persons in need upon seeing the large number of people with no means of mobility, other than to be physically carried on someone's back or scooting around on a makeshift board, he started delivering wheelchairs to those in need. Wheelchairs are distributed around the world with the help of many partners including the U.S. government, United Nations organizations, and nongovernmental organizations from Red Cross to Rotary, and now the Knights of Columbus. It is estimated that 100 to 150 million people around the globe are in need of a chair, yet only about 1% of those have access to one. Since it was founded, the wheelchair Foundation has delivered an estimated 500,000 wheelchairs. Headquartered in northern California, the Wheelchair Foundation has a staff of 25, including two of Behring's sons, and a board of advisors including the king and queen of Spain, Mikhail Gorbachev, Jerry Lewis, and Supreme Knight, Carl A. Anderson. Chris Lewis, son of entertainer Jerry Lewis serves as public education director for the Wheelchair Foundation, and is a member of the Knight of Columbus.

IA. State Deputy, Mike Gaspers heartily endorses this very important program, and has named Jerry A. Wells, Community Chairman for the state of Iowa as Wheelchair Fund Chmn. The Iowa Knights of Columbus is a Catholic fraternal organization of almost 31,000 men, and almost 1.7 million worldwide devoted to the vision of Father Michael McGivney, the parish priest who started the order in 1882 from his parish in New Haven Connecticut. Since then, the Knights of Columbus has been very active in promoting programs involving youth, family, religious and community. The general focus is on charity, probably the most important principle in Fr McGivney's mind when he conceived the idea some 125 years ago.

In the spirit of charity, the Knight are raising funds to purchase wheelchairs, and have set a very lofty goal for the State of Iowa. At the July, 2006 meeting of the IA. Knights, it was decided to collect funding to purchase a sea container of 280 chairs, the most cost effective method of distributing the much needed wheelchairs to developing countries around the world. For every \$75.00 raised, the National Wheelchair Foundation will give a matching amount of \$75.00. For every \$21,000 we raise, plus the match of \$21,00, the container can be shipped to a developing country to be determined by the Iowa State Council.

During this Lenten time, the Knights are asking that the people of Iowa help in reaching out to those less fortunate than ourselves and , also in the spirit of charity, consider the possibilities of this life changing program. If you would be interested in helping make the world a better place for these deserving persons around the globe, Please contact your local Knights of Columbus council, or contact the Iowa Wheelchair Fund at : Jerry A. Wells, Community Chairman, 856 Division St. ,Webster City, IA. 50595