

Summer 2003



# THE BALING WIRE

## *Accessible Vehicles Keep Colorado Going*

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### **Special points of Interest:**

- **AgrAbility promotes success in agriculture for people with disabilities.**
- **AgrAbility provides "on the farm" visits at no charge to the family.**
- **We make assistive technology recommendations to live and work more productively.**
- **We provide information on re-sources for peer support.**

For more than 10 years, Kristen made the same daily drive down an old gravel road toward her home in rural Colorado. One snowy January day she traveled this familiar trek feeling confident in driving her small truck down a road she knew like the back of her hand. It was on this road that her life was forever changed. In an instant, a car heading toward her caused Kristen to lose control of the wheel. Hours later, Kristen found herself on a hospital bed, unsure of what happened or what would happen next. Kristen's way of life would dramatically change. She was suddenly faced with the difficulties of disability. Certainly, she thought, she would never drive again.

According to the 2000 census report, approximately one percent of the national population has at least some mobility impairment. In Colorado, this translates to approximately 40,000 people between the Denver Metro and Colorado

Springs areas. What loss of physical mobility can mean to real people who have experienced a debilitating injury or condition is an end to driving privileges, an end to independence; but losing these privileges does not necessarily mean they cannot be regained.

Enter the words, "Adaptive Technology". Today, people and technology come together, working to enable people with disabilities to drive again. One person who knows adaptive technology very well is our featured expert, Jeff Kraft, president of Freewheel Vans in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. Jeff offered the following information on the services Freewheel provides. "We offer modifications on existing vehicles and have new vans and mini-vans that are fully equipped... nine times out of ten we can come up with a solution to fit people's needs and budget."

The process starts when a customer calls a business such as FreeWheel

Vans. Because every client's situation is different, the first challenge is to determine the goals and needs unique to that client. Some of the questions that help determine a suitable vehicle or modification(s) are:

- How is a vehicle used (i.e. miles driven per day/week and where)?
- How many total passengers need to ride in the vehicle?
- Will the client be a passenger only or a driver as well?

Once a client's goals are established, options are discussed. What features are desirable? What options are affordable? What, with today's technology, is available?

Let's start with what is available. Some of the newer model mini-vans come with a 10" inch lowered floor, and a suspension kneeling,

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## *New Faces & Changes at AgrAbility*

Colorado AgrAbility has undergone some changes in staff recently and we would like to keep everyone updated. In June, Carla Wilhite, project coordinator left Colorado and accepted a position with the Oklahoma AgrAbility project. Many of our readers will remember

Carla and all the fine work she did for the project. During her time at Colorado AgrAbility the program grew considerably. By last year, our project had 50 active clients on our caseload. Carla's dedication and passion for this program is well known by all who worked with her,

clients and students alike.  
**THANKS CARLA!!!**

In June, we brought Jason Beck on board full time as our rehabilitation technologist. Jason graduated last year from CU Boulder with a

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## Accessible

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automatic door/ramp feature. This combination of features is attractive because it only requires one step to use it. One button is pushed, the door opens, and the lift comes out, ready to use.

What else? The quick release seat can be installed in the passenger and/or driver side of a van. It is easily removable and allows a person to simply guide their wheelchair from ramp to steering wheel, secure the wheelchair and drive. No outside assistance is necessary. No transfer from one chair to another is necessary. Installation of the quick release chair on both passenger and driver side adds the choice of being driver or passenger, both without assistance. Full size vans offer more passenger and cargo space. Rural clients who need to get it all done in one trip often request this option. Again the floor can be lowered and a lift installed.

Hand modifications, steering wheel options, tie downs and many more are part of a comprehensive modification job for a wheel chair user. Some, however, may not need all of the adaptations. Each situation is unique. Prices generally range from \$22,000 - \$30,000 for used modified vehicles. New adapted mini-vans are \$40,000 and up. Older vehicles built in the early 90's can be purchase for \$13,000-\$20,000.

One important item to note is that FreeWheel Vans or any other vehicle modification company CANNOT adapt a vehicle for a disabled user who plans to drive unless they have passed a rigorous evaluation and driving training to ensure they are safe on all kinds of road conditions. This evaluation can be obtained only from a Certified Rehabilitation Driving Specialist. A client must then go to the Department of Motor Vehicles and pass another exam to obtain a license.

So how does one fund all this? "The key," Jeff says, "is to be persistent and patient." Many times funding comes from more than one source. Where can one start? Insurance companies, Veteran's Administration (if service connected), special disability non-profits and if a vocational goal is in mind, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Rural drivers and farm families depend on reliable transportation because long distance driving needs occur on a regular basis. Public transportation is simply not an option.

Kristen thought she would never drive again. Today she is licensed to drive her modified van. With the help of experts such as Jeff Kraft at FreeWheel Vans or other dealers, a person challenged by a disability may be back on the road before they know it!

-Michelle Zorack, Project Coordinator

*The following is a list of Colorado Dealers & Installers who provide Vehicle Modifications & Adaptive Equipment:*

### Adaptive Automotive

333 East 76th Ave.  
Denver, CO 80226  
1-800-748-3695

### FreeWheel Vans, Inc.

4901 Ward Road  
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033  
303-467-9981

### G.C.M. Enterprises

573 S. Commercial Unit #3  
Grand Junction, CO 81505  
970-248-0026

### Morning Star Mobility, Inc.

109 N. Iowa  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
719-635-7800

### Rocky Mountain Wheelers, Inc.

2040 W. Hamilton Place  
Sheridan, CO 80110  
303-789-4063

## New Faces

*(Continued from page 1)*

degree in mechanical engineering and brings many great ideas and skills to the project. Jason's name should be familiar to most of our clients as he interned and did contract work with us until he was hired this June.

Jason is always eager to help in any way when technology or other design issues

come up. Jason has fabricated tractor steps, an irrigation ditch gate, and many other items to help our farmers and ranchers.

Last, but not least, the new project coordinator at Colorado Easter Seals is Michelle Zorack. Michelle has been with the project for two years as case manager and has a background in Occupational Therapy. It is a privilege

to be the project's new coordinator and we are looking forward to a great year! Please call us anytime with your questions and ideas of how we may serve Colorado even better. Our phone number is 1-800-335-2598 Ext. 233 or 224.





# Technology Helps!

By Jason Beck, Rehabilitation Technologist

As we continue to update the Baling Wire we thought this would be a good section to include. Here you will find some of the latest and greatest items out there to help make life a little easier for farmers/ranchers with disabilities. If you like what you find here please give us a call and we can give you more information about it. Also, if you have a specific item you are looking for or problem you are trying to solve please give us a call. We are always here to help!

A lot of people we work with in Colorado have found a wheelchair or scooter can be very helpful in getting around outside of the home. A



wheelchair or scooter can restore the mobility they once had by allowing them to freely travel around town. However, sometimes it can be difficult to transport the wheelchair or scooter. Well, you are in luck! There are several companies that make devices that allow you to easily load/unload your scooter or wheelchair into your trunk or truck bed.

Bruno Independent Living Aids make many different types of wheelchair and scooter lifts. The Space Saver is a model for smaller trunks. It

can lift a wheelchair/scooter of up to 180 lbs into the trunk and then can be easily disassembled to be stored out of the way when not in use. The Cab-Sider lift can store a folding wheelchair right behind the driver seat. And the Out-Rider will allow you to lift the wheelchair/scooter into the bed of the truck.



Even if you have a top on your truck, Bruno makes a device that will open the top in order to get access to the truck bed. Most of these devices cost about \$2000 for the device and installation. This can be a very expensive investment, but remember that these devices may be eligible for reimbursement through some insurance companies, so check your insurance coverage. Also, if you are buying a new car or truck some manufacturers will offer a \$1000 rebate to be used towards the purchase and installation of such a lift.



## Special Thanks...

Easter Seals and Colorado AgrAbility would like to thank the **Robert E. Hoggsett Memorial Foundation** in Fort Morgan for their continued support of AgrAbility in 2003-2004.

Thanks to the foundation's gift of \$3,650.00 we are able to serve farmers and ranchers in the North East quadrant of Colorado. Last year we were able to serve 14 plus individuals in this area alone. The foundation has been a long time supporter of Easter Seals Colorado and we would like to thank them for their generous giving.

AgrAbility is the recipient of funding through the **Mabel Y. Hughes Charitable Trust** for this year.

The Mabel Hughes Trust fund has given \$5,000 to Colorado AgrAbility to increase the number of clients served in Colorado as well as provide information to health professionals on "Aging In Place" issues. We are excited to expand our services in Colorado and thank Ms. Judy K Dowling and the board of Trustees at Wells Fargo Bank for selecting our program.



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Easter Seals Colorado  
5755 W. Alameda Ave.  
Lakewood, CO 80226

Phone: 303-937-7713  
Fax: 303-233-1028



[www.eastersealsco.org/agrability](http://www.eastersealsco.org/agrability)



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## Equipment Corner

We have a few items in our loan closet here at Easter Seals which you may benefit from or someone you know. Please call us at 1-800-335-2598 x224 and ask for Jason if you are interested in any item listed below.

- 18.5" manual adult wheelchair
- 11" child folding manual wheelchair
- Shower chair
- Power Saver Scooter
- Child power wheelchair
- Crutches
- Canes

We are always looking for items in good condition such as shower/bath bench seats and other durable medical equipment. Let us know if you would like to donate.

### FOR SALE:

95 Ford Conversion Van — Modified for tri-fold wheelchair lift. Great condition!

Call For More information: 1-719-372-3540

