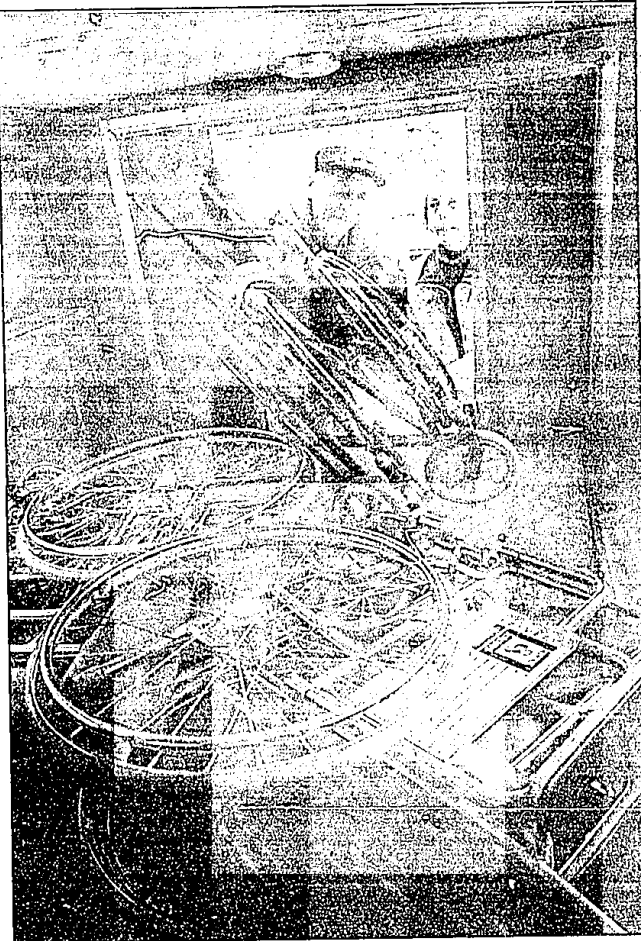


STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL EBERHART

Making a difference: Jim Rapin and Dorothy Pitsch (at right) load a donated wheelchair into the back of Jim's truck. They will take it to whatever temporary storage they find. Above, they tag a donated wheelchair.



# Wheels for the World

## Magazine article prompts donations from metro area

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI  
SPECIAL WRITER

A recent *Life* magazine article about an 11-year-old Chinese girl who was able to attend school for the first time after receiving a wheelchair donated from Wheels for the World has generated many donations in metro-Detroit. The response has been so good that storage space is needed.

"You realize what a difference one of these chairs can make," said Farmington Hills resident Dorothy Pitsch, Wheels for the World metro-Detroit chairwoman.

After reading the story about Liu Quinling, local organizations, like Angela Hospice in Livonia, and families of loved ones who have died are calling Pitsch wanting to donate wheelchairs, walkers and aluminum crutches.

"We absolutely need all of the used, but serviceable wheelchairs that we can find," said Pitsch, adding that a representative from Children's Hospital also promised to send her used wheelchairs.

Storage space is needed until May for about 200 wheelchairs that will be delivered to Romania, Poland and Ghana. Another chapter of Wheels for the World recently had a truck donated and that seems to be the most efficient solution, Pitsch said. Wheelchairs are stored in the truck and when it's filled a driver takes them to a Tennessee prison where inmates fix them before they're shipped to needy and handicapped people around the world.

"If I could get something like that it would be a blessing," Pitsch said. "But I'll take any kind of storage."

Currently, Pitsch is using garage and basement space donated by friends and family.

Wheels for the World is planning a two-week drive at the end of April to get as many wheelchairs as possible before her current load is shipped for repairs.

"These wheelchairs can't be used in the United States, because of the insurance liability," Pitsch added.

**■ 'We absolutely need all of the used, but serviceable wheelchairs that we can find.'**

*Dorothy Pitsch*  
Farmington Hills resident  
and Wheels for the World metro-Detroit chairwoman

months old. Every time the couple saw the empty chair it was a stark reminder of their loss. Since the wheelchair held such precious memories, the couple asked that it be kept somewhere special before it was shipped to another country. Pitsch got permission from Sister Mary Thomas to store it at the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills. "The parents brought the wheelchair to the monastery and met me there and Sister Mary Thomas saw that it was a small chair and she said it would be the perfect size for a nun who was suffering from polio and needed a wheelchair just that size," said Pitsch explaining that Sister Mary Thomas also donated three larger wheelchairs. "I left the special wheelchair for their special nun and I took their three wheelchairs," Pitsch said.

Another woman, who never identified herself to Pitsch, called after reading the *Life* Magazine story. They met at Major in Northville.

"The woman walked right up to me and she threw her arms around me and hugged me and said: 'Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity,'" Pitsch said.

Just as quickly the woman got into her car and drove off.

Meanwhile, Pitsch's great niece, Erica Bourgois, president of Gamma Phi Beta at Oakland University in Rochester Hills, has promised that her sorority will collect wheelchairs and earn money for wheelchair parts and shipping costs.

Pitsch's daughter, Michelle Dinardo, ran an ad asking for used wheelchairs in her church paper at Prince of Peace Catholic Church in West Bloomfield. The next day someone brought her a wheelchair. When Dinardo asked if the woman wanted a receipt for tax purposes, the woman said: "Oh, no, this isn't for a tax reduction, this is for God."

Anyone interested in donating wheelchairs or storage space should call Pitsch at (248) 661-3317.

Randy learned Wheels for the World needed a Detroit area representative to launch a wheelchair drive and the Grand Rapids resident called his favorite aunt. Against all odds, Randy and Mary Lou had their first baby in 1997, said Pitsch, who uses Mary Lou and the baby in a poster to promote Wheels for the World.

Pitsch's first donation came from a Clinton Township couple after their 18-year-old son died. He suffered from a degenerative muscular disease and had been in a wheelchair since he was 18

months old. Every time the couple saw the empty chair it was a stark reminder of their loss.

Since the wheelchair held such precious memories, the couple asked that it be kept somewhere special before it was shipped to another country. Pitsch got permission from Sister Mary Thomas to store it at the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills.

"The parents brought the wheelchair to the monastery and met me there and Sister Mary Thomas saw that it was a small chair and she said it would be the perfect size for a nun who was suffering from polio and needed a wheelchair just that size," said Pitsch explaining that Sister Mary Thomas also donated three larger wheelchairs. "I left the special wheelchair for their special nun and I took their three wheelchairs," Pitsch said.

Another woman, who never identified herself to Pitsch, called after reading the *Life* Magazine story. They met at Major in Northville.

"The woman walked right up to me and she threw her arms around me and hugged me and said: 'Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity,'" Pitsch said.

Just as quickly the woman got into her car and drove off.

Meanwhile, Pitsch's great niece, Erica Bourgois, president of Gamma Phi Beta at Oakland University in Rochester Hills, has promised that her sorority will collect wheelchairs and earn money for wheelchair parts and shipping costs.

Pitsch's daughter, Michelle Dinardo, ran an ad asking for used wheelchairs in her church paper at Prince of Peace Catholic Church in West Bloomfield. The next day someone brought her a wheelchair. When Dinardo asked if the woman wanted a receipt for tax purposes, the woman said: "Oh, no, this isn't for a tax reduction, this is for God."

Anyone interested in donating wheelchairs or storage space should call Pitsch at (248) 661-3317.

Randy learned Wheels for the World needed a Detroit area representative to launch a wheelchair drive and the Grand Rapids resident called his favorite aunt. Against all odds, Randy and Mary Lou had their first baby in 1997, said Pitsch, who uses Mary Lou and the baby in a poster to promote Wheels for the World.

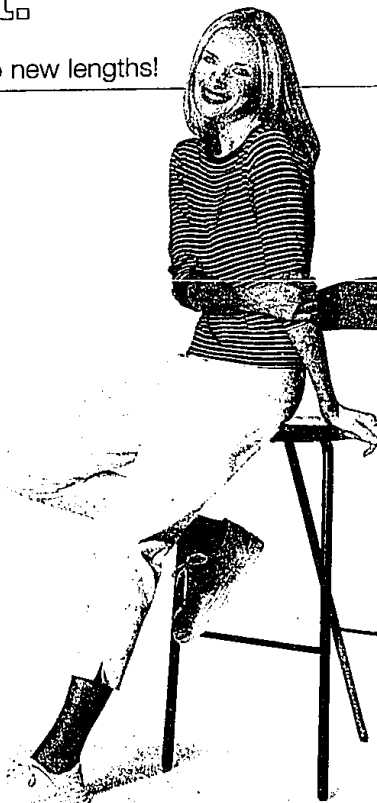
Pitsch's first donation came from a Clinton Township couple after their 18-year-old son died. He suffered from a degenerative muscular disease and had been in a wheelchair since he was 18

## reflect:

it's so like you taking fashion to new lengths!

Capri pants and 3/4-length sleeves are all the rage, and so are you, in these comfortable casuals.

Nautical navy and white from Karen Kane. Made in the USA. Striped boatneck tee. Rayon/polyester/spandex. Sizes S, M, L. \$56. White cotton/spandex pants. Sizes 4-14. \$74. Signature Sportswear.



## Odyssey of the Mind showcased

The Farmington Public Schools 16th annual Odyssey of the Mind Local Showcase will be at 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. with awards following presentations Saturday, Jan. 30.

The showcase will be at Farmington High school. Twenty-five teams will receive a practice evaluation on their solutions to this

**8 A.M. TO 1 P.M. SATURDAY**

year's Odyssey of the Mind problems. The showcase is a preparation for the OMC Regional Competition March 28, also at Farm-

ington High School. Teams from Wooddale, Beechview, Power, Highmeadow, Hillside, Lanigan, Longacre, Gill, Duncker, Harrison, St. Fabian and Our Lady of Sorrows will present solutions and problem solving skills. The public is invited to attend.

# Jacobson's

Birmingham • (243) 644-6900 Livonia • (734) 591-7696 Rochester • (248) 651-6000

SHOPPING HOURS • MON-SAT 10-9 • OPEN SUN AT NOON  
Gift Certificates Complimentary Silver Gift Box Jacobson's Charge