

Forever thankful

Hills woman's phone rings hours after Observer story ran

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
SPECIAL WRITER

Metro-Detroiters are known for their generosity, and they surprised a Farmington Hills woman who made a recent plea in the Observer Newspapers for storage space for wheelchairs that are donated to handicapped people around the world.

Hours after the article ran about a need to store used wheelchairs donated to Wheels for the World, Dorothy Pitsch's phone began ringing.

"It's been tremendous," said Pitsch, Wheels for the World metro-Detroit chairwoman. "It's more than what I expected," she said. "We're organizing the areas now and confirming the storage spaces."

Wheels for the World was launched in 1992 by Joni Eareckson Tada who lost the use of her arms and legs after a diving accident when she was 17. She began the international program, JAF Wheels for the World, to help liberate handicapped people who lack access to wheelchairs and other equipment.

Since 1992 the organization has placed 6,000 people in wheelchairs. Wheels for the World received international attention recently when a Life magazine article featured a heart-breaking story about an 11-year-old Chinese girl who was able to attend school for the first time after receiving a wheelchair from Wheels for the World.

"The answer to our prayers came with two very special phone calls," said Pitsch.

One call came from Shurgard Storage with an offer to donate storage sites in Livonia; Plymouth;

Southfield; Rochester/Utica; Southfield; Troy/Oakland Mall; and Walled Lake. The company is giving \$80 worth of coupons for storage to anyone who donates a wheelchair at any of its locations. Also, Classic Storage has donated space in Detroit.

The second special call came from Dan's Chrysler offering the use of truck trailers to collect all of the wheelchairs donated through April. The trailers will be parked at an undecided Farmington Hills parking lot where high school students will help tag and load the shipment. A Dan's Chrysler driver will take the load to a Nashville, Tenn., prison where they will be refurbished before being shipped to a Third World country.

Pitsch's work inspired a call from Joyce Bryant who offered 400 square feet of storage in her unused Plymouth garage.

WHEELS FOR THE WORLD

Chris Haas, from Bushnell Congregational Church near the Southfield freeway and Grand River, said he is seeking permission from church officials to use an empty gymnasium to store the equipment. And a Clinton Township man said he had enough space to store 50-70 wheelchairs.

Pitsch also got calls from people wanting to donate equipment.

One woman offered to donate an aluminum walker. And a Farmington Hills nurse, Lenore Reese, promised Pitsch that she will collect walkers from nursing and retirement homes.

Pitsch has received between 35 and 45 calls daily with offers of wheelchairs and storage space for the chairs since articles in the Observer & Eccentric told about her plea for the organization.

"This will give the recipients of the wheelchairs a chance to be freed from their prison of immobility," Pitsch said. "Independence and self-esteem are something they'll have."

No more storage space is needed, she added.

"Things have worked out so well that we believe that God has directed this," said Jan Glovak, a Farmington Hills resident and Wheels for the World volunteer.

"I've been to Third World countries and they don't have medical supplies," she said. "A lot of these people have never even

■ A Farmington Hills physician said the hospital he works for is holding three wheelchairs for him.

Dorothy Pitsch
—Metro Detroit chairwoman

seen a wheelchair."

Meanwhile, Pitsch's phone rings, sometimes until 11 p.m., with offers of donations. One call came from a Farmington Hills woman who wanted to donate her mother's wheelchair.

"She said she didn't want to just give it to a charity who would put it in a corner collecting dust," Pitsch said.

A Farmington area businesswoman promised to clean out the storage room of his medical facility and collect wheelchairs, walkers and crutches for Wheels for the World.

"A Farmington Hills physician said the hospital he works for is holding three wheelchairs for him," Pitsch said. "He also said he posted the article in his waiting room so his patients will be aware of the need."

Donations for shipping costs are also needed. Make checks payable to JAF Ministries Wheels for the World, in care of Dorothy Pitsch, 37255 Fox Glen, Farmington Hills, 48331. Pitsch will send the money to the JAF headquarters in California.

"We're hoping to separate money for southeastern Michi-

gan so that it can go to shipping of those wheelchairs," Glovak said.

Anyone interested in donating wheelchairs, crutches or walkers should call Shurgard Storage in Livonia at (734) 522-7811; in Rochester/Utica at (810) 254-0740; in Southfield at (248) 357-1137; in Troy/Oakland Mall at

(248) 688-0742; in Plymouth at (734) 458-2200; and in Walled Lake at (248) 660-4020.

Classic Storage in Detroit can be reached at (313) 842-6449. For more information, Pitsch can be reached at (248) 661-3317 and Glovak at (248) 661-0964.

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OBITUARIES

CATHERYNN S. HAGSTROM
Catherynn Sarah Hagstrom, 93, formerly of Farmington, died Feb. 1 at Heartland Health Care in Livonia.

Mrs. Hagstrom was a homemaker and enjoyed crocheting. She is survived by sons, Donald (Pearl) of Trufant, Harold (Jerry) of Las Vegas, Nev., and Robert (Kathleen) of Six Lakes; daughters, Kathleen (Clarence) Probat of Livonia, Margaret (Harold) Montroy of Erie, Pa., Phyllis (Bob) Olberg of Howell, Shirley (Ken) Snyder of Lake View and Patricia (William) Bamford of Sand Lake; brother, Alfred (Ann) Knox of Illinois; 33 grandchildren; 76 great-grandchildren; and 40 great-great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Feb. 4 at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington with the Rev. Don Sweeney officiating. Memorial contributions may be sent to Heartland Hospice, 28588 Northwestern Highway, Suite 425 Southfield 48064.

BARCLAY J. McMULLEN SR.
Barclay John McMullen Sr., 80, died Feb. 3 at Hospice Home in Farmington Hills.

Mr. McMullen was the owner of McMullen Tool Supply Company and a life member of Plum Hollow Country Club. He was also a member of Huron River Hunting & Fishing Club and Quail Ridge Golf Club in Boynton Beach, Fla.

He is survived by wife, Dorothy; son, John (Carol); brother, Gordon; and grandchildren, Kimberly and Andrew.

Private services were held. Arrangements were made by the Wm. R. Hamilton Co. in Birmingham.

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