



THE HISTORY OF

INTERNATIONAL

WHEELCHAIR DAY

Steve Wilkinson

THE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL WHEELCHAIR DAY

Steve Wilkinson



Copyright © 2015 by Steve Wilkinson

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or scholarly journal.

First published 2015 by WheelchairSteve Ltd
ISBN: 978-0-9564751-2-1

Printed in United Kingdom by Paper Craft, Washington, Tyne & Wear

Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
Chapter 2 - Aims of International Wheelchair Day	3
Chapter 3 - 2008 to 2011	5
Chapter 4 – 2012	7
Chapter 5 – 2013	11
Chapter 6 – 2014	17
Chapter 7 – 2015	23
Chapter 8 – 2016	31
Chapter 9 – Whirlwind Wheelchair	33
Acknowledgements	35

Dedications

International Wheelchair Day is dedicated to my late Mam, **Joyce Wilkinson**, who was born on 1st March 1929. She cared for me, supported me and inspired me throughout my childhood.



This book is dedicated to the people of Nepal, in particular those involved with the **Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre** in Kathmandu. They have been instrumental in the growth of **International Wheelchair Day** since they first celebrated with an event in 2012.

Having been significantly impacted by the earthquake in Nepal in April 2015, all of the profits from the sale of this book will be donated to help them cope with increasing demand for their support, services and provision of wheelchairs in the years ahead.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

I launched **International Wheelchair Day** on 1st March 2008. I can't remember why, but I recall "googling" the expression and discovering there wasn't such a day.

I was aware of the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** (3rd December), which had existed since 1992, but I wanted the focus of **International Wheelchair Day** to be about the wheelchair and people involved with wheelchairs, irrespective of whether or not they have some form of disability.

I was born in 1953 in **Newcastle upon Tyne** in the UK, the first child of **Joyce and Tommy Wilkinson**.



At the age of two, I was diagnosed with **Spina Bifida**, which would affect my mobility throughout my life.

From the age of ten, I walked with sticks, but also had a manual wheelchair, which I used for longer distances, such as when my Mam pushed me to school and back, or I was out with friends.

In my late teens, I had a car and stopped using my wheelchair. It was only when, in 1987, I went on holiday to **Disney World** in **Orlando, Florida** that I hired a wheelchair to cover the huge distances in the parks. Mobility became so much easier for me.

On returning home, I bought my first wheelchair and kept it in the back of the car for when I needed to use it. I still walked when I was at work, but from around the turn of the century, I decided it was easier to use the wheelchair most of the time.

In 2012, after a lengthy lay off due to illness, I realised I was going to struggle to regain whatever strength I had in my leg muscles, so I became a full time wheelchair user.

It has become increasingly clear to me over the last 25 years that my wheelchair gives me freedom to get out and about, as it surely does with others.

I felt this freedom should be celebrated, as it no doubt applied to almost every other wheelchair user in the World. Therefore, in 2008, I was inspired to create **International Wheelchair Day** on 1st March. I chose that date as it was my late Mother, Joyce's birthday so the day is dedicated to her.

I had no idea at the time how the annual celebration would take off, but I'm delighted that over 7 years later, it is starting to have a life of it's own.

People are finding **International Wheelchair Day** on the internet or by other means and organising their own activities and events. I often only hear about them after the event by searching the web, but I am delighted to share what they have done as a "thank you" for recognising the day and what it stands for.

I'm delighted that since the slow beginning in 2008, individual people and organisations all over the World, including Australia, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Senegal, USA and the UK, have celebrated the day in their own unique way.

Long may that growth continue.

www.internationalwheelchairday.com

www.twitter.com/IntWheelchair

www.facebook.com/InternationalWheelchairDay

Chapter 2 - Aims of International Wheelchair Day

When I launched the first International Wheelchair Day on 1st March 2008, I established the following 3 aims, which still apply over 7 years later.

1. **To enable wheelchair users to celebrate the positive impact a wheelchair has in their lives.**
2. **To celebrate the great work of the many millions of people who provide wheelchairs, who provide support and care for wheelchair users and who make the World a better and more accessible place for people with mobility issues.**
3. **To acknowledge and react constructively to the fact there are many tens of millions of people in the World who need a wheelchair, but are unable to acquire one.**

In the same way my wheelchair gives me freedom to get out and about and enjoy life to the full, **International Wheelchair Day** provides an occasion for the millions of wheelchair users around the World to celebrate the positive impact a wheelchair has on their lives.



It's an opportunity for those those who provide help and support to make that possible, to celebrate their contribution, too.

This includes those who manufacture wheelchairs, those who assess the needs of wheelchair users, those who care for wheelchair users and those who ensure their buildings, products and services are suitably accessible.

According to the **World Health Organisation**, there could be as many as 100 million people in the World who need a wheelchair, but as few as 5 to 15% of them have access to a suitable wheelchair.

While it is often Third World countries where this is an issue, and many charitable organisations make great efforts to raise funds to provide wheelchairs, the developed World often lacks sufficient funding too. This can mean someone has to use a wheelchair that is unsuitable for their specific needs.

International Wheelchair Day is the ideal occasion to consider this issue and do something about it.



Chapter 3 - 2008 to 2011

Seven years ago, on 1st March 2008, **International Wheelchair Day** was born. Little did I know that 7 years on, this day of celebration would have a positive influence and events would be taking place all over the World.

Being a wheelchair user myself, and having a desire to make a difference in the world for wheelchair users and others with mobility needs, I simply "googled" the expression "**International Wheelchair Day**" and discovered there wasn't one - so I created it!

There is no official body to register "days", so I just declared that 1st March would become **International Wheelchair Day**. It was the days before Facebook, Twitter, etc so I simply posted a blog on a social media website called Ecademy (now called Sunzu), announcing the launch.

I chose 1st March as that was the birthday of my late Mother, Joyce. The annual event has become a dedication to her, for the great support she gave me as a child.

The day was, and still is, all about celebration and reflection by wheelchair users and those associated with wheelchair users.

It's a day of celebration for the freedom a wheelchair gives me and millions of others throughout the world. I would be unable to get out and about and have the quality of life I have if it wasn't for my wheelchair.

It's a day of reflection about the fact that the world isn't as "wheelchair friendly" as it could be. There are still many access issues preventing wheelchair users going to places non-wheelchair users can go easily.

It's also a day of reflection of the fact that in many parts of the world, there are tens of millions of people who need a wheelchair to enhance their quality of life.

Unfortunately, many are unable to acquire one suitable for the terrain and their special needs, so must be carried or crawl to get about.



Young man in Papua New Guinea carried by his parents. (Picture by Helen Edwards, Loyalty Aid)

The most significant response on Ecademy came from a gentleman called **John von Nuding**. He pointed out that 1st March 1922 was also the birthday of the late **Michael Flanders**, a wheelchair user after contracting Polio in 1943. Michael was one half of **Flanders and Swann**, the popular singing duo in the 1950s and 60s. Michael was also the father of **Stephanie Flanders**, the former BBC Economics Editor.

Further Ecademy blogs in 2009 and 2010 announcing the anniversaries of the launch produce no response on-line.

However, in 2011, **International Wheelchair Day** took off!

Hannah Ensor, a wheelchair user and accomplished cartoonist from Oxfordshire, discovered **International Wheelchair Day** on the internet, designed a logo, and invited me to use it. It was a pleasure to do so and Hannah has designed the logo every year since.



Chapter 4 - 2012

Preparations for the 2012 International Wheelchair Day began in November 2011 when **Hannah Ensor**, once again, produced an excellent official logo.



I was going to be in Adelaide, Australia on 1st March, so I invited two colleagues to organise an event in Newcastle upon Tyne.



Andrew Pickering and **Pete Gartland**, a fellow wheelchair user, organised an event at **Percy Hedley Sports Academy** in association with **Adam Parry**, their Sports Development Manager. They held a number of activities, including a demonstration wheelchair basketball match.

Altonaids Mobility, a wheelchair supplier from Gateshead, kindly provided some wheelchairs for visitors to try.

Ahead of my holiday to Australia, I contacted **Letizia Gentile**, Director of the **Disability Information Resource Centre** in Adelaide, a place I'd visited on my previous trip in 2010. The idea was to meet when I arrived to organise some kind of **International Wheelchair Day** launch event on 1st March.

A few days before a follow up meeting, I met **Gail Miller**, who had written a book and teacher resource called “**What we’re Wheelie Like**”.

bit.ly/WWLTR

Gail accompanied me to see Letizia and through their combined contact network, an excellent launch event was held at DIRC on the morning of **International Wheelchair Day**.



In total, there were about 40 people in attendance, including several wheelchair users.



Letizia and Gail also ensured the event received good media coverage and I appeared live on 3 radio shows - **Peter Goers** on ABC, **Amanda Blair** on 5AA and **Peter Greco** of RPH. I also spoke live to **Alfie and Charlie Breakfast Show** on BBC Radio Newcastle.

We were honoured that 2 members of the **South Australia Parliament** attended - Disability Minister, **Ian Hunter** MSP and **Kelly Vincent** MSP, a wheelchair user, who represents the **Dignity for Disability** party. They both made speeches.



There were two other events that took place in 2012 that symbolised what **International Wheelchair Day** is all about and that through the internet, it has a life of its own without my direct involvement.

On 29th February, I received an email from a lady called **Cecile Knapp** to advise that Nepal were going to celebrate **International Wheelchair Day** for the first time.

They used the slogan “**Shall we fly**” to emphasise the difficulties wheelchair users were facing while wanting to move around. “**Shall we fly**” was an invitation to do whatever was in their power to make the streets and buildings accessible for all.



The event, organised by the **Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre** in Kathmandu, was a get together of wheelchair users, organisations dealing with the rights and the wellbeing of disabled people, as well as political decision makers.

Around 80 wheelchair users of Kathmandu Valley took part in a rally around Bhrikutimandap to plead for their right for accessible roads and buildings.



As you will read later, the growth of this annual event in Nepal demonstrates that wheelchair users and their supporters can work together to create a better World for everyone.

Another event in 2012 demonstrated that **International Wheelchair Day** can be celebrated by a single person with just as much significance as a large rally like the one in Nepal.

Searching the internet, I came across a blog written by a young lady called **Dannie Brennand** from the North East of England, who writes using her nickname, Dannilion. Dannie, who was in her mid-twenties at the time, has M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) and spends most of her time in bed. She started her blog:

“I went outside for 5 minutes on Thursday, as it was International Wheelchair Day and I wanted to use my wheelchair. It was amazing being able to go out there, though I’m paying for it now”.

Chapter 5 - 2013

In August 2013, **Hannah Ensor** produced another impressive logo, which was made available for free download for anyone to use for their events and activities, as is now the case every year.



As can be seen in this photograph, the event in Adelaide, South Australia used the logo. The new Disability Minister, **Tony Piccolo MSP** and **Kelly Vincent MSP**, who had been involved in 2012, made speeches at one of several open days across the city.

At the open day at the Independent Living Centre (ILC) at the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, Tony also toured the facilities and spoke with several of the service users who benefit from the services they offer.





The **Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre** in Nepal once again significantly celebrated the day in Kathmandu with another rally. On this occasion some 126 wheelchair users attended and held a Flashmob dance.

Speakers at the rally called for better facilities and more suitable wheelchairs appropriate for the terrain in the area.

The large number of attendees demonstrated the enormous potential for wheelchair users to work together to achieve change.



Since 2006, **Mary Honeybun**, a lady in her eighties from Noordhoek in South Africa had been collecting bread tags (used to close bags of bread). She sorts them and sends them to a recycling plant, where they are melted down to make seed pots, etc.



From the proceeds, 386 wheelchairs had been purchased for children and adults who need them in association with **Rotary's Wheelchair Foundation**.

An organisation called **Adapt To Change** worked with children at **Avondale Primary School** in Atlantis, Cape Town to collect tags from November 2012 and handed them to Mary on **International Wheelchair Day**.

Little tag - BIG difference!

No urban legend, just a fantastic success story...

Since October 2008, several million breadtags have been processed (washed, sorted, packed). These breadtags are sold to a recycler called Goplant and the money collected pays for the wheelchairs which are purchased through a local pharmacy.

Not only can these breadtags change the life of a person in need, but the recycling process is helping our environment too. They are recycled as seedling trays for plant nurseries.

Start collecting today!

Mary wheelchairs have been distributed to disabled children and adults around the country and even as far afield as Zimbabwe.

Those humble bits of polystyrene can make a real difference to get your friends and family involved too - it's really easy! You can contact Mary for more info on collection points around the country.

Broadsheets for Wheelchairs Foundation
021 789 1831

Sen 2015
Noordhoek
7979
1. April 2013

Dear Sen Marie,
Thank you so much for supporting "Broadsheets for Wheelchairs", especially with such a wonderful collection of tags, which you have brought to Noordhoek.

Now give a very, very big "thank-you" to all the staff & learners at Avondale School, who contributed so many tags. With these tags, & all the other tags, we will be able to give a wheelchair to a disabled boy & girl.

So far, 368 wheelchairs have been given to children and adults. Last year, 5 tons of tags were recycled & kept out of the environment. So, please continue to collect.

Yours very sincerely,
Mary



In Newport on the Isle of Wight in the UK, 12 year old **James Loosemore**, a wheelchair user, challenged the Council's Children's Champion, **Stephen Woodford**, to spend a day with him going around in a wheelchair to help understand the challenges he faced. They both wore t-shirts featuring the official 2013 logo.

Picture courtesy of Isle of Wight County Press

At lunchtime on 1st March 2013, I received an email from a lady who had seen James and Stephen and was wondering what **International Wheelchair Day** was all about.

She said her daughter, Shakira, used a wheelchair and got great pleasure out of her "trusty steed" to live life to the full. When **Shakira** returned from school, they had their own personal celebration taking this photograph of Shakira.



Dr. Jonathan Griffiths, who is a GP at Swanlow Practice in Winsford, Cheshire, and Chair of **NHS Vale Royal CCG**, used **NHS Change Day** (11 March 2013) to celebrate **International Wheelchair Day** by spending his working day in a wheelchair.



Throughout the day, he posted his observations on Twitter and produced a blog on the CCG website.

On arrival at work, the chair was waiting for him, but he needed to work on his own on the ground floor of the building, which didn't have lift access to his office on the 2nd floor. He found this quite socially isolating and realised how being alone could affect his patients with limited mobility.

For the weekly team meeting, everyone had to come downstairs. It highlighted how ill equipped they were to manage wheelchair users in their old building.

Dr. Griffiths needed to attend another meeting in the afternoon and enjoyed a comfortable ride to this more modern building in an accessible taxi, clamped safely into the vehicle after being pushed up the ramp. In this building, he still faced challenges of getting through doors and closing the toilet door behind him.

By the end of the day, he felt much more aware of the difficulties facing wheelchair users in just getting about. Things were more difficult than expected, and he has now found respect for people in wheelchairs who just get on with life. He recommended all NHS staff to spend a day in a wheelchair.



BBC Radio Newcastle has always been supportive in promoting **International Wheelchair Day** and agreed this year that Breakfast Show presenter, **Alfie Joey**, could join me pushing himself around in a wheelchair in Newcastle to experience a little of life using one.

I loaned Alfie a wheelchair and he began his journey travelling by bus to meet me in the City Centre.

He was appreciative of the driver's help, but was a little daunted by people looking at him facing backwards on the bus.

We pushed around for a while where he experienced going into shops, drawing money from an ATM and going into an accessible toilet.

The session ended with Alfie looking on, impressed at the **Braun ChairTopper** device I use to load my wheelchair into my car.

The following day, he gave a great report on the Breakfast show about his experience.



Chapter 6 - 2014



The streets of Kathmandu were once again taken over by nearly 150 wheelchair users and over 300 supporters for the **Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre's 3rd International Wheelchair Day** rally.



The annual Kathmandu street parade, with an increasing number of participants each year, is symbolic of the overall global growth of **International Wheelchair Day**.



Art was one of the themes of this year's celebrations. One of the wheelchair users, who is also an artist produced several paintings at the rally.

This is one of his paintings.



Disability organisations in Adelaide got together to celebrate **International Wheelchair Day**, closing off Hindmarsh Square in the City Centre for the event.

I was in Adelaide at Christmas 2014 and was involved in some planning meetings.



Exhibitors showed their work, musical performers entertained and sporting organisations demonstrated wheelchair-based sport, inviting people in the 300 strong attendance to take part.



Bruce Becker and his team at the **Department for Communities and Social Inclusion** and the local groups with whom they collaborated declared the event a great success and looked forward to repeating it in the future.

Early in 2013, **Verena Streitferdt** and her brother, **Tobias**, a wheelchair user, established a website called WheelchairTraveller.org with the aim of providing information about wheelchair travel around the World.

In October 2013, they began their World tour, encouraging participation in **International Wheelchair Day** as they visited various places.



They inspired a lot of interest in holding an event in Buenos Aires, but it didn't materialise.

However, a public event was funded by their enterprise, Wheelchair Traveller, in Dakar, Senegal.

Supported by **FormEduc** and **Handicap International**, around 50 wheelchair users pushed through the streets of Dakar. There was a press conference and speeches followed by a basketball demonstration match.



Wirral Community NHS Trust celebrated the day by re-launching its User Group. This gives the opportunity for wheelchair service users or carers/parents, who have an interest in the development of the local NHS wheelchair service to help shape it's future.

Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust hosted a wheelchair dancing event in association with a Manchester-based charity called "**Strictly Wheelchair Dancing**".



Some 50 people attended the event and saw Britain's Got Talent stars, **Paula Moulton** and **Gary Lyness**, practicing different dances, like tango, cha cha and foxtrot.



In the UK, the **Variety Wheelchair Programme** celebrated **International Wheelchair Day** and the 25th year of their existence by donating five wheelchairs to the **Variety Children's Hospital** at King's College London.

More than 4,000 wheelchairs have been donated by Variety over the 25 years. This donation demonstrated the charity's continued commitment to enhancing the lives and mobility of children and young people throughout the UK.



United Healthcare, an organisation dedicated to helping people throughout the USA live healthier lives by simplifying their health care experience, held the first ever event to celebrate **International Wheelchair Day** in the United States by donating 10 wheelchairs to the **Lestonnac Free Clinic**, at their main clinic in Orange County, California.

Chapter 7 - 2015

The 2015 celebration of **International Wheelchair Day** has undoubtedly been the biggest yet with events taking place in several countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, for the first time.



As has become custom now, Nepal led the way with another impressive rally, this year with a musical theme.

I had the great honour of speaking live to those attending at event via Skype from my home in Newcastle upon Tyne in the early hours of the Sunday morning.

In the weeks leading up to the event, it was a pleasure to speak via Skype to **Cecile Knapp** and others involved in organising the rally on the **Doc Anand** radio show I co-host with him on **Spice FM**. It highlighted their enthusiasm to celebrate the freedom their wheelchairs gives.



Oumar Diop, Coordinator for **FormEduc**, was also a guest on SpiceFM and told of this year's rally on the Boulevard Charles De Gaulle in Dakar, **Senegal**. Those on the parade had the opportunity to highlight the issues of accessibility.



Mizanur Rahman Kiron, a passionate campaigner for disability rights put Bangladesh on the **International Wheelchair Day** map for the first time.

Kiron, who is President of the PDF (**Physically-challenged Development Foundation**) at **Jahangirnagar University** and his colleagues organised a press conference, which was attended by some 20 journalists.

They were highlighting the issues at the University, where students in wheelchairs have difficulty moving between departments due to inadequate access to the facilities.



Pakistan joined the celebrations for the first time with an event at **Bacha Khan Medical Complex** at Swabi. Some 200 wheelchair users and key stakeholders attended with the aim of raising awareness about disability and the need for appropriate wheelchairs.



The event, which featured speeches and wheelchair races, is part of a project funded by **Johanniter International** in collaboration with the **International Committee of the Red Cross, Motivation Charitable Trust (UK)** and the **Chal Foundation (Pakistan)**.

The project has helped develop and establish nine wheelchair services in different areas of Pakistan which meet **World Health Organisation** wheelchair service guidelines. This ensures wheelchair users receive an appropriate wheelchair for their needs, enabling them to live a better quality of life.

Novita Children's Services support children and young people throughout their childhood and adolescent years, in Adelaide, regional South Australia and beyond. To celebrate **International Wheelchair Day**, they invited some of their many children, who use a powered or manual wheelchair in their day to day lives, to share in their website blog how having a wheelchair has changed their life in a positive way and what their dreams are for their future. One of the children, 15 year old Caleb, also appeared on an **ABC Behind The News** feature where he spoke positively about how his wheelchair helps him cope and have a full and active life.



At the **Heaton Mosque** in Newcastle upon Tyne, a good friend of mine, **Zafar Bhatti**, organised a Wheelchair Table Tennis exhibition match. I played with some friends who normally don't use a wheelchair, demonstrating how sport can be all-inclusive and everyone can have fun in a wheelchair.



Anita Lower, Lib Dem Leader on Newcastle upon Tyne City Council took on the “**Go To Work In A Wheelchair**” Challenge. Apart from on one occasion in her past, Anita had not used a wheelchair, but on this day experienced many issues faced by regular wheelchair users on a day to day basis. She summarised her day in a blog, the highlights of which are featured below.

Anita was grateful to **Tesco in Kingston Park** for loaning her a wheelchair for the day. She couldn't lift it into boot of her car, so put it behind the front seats and went off to see a Ward resident. Unfortunately she had to conduct her conversation on the doorstep as she was unable to get into their property.

On returning to her car, she discovered that someone had parked next to her, so she had to push in the wheelchair along the road to get to the driver's side of car to load the wheelchair.

Anita then headed for the Civic Centre, which she thought should be easy to access. On arrival, there was no suitable parking space, so she had to telephone and request a bay to be allocated so she could remove her wheelchair.

When Anita got out of her car, she realised there were only three dropped kerbs from the car park, but the first two were blocked by Council vehicles. She therefore had to detour around the car park avoiding moving cars to get on to the footpath.

The building has a 'disabled' lift, but Anita had to physically move metal cages to access it and go to the first floor.

She hadn't realised everything took so much planning to find a step free route to the room for a Committee meeting, which was far from suitable for a wheelchair user.

Anita's final challenge of the day came when going home. At 7pm, after many staff had already left, she discovered that the only lift which accessed the car park was switched off for maintenance work, so had to concede and walk down the stairs while someone carried the chair.

Her conclusion at the end of the experience was that she hadn't realised how much planning went in to completing the simplest tasks. She was also amazed at how many people who normally speak to her suddenly did not see her. She felt invisible to a vast number of people.

A lot could be learnt and action taken if many more politicians and business leaders took on the **“Go To Work In A Wheelchair”** Challenge in the future, as Anita bravely did in 2015.



Fiona Jarvis, a wheelchair-user, who runs the stylish accessibility information website and app, **Blue Badge Style**, and a group of friends, which included one other wheelchair user, organised a Bar Crawl around the City of London, which features many old and listed buildings.

Starting at the South Place Hotel, they then went on to the 1901 Wine Bar at the Andaz Hotel, the Magpie Pub in New Street, the Old Bengal Bar, Anise at Cinnamon Kitchen and finally to the Social Bar in Tower 42, Old Broad Street.

They demonstrated that, armed with relevant information that places have level access, lifts and suitable loos, a wheelchair is no barrier to a group of people having a great time.

Accessibility reviews about the places visited can be found on the Blue Badge Style website www.bluebadgestyle.com.

Kris Saunders-Stowe, a wheelchair user and fitness instructor, working with both disabled and non-disabled people in Herefordshire, celebrated **International Wheelchair Day** by raising over £600 for his **London Marathon** participation on behalf of the **MS Society**. At the Tesco store in Gloucester, Kris pushed for 5 hours non-stop on a special wheelchair treadmill..

INTERNATIONAL WHEELCHAIR DAY , 1st MARCH 2015

Why do you worry...?
Why do you Depressed...?
You are not alone,
Somany are more disable than you.
I am here to help you all
Do not stand?..Do not Walk..?
where do you want to go...
I will take you there....

I feel proud of you,
you are very special to me.
You create wonders sitting on me.

I will always be with you,
till your full recovery
Have faith,awake yourself,
be strong and always
be creative and joyful.

Your Loving,
WHEELCHAIR

Wordings and Creation :
- *Chandra Budhiraju*
1st March 2015



Difficulties are just things to overcome, after all. *- Ernest Shackleton*

Show must go on.



INTERNATIONAL WHEELCHAIR DAY
1st MARCH 2015

Chandra Budhiraju

Chandra Budhiraju, a creative artist and photographer from Vizianagaram in India produced two excellent pieces of work to celebrate **International Wheelchair Day**.

Chapter 8 - 2016

The year on year growth of **International Wheelchair Day** around the World suggests that 2016 will be bigger and better than ever.

The official logo has again been produced by **Hannah Ensor** of StickmanCommunications.co.uk.



Anyone may download the 2016 logo and freely use it on promotional material, banners, t-shirts, merchandise, etc from the website, www.internationalwheelchairday.com.

Hopefully you and your organisation, business, school, etc will join in to celebrate **International Wheelchair Day** in 2016.

To help you decide the kind of event or activity you could organise, its worth looking back and reflecting on what has happened around the World so far:

- Group rallies with speeches, parades, music, etc like those that have been held in **Nepal** since 2012, in **Senegal** since 2014 and in **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan** in 2015.

- Exhibitions, wheelchair sport and dancing demonstrations like those held at **Percy Hedley Sports Academy** in 2012, in Adelaide and at **Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust** in 2014.

- “**Go To Work in a Wheelchair**” challenges like Dr. Jon Griffiths did in 2013 in Cheshire and Councillor Anita Lower did in 2015 in Newcastle.

- Wheelchair experience challenges for non-wheelchair user like **Stephen Woodford** did on the **Isle of Wight** and the BBC's **Alfie Joey** did in **Newcastle**, both in 2013.
- Charitable donations of wheelchairs to needy groups like **United Healthcare** did with **Lestonnac Free Clinic** in **California** and **Variety Wheelchair Programme** did to the **Variety Children's Hospital** in **London**, both in 2014.
- In a similar way, the excellent work of **Mary Honeybun** in **South Africa** to collect bread tags and turn them into money to buy wheelchairs deserves a mention here too.
- This activity of good work creating money to donate wheelchairs involved the children at a local school collecting the tags. Perhaps other schools around the World could collect or make something (paintings of wheelchairs, for example) and sell them to raise funds for wheelchair purchasing.
- Why not follow in the footsteps, or wheels, of **Blue Badge Style** and organise a tour of bars or other locations highlighting their accessibility.
- Last, and be no means least, the individual activities of **Shakira** being photographed holding a sign with the logo in 2013 and **Dannie Brennand** going outside for the first time in her wheelchair for a few minutes in 2012 all form part of the annual celebration of the wheelchair and the freedom it provides all over World.

Be sure to let us know your plans through the contact details on the website and we'll give your event or activity a mention on the website and through our social media networks.

Chapter 9 – Whirlwind Wheelchair

Who is Whirlwind and what they do?

Whirlwind Wheelchair International is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities in the developing world, while also promoting sustainable local economic development in the process. They work to make it possible for every person in the world who needs a high quality wheelchair to obtain one, leading to maximum personal independence and integration into society. By giving wheelchair riders a central role in all aspects of their designs and projects, Whirlwind ensures that their chairs are individually appropriate for each user and his or her respective environment. For thirty years in over 60 countries they have focused on producing durable, low-cost, and highly functional wheelchairs. These chairs give riders the reliable and functional mobility they need to reach their full potential.



Sri Lestari takes her nephew for a ride on her Whirlwind RoughRider near Jogjakarta, Indonesia.

Their active adult wheelchair design, the **RoughRider®**, is used by 45,000 riders traveling over every terrain that only the best of wheelchairs can cross, from muddy village paths to rough pot-holed urban streets.

In partnership with their wheelchair donor/buyers, Whirlwind provided 45,000 RoughRiders® from 2008 through to 2014. These chairs were produced through their network of regional, quality-certified manufacturers, which currently can produce 15,000 RoughRiders® per year.

Why Wheelchairs?

The **World Health Organisation** estimates that 1 out of every 300 people, i.e. around 20 million people, in the developing world are in need of a good wheelchair. [WHO Wheelchair Guidelines, 2008] At Whirlwind, they define a "good wheelchair" as one that's safe, durable, locally repairable, and highly useable for the rider. Without durability, breakdowns can interrupt activities like staying in school and getting to work.

Without local repairability, wheelchair users depend on international aid and assistance. Because most riders can afford to own only a single chair, they need an all-purpose chair. An all-purpose wheelchair is functional for many activities such as crossing over tree roots or broken pavement, reaching down to floor level to care for small children, allowing elbow room to do work tasks, and folding for easy transport in cars and public transportation.



Arnulfo Criollo on his RoughRider going down one of the many rampless curbs in Cali Colombia

Whirlwind Wheelchair International is a non-profit organisation who have their headquarters in Berkeley, California.

Find more information about how you can get involved and help **Whirlwind Wheelchair International** on their website:

www.whirlwindwheelchair.org

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank the following people for their contribution to **International Wheelchair Day** since 2008:

- John von Nuding
- Hannah Ensor, Stickman Communications
- Andrew Pickering & Pete Gartland
- Adam Parry, Percy Hedley Sports Academy
- Altonaids Mobility, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear
- Letizia Gentile, Disability Information Resource Centre, Adelaide, South Australia
- Gail Miller, Author, Adelaide, South Australia
- Ian Hunter MSP, Disability Minister, South Australia Parliament
- Kelly Vincent MSP, South Australia Parliament
- Peter Goers, ABC Radio, Adelaide, South Australia
- Amanda Blair, 5AA Radio, Adelaide, South Australia
- Peter Greco, RPH Radio, Adelaide, South Australia
- Helen Edwards, Loyalty Aid, Melbourne, Australia
- Alfie Joey & Charlie Charlton, BBC Radio Newcastle
- Cecile Knapp, Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Dannie Brennand, North East England
- Tony Piccolo MSP, Disability Minister, South Australia Parliament
- Mary Honeybun, Noordhoek, South Africa
- The staff of Adapt To Change and the children of Avondale Primary School, Atlantis, Cape Town, South Africa
- James Loosemore & Stephen Woodford, Isle of Wight
- Shakira & her Mum, Lindsay, Isle of Wight
- Dr. Jonathan Griffiths, NHS Vale Royal CCG, Cheshire
- Bruce Becker & Team, Department of Communities & Social Inclusion, Adelaide, South Australia
- Verena & Tobias Streitferdt, WheelchairTraveller.org

Acknowledgements (cont.)

- Wirral Community NHS Trust
- Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust
- Paula Moulton & Gary Lyness, Strictly Wheelchair Dancing, Manchester
- Variety Wheelchair Programme & the Variety Children's Hospital, King's College, London
- United Healthcare & Lestonic Free Clinic, Orange County, California
- Doctor Anand, Spice FM, Newcastle
- Oumar Diop, FormEduc, Dakar, Senegal
- Mizanur Rahman Kiron, Physically-challenged Development Foundation, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh
- Bacha Khan Medical Complex, Swabi, Pakistan in association with Johanniter International, International Committee of the Red Cross, Motivation Charitable Trust (UK) and Chal Foundation (Pakistan)
- Caleb & Novita Children's Services, Adelaide, South Australia
- Zafar Bhatti & Heaton Mosque, Newcastle
- Tom Fenwick-Brown & Mick Rickwood, Newcastle
- Cllr. Anita Lower, Newcastle City Council
- Tesco, Kingston Park
- Fiona Jarvis & friends, Blue Badge Style, London
- Kris Saunders-Stowe, Herefordshire
- Chandra Budhiraju, Artist, Vizianagaram, India
- Whirlwind Wheelchair International, Berkeley, California

Thank you for reading this book. I hope it has inspired you to get more involved in **International Wheelchair Day** in the future.

I talk about **International Wheelchair Day** as part of my "**Playing The Cards You're Dealt**" motivational keynote speech, which has inspired people all over the World in schools, businesses and charitable organisations. For more information and details of how to book me, see www.wheelchairsteve.com.

THE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL WHEELCHAIR DAY

International Wheelchair Day was launched on 1st March 2008 by the author of this book, Steve Wilkinson. The main aim of this annual event is for wheelchair users to celebrate the freedom a wheelchair provides.

Since 2012, the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal has been instrumental in International Wheelchair Day's global expansion, holding wheelchair user rallies every year. More than ever since the devastating earthquake in April 2015, there has been an increasing need for support for injured people in Nepal. Consequently, the entire profits from the sale of this book will be donated to the Spinal Centre to help them continue their good work.

Steve Wilkinson was born in 1953 and diagnosed with Spina Bifida. He has used a wheelchair for most of his life and has been a full-time wheelchair user since 2000. Steve has always had a positive attitude to life and a determination to succeed in every challenge he faces. For the last 20 years, Steve has campaigned for improved accessibility for people, like himself, who have mobility issues.



£5.99

USD \$10.00

EUR €9.00

AUD \$12.50

