

“No More Crawling!” Wheelchairs for Africa

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“God has a purpose in my life – all these things happen for a reason.” – Michael Panther

Thanks to Michael Panther’s program “[Wheels for Africa](#),” we will be shipping 240 wheelchairs to CURE Kenya this month! These wheelchairs will make a huge difference for our patients and others with mobility issues in Africa. Michael knows first hand the struggle that people with disabilities in underserved areas of Africa face and has dedicated his life to addressing this issue.

When Michael was 10 years old, he got sick in South Sudan, where no medical facilities were available to him. Fortunately, a humanitarian group found him and brought him to a refugee camp in Kenya. It was there that Michael was referred to CURE Kenya for treatment. Due to a long waiting list of people trying to get to the hospital, he had to wait another 6 months before he was treated. From the time he got sick to the time of treatment, 2 years had passed by.

At CURE Kenya, Michael met Dr. Mead and his wife, Jana, who offered to provide long-term care for him. Michael went to live with the Mead family in the United States and immediately felt a difference in how people with disabilities were treated. *“I see the hope that people with disabilities have because of the people that love and care for them. It stirred something in my heart. You know what? I think that is why God saved my life. I want to take that back to Africa,” Michael said.*

Michael is the founder of the non-profit organization “[Living With Hope](#)” that procures and ships out wheelchairs, walkers, and canes to Africa. His tie to CURE Kenya has been a blessing to the hospital and surrounding area. He and his team of physical therapists and mechanics have been to Kenya three times to help distribute wheelchairs. The team customizes wheelchairs on the spot to make sure they fit each person properly. *“We don’t just have them pick a wheelchair and go home. We fit them to the patient,” Michael explains.* The goal is to train a local team in Kenya to fit the wheelchairs on their own.

The “Wheels for Africa” team visited Kenya at the beginning of March 2020, but their trip was cut short due to

COVID-19 travel restrictions. Fortunately, they were able to get most of the wheelchair distribution done at CURE. In addition to CURE Kenya, Michael is partnering with CURE Ethiopia to help them distribute wheelchairs this fall.



Michael and CURE team members at the CURE Mission Support Center after unloading a truckload of donated wheelchairs for shipment to CURE Kenya.

To obtain the wheelchairs, Living with Hope conducts wheelchair drives at churches in the Indiana and Chicago suburbs. They get 75% of their wheelchairs from these donations. Wheelchair drives usually occur in the spring and start back up again in the fall, and the donated chairs are refurbished before they are shipped to Africa. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and shutdowns, these drives have not been able to occur, and it has hurt supply. Through prior donations and procurement, Michael and his team were able to supply CURE with 240 wheelchairs this spring. We are blessed to partner with this organization working hard to improve the lives of people with disabilities in Africa.

“My hope for the future is that everyone in Africa will be able to get mobility - no more crawling. I have seen so many people crawl on the ground. Most importantly, I want them to feel valued and know that God loves them. We give a bible to people when we give them a wheelchair. The most important thing is to have the love of Jesus Christ,” said Michael.

Michael is motivated and driven by [1 John 3 v.17-18](#) “if anyone has material possession and sees his brother in need...let us love in actions and in truth.”

“I feel like I ask myself how do we make the invisible God visible. It is how we love one another. I want that love to be experienced by those with disabilities in Africa.” - Michael Panther

Thank you for your partnership and love for the children of Africa, Michael!