

KIDS ON WHEELS

PRE-OWNED PEDIATRIC WHEELS

More and more parents are seeking ways to recycle mobility devices and fill the gaps for underinsured families who struggle to afford products that could help their children.

Christy and Peter Kopp have taken the concept to a sophisticated level in the Denver metro area. Their nonprofit Kids Mobility Network connects children in their region with equipment that promotes "safety, mobility and independence."

They got the idea when they found themselves laden with equipment their daughter, Kayla, 7, had outgrown. "There were not a whole lot of options unless you had a friend to give it to," says Christy. The Kopps, both entrepreneurs, saw that recycling products could get more kids with disabilities into social situations with their peers, a goal they are passionate about.

And parents find it very rewarding, too. "Parents are so excited about this," Christy says. "They are happy to see an expensive piece go to another family going through the exact same things they've gone through."

At this time, the Kopps are focusing on Colorado, but they hope to expand someday. Meanwhile they are happy to talk to other parents interested in starting similar organizations.

Despite the challenges of fundraising and logistics, Christy says the work has been incredibly fulfilling. An experience from the day before is still fresh in her mind: She brought a rehabbed chair to a 12-year-old boy who had lost a leg to cancer. "He was literally getting chemo when we delivered the chair," she says. The boy's mother spoke no English, but through an interpreter she kept asking, "Are you sure you are not taking this back?"

Christy insisted, "No, it's yours." Then a nurse asked if the organization had any bathroom equipment the boy could have. It didn't but four hours later, that very equipment landed in Christy's lap. "Call it good karma or whatever," she says, "but it's so heart-filling."

To give a tax-deductible donation or to learn more, contact the organization at 303/346-6075 or www.kidsmobility.org.

