

# Wheelchairs given to Needy Residents in Thailand

LDS Charities participates with Rotary Clubs in service project

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Thailand public affairs missionaries

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LDS Charities joined with Rotary Clubs in Thailand to make the donation of wheelchairs possible.

Photo by Elder Keith Hardy

At this, arguably the most popular seaside resort in Asia, the women of the Rotary Club of Junkseilon held a 30-wheelchair ceremony on Feb. 28 by coordinating with LDS Charities and the Bang Rak Rotary Club of Thailand. It was the fourth distribution LDS Charities has been involved with since the end of January, bringing the number of wheelchairs to 130.

With the elaborate stage decorations, the gorgeous flower arrangements, the sincere speeches and the crowd that gathers, these events touch our hearts and are forever etched in our memories.

The recipients arrive with faces lined with discouragement, dressed in simple clothing, and wait patiently to be recognized with their caretakers [many of whom] who have been worn down with constant work and frustration. Of course, recipients anticipate with relief and hope that these wheelchairs will enable them to sense the comfort of mobility and ease the burden of their caretakers. These souls with disabilities are living a difficult life without promise of a brighter future.

We witnessed a memorable scene when the recipients took the microphone offered to them. One by one they took courage and answered questions concerning their condition, illness or accident.

A 75-year-old woman, Mrs. Promp, expressed through tears of gratitude that at last after three years of disability she will no longer have to borrow a wheelchair from a neighbor to go to her doctor appointments.



Recipients and others enjoy a ceremony where wheelchairs were distributed to needy people in Phuket, Thailand.

Photo by Elder Keith Hardy

A young taxi driver, Mr. Ransiman, had swerved to miss hitting an intoxicated person in his path and not only crashed his vehicle, but also lost the use of both legs. He hesitantly whispered "thank you" in English. His lovely sister, who spoke excellent English, revealed that her brother once had great command of English. We watched as his mother cast her eyes lovingly at her 34-year-old son, acknowledging he must endure his life as an invalid.

Mr. Somrvan, 64, has been paralyzed for four years. Mrs. Issha, 85, suffered a stroke five years ago.

Most of us can't imagine having to face a devastating disability. Not one wheelchair recipient had the full use of a wheelchair prior to this time. It is an uncomfortable feeling for us as we visit these gentle people, realizing that they do not have many comforts of life. The average person in Thailand barely earns enough to survive.

These ceremonies are extremely sobering and humbling. With grateful hearts, we are forever indebted to the service rendered by LDS Charities through a partnership with the Rotarians of Thailand. The Church is recognized as a noble and charitable organization.