

# Enchúlame la Silla Plus

Subject: Wheelchair parts manufacturing Presenter: Erik Friend Date: October 2017



## History



#### ALEM: A perfect partnership

ALEM is a workshop in Cuernavaca Mexico. A highly trained team of persons with disabilities design, fabricate and repair wheelchairs, recumbent tricycles, sports wheelchairs, and custom wheeled devices for children and adults with severe physical disabilities. ALEM offers subsidized repair to these users, charging them only for labor, which is the much smaller portion of the repair cost. The ALEM team, through the help of local rotary clubs, also conducts wheelchair repair tours throughout the region. ALEM is developing Wheelchair Repair Shop manuals and training videos to train persons with disabilities to become workers within satellite locations. We hope to set up "replica" shops in other cities in Mexico.





#### The importance and recognition of ALEM by Rotary International



was underscored when Rotary International named ALEM as one of four highlighted projects in the world. ALEM was showcased in the December 2015 issue of The Rotarian, which is read by 1.2 million Rotarians worldwide. Rotary International visited ALEM in 2016 to produce a video about the project, seen by that same global population. ALEM was on the cover of the Rotary International website face page and was the centerpiece topic of the Keynote Speaker at a gathering of all Rotary District Governors from around the world.



#### How it has worked

**Why Needed?** The Rotary Global grants allowed ALEM to 1) buy parts for repairing wheelchairs and equipment and 2) buy a trailer that was converted into a mobile repair shop which was used in an outreach program to repair wheelchairs in communities around Cuernavaca, Mexico. In 2015 ALEM repaired 1000 wheelchairs in Cuernavaca, Veracruz, Acapulco, Puebla, Cuautla, Totolapan, and Jojutla and is in conversations for helping set up replica repair shops in several cities. In 2016 ALEM doubled the number of wheelchairs repaired surpassing 2000, and in 2017 it is over 3000.

Behind the growth and sustainability of the ALEM workshop is the subsidy and donation of the parts needed in the repairs. Presently parts have been purchased though the Global Grant, district grants, club donations and individual donations. The workers with disabilities at ALEM earn their livelihood from the wheelchairs repairs they perform (\$15.00/chair).



## The Future



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ALEM has repaired over 3,000 wheelchairs this year that requires \$90,000 in parts (cost per wheelchair is \$30). The second phase of the project, which includes continued repairs from ALEMs current site as well as any replications (wheelchair repair shops in other cities) that emerge, will require many, many more necessary parts.

**Project's Goal:** ALEM is seeking funding to initiate manufacture of the most common wheelchair parts for their ongoing wheelchair repair project.

By reducing the cost of the wheelchair parts, ALEM can become self-sustainable.

And...the project offers full-time employment to people with disabilities.



It is important to mention that in addition to the direct benefit to the wheelchair user numerous other reasons make the program so beneficial and in alignment with Rotary's areas of focus and vision.

- Environmental sustainability reuse/recycle instead of disposal and replacement (many repairable wheelchairs are rotting away in back patios)
- 25% of wheelchair users have special needs that require significant modification of the standard wheelchair, modification that these repair shops can offer.
- The project advocates for a paradigm shift in people's thinking about people with disabilities, their capabilities and place in society. This is highly significant in a society where people with disabilities are either hidden away or put out on show to ask for give aways (there are many personal stories that could be shared of entire life transformations).



### A Collective Effort: Partnering with other donors







Multiple Beneficiaries: win-win-win

# Gifts to The Rotary Foundation helped ALEM establish a mobile workshop.





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## GRACIAS



