

May We Help

By Bill Sand

Christmas every week of the year...that is what it is like for the volunteers with “May We Help” (www.maywehelp.org). They design, build and modify assistive devices for individuals struggling with physical challenges and deliver them for FREE. Since 2006 “May We Help” has been inventing one-of-a-kind solutions for people with disabilities. A disability could be one of many diagnoses or just age taking a toll on our bodies. These disabilities may require the use of walkers or other assistive devices to do what we want or need to do.

Many of the devices that are produced are simple, at least for the volunteers. Examples are a modified walker for an older client who is 6’9” tall. A standard walker was not stable enough, so it was modified to make it stable for a person of his height. Another walker was for a woman who had lost part of her left arm. Standard parts were available but no one could put them together. A “May We Help” volunteer combined the two parts to allow her to use the walker.

“May We Help” was founded by *the 3 Bill’s*, who have a passion for helping others. For several years each of the Bills worked out of the shop they had at their homes. It wasn’t long before other volunteers came forward to help with this cause. Volunteers consist of engineers, designers, metal workers, seamstresses, hobbyists and anyone else with a passion to help others. The main office is located at 7501 Wooster Pike in Mariemont. The facility contains a large meeting room, offices and a shop with metal and wood working equipment comparable to a small business. The facility is open for tours. If interested, send a request to workshop@maywehelp.org

As the organization grew, so did the number and variety of requests. “May We Help” has shipped or delivered projects to 23 states. Clients range in age from two to eighty years old. Many of the projects require the input of a Physical Therapist or Occupational Therapist to make sure the device will function properly for the client.

Some projects require the help of several volunteers, each with their own talents. A good example of this is a client named Jeff who needed assistance to independently take a sip of water. He lives with quadriplegia and has an assistant that is with him during the day. When Jeff would want a sip of water, he would ask his assistant for a drink. He deeply desired to take a drink on his own. The lead volunteer could machine parts, but needed some help with design and then help with electronics and computer software. Together, they came up with a device that allowed him to drink on his own. This project took several months to build and debug but it has allowed Jeff that little bit of normalcy and independence that most people enjoy.

Most of the projects are one of a kind. Occasionally, the same solution can be applied to situations where the clients have different diagnoses. For example, Joyce had several complications from birth. One ailment is arthrogyposis. Arthrogyposis is congenital and involves one or several joints being locked. In Joyce’s case, it is her elbow. She cannot bend her arm. When working in her kitchen it was extremely difficult for her to turn the water on and off. Working with our volunteer, a simple “stick” was made to allow her to use the water easily whenever she wanted. This is a simple solution, but life changing for Joyce. Six months after this project was complete, another woman, this time with multiple sclerosis, asked us for help with the same problem.

“May We Help” does not charge for services or material for their projects. A request form is short and easy to fill out online.

“May We Help” is always looking for volunteers who enjoy the challenge of finding a unique way to help others, and for new clients to help.

Visit www.maywehelp.org to volunteer or request a device. Questions may be directed to workshop@maywehelp.org