CReATE Re-Launches with New Focus, Larger Selection | CPD

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Larry O'Sullivan spent 30 years as a professional photographer in Australia, shooting everything from weddings to aerial pictures, but was forced to leave the Down Under after late complications from a Vietnam War injury led to an above-the-knee double amputation a few years ago.

"I'd passed my 'use by' date in Australia, but aging and retirement is not synonymous with not having something to do," O'Sullivan said. "America is the land of potential and accessibility – you can be anything you want to be."

CReATE, Citizens Reutilizing Assistive Technology Equipment, is a non-profit that helps Utahns with disabilities be more independent by providing low-cost mobility equipment. Wheelchairs and scooters are donated from the community, and cleaned and refurbished to manufacturer standards by a technician. O'Sullivan read about CReATE in the newspaper and knew it was his answer to finding a power chair, or as he calls the assistive technology devices, ‘fast speed chairs.’ The devices are hard to come by in Australia, he said.

"Here, I can go cross-country and only carry an emergency kit on my chair. The chair I got from CReATE has given me independence," O'Sullivan said.

Mobility is essential to a good quality life and independence, but as baby boomers age and medical insurance does not always meet a consumer’s needs, the demand for affordable mobility equipment increases.

Devices from CReATE generally cost less than $500, and the program doesn’t require proof of disability or insurance. All Utahans are welcome to utilize the program, which began as a concept more than 15 years ago.

Program coordinator Alma Burgess, said, “We knew this need existed after working with the public through the Utah Assistive Technology Program at the Center for Persons with Disabilities.”

The program officially began in 2007 as a certified 501c (3), and is housed at the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation in the Judy Ann Buffmire building.

CReATE has undergone logistical changes, and will re-open to the public October 1st with an emphasis on quick service and a good selection of mobility devices.

“We’ve learned a lot the first few years of CReATE’s existence,” Burgess said. “We are streamlining the process, working closely with other non-profits and state agencies, and trying to get the word out.”

The re-opening event will kick-off at 2 p.m. with a presentation to raise awareness about the program. O'Sullivan and other previous device recipients will talk about receiving their wheelchairs and how they are now using them. Devices will be showcased, and CReATE staff will highlight the process of receiving or donating a chair and the future goals of the program.

Following the presentation will be an open house with CReATE partner UCAT (Utah Center for Assistive Technology) to promote the assistive technology services available to Utahns.

O'Sullivan said, "I am not good at being housebound, and now I can make my own ends meet here," he said. "My father said life is a magnificent adventure, and I want to be here as long as there are adventures to live for.”