Wheelchair is Freedom to Those Who Use It | CPD

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All-terrain wheelchairs give users even more freedom.
(Photo courtesy of Action Trackchairs)

Gordon Richins, consumer liaison at Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities, uses a wheelchair after a farming accident 26 years ago left him a quadriplegic. But make no mistake—Richins is not “confined” to the wheelchair. The chair is freedom. The chair allows him to ride the Cache Valley Transit bus to the CPD, attend meetings across campus or across town, even to go airborne in a hot air balloon.

Richins’ power chair is freedom, but there are a few things it can’t do. It can’t maneuver up or down curbs or rough terrain. It can’t roll on sand or in snow. It can’t take him down to the creek behind his house to fish.

An open house last week at the Utah Center for Assistive Technology in Salt Lake City offered test drives of several pieces of mobility equipment, including the Action TrackChair, which looks something like a cross between a power wheelchair and, well, an Army tank. Richins was the first to try it.

Watch the video.

“It was awesome!” Richins said. “I rolled up and down and grassy hill, and over a pile of branches. I couldn’t do that with my regular chair.”

The Action TrackChairs come in two models and 15 colors with a base price of $10,200, but available options, including a gun rack or fishing rod holder, can push the price tag much higher. Richins said the chair he tested was about $15,000.

“I told Clay (Christensen, assistive technology lab coordinator) he was going to have to make me one,” Richins said, adding that an all-terrain wheelchair like that would let him to get back to an activity he misses—fishing in the creek behind his house.