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Tom Boman works on a wheelchair at CReATE in this file photo

On January 8, a mom called the Red Rock Center for Independence in St. George, looking for a loaner wheelchair for her son. The 14-year-old has Down syndrome and other health challenges. His wheelchairs are usually provided by Intermountain Health Care, but the mom does all the customizations, often fabricating armrests and other parts herself. The family has been approved by Shriner’s Hospital for a new chair, but this week, the boy’s backup chair simply fell apart. He needed a loaner for a few weeks while IHC made repairs to the chair.

Red Rock Center has a large loan bank, but not much pediatric equipment, so Martha Hafen, Independent Living Coordinator for youth at the center, posted the following on Facebook:

“We need a little help today! We have gotten a call from a parent that is in desperate need of a pediatric size wheelchair with a 5-point harness that her son could borrow for a few weeks. If anyone knows of a family that may have a child that has outgrown a chair or one that you aren’t using—please either call the Red Rock Center at 435-673-7501 or post here. Asking around to friends and neighbors would be greatly appreciated!”

The post was passed on to Clay Christensen, AT lab coordinator, and Alma Burgess, program coordinator for Citizens Re-utilizing Assistive Technology Equipment (CReATE) at Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities. Tom Boman, CReATE’s wheelchair technician, contacted Red Rock Center’s assistive technology specialist Mike Earl, who explained exactly what was needed. Because CReATE maintains such a large inventory of refurbished mobility equipment, Boman was able to quickly locate a suitable loaner.

Within 24 hours of Hafen’s original post, a wheelchair had been found and arrangements had been made to deliver it to the family in St. George.

The mom was “just in tears,” after finding out that her son would be getting the needed equipment, Hafen said.

“One of the best things about the people in the state of Utah is that when there is a need, there is NOTHING that can’t be done,” she posted later on Facebook.