Create Helps Utahns with Disabilities | CPD

Just a few months after officially opening its doors, the Citizens Reutilizing Assistive Technology Equipment (CReATE) program is helping Utahns with disabilities move in a world where expenses and red tape can seem stacked against them. CReATE, a program of the Center for Persons with Disabilities, refurbishes mobility devices and provides them at a low cost to people who might not receive them otherwise. The devices are donated and restored at a warehouse in Salt Lake City, where certified technicians make sure they are safe, dependable and available. Price and availability are huge obstacles to people who need mobility devices, since manual wheelchairs can cost thousands of dollars, and motorized wheelchairs can run into tens of thousands, depending on the features needed. Even when insurance will cover the purchase of a new chair, the person who needs it must sometimes wait for months for it to arrive. The situations that bring people to the program are as varied as the people themselves. JoMarie Kelly’s daughter, Lanette, had a wheelchair, but she was outgrowing it, and her old chair was falling apart. Their insurance covered a new chair, so they ordered one, but after a months-long wait the need for a new chair only grew, along with Lanette. “She was just stuffed into her old chair,” JoMarie said. Lanette needed a working chair for more than just getting around. It was important that Lanette eat from a sitting position, and the chair’s security straps gave her the stability she needed to eat safely. CReATE found her a chair with a head rest, back rest, a special seat that will help prevent sores, and straps across her legs and waist and over her shoulders. “I had to pay a fee to get it cleaned and looked over to make sure it was safe,” JoMarie said. As for the new chair she had ordered, after 10 months it came—in the wrong size. In November she was still waiting for the correct one. Judy Wendel’s daughter, Tanna, also had a chair, but the joystick on it was going bad. “From what I understand you can only get one [chair] from Medicaid every five years, and hers was three years old,” Judy said. Repairing it would cost $2000; more than she could afford. After speaking to a case worker from independent living, Wendel was connected with the CReATE program. They found a good fit for her daughter, at a price that made it possible to get around. Cameron Sevy just wanted the independence of going places without having to ask his wife to take him. He needed a faster, safer chair, but at the price of $6000 it was not possible. He was referred to the CReATE program and went to the warehouse in person. “There was a wide variety of chairs available,” he said. “I really had the pick of the litter.” He found something at a price that brought his goal of getting a new chair within reach. Sevy is thankful to everyone who made it possible: donors, organizations and technicians who make the devices safe and dependable. “It’s a tremendous service to the people of the state,” he said. The program caught the attention of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, which awarded a $16,500 grant to help put mobility devices into the hands of Utahns who need it most. To find out what mobility devices are available or to make arrangements to acquire or donate, call (801) 887-9398.