

Shriners donates equipment to AT lab

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A sign "Count your blessings, not your problems," hangs on the Assistive Technology Lab wall and describes the focus of the lab.

The lab is part of the Center for Persons with Disabilities on campus and provides equipment to help those with disabilities live an easier life. The person's abilities are accentuated, and they then use them in conjunction with equipment to handle the everyday tasks of life. A few pieces of equipment include wheelchairs, scooters, writing easels, talking watches, large-buttoned phones and other specially designed tools.

Recently the lab received a large donation that will help them continue to provide free or greatly reduced equipment to those in need, mainly in the Cache Valley area.

When Shriners Hospital in Salt Lake City received new equipment to replace their current inventory, USU was the recipient of the surplus, most of which was still in great shape, said Stan Clelland, Assistive Technology Lab technician. While some of the pieces aren't completely usable, the AT Lab will salvage those parts that are and combine them with other pieces until they have a functional piece of equipment.

The donated equipment filled a horse trailer and a pickup truck, Clelland said. He estimated the new value of the equipment to be between \$80,000 and \$100,000.

"The best part is students get to participate in refurbishing and rebuilding it to get out to the community," Clelland said.

Often students from different areas of the university, such as an engineering and special education, team up to make projects for a specific person. With their broad range of knowledge, the finished product is at its best.

Much of the equipment donated was wheelchairs, scooters and wheelchair seats and tires. Once they have been restored to their best, they will be donated to a variety of programs such as the Up to Three program, which provides assistance for children three and under and their parents.

Six independent living centers around the state are also part of the program, and it takes all of the programs working together for success, said Heather Butikofer, public relations and marketing specialist for the Center for Persons with Disabilities.

Teamwork is the key to making the dollars stretch for these non-profit organizations, Clelland said.

"(When we do that), everybody wins and that's what we shoot for - win, win win,"
Clelland said.

Students are able to borrow pieces of equipment for periods of time if they need it. The lab also provides a wheelchair at graduations and to the University Inn.

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