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A Hands Free Shoe Solution • October 24, 2016

EDITOR'S PEN

Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief

Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Steve Kaufman

CEO/Founder, Hands Free, Inc.
The makers of Quikiks Hands-Free Shoes

Gary Barg: Steve, tell me about Quikiks Hand Free Shoes and why it's so important for family caregivers to know about them?

Steve Kaufman: Sure, Gary, thanks. Why is it important that caregivers know about hands free shoes? For many people it is a daily struggle to put on their shoes due to all sorts of conditions. Whether it be vertigo, obesity, chronic back pain, severe arthritis, Cerebral Palsy or Parkinson's—there's just a whole host of conditions that make it difficult for people to put their shoes on independently. So having hands free shoes not only allows these people to get into proper supportive footwear, but also increases their self-esteem. In addition, it unburdens the caregiver from having to do it for them. About nine years ago, my teenage son developed scoliosis, which many people might know is a curvature in the spine. He had to wear this big torso brace that went from his lower abdomen to up under his armpits to prevent the curve in his back from getting worse. But, it also prevented him from being able to bend over and put his own shoes on. That's where the inspiration came to me to develop some footwear that he could independently put on and not have his mom and dad come over and do it for him.

Gary Barg: How do the shoes work?

Steve Kaufman: It's actually a very simple, robust mechanism. There's no electronics, no batteries, no Bluetooth, or Wi-Fi connections. There's a spring loaded hinge underneath the heel portion of the shoe which enables the rear portion to rotate backwards and create a huge entryway, making it very easy for people to slide their foot right into the shoe. The entry becomes about 50% larger than a typical shoe, so you can slide your foot right in, and then as you step down, the motion of your foot going into the shoe, rotates the back of the shoe closed and it securely fastens with a magnet.

Gary Barg: Oh, brilliant.

Steve Kaufman: It's really very simple. To get out, you simply do a little heel strike and the momentum of your foot swinging down breaks the magnetic hold. The shoes pop open and your foot slides right out. You never have to bend over or use your hands to get in, or to get out.

Gary Barg: Slip and fall accidents are a huge problem with older adults. Can the shoes help?

Steve Kaufman: Yes. In fact, the statistics relating to slip and fall accidents are quite staggering. Thirty percent of people over the age 65 have a slip and fall accident, which results in ninety-five percent of the hip fractures that occur. Fifty percent of older adults who have a hip fracture are unable to return home or live independently again. It really can be the beginning of a downward spiral, which severely, negatively impacts the quality of their life and even their life expectancy. There was a large study done by the University of Washington. It involved more than 1,300 subjects over a two-year period. They were trying to find out to what extent various types of footwear or even the lack of wearing footwear contributed to slip and fall accidents. What they found was quite staggering. Compared with wearing supportive athletic shoes, like sneakers, the increased risk of having a slip and fall accident for people wearing bedroom slippers, flip flops or going barefoot is up to a thousand percent.

Gary Barg: That's amazing. What have you heard from your users?

Steve Kaufman: We've had some tremendous testimonials. A man in California bought a pair for his dad who used to get headaches bending over to put his shoes on. Now with the Quikiks, since he doesn't have to bend over anymore, there are no more headaches. Another gentleman in Florida who is living with Multiple Sclerosis bought a pair. He said that Quikiks enabled him to put his shoes on independently for the first time in 20 years. It's stories like that which make me tear up. His wife got on the phone to thank me too because she said that she was the one who had to put his shoes on and that was a task that

she wasn't looking forward to each day. A gentleman in the New York City area has had seven spine surgeries and wears a foot drop brace. He couldn't put his own shoes on at all until he got a pair of Quikiks.

Gary Barg: What sizes and styles do they come in?

Steve Kaufman: We have a variety of styles for men and women, some with Velcro straps. We have a casual dress shoe for men and a Mary Jane for women. For women, they range in half sizes from size 6 through size 11, and come in two widths—medium and wide. For the men, they go in half sizes from 7 to 14 in three widths—medium, wide, and extra-wide. They come with shoelaces or Velcro straps that are meant to be initially adjusted to the wearer's liking and from then on, they get in and out using the hands-free system.

Gary Barg: Are Quikiks covered by insurance?

Steve Kaufman: Not currently but we're looking into that. For veterans, the VA actually has discretionary funds available, so the VA healthcare practitioners can purchase them outright and give them free of charge to the Vet in need.

Gary Barg: Are there other ways people can defray the cost of the Quikiks?

Steve Kaufman: In the New York City area, with a documented disability, you can apply through United Cerebral Palsy. If your situation is appropriate, UCP will pay for the shoes. At this point, it is only limited to the boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx in New York City.

Gary Barg: So how do I get a pair?

Steve Kaufman: You can purchase them online through our website [Quikiks.com](https://www.Quikiks.com)

Gary Barg: As well as the self-reliance that we feel when we don't have to ask for help putting on our shoes, I really like the idea that Quikiks can help reduce slip and falls around the house.

Steve Kaufman: As I mentioned, wandering around in socks increases the risk of a slip and fall accident by a thousand percent. That's scary stuff.

Gary Barg: Anything increasing by a thousand percent, other than your income, is not a good thing.

Steve Kaufman: Absolutely.

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