



The Enabler

www.enabletech.org

Fall 2015

Message from the president

This is the first of what I hope to make a semi-annual, and as we grow, a quarterly newsletter about recent items of interest at Enabling Technologies Associates (Enabletech). I have been President now for nearly 3 years, and since my involvement in 2011, I have seen us undertake 80 projects. It has been very rewarding to assume the responsibility of president from Phil Atkinson, our founder and president emeritus, who, I'm pleased to say, is still actively helping us out with projects.

New undertakings include:

- Establishing an [advisory board](#) of up to 12 members representing various fields of expertise to provide technical and medical advice on short notice. We have filled four of these positions with uniquely qualified talent and I welcome them to Enabletech.
- Exploring the possibility of our first "[spin-off](#)" [business](#) with the wheelchair accessible crib.
- Re-establishing our [partnership](#) with the mechanical engineering department at the University of South Carolina

All in all, I think Enabletech continues to be a valuable resource for people with disabilities, and I look forward to many more rewarding projects in the future.

Ed Keelen
President

Four advisory board members named

At last year's board meeting, we established an advisory board to give us an avenue to obtain much needed technical and medical advice on short notice.

We are pleased to announce the first four members: Frank Heckendorn, Don Spires, Sharon Swift and former board member Preston Coleman.

Look for their bios on our website soon!

Enabletech ships three wheelchair-accessible cribs

Don Spires of Palmetto Homestyle expressed interest in picking up the wheelchair-accessible crib as a stand-alone business. We obtained the existing crib built in 2003, and used Phil Atkinson's sketches to fabricate a new, improved version. The new model uses a simpler method to bolt the sides together, and changes the slat structure of the sides for easier fabrication.

Our first crib was shipped to Philadelphia, PA, for a client and her three-month old baby. At first, the client wanted to return the crib because her room was too small to accommodate it. This was, of course a key “lesson-learned” for us: make sure the bedroom is large enough for the crib BEFORE we ship it.

Fortunately, Ed Keelen’s cousin lives in the area and was able to visit the client, provide measurements of the room which Ed then made into a scale drawing and we figured out a way to fit the crib in the room. Ed’s cousin also helped to assemble the crib, and even bought the mattress and sheets for it! The client is ecstatic with the new crib, and doesn’t know how she got along without it. Many thanks to Ed’s cousin, Cynthia Belliveau, who became a remote Enabletech “volunteer” and made this project come to fruition.



The second crib has shipped to Rockford, MI. We learned a lot about packaging the crib for shipment, including the assembly tools with the shipment, and providing an updated set of assembly instructions along with a schematic for use in assembling the crib. The client recently called and was very pleased with the crib and said that set up went smoothly. Her baby is due in September.

The third crib was provided to a client in Rembert, SC. Since it was geographically close, Don Spires had one of his crews deliver the crib and assemble it for the client. Her baby is due in October.

All of these clients learned about the crib on our website. It turns out that when you Google “wheelchair accessible crib,” an image of our crib is the first thing to appear, and when you click on that image, it takes you directly to our web site. We hope to receive many new clients via this method.

There is much work to be done to transform the crib into a business. First, we need a patent. Phil Atkinson has a lead on a patent attorney (the son of a former client) who may help us. Then, we need to get the crib certified. We are in communication with Intertek Consumer Goods North America, which does product testing to find out exactly what is required. We are also in contact with the Juvenile Product Manufacturers

Association, which gives members advice on how to get certified.

Don is envisioning a sales price of about \$1600 for the crib, of which Enabletech will receive a \$250 donation for each crib sold. If the client cannot afford the crib, Enabletech will buy the crib at cost from Don, hopefully using a \$25,000 grant we are applying for.



The USC students working on the hygiene system are, seated from left, Benjamin Godley, Kyle Singer, Bobby Yarborough and Mohammed Almansour. Standing is Russell Turpin, Enabletech technical advisor.

Enabletech re-establishes working relationship with USC

Enabletech has worked on several joint projects with the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of South Carolina. The most recent

one was the all-terrain wheelchair, a very ambitious project where a new zero-turn radius, all-electric version of an earlier prototype was designed and fabricated from the ground up.

After that project, we went on a one year “break” from our advisory duties, and now we have resumed relationships with the university. The new project is to develop a hygiene system for Travis Cunningham, a young boy who was born without arms.

Russ Turpin is our technical advisor on this project. The four senior mechanical engineering students assigned to the project are about halfway through, and have established a conceptual design for the hygiene system, which includes a method for Travis to shower and dry himself and brush his teeth independently.



Spring Valley Rotary Club donates \$250 grant

After Ed Keelen gave a presentation to the Spring Valley Rotary Club about Enabletech in July, Kathleen Ganley presented him with a \$250 grant check from the organization. The money will go toward the hygiene system for Travis Cunningham. Although this is a small grant, it is evidence that organizations are interested in the kind of work Enabletech does and are willing to contribute financially toward our success.

Small projects add up to big benefits

Enabletech has undertaken 16 projects so far this calendar year. The major ones are discussed in other parts of this newsletter, but we can't forget that each project is valuable to the client who needs it.

Smaller projects include:

- Troubleshooting on a lift into a bus that is a client's home;
- Devising a method for a girl with Schizencephaly to get in and out of her tub. Schizencephaly is a condition where parts of the brain do not form in the womb and leave the client with Cerebral Palsy and cortical-visual deficits;
- Adding side wheels to a gate trainer so it traverses the corridor more smoothly;
- Reworking an exercise seat and finding an elliptical trainer for Saluda Physical Therapy;
- Procuring several hospital beds and refurbishing them for future clients;
- Upgrading the clothing system for Travis, the boy born without arms;
- Repairing a lift chair for a single leg amputee that was urgently needed to elevate and protect her good leg; and
- Narrowing a “potty chair” so it would fit through a bathroom door.

All of these projects taken individually may seem like “small potatoes”, but to the client who received them, they are life changing. Thanks to all of our volunteers who make these projects come alive.



Enabletech volunteer Jeff Nelson with the potty chair he worked on.

Enabletech in the news

Enabletech was a featured write-up in the May, 2015, issue of “Lexington Life”, a regional publication that covers the Lexington, SC, area. The article describes the history of Enabletech, features brief bios of some of the key members, and provides details on some of our more prominent projects.

Getting published in this magazine is another way Enabletech is reaching out to potential customers with our capabilities.



Help is always appreciated

Want to donate, volunteer or suggest a project? Just go to our website—www.enabletech.org—and click on the “Donate,” “Volunteer,” or “Request a Project” button near the middle of the page. Or, send us an email by clicking on the “Send us an email” button at the bottom of the page.

We would love to hear from you.