

# Gift for Thailand to Benefit Disabled

**Church donates 980 wheelchairs in honor of the king's birthday**

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BANGKOK, THAILAND — Nearly 1,000 Thai citizens with physical disabilities will receive wheelchairs thanks to a major donation through Latter-day Saint Charities, to His Majesty the King Bhumibol Adulyadej in honor of his 80th birthday.



His Excellency Kamthon Sindhvananda, left, and Elder Donald L. Hallstrom gather with youth who will benefit from Church's donation of wheelchairs. Also with the group are members of one of the receiving charities in Thailand.

Photo courtesy Elder Wayne G. Facer

His Excellency Kamthon Sindhvananda, left, and Elder Donald L. Hallstrom gather with youth who will benefit from Church's donation of wheelchairs. Also with the group are members of one of the receiving charities in Thailand.

The donation was made through the Privy Council, an advisory counsel to the king, to the designated charity, the Sai Jai Thai Foundation, a charity under the patronage of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. Providing the 980 wheelchairs is Latter-day Saint Charities, the charitable foundation of the Church. The Sai Jai Thai Foundation will distribute the wheelchairs to those in need with the assistance of nine nominated charities.

Accepting the wheelchairs from LDS Charities in a ceremony Thursday, Aug. 14, was His Excellency Kamthon Sindhvananda, privy councilor and vice-president of the Sai Jai Thai Foundation. His Excellency Kamthon thanked Latter-day Saints Charities and the Church for the donation.

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy, president of the Asia Area, thanked Sai Jai Thai for its assistance in receiving and storing the wheelchairs until they could be distributed. He explained that the

Church has been involved in many humanitarian welfare efforts in Thailand over the past few years and that it is a privilege to help the poor and needy in the Kingdom of Thailand.

Work began on the wheelchair donation shortly after senior missionaries Robert and Theone Snow, Thailand country directors for Latter-day Saint Charities, arrived in Thailand in March 2007. They met with M.R. Benchapa Krairiksh, a descendant of King Rama IV, to ask for assistance in making a donation to the palace.

M.R. Benchapa has done much charity work with local charities and is the wife of Sakthip Krairiksh, former Thailand ambassador to the United States and Japan. While in the U.S., the couple became friends with members of the Church in the Washington, D.C., area. They were hosted by Church officials in Salt Lake City. In Utah, the couple became friends with President Gordon B. Hinckley.

M.R. Benchapa said that she was excited about working with the palace on the wheelchair donation and suggested the Snows write a letter to the Privy Council outlining the proposal. She said that "the letter should state that Latter-day Saint Charities would like to donate 980 wheelchairs to H.M. The King in honor of His Majesty's 80th birthday." That specific number was suggested because the number 9 represents the current king who is the 9th king in the Rama line and 80 represents the king's 80th birthday in December 2007.

In Thailand, the Church has 15,000 members in 39 units throughout the country. Elder Snow noted that the Church has made significant donations to the Thai citizens over the years. Those donations have included neonatal resuscitation equipment and training, vision care equipment, infant health kits and infant formula, tsunami aid, intensive English teaching assistance and clean water projects for schools and villages.