

Got used equipment?

Kids Mobility Network, a new nonprofit, will take it

By Liz Beaulieu, Managing Editor

DENVER - Peter and Christy Kopp, the parents of a daughter with a rare genetic disorder, know what it's like to watch a child outgrow mobility equipment before it shows much wear and tear.

In the past, the parents of 7-year-old Kayla have tried donating her barely used walkers and wheelchairs to children's hospitals, but liability issues always kept the hospitals from passing the equipment on to other children.

The Kopps didn't want the equipment to go to waste, knowing how much it improved Kayla's self esteem and development, as well as her ability to interact with peers.

"This equipment does a lot more than provide mobility," said Peter Kopp.

Furthermore, the Kopps knew there were children who could use the equipment.

So late last year, the Kopps formed Kids Mobility Network, a nonprofit organization that refurbishes equipment and donates it to underinsured or uninsured children. Christy Kopp serves as executive director. In mid-January, the Kopps debuted its Web site, www.kidsmobility.org.

Kids Mobility Network is good news for area rehab providers. AAA Medical Sales in Lakewood, Colo., for instance, gets several pieces of used equipment each month, but like hospitals, it can't refurbish them and pass them on to other customers for liability reasons, said Michele Longo, AAA Medical's president.

AAA Medical currently donates the used equipment it receives to the Mobility Project in Colorado Springs, Colo. The nonprofit organization refurbishes equipment and distributes it to countries like Mexico and Afghanistan. The rehab provider also donates equipment to a local loan closet.



Now, AAA Medical has another option: Kids Mobility Network.

Already, the Koppes have collected more than 1,000 pieces of equipment. They have a volunteer physical therapist on board to perform evaluations, and they're now looking for technicians to refurbish the equipment.

The PT and technicians will help Kids Mobility Network ensure that equipment is refurbished and reused safely, Peter Kopp said.

"We realize there'll be some specialty equipment that may never find another home," he said.

Peter Kopp expects Kids Mobility Network to pump \$250,000 to \$300,000 worth of equipment back into the community in 2006. He expects that number to jump to \$1 million in 2007.

Kids Mobility Network was launched in November with \$200,000 from Motavo Venture Group, an investment firm owned by Peter Kopp.