



## 'The only way she could get around was by crawling on the ground': Quincy man aids young African woman in gaining mobility

By [STEVE EIGHINGER](#) Quincy Herald-Whig Staff Writer published 11/29/10

Jerry Roush thought he was going to Africa simply to help dig wells (Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania). What he eventually encountered was a unique friendship, one that has proved rewarding in more ways than he might have expected. ....One of those he came in contact with in Zambia was a young woman in her late 20s named Ireen Sakala. "When we finish a well in a village, there is always a picture taken with the village leaders," said Roush... "After we were done taking this one particular picture in Zambia, I noticed a woman sitting on the ground under a mango tree who motioned me over." She told Roush she was handicapped and asked if there would be any way he could help her get a wheelchair. The woman in question was Sakala, who told of how she had polio when she was young. "The only way she could get around was by crawling on the ground," Roush said.

Roush was moved by her story and went about trying to arrange for a device that would help Sakala. He worked with friends, acquaintances and fellow volunteers on a journey that led him to Personal Energy Transportation (PET) in Columbia, MO, .... The process took about a year, but Sakala finally received her PET. It is what happened afterward that has touched Roush's heart even more. Sakala, who is now raising a little girl, paid her good fortune forward. "Ireen helped form a support group for handicapped people in her region, and has helped many others get PETs," Roush said. "By this fall, she had helped about 50 individuals get PETs. Ireen just didn't receive a gift, she passed it on ... and she continues to do that. "With her blessing, she has helped bless so many others. She planted the seed when she asked for that wheelchair."

Sakala's attitude and approach to life is a product of her environment, Roush believes. "You just fall in love with the people (in that region)," he said. "They have so little, but they will do anything for you. When you come home from there, you come back different. ..."They are a warm-hearted people," he said. Sakala is a living -- and riding -- testimony to that observation.



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