

Missionaries help wheelchair bound man

Ron Sibiya

The life of a wheelchair-bound man, Francis Jim, changed for the better after he received a brand new wheelchair from American missionaries, the I-quad team.

The wheelchair, worth over R3 000, was handed to Jim at PopUp centre in Salvokop last Friday.

The I-Squad team, consisting of 29 volunteers, is camped out in tents at PopUp centre for a month. They are involved with various programmes and services within PopUp.

A member of I-Squad, Lauren Lee, initiated the programme of assisting Jim after she had met him at the PopUp soup kitchen. Lee was volunteering at the soup kitchen to dish up soup and bread to over 100 disadvantaged Salvokop residents.

Jim, in an old worn-out wheelchair, queued daily for his only meal.

The condition of his wheelchair made it difficult for him to travel on gravel roads and on uneven areas such as in the backyard where he stays in Salvokop.

Jim is actually a Zimbabwean national who depended on selling sweets on the corner of Du Toit and Skinner streets to make a living.

The government cannot provide him with a disability grant, as he is not a South African.

He is one of thousands of Zimbabweans who came to South African to look for greener pastures as their country experiences an economic crisis.

The money he makes from selling sweets is, however, not enough to satisfy his basic needs. He has to pay R175 monthly rent to the landlord, for living in a shack in the back yard.

He suffers from cerebral palsy, which



Margarete Korwin, Vallerie Müller, Phia Lindeque, Timo Graumann, Sister Kate van den Berg, Francis Jim and Daniel Kröll.

resulted in him being reliant on a wheelchair to get around, but he told Rekord that he did not allow his physical and mental condition to limit him from doing what he wanted to do.

"I prefer to do things myself rather than being assisted," Jim said.

Daniel Kröll, one of PopUp's German volunteers who assisted in the programme,

said Jim's fighting spirit was amazing.

"If I were Jim I would have given up," Kröll said.

This was evident when Jim kept on denying assistance from the volunteers who offered to push him in a new wheelchair to his shack from the PopUp centre.

Among many things, Jim needs a bed to sleep on.



Daniel Kröll shows Francis' old wheelchair.