

SUNDAY PROFILE

Rick and Kay Bunch were inspired to help disabled people gain freedom with hand-cranked transportation devices.



Rick and Kay Bunch are pictured at their home Wednesday. Both believe strongly in serving the community. V. RICHARD HARO/THE COLORADOAN

Church couple tries to generate change

By Sarah Jane Kyle
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Fort Collins residents Rick and Kay Bunch are driven by faith and the desire to make this world a better place.

"My idea of church in the first place is that we do as a community what we're unable to individually," Rick said. "You have to pool your resources and reach out to people to make their lives better."

Kay is the outreach pastor at Community of Christ Church in Fort Collins, 220 E. Oak St. Since the couple moved here in 2006 for retirement, they've made an effort through their church and personally to improve the world around them. The church has ongoing efforts to help local nonprofits, including Homeless Gear's Street Outreach program, and most recently, a project launched by the couple to help "a culture that crawls" in developing countries.

Kay was first introduced to Personal Energy Transportation while visiting her college roommate in Columbia, Mo. PET is a solution created by Mel West of Columbia, Mo., to provide mobility to people who lost the use of their legs due to disease, accident or land mines.

In learning more about the devices, which are hand-cranked and capable of navigating the treacherous unpaved roads and trails of poor countries, the couple was confronted by a culture they didn't know existed and stories of people "who had to say in their home for years" because they couldn't move or get help after the loss of their limbs.

More than 21 million people in the world don't have mobility because of the loss of their legs or feet, Rick said.

"If you were in Fort Collins and didn't have any legs, you'd have all kinds of services and people who would help you," Kay said. "Who has ever heard of a culture that has to

crawl living here in America? But in poor countries, they don't have anything. When you hear their stories, it breaks your heart."

Upon returning to Fort Collins, Rick and Kay started sharing what they learned with their church, family and friends and dedicated the first three months of this year to fundraising for "two, maybe four" of the vehicles. All supplies and labor for a PET is donated, but it costs \$250 to ship the device to a person in need.

Families in the church hosted donation dinners. Rick and Kay helped organize fundraisers, including a magic show put on by the church's youth group. A change jar sat in a model PET Rick built for the church lobby — which gathered \$160 alone.

As they tallied the funds at the end of the outreach project, the church was able to raise enough money to send 20 PET devices to El Salvador.

The outpouring of the community

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