

Scooter business gives disabled their lives back

September 18, 2003 - The way Dave Simms looks at it, he is not just providing the elderly and disabled with mobility equipment, he also is giving them their lives back.

About a month ago, Simms opened Freedom Scooters and Mobility Equipment in the Park Place shopping center in Freehold, off Park Avenue (Route 33).

The store specializes in the sales of **power wheelchairs** and scooters, which allow senior citizens and disabled people of all ages not only a way to get around their house, but also to participate in activities outside of the home, Simms said.

"People don't realize how many people are homebound," Simms, 46, said. "Most of us don't know about it because most of these people are sitting home and have no way of getting out and about."

Simms said more than 1.4 million state residents suffer from some type of disability, many of whom are unable to travel outside of their homes. They shouldn't have to struggle with a cane or a walker, he said.

"We want to help them get out of being trapped in their homes," Simms said. "We want to help people's quality of life."

He said he mostly visits potential customers at their homes for free trials. Simms offers between 30 and 40 different types of scooters and power **wheelchairs**, which travel between 5 and 10 mph.

New technology has helped make the equipment more advanced, Simms said. They can make quick and sharp turns, and many are small enough to maneuver in the house.

The most difficult part, he said, is getting people to admit they need help getting around.

"Denial is the biggest part of what we have to deal with," Simms said. "They're embarrassed because they feel they're giving in, but they're actually gaining more ability."

But he said new styles of the equipment make them more attractive for prospective buyers. They come in "fancy" colors, such as candy apple red and viper blue, and feature more contours and sleek designs.

Simms said a lot of senior citizens live in Monmouth and Ocean counties and many of them have disabilities that make walking difficult, such as arthritis and respiratory and heart problems.

Living down the Shore is a good reason for them to buy power **wheelchairs** and scooters, he said. Having such equipment makes trips to the boardwalk or Atlantic City more realistic.

"They all want to be active," he said.

Simms said one of his most satisfying sales was to an elderly man who "never saw his back yard until he got a scooter."

Scooters at his store cost between \$800 and \$2,500, he said, while the dual-engine power **wheelchairs** run between \$1,500 and \$5,000. Manual **wheelchairs** cost between \$300 and \$600.

His business, at 590 Park Ave., Suite 1B, also offers walkers, portable ramps and safety equipment for the bathroom, including shower chairs and transfer benches.

For more information or to schedule an appointment for an in-home visit, call (732) 577-7033 ext. 11 or (888) 483-7333 or visit www.freescooters.com.