



## ***FREE of South Hampton Roads Chapter – FAQs***

### **Helping Those in Need Find Independence through Mobility**

**What is The FREE Foundation?** The FREE Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides mobility related rehabilitation equipment to enhance independence and improve quality of life. FREE collects, sanitizes, repairs and gifts donated mobility equipment to adults in need and at risk in Virginia. The FREE Foundation, also known as FREE, is officially named the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment & Endowment. FREE was founded in Roanoke, VA in 1999.

**What is rehabilitation mobility equipment?** Any piece of equipment that helps someone regain and maintain their mobility and independence. Examples include wheelchairs, walkers, power chairs, lift chairs, bathroom transfer aids, canes and crutches.

**Why is gifting mobility equipment important?** People who go without needed mobility equipment fall more often. When they fall, they wind up in emergency rooms, hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities. They lose their mobility and their independence. When FREE gifts equipment, falls drop by over 80%, resulting in dramatic drops (80%+) in ER visits, hospital stays and transfers to nursing homes and assisted living. This saves Virginians millions of dollars annually.

**What communities are served by FREE?** FREE serves Virginia communities in Roanoke, Lynchburg, Winchester, Martinsville, Richmond and the New River Valley. Last year, the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and its Commissioner, Jim Rothrock, encouraged FREE to consider expanding to serve both South Hampton Roads and Richmond. DRS and Commissioner Rothrock have been long-time supporters of FREE and manage a grant to the foundation from the Commonwealth Neurotrama Initiative. The new FREE of Richmond chapter opened in December. We are targeting the South Hampton Roads chapter to open in late Spring of this year.

**Is there a need for FREE in South Hampton Roads?** Absolutely. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of uninsured adults under 65 grew by more than 10 percent in South Hampton Roads between 2008 and 2009, faster than in Virginia or the nation. In Norfolk, nearly 24 percent of adults under 65 held no health insurance. On top of that, the number of underinsured adults who can't get needed equipment continues to grow.

**Does FREE Foundation serve the Peninsula area and the Eastern shore?** Transportation logistics and limitations on available volunteer time mean the new chapter will not be actively serving those areas. However, persons in need from those areas who have the ability to get to our location to pick up their equipment will be welcomed and served by FREE.

**I have gently used mobility equipment that I would like to donate. Where can I donate it?** Simply drop your tax-deductible donation off at any Tidewater area Goodwill store or donation site. The folks at Goodwill will make sure that donation gets to FREE and is put to good use.

**Why used equipment rather than new equipment?** Thousands of no longer needed walkers, wheelchairs, shower seats, power chairs, lift chairs and other durable medical equipment now clutter attics, closets and garages in our area. Often, this equipment is practically new and has much more usable life. FREE has developed a volunteer-based model that collects this equipment and repairs and sanitizes it to be used again. Without the cost burden of

buying new equipment, FREE is able to leverage its resources and gift many more pieces of equipment to those in need. For every \$1 invested in FREE, FREE gives back over \$33 in equipment and healthcare cost savings to the communities it serves. In 2011, FREE expects to receive approximately \$500,000 in donated equipment.

**Where is FREE of South Hampton Roads located?** We are currently located at 828 Healthy Way in Virginia Beach, VA 23462.

**How do I know if I qualify for equipment from FREE?** If you have no other means of obtaining the mobility equipment your doctor prescribes, you can download the FREE of South Hampton Roads application by clicking the 'Applications' tab at [www.free-foundation.org](http://www.free-foundation.org). You will need to submit proof that you qualify financially and have a physician's prescription for the needed equipment.

**Does FREE serve children?** In Virginia, children in need of mobility equipment have access to many other sources of help that address their needs. Therefore, FREE focuses on serving the at risk adult population.

**Can I make a financial contribution to FREE of South Hampton Roads?** Yes. Go to [www.free-foundation.org](http://www.free-foundation.org) and contribute. All donations from South Hampton Roads area residents will go to the FREE of South Hampton Roads chapter.

**How else can I help?** Get the word out about FREE and its mission. Follow FREE on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/FREE-Foundation-of-Virginia/101652323220841> and help us build buzz about all that FREE is accomplishing.

**Who supports FREE?** All gifts of equipment come from members of the local communities that are served by FREE. FREE is supported by grants from private and public sources and individual contributions. FREE partners with DRS and with Goodwill Industries. In South Hampton Roads, FREE is supported by grants from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation and the Sentara Healthcare Foundation. FREE is part of the Virginia Reuse Network (VRN), which includes DRS, the Virginia Assistive Technology System, the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and an informal network comprised of various human services agencies, medical facilities, churches and other similar organizations. The VRN is supported by several funding sources, including the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the federal Assistive Technology Act.

#### Contact info:

*South Hampton Roads Chapter*

*Valeria Mitchell – President, FREE of SHR Chapter*

*Crystal Mendez – Administrative Assistant*

*Office: (757) 771-6183*

*FAX: (757) 447-6333*

*E-mail: [shr@free-foundation.org](mailto:shr@free-foundation.org)*

*Website: [www.free-foundation.org](http://www.free-foundation.org)*