



Free2Go™
MOBILITY



Lesli Wang

You are Free to Go

Lesli Wang's mother inspired the necessity of her invention

By Lisa Crawford Watson

Her elderly mother has arthritis and a degenerative muscle disease, so mom started using a cane to get around, and then progressed to using a rollator – a rolling walker with a seat. One time, her mother got stuck in the stall of a public restroom. It was devastating. The more upset she got, the weaker she became.

After that, her mother started turning down invitations, and refusing to consume liquids if she knew she had to leave the house. Her world was getting smaller.

At home, her mother used a commode placed on the toilet, so she didn't have to lower and lift herself so far. When traveling, she took the commode along. Her daughter didn't particularly like to claim it as it came around the luggage carousel.

There had to be a better way to accommodate her mother.

"The toilet is not a subject people want to talk about," says daughter Lesli Wang. "I was raised that you don't engage in bathroom talk. Perhaps this is why many have overlooked the importance of bathroom safety, of making things portable and discreet for the disabled. Plus, there is an assumption that ADA-compliant restrooms address the needs of all people with reduced mobility."

Wang has done her homework. Which is what led her, along with her determination to help her mom, to invent the Free2Go™ Rollator, the first product that combines bathroom safety and mobility. It makes so much sense, it seems obvious. But it wasn't necessary until

it became essential. Necessity really is the mother of invention.

Wang, a commercial property manager in the Bay Area, left her job last fall to work full-time on the product she invented to protect her mother.

Certainly people can go into a handicap stall, says Wang, which is basically designed for people transferring from a seated position, such as a wheelchair. But if they use a walking aid, it can be hard to negotiate the space, or maybe the toilet is not at the right height, or the grab bars are awkwardly placed and may create more hazard than help.

"The risk of a debilitating accident increases when there is no support close to the body to assist with sitting, lifting and preventing a fall," says Wang. "It is reported that those who survive a fall spend more than \$19 billion in directly related medical costs."

"The Free2Go™ Rollator incorporates the benefits of a raised toilet seat and toilet safety frame into a rolling walker or rollator," says Wang. "So mobility-challenged individuals can safely, confidently and discreetly use a toilet in any restroom – at home, in the homes of others, and in public restrooms. The Free2Go™ Rollator's three-in-one benefits also make it ideal for travel."

Here's how it works. The device looks and operates like a conventional rollator, except Wang has incorporated a commode under the seat.

Simply roll it into a bathroom or public rest-

room, and position it right over the standard toilet. Set the brake, lift the seat, and sit down, at the right height, between the safety bars of the rollator. There's even a pouch under the seat to hold cleaning wipes to wipe down the seat. Then rise, with the help of the rollator, lower the seat, release the brake, and walk on out.

"So much of what we do to prolong seniors' independence – installing monitoring devices, ramps and chair lifts, increasing lighting and removing throw rugs – is to prevent falls. Toilet safety is part of this. But to truly promote independence," says Wang, "toilet safety must extend beyond the home."

Toilet safety also extends beyond the elderly population. Wang recently sold a Free2Go™ Rollator to a 54-year-old woman in Australia who suffers from a degenerative muscle disease. The Australian woman had largely become housebound because she couldn't carry her commode with her. She loved to travel, but that, she assumed, was over. Until she discovered the Free2Go™, which has completely changed her life.

"This woman may live till she's in her 90s," says Wang. "Was she really going to be housebound for another 40 years? Not if I can help it. This situation is real. We're just real people, like so many others, with a real need, and we want to make things easier." ■

For more information, visit www.free2gomobility.com.