

Q When was your company established, and what services do you provide?

A We've been in business since early 2007, but I'd worked providing similar services for about six years prior to that, so I already knew the ropes and had begun establishing a network of agents and suppliers at locations around the world. We're headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and basically what we do is provide equipment and services to travelers with disabilities, including oxygen, wheelchairs, scooters, power chairs, walkers, and equipment for the hearing impaired. We also offer mini-refrigerators for insulin storage, hospital beds, concentrators and nebulizers, transfer beds, and patient lifts and ramps. We can even provide staff to escort passengers on designated sailings or charters, and these are people who have undergone training and stringent background checks before they come into contact with any of our clients. People who are planning a trip can contact us and we'll deliver whatever they need to any location they choose, including their stateroom aboard the cruise ship they'll be traveling on or to their hotel onshore. Special Needs at Sea is a division of the Special Needs Group, which markets the Neatech "Joy on the Beach," or JOB, wheelchair, in addition to distributing Virox disinfectant accelerated hydrogen peroxide technology. We also make sure all of our equipment is completely sanitized between rentals using the same technology. In addition, we provide the materials that are used in relief areas on cruise ships for service animals—I always tell people that's found on the "poop deck"—so we're involved in providing quite a wide range of products and services for travelers with disabilities. And even though we aren't travel agents ourselves, we do work closely with them to make sure their clients' needs are met as part of their vacation package. We achieve this by having representatives who are located in 55 cities in 20 countries around the world who maintain stock for local delivery and have also established supplier networks so that we can always get what we need as quickly as possible.

Q I'm sure you've developed close relationships with all the major cruise lines over the years.

A That's true, we have. We have relationships with Royal Caribbean, Princess, Celebrity



Cruises, Holland America, Carnival, Crystal Cruises, Cunard, and the Disney Cruise Line, among others. We're especially excited about a new pilot program we're launching with the Holland America Line, where we'll place an attended kiosk at a port where guests who've made arrangements with us can pick up the scooter or wheelchair they've rented, and we'll even be able to service customers who haven't placed their orders in advance. As I've mentioned, we can also deliver equipment directly to a passenger's stateroom and then they can drop it right back off at the kiosk on their return. We thought this would be a good way of taking their needs into consideration as our services

evolve, and we hope that the other lines will be interested in considering a similar relationship since it's such a great benefit for their passengers. In addition, we can help people who find themselves in emergency situations while they're traveling, like when their mobility equipment breaks down or is damaged, and our operators are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Q Why do you do this, from a personal standpoint?

A The answer to that question is found in every thank-you note we receive from someone who has taken advantage of our services and then written to let us know we helped make their travels enjoyable, or even possible in some cases. One day not long ago I was filling up one of our delivery vans at a gas station, and a woman approached to ask what the logo on the side meant. I told her that we deliver oxygen and mobility equipment to people who are taking a cruise, and she was amazed, because she didn't know anything like that existed. As it turned out, her mother was in poor health and had become isolated, and she said "Do you mean you can help Mom get back out in the world and start traveling again?" Any of your readers can understand what something like this can mean, but just think about family members and caregivers who want to see their loved ones safe, healthy, and enjoying life. So that's a really big part of my reason for loving what I do. If you can make a living, and make a difference, then you're really one of the lucky few. *AG*

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