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**Ward brings his gospel on wheels to town**



Ardie Arvidson/The Messenger

Randy Ward serves God by bringing his ‘Gospel on Wheels: The Main in the Wheelchair Singing for Jesus’ ministry to churches and giving concert.

By Ardie Arvidson
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The wheelchair spokesman for God has turned the tragedies of his life into something positive, something good, a singing ministry on wheels.

“If [God] can change me, He can change anybody,” Randy Ward said.

Ward of Bolton, N.C., known as “Gospel on Wheels: The Man in the Wheelchair Singing for Jesus,” will be singing along with the Strait Gate Quartet and Bibletones at The Music Hall on Harry Byrd Highway between Hartsville and Darlington at 6 p.m. Oct. 17.

Ward, who was in Hartsville recently visiting his friend Diane King, offers his services to churches for free singing southern and country gospel in addition to giving his testimony.

Ward grew up in the Boys Home, Lake Waccamaw, N.C., and attended church as a youth. When he was 17-years-old he joined the U.S. Army, had aspirations of playing football and running track for the Army.

Ward said he was a good athlete, played football and ran track and was possibly on his way to the Olympics when tragedy struck. On leave for the Christmas holidays, Ward was involved in an automobile accident on Christmas Day in 1970.

As a result of the accident, Ward was paralyzed from the waist down. Without the use of his legs, his dreams were shattered.

Ward said he went through some rough times for years after the accident, blaming God, hating the driver of the car, and being mad at the world. There was a period of his life when drug and alcohol addictions ruled his life. He said his first wife died of a drug overdose, and from that point on his life began to change.

He was living in California and decided to return to his roots. He went to Bible college and started playing wheelchair basketball for the Port City Spokesmen, a National Wheelchair Basketball Association Division III champion team.

As he found his calling, Ward realized preaching was not it. Singing was.

He has made several CDs and has songs climbing the gospel charts. “U.S. Gospel News” magazine featured Ward as its artist of the month for October.

His song “I’ve Been There” has made it to No. 11 on the country gospel charts and No. 56 on the southern gospel music chart CMP magazine list.

His latest release, “He Said Live” is climbing the charts, too.

Ward said he is at his best when he is in church singing and giving his testimony.

Today he travels throughout South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee. Almost every week he sings in churches and at concerts, gives his testimony and reaches out to people who may be as lost as he once was.

Ward said he needs no special assistance. His staff takes care of everything including sound system.

Ward said he doesn’t charge for his services.

“Salvation is free,” he says.

The gospel singer added that he would like to bring his musical message to Hartsville churches and those in surrounding communities. To book Ward, go to his Web site <http://www.gospelonwheels.com> or call (910) 655-0417.

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