

# BUSINESS ADVOCATE

An Alabama based engineering firm with a culture of giving back is changing the lives of mobility challenged children at home and across the world.

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# TRULY MOVING

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**ENGINEERING FIRM  
DISCOVERS HOW  
GIVING BACK  
CAN LEAD TO LIFE  
CHANGING COMMUNITY  
INVOLVEMENT**

Mobile-based Hargrove Engineers + Constructors is already renowned as a preeminent international firm, however the company's legacy of innovation is now leaving its mark in the non-profit world, as well.

Hargrove, a full-service EPC, automation, life sciences and technical services firm, has been headquartered in Alabama's Port City since its founding in 1995. The company now operates 16 full-service offices across Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Mexico.

Wielding the capability of a global EPC and controls + automation company, Hargrove takes great pride in still delivering the responsiveness of a small, local firm.

Ultimately, the team at Hargrove is a family, albeit a rapidly growing one, and giving back to



the communities in which the firm operates is a core pillar of the company. To that end, the Hargrove Foundation's philanthropic work has boomed right alongside the

***"THERE IS A LOT OF INNOVATION, THERE IS A LOT OF HEART IN HARGROVE TO DO MORE AND GIVE BACK MORE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING OUR OFFICES."***

company's growth. Since its inception in 2012, the foundation has contributed over \$2 million to charitable causes across Education, Arts & Culture, Sports Activities, and Health & Human Services.

Yet, Hargrove's mission to give back has gone much further than dollars and cents.

It was December 2015, and Hargrove team member Michelle Jones was at the historic Saenger Theatre in Mobile to see her son's

class put on "A Christmas Carol." Just blocks away from Hargrove headquarters, a fellow mom at the play mentioned to Jones that she needed to find an engineering firm or university department that could design a way for her daughter, Emma, to get around.



Emma, like many children in similar situations with limited mobility, could not qualify for insurance to cover an electronic wheelchair because she had not proven to a medical professional that she had the capacity to safely operate one.

From there, EMMA was born -- Engineered Machine for Mobility and Access. Named in honor of its namesake, Emma Pablo, the first EMMA was delivered by Hargrove in October 2016.

The engineering firm takes a typical toy car you'd buy on the shelf and then meticulously overhauls each one to make a unique EMMA that fits the individual needs of every recipient. The adaptive EMMAs provide convenient, accessible pathways for development of the necessary skills to meet insurance requirements for electronic wheelchairs for some recipients, and for others the EMMA is a more long-term mobility solution.

Studies have shown that the ability to control one's movement through space has a direct impact on social, cognitive and speech skills. Providing mobility limited children with access to these adaptive toy EMMAs



has the potential for additional life-changing impacts. Each EMMA can be customized with head switches, joysticks and push buttons to match individual situations.

Over the past five years, one chance conversation at a school play has led to life changing opportunities for numerous children. Jones now serves as executive director of harGIVES (Hargrove Innovative Volunteer Engineering Services Organization), a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to giving back using time and talent. HarGIVES' main initiative is still the Hargrove Adaptive Toy (HAT) Project, yet the organization is positioned to identify and respond to any community need in which engineering and technical expertise could be used to meet that need.

The most rewarding part for Jones is working with all of the families and children, she explained. Through the HAT Project, these families have experienced huge individual victories, and that's how harGIVES gauges success.

"They have the absolute biggest smiles on their face," Jones said, speaking of the moment when a child first operates their

**LEFT PAGE**

*An EMMA recipient gets ready to cruise around in her adapted Power Wheels Cadillac Escalade.*

**THIS PAGE**

*Left: Hargrove engineers pride themselves on using their time and talent to tackle community needs.*

*Right: The HAT Project delivers huge victories in the lives of families.*

**NEXT PAGE**

*Left: HarGIVES is constantly innovating to deliver mobility solutions to children in need.*

*Right: The future is bright for the HAT Project, which is in the process of upgrading and expanding its offerings.*





adaptive toy. “And hearing from them about the victories that they were able to have -- that is most definitely the most rewarding experience for me as part of the HAT Project. Giving anybody the opportunity to succeed -- I was raised with the belief that there is absolutely nothing we can’t accomplish if you put your mind to it. So, providing an avenue for others to have success in areas where they were previously told there were roadblocks is just an amazing, amazing thing, and I’m so grateful to be a part of it.”

While COVID essentially paused harGIVES’ efforts for two years, the program is now ramping back up. Jones said that there are five adaptive toys currently being updated, in addition to two new EMMAs that the Baton Rouge office recently gave out and two additional new units to be awarded soon.

The HAT Project is continuing

to innovate, as well. Hargrove engineers are working on upgrading from the existing 12-volt battery toy to a 24-volt model that can handle larger and older children and teenagers.

“There is a lot of innovation, there is a lot of heart in Hargrove to do more and give back more to improve the quality of life in communities surrounding our offices,” Jones added.

Members of the community can go to [www.hargives.org](http://www.hargives.org) to submit

a project idea or let the team know about a need they can help address. Physical therapists and families can apply for an EMMA on this website, too.

Looking ahead, Jones stressed that harGIVES is always looking to conquer new challenges.

“We are looking to expand our offerings to continue equipping people to grow and develop more and have freedoms where otherwise they’ve been limited,” she remarked.

For more information on the Hargrove family of companies, please visit [www.hargrove-epc.com](http://www.hargrove-epc.com). **BA**

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