

VAN-TASTIC!

At Gillis, we believe in the value of providing lessons in the community that prepare children to become adults. Field trips hold value for any child, but for Gillis students and residents, such community interaction is critical to their positive socialization. Chaotic family situations combined with violence and deprivation skew our students' experience and relationship to society. Field trips provide them an opportunity to witness many new aspects of their community.

Another important concept behind Gillis field trip programming is the modeling of idle/leisure time and exposure to positive interests and activities. For many of our students, the primary leisure time models they have witnessed encompass little more than television viewing and substance abuse. They need to be shown that a myriad of recreational choices, hobbies and interests await them in Kansas City. A fishing trip may seem a frivolous exercise for some students. However, for our kids, the experience demonstrates a positive recreational pursuit in great contrast to the options they have seen before.

All of this, of course, depends on our ability to transport our boys. And over the last year, our transportation capabilities went down to two ten-year-old 6-passenger minivans. Most of the time, one or the other of these vans was in the shop. It was clear that in order for the kids we serve to get the most out of life and treatment we needed some new wheels.

A lot of things had to come together for Gillis to get vans. We hoped that we would be able to raise enough money to purchase a couple of used passenger vans by the end of the year. The first big help came from the William T. Kemper Foundation at Commerce Bank. The Foundation more than matched our available funds with a much needed grant.

When we began shopping for vans, we got some much needed help from Dan Adams and the other great people at Bob Smith Motors a few blocks away in Waldo. Dan scoured the city to find the best deal possible for Gillis and our boys.

Dan, in turn, got some great help from Ken Miles and Nicole Liens at Manheim Auctions. They found two nearly BRAND NEW vans for an amazing price for us. But the excellent deal meant that we'd need to come up with significantly more money.

Thankfully, a long-time special friend of Gillis who prefers to not have his gifts publicized, along with the David Hancock family, pledged enough money toward the vans that we were able to make the deal go through.



All of these amazing people helped make the van project work, and it seems like a miracle that it all came together, but in the end these gracious donors and businessmen made a big difference in the lives of hundreds of children over the next twelve years. Thank you very much, Mr. Fields, Ms. Rice, Ken, Nicole, Dan, the Hancock family, the William T. Kemper Foundation, Manheim Auctions, Commerce Bank, and Bob Smith motors. The boys appreciate this very, very much.