

Community Works Together to Present Accessible Van to Deserving Family

By Dana Goldberg

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From Left: Larry Grueninger, Margie Grueninger, Donald Dufty, Ramona Carmeci, Mary Jane Samanich and Glenn Samanich

Wall Twp, NJ – The Samanich Family and the Grueninger family met for the first time inside the Monmouth Vans garage, finding shelter from the snow. The Grueningers wanted to see the reaction as the Samaniches lay eyes on their new van, a valuable piece of equipment they could not have afforded without the Grueninger's help.

When Larry Grueninger and his wife, Margie, of Lakehurst, NJ, were looking to upgrade their accessible family vehicle, they decided to donate their old van to a family in need rather than trading it in for credit on a new one. They went to Monmouth Vans where they had purchased their vehicle in the past, and spoke to Donald Dufty, Mobility Consultant, to discuss their options.

When he finished speaking with the Grueningers, Dufty contacted Ramona Carmeci, Manager of Family Support Programs at the Family Support Center of New Jersey. "I called Ramona as soon as I could because I had worked with her in the past and I was confident she would find a deserving family," Dufty said.

At a training just a week earlier, Carmeci met Mrs. Samanich, who expressed her need of such a vehicle. Mary Jane and Glenn Samanich from Ringwood, NJ are parents of three children; their four-year-old daughter, Rebecca, has Cerebral Palsy and epilepsy. Rebecca uses a wheelchair and it was getting harder and harder to travel with her without an accessible van.

"I had to be honest with her," Carmeci said. "I told Mrs. Samanich it would be a once in a lifetime event if we had a van donated. I was so happy when Don told me the news. I called Mrs. Samanich immediately."

The van is completely automatic, with automatic entry, power entry doors, and an automatic chair lift, but was not originally built to support a child's wheelchair. Upon evaluating the families need verses what the van offered, Gene Morton, Owner of Monmouth Vans, suggested a number of remedies, and at no cost to the family, Monmouth Vans adjusted the vehicle to suit them. They added a four-point manual belt tie-down system, and a bench seat in the back for the Samanich's other two children. Monmouth Vans also equipped the van with an automatic tie-down system for when Rebecca starts using a larger wheelchair as she gets older.

"Receiving this van is truly a blessing. It will allow us to grow as a family," said Mary Jane Samanich. "We are so grateful for the generosity of the Grueninger family."

It is only with this tight web of community supports that all the dots were able to be connected to provide the Samanich family a new van and a new start.

Monmouth Vans Access & Mobility and Garden State Scooters (GSS): Monmouth Vans specializes in the sale

and service of modified vehicles for the disabled. Monmouth Vans is a National Mobility Equipment Dealer (NMEDA) and Quality Assurance Association Dealer (QAP). GSS operates as a separate division and is a Medicare Provider. For more information, call 800-221-0034 or visit www.monvans.com.

The Family Support Center of NJ (FSCNJ):

FSCNJ is a clearinghouse of up-to-date information and services to families caring for someone with a disability, chronic health condition or other special needs. Call 800-FSC-NJ10 or visit www.fscnj.org for more information. FSCNJ is an affiliate of The Family Resource Network (www.familyresourcenetwork.org) which includes Autism Family Services of NJ, Caregivers of NJ and the Epilepsy Foundation of NJ.

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