

New nonprofit driven to help fellow Tipton native fund accessible van

enGAGE Mobility is a nonprofit organization with a mission to help families fund wheelchair accessible vehicles.

The charity was founded in 2022 by Hannah (Combs) Wingo, originally from Tipton, and her husband Evan. The Wingo family has experienced first-hand the life changing benefits of having a ramp van to transport their 8-year-old son Gage, who's a full time wheelchair user. They've also been on the receiving end of overwhelming kindness and generosity. Their experiences inspired them to start enGAGE Mobility to help other families in the same way.

The first family selected to receive assistance from enGAGE Mobility is fellow Tipton native Michelle (Dick) Lewis. Michelle and her husband Chris, who married in Tipton in 2011, reside in Kansas City with their daughter Eliana. Eliana has an SCN2A-related disorder resulting from a rare genetic mutation.

Eliana's medical care requires frequent trips to the hospital and clinic appointments. The Lewis family transports Eliana in their cars to and from these appointments, as well as school and other destinations. Each trip requires Eliana be transferred from her wheelchair to a car seat, with her chair being lifted and stowed in the vehicle for the commute. The repetitive heavy lifting takes a physical toll, which prompted



Easier transports

Hannah and Evan Wingo find family trips much easier with their ramp van to help transport their son, Gage, who is a full time wheelchair user. The vans are very costly and they have started a 501(c)(3) organization to help families like theirs. A fundraiser is planned for May 5 in Tipton, a Cinco de Mayo MexiVan Dinner which will benefit fellow Tipton native Michelle (Dick) and Chris Lewis and their daughter, Eliana.

(Photos courtesy Hannah Wingo)

the end of May. The extensive post-op recovery makes safe, reliable, simplified transportation even more crucial.

"As a new mom, experiencing the isolating reality of raising a child impacted by disability,

Michelle was the first person to reach out and offer me a lifeline of sorts. Her empathy and encouragement reminded me I wasn't alone," says Hannah Wingo, founder of enGAGE Mobility.

"That important reminder has persisted through the years in various ways. We're not meant to do parenthood, or anything in life, all alone. Accepting help isn't always easy, but it's always worth it. Connections and community are what it's all about." enGAGE Mobility is striving to connect the Lewis family with a community of supporters to collectively offer financial support to fund an accessible vehicle. The fundraising campaign for Eliana began in January 2023 and will continue through May, with an overall goal of \$50,000 to go towards the purchase of a ramp van.

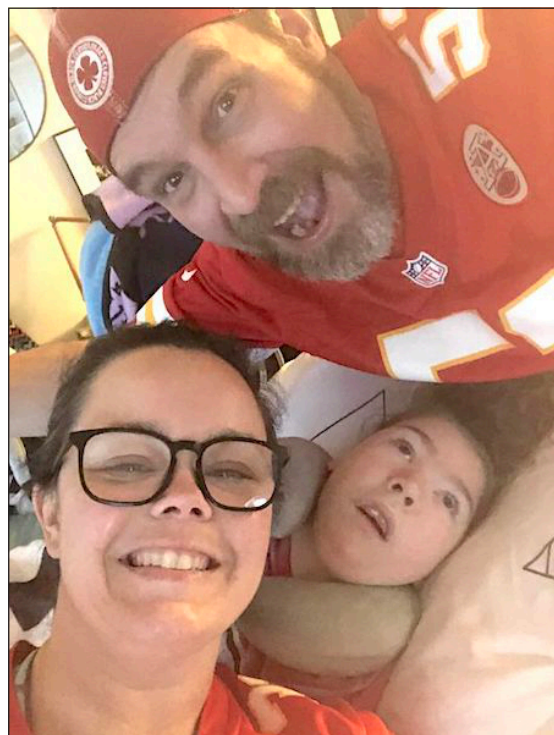
Contributions from individuals, businesses, and organizations are being actively sought to reach this goal. enGAGE Mobility is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Gifts can be made online at engagemobility.org or by mail to 4363 North Essex Ave., Springfield, MO 65803.

Another opportunity to support the cause is approaching on May 5. enGAGE Mobility will host a Cinco de Mayo MexiVAN Dinner at the St. Andrew's School gym and cafeteria. The night will include a taco and nacho bar, raffle and more. Cost for dinner is \$15 per person (\$7 for kids 5-10 years old; free for kids under 5). Advance tickets are encouraged and can be purchased online at engagemobility.org.

Those interested in event sponsorship or in-kind donations can contact Hannah Wingo at 417-496-2210 or hannah@engagemobility.org.

About enGAGE Mobility

enGAGE Mobility is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on supporting the



Chiefs fans

Michelle and Chris Lewis and their daughter, Eliana, show their love of the Kansas City Chiefs with appropriate attire. Eliana has an SCN2A-related disorder resulting from a rare genetic mutation that requires use of a wheelchair.

her parents to explore better options. Their research led them to another obstacle—the exorbitant cost of accessible vans, upwards of \$90,000.

Despite the financial burden, prioritizing the purchase of a ramp van is urgent for Chris and Michelle, as Eliana is scheduled to have spinal fusion surgery at



Eliana Lewis

transportation needs of Missouri families raising children who use wheelchairs. In addition to providing informative resources about available options, enGAGE offers financial support for the purchase of an accessible vehicle or assistance with vehicle conversion. enGAGE is committed to supporting families in life-changing ways through the generous donations of its supporters. Learn more at engagemobility.org.

About the Lewis Family

Michelle and Chris Lewis live in Kansas City with their 9-year-old daughter Eliana. Michelle has been a high school educator for 17 years and currently serves as a Special Education Teacher for Pleasant Hill High School. Chris works full time as Bar Manager for Chappel's Restaurant and Sports Museum. Eliana is a third grader at the North Kansas City school district. Through the experience and outcomes surrounding Eliana's diagnosis, the Lewis family is heavily involved in the FamilieSCN2A Foundation. Information about their mission and work can be found at SCN2A.org.