

Lattimer family

On the road again

“We call it his gangsta van,” Julia Lattimer laughs. Giving in Action helped the Lattimers purchase a new wheel-chair accessible van for Julia’s son Kurt. The family then upgraded the van with tinted windows and a snazzy sound system that make Kurt feel like a star rapper. But what really rocks is the freedom the van has given him.

Kurt is 20 years old, with dark hair and an enthusiastic, crooked grin. He also has progressive motor neuron disease, and is totally dependant upon caregivers. The Lattimer’s previous vehicle couldn’t handle Kurt’s 450-pound power wheelchair, but the new van, supported in part with a grant from Giving in Action, has multiplied the possibilities for Kurt and his family. “Kurt gets endless pleasure from the van. With it, he can take his power chair to the mall, Stanley Park, the air show in Delta... It makes it possible for him to do so many more things, and to have friends outside of a very small community that he had access to before. He really loves it,” says Julia.

In addition to his hot new wheels and his upgraded social life, Giving in Action also contributed to the construction of an independent living area for Kurt adjacent to the family home. “Should Kurt live long enough, we’ll arrange staffing so he can live on his own there,” Julia says. “But right now, it’s giving all of us some breathing room. Kurt’s an adult, and he really needed to be able to separate a bit. He needed his own space. Kurt works on a communication device, and he needs to really focus. Plus he’s kind of a peace-loving, quiet sort anyway, and our house is always really busy.” Kurt’s new pad has high ceilings, and one wall of windows provides a view onto tall trees. “He loves spending time in his room. It’s spacious, it’s beautiful, it’s his own place,” says Julia.

“Kurt was never supposed to live this long, so we’re very fortunate to have him. And he does a lot of work to keep himself going. He has to do a lot of breathing exercises, and he never complains. He’s very disciplined, and that’s all great. But when you don’t have a lot of options, it’s really about making the most of what you do have. It’s about quality. And this grant has really improved his quality of life, our quality of life. It’s made an enormous difference,” Julia concludes.