

# “THE CURE MACHINE VAN” DAY! MUSTANG CLUB OF MARYLAND



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Photos by Scott Robinson  
and Steve Tapper

It was another cold, rainy, miserable day in February, and the kind of day when you just wanted to stay home and keep warm. Yet despite the freezing rain more than 40 volunteers from the Mustang Club of Maryland along with several other local Mustang clubs met at Bob Thompson’s Garage. The goal was to help a family who has had more than their share of challenges.

Bob Thompson is the current President of the Mustang Club of Maryland (MCOM), and the man responsible for spearheading this fantastic project. Under Bob’s leadership, the Mustang Club of Maryland has achieved a dramatic increase in membership and raised a considerable amount of money to donate to local charities.

Noting our involvement with charitable causes, Ryan Wagner, another MCOM member, introduced Bob to Nate Lee who had worked for Ryan in his IT business. After hearing about Nate’s five-year-old daughter Emily, who was born with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA),

Bob asked Nate if there was anything the club could do for the family, and Emily in particular, to make her more comfortable.

SMA is the number-one genetic killer of children. It is a degenerative condition that affects the motor nerves resulting in muscular wasting and weakness. It occurs in one out of every 6,000-10,000 births. Nate and his wife, Diana, had another daughter, Linnea, who would now be 8 years old, die of this disease in 2004. Fortunately, SMA does not affect their oldest daughter, Annabelle, who is 9 years old.

As it turns out, Nate had recently purchased a 2001 commercial Ford van with a diesel engine from a man in Montana. The van needed a lot of work in order to accommodate Emily and provide for her comfort. Nate outlined his “wish list” with Bob. Bob then enthusiastically promoted the project as a “Tech Day” to the members of our club, who also endorsed the project.

So on Saturday, February 5, 2011, the members of MCOM, The All American Mustang Club, and the Maryland Patriot Stangs & Ford Club met at Bob’s Garage to make this project a reality.

What happened next is something like





the hit TV Show "Extreme Makeovers," where a team of people builds or rebuilds a home for a deserving family. In this case our club volunteers performed an extreme makeover on Nate's van, and we did it all in one day!

Our goal was to make this van as comfortable for Emily as possible. Since Emily does not like the dark we added subdued lighting to the van's interior. The lighting can be changed to various color themes to help Emily relax and feel comfortable while traveling. Since Emily requires a lot of time traveling to and from the hospital, and must be moved around a lot to maintain her comfort, we added a DVD player with a movable display. The display unit can be positioned on either side of the van so that Emily can watch it no matter which way she is lying.

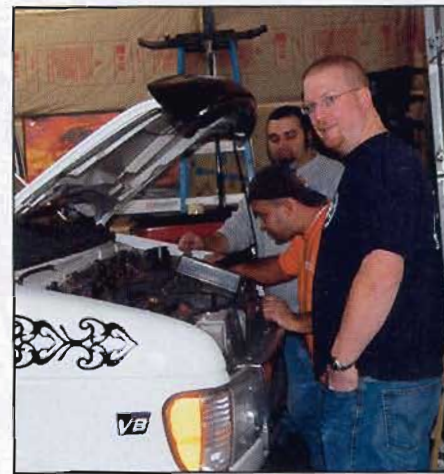
This van also has a lowered floor and required additional modifications. While the van is equipped with a wheelchair lift, it was necessary to modify the running boards three-inches lower. Dave Rummel, the club's MCA representative, added customized mounts to the running boards in order to fit the van. In addition, Dave installed a rear back up camera

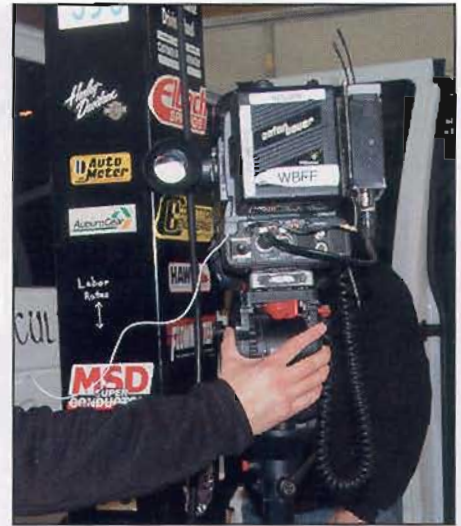
as a safety feature to help Nate better maneuver the large van and assist in parking.

Thanks to the owner of "Bill's Auto Works," and Glen Pearson of grafxguy.com, custom graphics were created and applied to the van, which note that this is a SMA-sponsored and equipped van. Fortunately that work was done the day before the restoration. Bill also cleaned up the van to prepare it for a thorough detailing.

Since I love to detail cars, Bob asked if I would be in charge of detailing the van. I arrived at 8am to set up my equipment and go over the van to see what needed to be done. Conveniently, the van was fairly clean and only required some spot cleaning and a wipe down to remove any old wax and dirt.

With help from Scott Robinson and his girlfriend, Heather, we wiped down the van with treated wipes to remove any dirt and grime. Nate pointed out some problem areas where the white paint had dulled and turned yellow. I assured Nate that we would take care of that problem and also give him a year's worth of paint protection. I used my new Griot's Garage





Machine Polisher with a polishing pad and applied Griot's Garage One-Step Sealant. One-Step Sealant is a polish and protectant in one. It will remove scratches, oxidation, and swirl marks while leaving behind a tough, durable protection for the paint for up to one year.

The Griot's Machine Polisher made quick work of the huge van! I was able to remove all of the dull, yellowed areas on the van and left a deep, sparkling shine. The polisher actually leaves very little residue to buff out but Heather did follow up using Microfiber towels to buff the van to a like-new appearance.

A couple of volunteers from the All American Mustang Club took care of polishing the chrome wheels and cleaning and treating the tires on the van. When they had finished their work, the outside of the van looked awesome!

While all of this was happening, volunteers were busy taking out the old carpeting and disassembling the dash and interior of the van for the new equipment

that was going to be installed. The Mustang Club of Maryland contributed \$500 toward new equipment to benefit Emily. Emily's father, Nate, provided a new passenger seat and club members fabricated a custom seat bracket for the installation. Map lights were also added to allow Emily's mother, Diana, the ability to monitor Emily's medical equipment.

Club Member Merci Drane, "The Tint Lady," applied tint to the van's windows and also installed sound deadening material to the inside of the van. Another club member, Jack Hardy of "Jack's Custom Floors," replaced the tattered and dirty carpeting inside the van with brand new carpeting.

Jim DeAngelis, a certified auto instructor at Catonsville Community College and Chris worked on the electronics and engine management upgrades needed for the restoration.

We established a set of projects that needed to be done to the van including: adding a new passenger seat and

## LIST OF VAN UPGRADES

### EXTERIOR

- Install drivers side running board
- Secure passenger side running board (this needs to be secured in the front and rear of the board, it is installed already and notched for the wheelchair lift)
- Install custom vinyl decals. Complete 360 degrees!
- Detail exterior, polish and seal exterior of the van
- Install rear electric plug

### INTERIOR

- Replace carpet that's easier for wheelchair to roll on
- Install passenger seat and custom made seat bracket
- Install in-dash DVD player
- Connect rear 7" LCD monitor to in-dash DVD player
- Install rear camera system to in-dash system
- Install center speakers
- Install accent lighting and map light so mom can monitor her medical equipment
- Install Disco Ball and strobe lights to finish it off!



custom seat bracket; installing a new running board to the driver's side of the van; and securing the running board on the passenger side of the van to accommodate Emily's power chair ramp. A new electrical outlet was installed on the back of the van.

The interior modifications included adding a fabricated seat bracket for the new passenger seat; installing an in-dash DVD player and GPS system, connecting a 7-inch LCD monitor to the in-dash DVD player, installing a rear view camera to the in-dash system, installing speakers throughout the van, and adding a Disco ball and strobe lights to the inside of the van to entertain and stimulate Emily as she travels in the van.

Bob's wife, Heather, and many other supporters, including Bob's parents, provided coffee, doughnuts, cakes, cookies, and later a delicious deli platter and hot Chili. We had plenty of soft drinks, too! This was indeed a big party.

The event was well publicized and attracted a lot of media attention. Channel 45, our local Fox affiliate, sent out a cameraman to document this project, and to interview Nate. Rick Hinkle who was also interviewed, volunteered to be a spokesman for the club. A lot of footage was taken and later that night we were seen on the 10pm evening news.

There is no greater feeling than to be able to personally affect the well being of a deserving family who has gone through so much in their lives. Nate and Diana were very thankful to the Mustang Club of Maryland for taking on this project to benefit Emily.

Our thanks go out to all of the wonderful people who gave of their time and talents to make this project a reality. While it is impossible to name everyone who participated in this project, those who did can be very proud of their contribution and deserve a big Thank You!

