**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:**

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**LOCAL FAMILY AMONG RECENT VICTIMS OF CICERO’S RISING CRIME RATE WHEN THEIR HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE VAN WAS STOLEN AND THEN SET ABLAZE**

**CICERO, IL**—The Trevino family of 1900 block of 48th CT in Cicero became victims of Cicero’s escalating crime rate when the handicap accessible van they use to transport two of their eldest children, both of whom are wheelchair-bound, was stolen and burned earlier this year.

In the early morning of January 31st, 2017, their van was stolen. It was a 2001 Dodge Grand Caravan that was donated by a generous family in 2014. The van was found on February 12th completely burned and destroyed. They only had liability insurance, as none of them ever considered that someone would be bold enough to steal a wheelchair accessible van. As a result, they will not be getting any money from the insurance company.

Lucy and Hugo Trevino are siblings who have a genetic condition known as Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). Progressive in nature, SMA causes severe muscular weakness, muscle wasting and can lead to premature death, depending on the type of SMA.

Having an accessible van is vital to their well-being and independence. Public transportation or reduced cost options do exist, but they are unreliable, and oftentimes, overbooked. In a city like Chicago, with the varying weather conditions, it is extremely dangerous for Lucy and Hugo to be out in any poor weather conditions (cold, rain, snow, etc.). Their hands get stiff in the cold and they can’t operate the joystick on their chairs. The chairs are electric, weigh over 300 lbs each, and thus, they cannot be out in the rain for that long. Replacing the accessible van that is retrofit for two wheelchairs, is very expensive – it could be double the cost of a regular van (starting price is $56,700). The modified vehicle needs to include safety belts, harnesses, a ramp, and other ADA equipment.

Hugo Trevino, Sr, the family’s patriarch said upon seeing the vandalized vehicle, when it was recovered nearly two weeks after being stolen, “I felt like crying. It looked like a bomb had gone off in the middle of it.”

Making matters worse, the siblings’ medical diagnosis means they need regular medical attention as the slightest bump, bruise or even common cold easily become complicated and can be reason for hospitalization. Without their handicap modified vehicle, a trip to the doctor becomes a problematic trek as public transport isn’t always readily available and/or it cannot accommodate both large wheelchairs.

When friends and relatives found out about the family’s ordeal, they immediately stepped into action to try to help replace the torched vehicle. A GoFundMe page was started on Hugo’s behalf and a fundraising event is being set up to help raise the needed funds.

**Fundraising Event and GoFundMe page Information**

**WHAT**: Overcoming Adversity - Four Wheels at a Time: A Storytelling/Poetry/Comedy Live Lit Performance Event to Benefit Lucy and Hugo Trevino

**WHERE**: Uncommon Ground, 1401 West Devon Avenue, Chicago, IL 60660

**WHEN:** Thursday, May 25, 2017. Doors open at 6:00 pm; Performances start at 7:00 pm

GoFundMe page at [www.gofundme.com/hugos-van](http://www.gofundme.com/hugos-van)

Facebook Event Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/806014649551317/>

**\*\*Tickets for the benefit event are $20 in advance and $25 at the door. Raffle tickets will be sold at the event as well.**

[**https://eventbrite.com/e/overcoming-adversity-four-wheels-at-a-time-tickets-32906319688?aff=efbeventtix**](https://eventbrite.com/e/overcoming-adversity-four-wheels-at-a-time-tickets-32906319688?aff=efbeventtix)

For more information, please contact Lihy Epstein at (847) 877-1267 or visit the above websites.

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