For years Jennilyn Jessop has driven a beat-up, worn out 1998 Astro Van. She put a lot of miles on the car— a single mother of six and a full-time student, Jennilyn has a lot of things to do and plenty of places to be. The van was “barely surviving,” Jennilyn says, “but I didn’t want to complain. I was just grateful to have it.”

Unfortunately, last time she took it to the mechanic— which she had to do quite often — the news wasn’t good. “It was leaking coolant and oil, and two of the doors didn’t work,” Jennilyn says. “He told me there were so many things wrong with it that it wasn’t worth putting any more money into it. But I didn’t have any other options, so I just crossed my fingers every morning and hoped it would start.”

However, when Jennilyn heard that Utah Valley University’s Automotive Department was planning on donating a van to a UVU student through the University’s Women’s Success Center, she immediately applied. Last month, Jennilyn was thrilled to find out that she had been selected by the Women’s Success Center to receive a refurbished Dodge Grand Caravan EX as part of UVU’s 28th annual Auto Expo & Swap Meet, one of the largest and best-known car shows in Utah.

“This is huge for me,” said Jennilyn, who started attending classes in January 2012 and has been going at least full-time every semester, including the summer. “I’m trying to get my degree as quickly as possible so I’m in a position to take better care of my kids. Now I won’t have to worry about being late for class or even missing class. I can get my children to where they need to go. It’s just awesome!”

A senior majoring in art and visual communications, with a minor in marketing, Jennilyn earned her associate degree last year and was valedictorian; she hopes to graduate with her bachelor degree next spring. “It wasn’t easy getting back into school after being a stay-at-home mom for 17 years,” says Jennilyn, who credits UVU faculty and staff with providing an incredible amount of support and encouragement. “I’ve learned so much and grown a lot. I feel like they really go out of their way to help students succeed and achieve their goals and make positive changes in their lives. At least I’ve definitely had that experience.”