

Miracle on Ferguson: Fill the Semis campaign continues to grow

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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WOOD RIVER - What started with a campaign to fill a trolley full of toys, food and household needs has grown into a campaign to fill three semi trucks in Wood River.

Sherry Gilleland, owner of **Dream Home Reality**, located at 543 E Ferguson in Wood River, said her annual goal of filling a large vehicle full of necessary items for those in need across the community has continued to expand entirely due to the generosity of the community. Last year, she filled two semis during the event. This year, during her Dec. 3 drive, Gilleland said she had to attain a third semi from **Schiber Trucking** in order to make sure she had enough space for all the donations. She said the third truck was almost entirely full of pet supplies.

"We had to call for another semi, so we are at three semis," a wide-eyed Gilleland said Saturday morning. "This is absolutely amazing. This morning at six, we went down the road to my friend's warehouse to load up the second semi, and we didn't know we would have it already full, so we had to call for a third one - a 24 foot one, and it's nothing but pet stuff."

Previous years' semi trucks featured a corner called "**Trevor's Corner**" dedicated in honor of a deceased close friend of the Gilleland family, **Trevor Tucker**. Gilleland said the sheer amount of generosity has grown Trevor's Corner into **Trevor's Truck**.



"We have an awesome community, and they know every year we add more and more charities," Gilleland said. "We're up to 25 now."

Those charities include local food pantries, churches, kids' outreach and animal welfare, among others. At 2 p.m., when the trucks had been loaded on Saturday, Gilleland made another announcement of expansion. Her father donated a parcel of land in **East Alton**, near **Edwardsville Road**, to Gilleland's cause. She hopes to raise as much as \$30,000 from the community so she can build a warehouse on that land and provide people and organizations in need with supplies throughout the year.

"Since we have grown so big, we started with just a trolley filled with toys, this kills your back," she said. "You know, you load all this stuff, you pack it up and you put it in a warehouse. Then you take it from the warehouse, put it on the semis and then we take it off again. We touch everything probably 10-12 times. My vision for next year is; my father has some land he's going to donate to me, and I am hoping I can get the community to come together. If we can raise about \$30,000, we can have our own warehouse built, and then we can say 'fill Santa's Warehouse.'"



Gilleland said all donations are 100 percent tax-deductible. She said her vision for Christmas at Santa's Warehouse will include a North Pole simulation complete with decorations and fake snow. Each charitable organization would have their own section of the warehouse, which they could use year-round to ensure they have a constant flow of needed materials to support those in the community in need.

"Right now, you can't see how much stuff we have on the semis," she said. "There is so much, it filled that whole warehouse down the road. people can walk in and see it. They could say, 'Oh my gosh we did this.'"

The drive to fill the semis started in July with a **Disco Bingo** fundraiser. Gilleland used the money from that event to buy materials to fill the semis.

