



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **New cars for two Head Start families make for a memorable holiday**

*Photos and raw b-roll can be downloaded [here](#) and [here](#).*

*Dec. 17, 2021* — Two wishes for wheels came true this week as Bates Collision Centers and Harris County Department of Education's Head Start division presented two special moms with rehabbed vehicles filled with presents as part of their annual Responsible Parenting Award.

In its 23rd year, Bates Collision Centers presented cars No. 41 and 42 to Destini Rhodes, a teaching assistant at Sheffield Head Start, and Alionuska Montalvo Perez, a Pugh Head Start mom. Both were nominated by Head Start staff.

Twenty-eight-year-old Rhodes is a full-time employee and student at San Jacinto College pursuing an associate's degree in early childhood education. She currently relies on a borrowed vehicle to shuttle her kids and herself to and from school and work. After unwrapping her new vehicle, a 2011 Chevy Equinox, she expressed disbelief over the generous gift.

"I feel very grateful," said Rhodes, a single mother of 3 children. "I've never been given anything in my life before. I've always had to work for everything. I can't even believe that I'm being recognized for being a good parent. It's something that you just do because you're a parent."

Throughout the year, the Bateses search for salvaged or donated vehicles that can be fixed up and given to deserving parents during the holiday season. Bates employees donate their time and skills to work on the cars and help fill them with gifts. Other community members and businesses donate gas, insurance, and materials needed to rehab the cars.

Shop owners Lee and Leila Bates have made this annual giveaway a priority because they recognize the sacrifices parents often make to provide for their children.

“Destini is an example of the kind of family that we are really searching to help with this project,” said Bates Collision Centers co-owner Leila Bates. “She’s not just sitting back waiting for good things to happen. She’s making good things happen for her family.”

Montalvo Perez, a Cuban immigrant who arrived in Texas five years ago in search of a better life for her family, also received a vehicle this week—a 2013 Mazda 3. Her 4-year-old son, Jencarlos Millan, is enrolled at the HCDE Pugh Head Start center.

“I am so grateful and relieved,” she said. “Now I can go out with my son and go to the grocery store whenever I want. When I take the bus, it becomes a whole-day ordeal. This car is truly a blessing.”

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