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DAVIES PROJECT

Davies Project Brings Free Medical Rides to Kalamazoo, Targeting Children, Expectant Mothers and NICU Families

The Davies Project, a Lansing nonprofit helping families access healthcare, has launched a pilot program in Kalamazoo County offering free rides to medical appointments for children with serious health conditions, expectant mothers, and NICU families.

David Mitchell | Thursday, April 30, 2026 | 6 min read | 2 sources cited

A Lansing-Based Nonprofit Expands to Southwest Michigan to Solve Transportation Barriers

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — A nonprofit that has spent more than a decade helping families overcome one of the most common barriers to healthcare — transportation — is now offering free rides to medical appointments in Kalamazoo County.

The Davies Project announced it is now providing free transportation for children with serious health conditions, pregnant people, and families with babies in neonatal intensive care units. The expansion addresses a persistent problem that prevents many families from accessing timely medical care.

"We want to make sure kids and expectant mothers get to all of their very important medical appointments," said Pam Riley Miklavcic of The Davies Project. "We are excited to bring this service to Kalamazoo and help ensure that children receive the care they need."

Why Transportation Matters

Research has shown that transportation challenges lead to missed appointments, which can delay treatment and worsen health outcomes. For many households, especially those already juggling illness, multiple appointments, work schedules and financial stress, simply getting to the doctor can become a crisis.

The organization has facilitated thousands of rides for families facing serious health challenges since its inception, contributing to fewer missed appointments and better outcomes for children.

"When I was a kid going through cancer treatment, I saw firsthand how difficult it is for families to get to appointments," said Drekia Cook, director of volunteer services for the Davies Project. "That experience is why we created The Davies Project."

A Relationship-Based Model

The organization distinguishes itself from rideshare services by emphasizing a relationship-based, high-touch approach. Volunteer drivers often become familiar with treatment plans, follow-up schedules and the day-to-day pressures families face.

"They come to rely on us as a support system," said Laura Young, deputy agency director. "To feel like they have at least the transportation piece covered with everything that they have going on."

The program serves several groups of families facing transportation barriers. Children from infancy through age 17 may qualify if they have a serious medical condition or diagnosis requiring specialist care. That can include chronic illnesses, developmental diagnoses such as autism, therapy appointments and ongoing treatment plans.

Pregnant people needing prenatal care may also qualify, as can parents needing transportation to visit babies in neonatal intensive care units.

The Davies Project's Origins

Founded in Lansing, The Davies Project was created after its founder and CEO, Pam Riley Miklavcic, recognized a major gap in care while supporting her own son through pediatric cancer treatment.

Her oldest son was diagnosed with cancer at age three and successfully recovered. He is now nearly 30 years old. During that experience, she saw how difficult it could be for families to consistently reach appointments, especially when treatment plans required frequent specialist visits.

"That observation is what kickstarted The Davies Project, which has since grown into a transportation and support network serving families in the Lansing area," said Young.

Kalamazoo Partnership

The nonprofit entered its twelfth year of service when it launched in Kalamazoo. Local leaders reached out through the United Way, which recognized the need for transportation services in the area.

"We were approached by the United Way," said Young. "They recognized the need for transportation services for people in Kalamazoo, and we were really excited to come this way."

The Kalamazoo expansion is launching as a pilot program. Leaders say one of the first priorities is building awareness, so families know the service exists and recruiting enough volunteers to

meet demand.

The nonprofit is partnering locally with Bronson Healthcare, the United Way and Cradle Kalamazoo. One focus will be helping reduce infant mortality and improving access to prenatal and infant care.

"We really want to focus on helping perinatal mothers and their infants and provide services to them for medical transportation for the first year after the baby is born," said Young. "And then we're also there in case any medical issue for the baby were to develop in that first year and we can stay with them."

Who Can Use the Service

Children from infancy through age 17 may qualify if they have a serious medical condition or diagnosis requiring specialist care. That can include chronic illnesses, developmental diagnoses such as autism, therapy appointments and ongoing treatment plans.

Pregnant people needing prenatal care may also qualify, as can parents needing transportation to visit babies in neonatal intensive care units.

Cook said the key requirement is that there is a transportation barrier. That may mean a family has no car, only one vehicle shared among multiple adults, or no practical way to reach appointments because of work schedules or other demands.

"There could be one car at the home, but the car is multi-purpose," Cook said. "We will make sure you get to your appointment."

A parent or guardian must accompany the child. If a parent cannot attend, another adult age 18 or older such as a grandparent, relative, family friend or neighbor may ride in their place.

Once a family is accepted into the program, rides may extend beyond specialty care. Amy Culver, the organization's family services coordinator in Kalamazoo County, said families can

also receive transportation for wellness appointments including dental, vision and mental health care.

"Once they have applied and are accepted to The Davies Project, we can provide transportation to all appointments, not just specialty appointments," Culver said. "We can provide for children checkups and to dental appointments."

Recruitment and Requirements

The nonprofit is actively recruiting drivers in Kalamazoo County. Volunteers must be at least 20 years old, have a personal vehicle, maintain at least Michigan minimum insurance coverage and have a reliable cell phone.

Cook said the organization tries to make volunteering flexible. Drivers can choose rides based on their own schedules rather than committing to fixed shifts.

"Our model was designed to be extremely flexible," Cook said. "Our volunteers can pick and choose when it aligns with their schedule."

Prospective drivers complete an application through the organization's website, followed by online training and an in-person orientation with Kalamazoo staff members.

Beyond Transportation

Some initially compare the model to rideshare services such as Uber or Lyft, but leaders say The Davies Project is intentionally different. Young described the program as relationship-based and high-touch, designed for families navigating complicated medical and social challenges.

"We're there to provide a ride, but we want to be a resource," Young said. "A listening ear, to get to know them, provide information on community resources."

In Lansing, that support has included snack bags, children's books, family outings, support groups and staff assistance when additional needs are identified. Leaders say they hope to eventually bring many of those same community-building programs to Kalamazoo.

The nonprofit also works with families who do not speak English. Young said staff and drivers use translation tools including interpreter phone services and text translation apps to coordinate rides and communicate details.

After each trip, families receive a survey by text message where they can share feedback about their experience.

Community Impact

Young said some mothers first use the service during pregnancy, then continue needing rides when their babies require NICU care, and later still if those children develop medical conditions requiring specialists.

"In those cases, the organization may support a family through multiple phases of care over several years," said Young.

Some families rely on The Davies Project multiple times each week for months at a time. Staff members often become familiar with treatment plans, follow-up schedules and the day-to-day pressures families face.

"Transportation stress is the cause of missed appointments," Culver said. "The lack of transportation can then lead to a decline in health."

The organization is now accepting volunteers in Kalamazoo County. Those interested can visit thedaviesproject.org for more information.