The LSU Coastal Roots Program has its own set of wheels thanks to two LSU College of Education alumni. Placed in service in June, the new van has already logged over 5,000 miles. It is customized with interior shelves and a sliding deck to accommodate live plants and supplies, and the vehicle’s exterior wrap serves as a rolling billboard for the coastal stewardship program.

"This couple’s generosity is really saving wear and tear on personal vehicles," said Pamela Blanchard, assistant professor in the College of Education and the director of Coastal Roots. "But more than that, our equipment can be left in the van where it’s safe and protected. I can haul plants without them getting wind damaged in the bed of my truck, which is easier for the schools so much easier and represents a cost savings because we no longer have to reimburse employees for mileage."

Coastal Roots now has students in 36 schools across 16 parishes growing native wetland plants in school-based nurseries and transplanting these young plants in restoration sites across the state. Blanchard said the program continues to expand and is expected to include 43 schools in 19 parishes by the end of the current academic year. Blanchard noted with pride that a Coastal Roots Program has also been established in Mississippi.

The donors wish to remain anonymous, but their generous contribution, which was facilitated by the LSU Foundation, will help other projects in the College of Education as well.