


Gable founded her nonprofit company with a little seed money—and a lot of hope

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her company was growing exponentially, Gable decided she wanted to help others in need and founded Expect a Miracle. She put up nearly \$3,000 in seed money, which the nonprofit organization bestowed that year on 16 families, paying for kids' summer camps, back-to-school clothes and braces. In 2004, the group bought nearly \$70,000 worth of luxuries, including sports equipment and music classes, for 518 children. Expect a Miracle, which sustains itself through donations and fund-raisers, now receives 200 to 300 applications per year from single parents who have heard of the group through local press or word of mouth. The group requires parents to provide proof of employment as well as their children's birth certificates; it also purchases items or services directly to ensure that all funds are spent properly.

But is it really wise to use money for prom tickets instead of heating bills? For ballet lessons instead of rent assistance? "There are plenty of government agencies that help with the essentials—housing, food stamps, that sort of thing," says Gable. "But the extras are the things that make life a little more sweet, the things that get us through the rough times. Everyone deserves that." 

For more information, visit www.expectamiraclefoundation.org.

When single parents can't afford life's little luxuries for their kids, Carolyn Gable comes to the rescue

Carolyn Gable was sitting at her desk when one of her volunteers rushed into her office, letter in hand. "Do we pay for proms?" the woman asked. That might seem like an odd question for most bosses, but not for the 54-year-old founder of the Chicago-based Expect a Miracle Foundation, who has made it her business to help single parents provide life's small extras for their children. She looked at the letter, written by a heartbroken mother who didn't have enough money to get her son tickets and a tuxedo for his senior prom. "Why not?" replied Gable. "This is a big day in the life of a teenager. No one should miss it."

Gable knows firsthand the pain of being a single mom forced to watch her children go without. A beauty-school dropout who divorced in her late twenties, she was left to support two young sons on her paltry pay as a waitress. "I'd make \$35 a day, stop to buy milk and diapers, then pay the

baby-sitter \$15," Gable recalls. "I'd have to work extra shifts to get my boys sneakers." Her burdens eased when she landed a customer service job at a trucking company and remarried. Seven years later, with little more than a computer and a Rolodex, she launched her own business brokering deals between manufacturers and trucking firms. Today, New Age Transportation, Distribution & Warehousing, is an \$18 million firm. When Gable divorced her second husband, she took comfort knowing that her children—there are seven of them, ages 6 to 30—would never be deprived.

Still, she never forgot the struggles of those early years. In 2001, when

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