

# Monster truck brings hope to Roadrunner student

Brad Allis, Marana News | Posted: Wednesday, March 8, 2017 4:00 am

It is not everyday that you see a Monster truck at your school, so you can imagine the surprise as students at Roadrunner Elementary School ventured out to their basketball court to find a 10,000-pound truck, complete with spikes and a menacing face on the side. In reality, there was nothing menacing about the truck's appearance as Monster Jam and Hope Kids teamed up to give one Roadrunner student a special day.



Max-D, the truck also known as Maximum Destruction, was on hand to help surprise 5-year-old Gabe Gutierrez. The kindergarten student was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia at the beginning of 2016. He has completed a full year of chemotherapy and is now back in the classroom and continuing his recovery, but Hope Kids knew he loved big trucks and helped plan the special day for him.

## MonsterTruck

“Gabe came to mind,” said Kimberly Trichel of Hope Kids. “Based off of his treatment and what he was going through, we thought his family could use a little hope.”

At first Gutierrez was all smiles, but after getting a small tour of the truck, the moment became a little too much for him and he showcased his shy side, burrowing his head into his mother's shoulder. Max-D driver Jared Eichelberger then turned his attention to the rest of Gabe's class and handed out Monster Jam postcards and autographs. Soon the whole school was out to check out the truck and when Gabe was more outgoing he, his family and Eichelberger got to interact some more.

“He likes monster trucks, there is just a lot going on,” said Gabe's father, Mike Gutierrez. “It has been a year and a half now of constant change for him. It is a lot for a kid like him to take in.”

His father added that Gabe had always been a very independent kid, so having to rely on others during his treatment was not always easy for him to do.

Eichelberger gifted Gabe with one of the helmets he wears when racing the truck, autographing it for him, and provided passes to the weekend's Monster Jam show in Tucson.

“This is why I do the sport,” Eichelberger said. “This is why Monster Jam is around. We're here for the fans. Especially the kids, they mean so much to me and they are the reason I have such an awesome job. To be able to come to the school here, especially to meet little Gabe, that means the world to me.”

HopeKids, an Arizona-based nonprofit that grants wishes to kids suffering from life-threatening health conditions, serves more than 1,200 families and 6,000 Arizonans.

“We provide hope,” said Trichel “We provide something other than doctor's visits and, in this case with Gabe, chemotherapy.”

For the family this day was just another in a long list of ways the community has supported them, and especially supported Gabe.

“It is just nice to see the community helping out,” said the elder Gutierrez. “It is great that the school can come out and share in this.”