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Whole Again

[By Jake Rigdon](#)

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When a trailer containing various camping items was stolen last August from a group of Rio Rancho Boy Scouts, residents and businesses did their part to help.

Tents, stoves, lanterns, sleeping bags, ropes— nearly everything that had been in the trailer— was replaced, free of charge.

The one thing that remained: a new trailer.

On Wednesday, Boy Scouts Troop 1974 got its trailer, thanks to money raised from the Mayor's Ball and Albuquerque-based Action RV Specialists.

Rio Rancho Mayor Kevin Jackson presented the trailer to the Scouts during a brief ceremony in back of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church.

Some of the proceeds from the Mayor's Ball paid for half the cost of the trailer, or about \$1,500, and Action RV chipped in the rest and supplied the trailer, said Action RV owner Mark Podeyn.

"We've been able to recover everything we had," said Al Schrantz, acting scoutmaster. "The outpouring of support, from Rio Rancho to Albuquerque to all over the state, really took me back. It was astonishing."

The Scouts kept their old trailer locked and in a back area of St. Thomas Aquinas, but it wasn't anchored to anything. John Francis, spokesman for the Rio Rancho Department of Public Safety, said someone likely hitched the trailer to the back of another vehicle and drove off.

Police never recovered the trailer and have no new leads in the case, Francis said.

The news touched a nerve with some residents.

"We were just kind of shocked when we finally realized the trailer had been stolen, especially considering where we had it, at a church," said Michael Schrantz, 16, one of the Scouts with Troop 1974.

Schrantz's father, Al, said a boot for one of the tires was among several security measures that would make the new trailer harder to steal.

Mike Gibson, Jackson's former campaign manager, said the mayor asked him if he could help find a local business willing to pay to replace the trailer.

Gibson, a retired State Police officer, was a Boy Scout as a youth. He was a member of the Order of the Arrow, which is Scouting's National Honor Society. Order of the Arrow members are Scout campers who best exemplify the Scout Oath.

"The Scouts played a vital role in my life," Gibson said. "I came from a broken home, raised by a single mother. I lost her to a drunken driver when I was in the Scouts, but they were always there for me. I eventually moved away and left the Scouts behind, but not the values I learned from being a

Scout."

Gibson later approached Action RV to gauge its interest in helping Troop 1974.

Podeyn said helping to replace the trailer was an easy decision. Action RV sold Troop 1974 the trailer that was stolen.

"They were devastated (by the theft)," he said. "We've been victims of theft here, so we know what it feels like. It's a lot for those kids to overcome."

Chris Shelby, Scout executive of the Great Southwest Council Boy Scouts of America, lauded Jackson's support, saying the Rio Rancho mayor was a big reason why Troop 1974 was able to have its supplies replenished.

"(Mayor Jackson) really believes in the values of Scouting," Shelby said.

Michael Schrantz said people's generosity taught him and other Scouts a lesson about the community they live in. He said the Scouts wouldn't have been able to go on many camping trips if the equipment and trailer had not been replaced.

"This makes me want to be a bigger part of the community," he said.