

Make-A-Wish®
NORTHEAST NEW YORK

Wishmaker

VOL 29 ISSUE 1 / SPRING/SUMMER 2020



Wishes are
Waiting

With gratitude from the Board Chair and CEO

Thank you for helping us to transform children's lives, one wish at a time!

All of us have been dramatically affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. These social and economic shock waves have been felt across every segment of our society, including the Make-A-Wish community.

Challenges lie ahead. But we are confident that, with your help, we will meet them — starting with a Gala like no other we have ever hosted.

In March we had planned to celebrate our *When Stars Align* Gala, honoring ALL the people who make wishes possible. This magical event — the single largest Make-A-Wish Northeast New York fundraiser of the year — had to be postponed from March 28 until June 4. Now, for the first time in chapter history, our Gala will be virtual instead of in-person, airing on that date on Facebook and YouTube. The safety of our wish kids and families, volunteers and supporters has to come first. That said, we will still gather as a community, only online!

Sadly, other internal and external events have also been postponed, if not outright canceled, over the course of the past three months. Numerous additional fundraising efforts are also curtailed. Make-A-Wish is not immune from the painful financial impact that continues to affect so many of our friends and supporters.

Most unfortunate of all is that wishes had to put on hold to keep our wish kids and families safe.

Yes, challenges lie ahead. But we will meet them — together.

While wishes may be on hold, the hopes and dreams of our wish kids are not! And we will not let those hope and dreams become a casualty of this crisis — because Make-A-Wish is all about providing hope, strength and joy to children and teens with critical illnesses and their families.

Hope, strength and joy. Those aspirational words refer to what wishes bring wish kids and their families going through a medical crisis. But they also refer to what all of us need right now to overcome this public health emergency and to move forward:

- The hope that we all remain safe and healthy;
- The strength we all must draw upon to manage through this time of trial, and;
- The joy, however distant it may seem, that we will all feel when we have overcome the pandemic.

For Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, the end of this pandemic will mark our return to granting the heartfelt wish of every eligible child with a critical illness in the 518 and 838 area codes. It will also give rise to exciting events designed to celebrate the Power of a Wish®, to aid the chapter in generating vital resources to fulfill the mission, and to forge a closer-knit Make-A-Wish community.

The question is ... *when*? Right now, we just can't be sure. This much we do know for certain:

Wishes are waiting.

This ironclad fact drives us every moment of every day, even while so much remains unsettled at best.

That's why our professional team and the Board of Trustees continue to work closely together — safely and remotely — with an eye on the day we return to wish granting.

The hope will always be there. The strength will always be there. And the joy will return.

Together, we *will* meet the challenges.

With your shared commitment to our mission, and your continued investment, Make-A-Wish Northeast New York will be ready. Thank you for your continued partnership with us! You and your loved ones remain in our thoughts. Stay healthy and safe!

Best wishes,

Sarah A. McKinney

Sarah A. McKinney
Board Chair

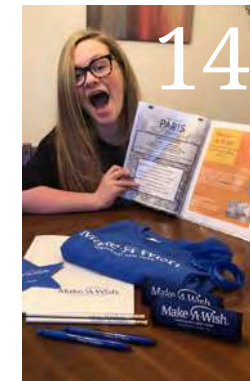
Bill Trigg, III

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Chief Executive Officer



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Wishmaker is published twice a year by
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ON THE COVER: Wish kid Olivia waits for a limousine —
and her wish. (See page 11.)

Serving children in the 15 counties of the 518 and 838 area codes since 1987

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Make-A-Wish®
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Wishes Are Waiting

In the 40 years since the granting of the first wish, Make-A-Wish® America, Make-A-Wish Northeast New York and the world have never been confronted with anything approaching the scope of the coronavirus pandemic.

Everyone reading this has been affected in ways large and small — socially, economically, culturally. It will be some time before our chapter, state, nation and world get back to normal. And that normal may or may not look different than it did six months ago.

For Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, the impacts came in rapid succession. Wishes were put on hold. Our March 28 **When Stars Align** Gala was postponed until June 4. As the weeks passed, it became clear that that revised date would not be feasible for a gathering, so on June 4 the chapter will now host its first-ever virtual Gala, via Facebook and YouTube. (See: story, Page 5.)

We fully expect this development — and the loss of some external fundraising events and donors — to adversely affect our bottom line. Regardless, the chapter remains unwavering in its vision of granting the wish of every eligible child in the 518 and 838 area codes.

While the full effect of this public

health crisis is unknown, we do know Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, like other chapters across the country, remains committed to its mission of creating life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

Wishes are waiting. You read that on the cover of this magazine. You read that on social media, as a hashtag: #wishesarewaiting. You will see it again and again and again.

Because, even amid the tumult and chaos unleashed on the world, wishes continue to be important. In fact, they may be more vital than ever.

In their letter to the Make-A-Wish community on Page 2, Board Chair Sarah A. McKinney and CEO William C. Trigg, III, talk about hope, strength and joy — traits often associated as byproducts of wishes.

Can you think of anything the world needs more of right now than hope, strength and joy?

Can you think of families more in need of that trinity of virtues than those with a

child — or children — who are medically compromised?

Wishes are waiting. We know people are hurting. Some have lost jobs, others loved ones, still others both. But we also know there are wish kids out there who are hurting and scared, too, worried if their wish will ever be granted, children in desperate need of hope.

And Make-A-Wish has always known there are people — so many people — with a burning desire to help.

We have seen all sorts of societal and economic upheaval as a result of this pandemic. But our mission, our vision — our promise — to wish kids and families cannot and will not change. We will need your help. And, together, we will rise to meet the challenges that lie ahead. This much we know.

To donate, visit
WishGala20.givesmart.com.



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A Virtual First for Chapter

The 22nd Annual Make-A-Wish Northeast New York *When Stars Align* Gala will be like none of its predecessors: It could boast a record audience ... without a single person in the room.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the chapter postponed its Gala — originally slated for the Hall of Springs in Saratoga Springs on Saturday, March 28 — to Thursday, June 4. As the calendar turned to early April, Make-A-Wish officials determined the wisest route is to turn that June 4 event into an online-only celebration, to be shown on the chapter's Facebook and YouTube channels simultaneously that night at 7 p.m.

"This decision to go with a Virtual Gala did not come lightly, but it is clearly the correct one," Make-A-Wish Northeast New York CEO William C. Trigg, III, said. "We will still gather as a community June 4 to celebrate and further our mission, but in a different way."

So, you have questions. We have answers.

What does an online Gala look like?

You will hear more wish-related stories and from wish kids and families. You will still see our familiar hosts, Benita Zahn of WNYT Ch. 13 and Chad O'Hara of B95.5 FM, although they will not be sharing the same stage. Most importantly, we will be doing the best we can to raise funds to grant wishes for children with critical illnesses.

How do I get involved?

First, you register at WishGala20.givesmart.com. You can get started now with purchasing raffle tickets for a great Disney Theme Parks package, or bottles for the wine and liquor pull! You'll also get the latest updates on the auction and the event and be able to start bidding when the auction opens days before the Gala continuing until 9 that evening. But most importantly, you can participate in our annual Fund-A-Wish auction to directly support local wishes! There's a range of giving levels from \$12,000 to sponsor a wish right down to \$25 — every donation matters.

Um ... What do I wear to a Virtual Gala?

Great question! Your options range from PJs to formal wear. This is totally your call — so long as you send us a photo to post on social media.

See you June 4.

when stars align
VIRTUAL
GALA



To register, go to WishGala20.givesmart.com.

Our Gala Wish Ambassadors

HERE IS A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR FIVE WISH AMBASSADORS FOR THE MAKE-A-WISH NORTHEAST NEW YORK WHEN STARS ALIGN VIRTUAL GALA.



A Head Start on Career
Cameron, 17, of Schroon Lake

When Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Cameron arrived by limo to video game development studio Vicarious Visions, he thought he was getting a behind-the-scenes tour and a chance to talk with developers. And he did.

When he was asked to pose for photos in front of Christmas decorations, with those designers and family and his wish granters Jesse and Russell Matteson, he was thrilled.

Then came the shocker, when the 17-year-old was told to turn around: Those wrapped gifts were in fact not decorations, but his wish — a high-end custom computer build with all the accessories that Cameron himself picked out.

Cameron, who has a nervous system disorder, hopes to be a live stream gamer and video editor for a career — and is already well-versed on the technical aspects of his chosen path. He looks at his wish not just as a gift, but a way forward in a life that has thrown medical obstacles his way.

“Words cannot even begin to describe this day,” mom Stephanie said. “Make-A-Wish Northeast New York has not only granted Cameron a wish, but a promising future in what he loves.”

Isla swam with the dolphins at a special dolphin sanctuary, Island Dolphin Care, in Key Largo, Florida, that along with physical therapists works with children with different abilities. The joy it brought Isla was like nothing the family had ever witnessed.

But on the trip the family’s greatest fears came true: The 7-year-old who has refractory epilepsy endured a prolonged seizure and had to be transported from a hospital on Key Largo to a children’s hospital in Miami.

“We were devastated not only by her seizure, but that her wish was interrupted and potentially ended,” wish mom Noelle said. “But in one of our most challenging moments came some of the greatest love we’ve ever received. Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wrapped us in love.

“They went above and beyond to extend our trip so that Isla could return to the dolphins, rearranging all our travel plans as well as making sure we were still able to visit the turtle hospital,” Noelle continued. “They made sure that Isla’s trip remained magical.”

A Wish Fulfilled
Isla, 7, of Albany



‘Lighter Than Air’
Ali, 9, of Albany

It’s that feeling everyone dreams of, being on the beach with toes in the water surrounded by pristine white beaches. For 9-year-old Ali, diagnosed with cancer two years before, that’s all it was — a dream. Ali had become all too familiar with the inside of a hospital, going through multiple treatments and being stuck inside drab walls dreaming of paradise.

When his family was referred to Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, there wasn’t a moment of hesitation. Ali knew he wanted to travel, to have a real escape for him and his family away from his medical struggles. An escape that would take all of them far away. All the way to Hawaii.

Ali’s adventures took him to the beautiful beaches of the tropical paradise and beyond. He also got to go ziplining, horseback riding, play the ukulele and see the inside of a pineapple factory!

“Ali and our whole family cannot express what this trip means to us,” said Ali’s mother Sabrina. “He beamed throughout the whole trip. We all did. This trip made us feel lighter than air.”

Like so many Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kids, Kaleigh wished to go to Walt Disney World® Resort. She loves the princesses — Moana, Anna, Elsa — and Olaf, too. Kaleigh wants to be a princess, and when she thought of her wish, she imagined magic like Elsa wields.

But the single most important part of her Disney wish was the simplest: She wanted to blow out the candles on her birthday cupcake. During her wish, Kaleigh turned 5, a most magical age, and she got to celebrate her birthday party in the most magical of places.

“When she finally saw the princesses, she was shocked,” wish mom Keiona said. “She still talks about it to this day. She talks about meeting the princesses and blowing out the candle on her cupcake on her birthday.”

Kaleigh’s birthday party was held in the Akershus Royal Banquet Hall. Anna and Elsa were among the princesses on hand — in addition to a very special 5-year-old.

“She was treated like royalty,” mom said.

A Birthday Wish
Kaleigh, 5, of Albany



A Close Family Draws Closer
Ben, 14, of Niskayuna

Ben is part of a close family, brought even closer by his Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish.

Like his three siblings, the 14-year-old was born in South Korea and adopted. Ben considered them as well as himself planning his wish to go to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™ at Universal Orlando™.

“Ben put a lot of thought into what he wanted to do, and what would be enjoyable for his siblings,” wish mom Barbara said. “The whole thing, from start to finish, was magical.”

The two oldest siblings bonded over planning experiences at Orlando theme parks. Meanwhile, the youngest, JeeHoon — about to turn 3 and adopted just three months earlier — grew more comfortable with his new family.

“We left home happy and excited, and returned even more so!” Barbara said. “Ben has been very happy and relaxed since our trip.”

Ben, who has a vascular disorder, started reading all the Harry Potter books when he was 7, and went through them all as well as the movies. On his wish, the family hit everything Potter, and other Orlando theme parks, and all the richness Give Kids the World Village® has to offer.

The best part of the wish journey?

“Just having such a stress-free experience,” Barbara said. “The entire thing was just an amazing experience for our family.”

Saluting Our Volunteers

The Make-A-Wish Northeast New York Year of the Wish Granter may be drawing to a close, but our appreciation for all the volunteers who make wishes possible never ceases.

Each year, the chapter recognizes a handful of standout volunteers, while noting that every volunteer is essential to what we do.

“Our volunteers are the mortar that holds the edifice of Make-A-Wish together. Without them, we simply could not fulfill our mission,” said William C. Trigg, III, CEO of Make-A-Wish Northeast New York. “With these awards, we recognize not only a few exceptional individuals, but also our entire corps of volunteers who enable our mission of creating life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.”

The chapter recognizes these 2020 volunteer award recipients:



Wish Champion Award Linda Doyle

Whether working in the chapter’s office, at an event or granting one of her many wishes (often alongside husband, Michael), Linda is one of the most versatile, valuable and cherished individuals in the Make-A-Wish community. Here at the office, we consider her family.

Wish Team Jesse & Rusty Matteson

One of roughly a dozen couples who are wish granters, the Mattesons serve the Tri-County region of our chapter — and much more. Quick to respond, they will also take on wishes in the Capital Region and the North County. No wish is too far or too complex, and they put their heart and soul into every one.



Above and Beyond Sabra Venezia

Need someone to greet a wish family at the airport at 5 a.m.? Sabra is there. How about a last-second volunteer to staff an event table? She’s on it. Is there a wish in need of a wish granter? Not as soon as you ask Sabra. Friendly and familiar from the moment you meet, Sabra is always willing to help out and do more for wish kids and families.



Wish Star Rob Roemer

A member of the Make-A-Wish Board of Trustees and a newly minted wish granter, Rob can be counted on a number of ways, whether it be raising funds, hosting events at CAP COM Federal Credit Union, serving as a liaison to the business community, granting wishes and more. His passion for the mission is clear every day.



Rising Star Jim Bettini

This award — think of it as a “Rookie of the Year” — goes to a newcomer who is not only a passionate and dedicated wish granter but is quick to volunteer for chapter events and tasks ranging from the daunting to the mundane.



The Workshop of Wishes



The Workshop of Wishes (a concept which began under the working title the Wishing Space Initiative) will feature special effects, props, technology and costumes to transform a large portion of the chapter office space into a very special and unusual setting. Children and teens who qualify for a wish will be invited to think about their wish (or wish options) in ways that will excite their imaginations, spark their enthusiasm for adventure and opportunity and fill them with joy as they consider the possibilities for their wish.

This transformation into a mission-centric, magical setting has the potential to inspire not only our

wish families, but also many other key stakeholders — from donors to vendors, wish granting and fundraising volunteers to the media, and the pediatric medical community to the greater business sector.

“The power of a wish extends beyond the wish itself for wish kids and families,” Make-A-Wish Northeast New York CEO William C. Trigg, III, said. “There is power in the anticipation of a wish — a sense of hope, strength and joy that is felt the moment a wish child or teen takes that first step on a wish journey.

“The Workshop of Wishes will afford wish kids an even more magical experience, either in person or remotely, to discover their heartfelt wish, or to learn that their wish will soon be granted.”

The Workshop of Wishes concept has been embraced by other Make-A-Wish chapters in various forms — from brightly

decorated rooms suited to doing a wish announcement or reveal (Make-A-Wish® Utah) to the construction of a Wish Castle complete with outstanding special effects (Make-A-Wish® New Jersey). The goal: to heighten the magical quality of the wish experience from the very start, so that wish kids, their families, donors and others realize that something life-transforming is about to take place.

This effort was inspired by: (a) the idea that every aspect of the wish granting process should harness the imagination of and inspire hope, strength and joy in our wish kids and their families; (b) a generous leadership gift from the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company Foundation through the Tronco Group of NML in Latham, New York, and its president Alex Tronco, and; (c) the chapter CEO’s recommendation that the chapter headquarters be reconfigured to be a place where wish families and donors can experience the wonder of imagining a wish come true.

For more than 40 years, Adirondack Studios has provided creative solutions for designers, artists, producers, and owners across the entire themed entertainment market spanning the globe. With a culture rooted in theatrical production, Adirondack Studios is a collaborative partner that focuses on story and guest experience by examining thoughtful design solutions and innovative methods and materials. Its out-of-the-box thinking is on display at opera houses and observatories, Universal Studios and Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge at Disneyland®, and numerous other venues worldwide.

The chapter hopes to have the Workshop of Wishes completed and operational before the close of the 2020 calendar year.

Wishes emerge from wish kids in a variety of ways. Some just know what they want, right away. Others are struck by a burst of imagination. Still others must contemplate and discern what their true heartfelt wish is among the nearly infinite options.

Enter the Workshop of Wishes.

In the coming months, the offices of Make-A-Wish Northeast New York in Albany will be transformed by our creative partners at Adirondack Studios of Argyle, New York, into a magical space of wonder — the Workshop of Wishes. The environment, designed to spark the imagination and anticipation of wish kids ages 2½ to 18, will be utilized in person and remotely by wish kids first starting their wish journey, and by those learning their wish is, in fact, being granted.

Luke Brings the Joy

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish ambassador Luke Hoag strode into Macy's at Colonie Center bringing the joy — and a whole bunch of letters.

Boxes of them. A busload, actually. Again.

Luke, a Hoosick Falls 12-year-old, began delivering letters to Santa to Macy's on Believe Day in 2015. This December, his fifth campaign, he beamed as he walked past cheering Macy's employees, smiling shoppers and the media to the Believe mailbox. He started unloading a sack of letters, stopping after a few dozen.

"I'll put the rest in later," he said to laughter.



Good move. Luke, as part of his Luke's Believe Campaign, delivered more than 84,000 letters as part of Macy's Believe Campaign to benefit Make-A-Wish® America, bringing his five-year total north of 250,000.

Since 2003, Macy's has donated more than \$122 million to Make-A-Wish, including more than \$19 million through the annual Believe campaign, helping to grant more than 14,500 wishes and impact nearly 3 million people, including wish kids and their families, volunteers, community groups, medical professionals and more.

With Macy's donating \$2 per letter on Believe Day, that means Luke — who was diagnosed with a brain tumor and went on his wish to Walt Disney World® Resort in 2010 — has been personally responsible for raising a half-million dollars for helping create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

A half-million dollars.

As stunning as the total is, more notable is the reaction of people when Luke enters the room. At Tamarac Elementary School, which handed over nearly 8,000 letters for his campaign, Luke is treated like a rock star by excited kids at an assembly on what is dubbed "Luke Day." Looking at the elated faces of everyone watching this wish kid arrive at Macy's, one can't help but be struck at how he spreads joy.

"There is joy everywhere," his mom Jackie said. "Sometimes it just takes a child to remind us."

Almost a decade after his Make-A-Wish, Luke has a new wish now.

"My wish is to see all these kids get their wish come true," he said.

And spread a lot of joy doing it.



'The Greatest Gift'

"David's wish was to meet Mickey Mouse [at Walt Disney World® Resort], but he got so much more! Seeing him smile and laugh all week was the greatest gift our family could ever receive!! A million thanks to everyone at Make-A-Wish Northeast New York."

— Wish mom Amy

The Rise of Riley

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Riley learned in a very rebellious way that his wish to undergo Jedi training at Walt Disney World® Resort's Stars Wars: Galaxy's Edge had been granted. Special thanks go out to: Jeff Carmel at Regal Cinemas at Colonie Center; Saber Guild: Empire Temple; The 501st Region Garrison Excelsior; Echo Base-Rebel Legion, and wish granters Linda Doyle and Dave Perritano for creating a wondrous wish experience.



A Wish Worth the Wait

Olivia stared out the window, elbows on the sill and chin in her hands, as the clock ticked. Five minutes. Ten. Fifteen ...

"She was waiting for the limo to come," mom Kellie said. "She was there for a good 30 minutes."

"She stayed by that window. It was magical, to say the least."

The entire family shared that anticipation of Olivia's Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish to Walt Disney World® Resort.

"Our family and Olivia are constantly in a state of coping," said Kellie, whose 5-year-old daughter has a nervous system disorder. "During the period leading up to our trip, our family got to plan and talk about the fun that was coming our way."

"It allowed us to focus on something exciting and happy without stress. Looking forward to Olivia's trip brought our family together in excitement and joy."

Eventually the limo arrived to take the family to the airport for its flight to Orlando. Olivia broke into a smile that lasted all week.

In fact, she's still smiling.

Kellie said the wish, which included mom, dad Mark, 7-year-old brother Jake and grandmother "NoNo," was so much more than a vacation — for everyone involved.

The family became immersed in all things Disney, from the attractions to the rides. More importantly, the wish gave the family a chance to relax, have fun, and just enjoy being a family without worry.

"No other vacation will ever be able to compare," the mom said. "Even for my husband and I — we didn't have to think about anything."

It was on this wish the parents discovered Olivia's love of roller coasters, particularly Disney's Seven Dwarfs Mine Train (which Olivia dubbed "Hi-Ho").

"My daughter is still talking about it," Kellie said. "We probably went on her roller coaster five times."

Mom will routinely check in with her daughter how she feels. "I feel fine, Mommy," the daughter almost invariably replies.

During her wish, Olivia had a different response:

"I feel happy."

"Olivia has never said that before," mom said. "I cried."

A photo album sits out in the family home. Olivia still looks at the album regularly and loves to talk about her wish facilitated by wish granters Ray Gawlak and Lorraine Heck.

"The whole week was just great," the mom said. "The wish will stay with our family forever."



Milestone Wish Involves Community

Working on a chilly November morning through the afternoon until darkness crept in, a team of wish granters — including a wish alum — and other volunteers labored to make a milestone wish possible for wish kid Liam just days shy of his sixth birthday.

Liam’s wish to have an adaptive playset was the 1,900th wish granted by Make-A-Wish Northeast New York since the chapter began granting wishes in 1987.

The playset is specially designed for Liam, who has epilepsy, is blind, was born with a heart defect and suffered a brain injury as a result, is non-verbal and confined to a wheelchair.

“This is something he will have for a lifetime,” said wish dad Will, who worked alongside volunteers digging holes, measuring and assembling the elaborate set in the front yard of the family’s rural home in Easton in Washington County. “He loves to swing. He will enjoy it every day.”



About 25 volunteers and family came out to help, including wish granters Michael and Eileen Dashnaw and Justice White — all of whom live nearby. White, 19, is a 2005 wish alum who has since raised money for the chapter and Make-A-Wish® America by collecting a half-million

letters for the Macy’s Believe campaign and jumping out of an airplane as part of Wish Jump. This was her first wish as a wish granter.

“Because of the experience my wish granters gave me, I wanted to give back to children,” said White, who was joined by her parents and other family members working on Liam’s wish.

Wish mom Heather said she’s thrilled with what Liam’s wish will mean to him in the days and years ahead, and the outpouring of support.

“It’s hard to find a group of people who go out of their way to make sure everything is right,” she said, looking around at all the Make-A-Wish Northeast New York volunteers working on her son’s behalf. “That someone would take the time to find out what he wants, it’s very touching.”

A Front Row Seat

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Aubrey, a 14-year-old from Tupper Lake, took in her Paris Fashion Week wish from almost every vantage point. “Aubrey had a wonderful time at the fashion shows, and our family trips to see the sights were phenomenal,” wish mom Meaghan said. “Aubrey had been looking forward to seeing the twinkling lights on the Eiffel Tower at night. We went, and it was truly magical.”



Mets Wish Capped by Late-Inning Heroics



Braeden wished to meet his favorite team, the New York Mets, at spring training in Port St. Lucie, Florida. The 14-year-old Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid is not only a fan, but a ballplayer — a pitcher and first baseman. He hoped to meet his favorite player: First baseman and rising superstar Pete Alonso, who set the team and Major League rookie records for home runs in 2019.

In Florida, the team gave Braeden a full Mets’ uniform — important because he brought out the team’s lineup card to home plate before a Sunday game against the St. Louis Cardinals at Clover Park. The teen met the Mets in the team’s clubhouse and on the field. He chatted up players such as Michael Conforto, Jacob deGrom, Jeff McNeil and former Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow, and manager Luis Rojas and his coaches.

“There were so many!” Braeden said. “I can’t even remember them all!”

The family — mom Meredith, dad Eric, sister Avery and Braeden — were allowed on the field and later had the best seats in the house for the game: first row behind home plate. The wish in Florida also included free time to visit nearby relatives, as well as an opportunity to get to the beach. Kelly Stang and Mark McGuire served as the wish granters.

Unfortunately, Pete Alonso and the teen did not connect when the family went

to the ballpark. Braeden was not going to meet the star.

Until ...

On the last day of his wish, at the very hotel where the family was staying, Braeden saw a large man walking his dog.

Could it be? ...

Yes, yes it could.

It was Alonso. Braeden and his dad approached, and the Met could not be more engaging, talking to the fellow first baseman, posing for photos and autographing a baseball.

“He was so chill,” Braeden said. “He was just a nice guy.”

And, just like so many of Alonso’s hits, Braeden’s wish was a home run.



Talkin’ Baseball

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Evan, a hardcore Boston Red Sox fan, joined Levack and Goz on 104.5 The Team ESPN Radio along with UAlbany Baseball coach Jon Mueller.

They talked a little baseball smack with Yankees fan Jeff Levack as Goz soaked it all in, before coach surprised Evan with the news that his wish to meet the Red Sox in spring training was being granted. This was great radio for a great wish, made possible by some great people.

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York Board Chair Sarah A. McKinney and Board member Jim Giordano served as the wish granters.

Thank you to the teammates of Price Chopper Supermarkets-Market 32 for making Evan’s wish possible.

'I wish to go to Walt Disney World® Resort'

Lillian, 4, from Johnstown

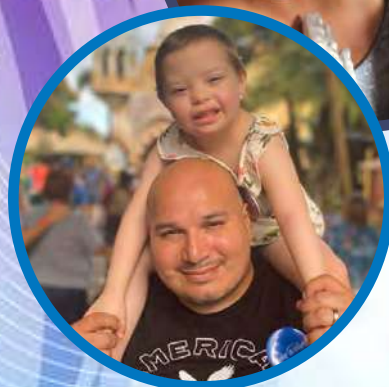
Wish Granters: Michelle Iannacone and Rob Iannacone
Wish sponsored by 2019 Fund-A-Wish Donors

Portia, 5, from Broadalbin

Wish Granters: Megan Eglin and Ray Gawlak
Wish sponsored by Fenimore Asset Management

Marcus, 9, from Plattsburgh

Wish Granters: Renee Elsinger and Amy LaDue
Wish sponsored by 2019 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign



Destiny, 4, from Whitehall

Wish Granters: Jesse Matteson and Russell Matteson
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wish Jump

Landon, 4, from Gloversville

Wish Granters: Frank Valiante and Ray Gawlak
Wish sponsored by 2019 Robert Lee Walsh American Legion Post 337 Golf Tournament

Ulrich, 4, from Troy

Wish Granters: Nicole Morgan and Karen Dominguez
Wish sponsored by 2019 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

Olivia, 5, from Broadalbin

Wish Granters: Lorraine Heck and Ray Gawlak
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wish Fest

Ella, 3, from Schenectady

Wish Granters: Pam Dutcher and Maria Vooris
Wish sponsored by 2019 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

Liam, 9, from Keeseville

Wish Granters: Renee Elsinger, Marty Relation and Lori Relation
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wack's Ride

Madison, 4, from Ballston Spa

Wish Granters: Kristle Mathison and Karen Kaufman-Wachs
Wish sponsored by 2019 Tech Valley Charity Golf Tournament

Raelynn, 4, from Queensbury

Wish Granters: Nancy Blair and Paula Hanchett
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wack's Ride

Jazalyn, 3, from Gloversville

Wish Granters: Abby Connor and Karen Dominguez
Wish sponsored by 2019 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

Kaleigh, 5, from Albany

Wish Granters: Linda Tepper and Nicole Pickel
Wish sponsored by Paintworxx

Sofia, 5, from Schenectady

Wish Granters: Miranda Eldridge and Deb Karius
Wish sponsored by 2020 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

David, 16, from Latham

Wish Granters: Michael Smith and Kate Bukowski
Wish sponsored by United Health Group

Tucker, 3, from Granville

Wish Granters: Ruth Jameson and Zach Ogden
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wish Jump

Mason, 11, from Mooers Forks

Wish Granters: Joel Steele and Kathy Steele
Wish sponsored by 2020 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

Adam, 8, from Hudson Falls

Wish Granters: Jesse Matteson and Russell Matteson
Wish sponsored by 2019 New York State Laborers' Golf Classic

Mac, 6, from Fonda

Wish Granters: Lorraine Heck and Ray Gawlak
Wish sponsored by 2019 Robert Lee Walsh American Legion Post 337 Golf Tournament

Carissa, 3, from Guilderland

Wish Granters: Theresa Roemer, Rob Roemer and Sandi Worona
Wish sponsored by 2019 Tech Valley Golf Tournament

Andrew, 5, from Clifton Park

Wish Granters: Janielle Krawczyk and Melissa Murphy
Wish sponsored by 2019 Gala Fund-A-Wish Donors

Riley, 13, from Albany

Wish Granters: David Perritano and Linda Doyle
Wish sponsored by 2019 Gala Fund-A-Wish Donors

Jacob, 5, from Latham

Wish Granters: Jenny O'Connor and Erin Oliver
Wish sponsored by 2019 Gala Fund-A-Wish Donors

'I wish to GO'

I Wish to Go on a Disney Cruise

Angelica, 10, from Glens Falls
Wish Granters: Maura Fox and Jenn Kennedy
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wack's Ride

I Wish to Go to Universal Studios

Claire, 9, from Clifton Park
Wish Granters: Mary Schow and Chrissy Shumate
Wish sponsored by 2019 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

I Wish to Go to Harry Potter World

Benjamin, 14, from Niskayuna
Wish Granters: Toni Cowie and Pete Cowie
Wish sponsored by Wish Alum David Bloom and David's Dream Team

I Wish to Go to Los Angeles

Jaden, 16, from Troy
Rachel Dymond and Pam Moore
Wish sponsored by Regeneron

I Wish to Go on a Cruise to the Bahamas

Isabel, 16, from Corinth
Wish Granters: Bob Bullock and Scott Liloia
Wish sponsored by 2019 Tech Valley Charity Golf Tournament

I Wish to Go to a Liverpool Reds Soccer Match in the United Kingdom

Cole, 18, from Castleton
Wish Granters: Michelle Arsenault and Deb Benziger
Wish sponsored by 2019 State Police - Livingston Golf Tournament

I Wish to Go to Paris Fashion Week

Aubrey, 14, from Tupper Lake
Wish Granters: Jess Herzog and Amanda Zullo
Wish sponsored by Frank and Tamsen Poore

I Wish to Go to Boston Red Sox Spring Training

Evan, 15, from Brunswick
Wish Granters: Sarah McKinney and Jim Giordano
Wish sponsored by Price Chopper/Market32 and their employees

I Wish to Go on a Western Caribbean Cruise

Carsyn, 16, from Wilton
Wish Granters: Linda Tepper and Ray Gawlak
Wish sponsored by John and Patti Hinkle

'I wish to BE'

I Wish to Be a Pittsburgh Penguin

Michael, 9, from Fort Ann
Wish Granters: Kim Crofut and Justice White
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wish Jump

These wish granters also participated on wishes that cannot be publicized: Joleen Bruyette, Francesca Casaregola; Lori DeBrino; Kismet McCormick; Diane Roberts; Cathy Scala; Karen Schultheis; Alison Shuler, and Sue Weiss.

'I wish to HAVE'

I Wish to Have a Shopping Spree

Ashley, 16, from Troy
Wish Granters: Christopher Fain and Jenny O'Connor
Wish sponsored by David Collins, Jim & Sandi Giordano and 2019 Gala Fund-A-Wish Donors

Daeqwan, 18, from Troy

Wish Granters: Michelle Arsenault and Christopher Fain
Wish sponsored by 2020 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

I Wish to Have an Adaptive Playset

Liam, 6, from Greenwich
Wish Granters: Justice White, Eileen Dashnaw and Michael Dashnaw
Wish sponsored by 2019 Wack's Ride

I Wish to Have an Assistance/Therapy Dog

Jack, 3, Clifton Park
Wish Granters: Mary Ellen Olenyk and Kirsten Broschinsky
Wish sponsored by 2019 Team Dame

I Wish to Have an Accessible Bathroom Makeover

Adam, 16, from Hoosick Falls
Wish Granters: Sabra Venezia and Linda Kramarchyk
Wish sponsored by 2020 Adopt-A-Wish Campaign

'I wish to MEET'

I Wish to Meet the Pittsburgh Steelers

Tyler, 18, from Malone
Wish Granters: James Cole and Ray Gawlak
Wish sponsored by 2020 Softball on Snow

I Wish to Meet the New York Mets at Spring Training

Braeden, 14, from Guilderland
Wish Granters: Mark McGuire and Kelly Stang
Wish sponsored by 2019 Kingsway Community Charity Golf Tournament

I Wish to Meet the Creators of "The Sims"

Del, 11, from Saranac
Wish Granters: Loretta Cappiello, Lori Relation and Marty Relation
Wish sponsored by 2019 Gala Fund-A-Wish Donors



the power of a wish



You'll Need to Take A Walk

It may still be spring, but plans are well under way for us to host our **Seventh Annual Walk For Wishes®** this summer on **Saturday, Aug. 1**. We invite you to join us at the **Joseph L. Bruno Stadium in Troy**, along with our hosts, the **Tri-City ValleyCats**, as we share in the most important stroll you'll take all year!

Each year, the Walk For Wishes brings together wish families, local businesses and community supporters in a celebration of the power of wishes in the lives of children battling critical illnesses. The Walk continues to grow and become one of our most important fundraisers of the year — because of YOU! **And this year, we need you more than ever.**

Right now, more than 50 wish kids locally have had their wishes postponed or directly affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. Once it is safe to grant wishes again, we don't want them to have to wait one moment longer than they must! By starting your Walk For Wishes team now, and sharing YOUR story and YOUR reasons for walking, you can help ensure that wishes won't have to wait any longer than necessary.

"The Walk is an opportunity for us to tell the world — one dollar at a time,

one step at a time — that wishes change lives as they bring hope, strength, and joy when families need it most," Director of Development Kirsten Broschinsky said. "It's a day of celebration, a day of stories of hope and a day of unity."

Last year, the Walk featured a record number of teams — 52 — and 642 walkers. Sponsors, teams and walkers shared their stories of how Make-A-Wish has impacted their lives, and the result was \$118,000 raised to grant the heartfelt wishes of children right here in the 518 and 838 area codes.

The Walk will commence at 10 a.m. that Saturday, with same-day registration beginning at 8 a.m. and opening ceremonies at 9:45 a.m. A family friendly event that is wheelchair accessible, the three-mile route in and around the campus of Hudson Valley Community College in

Troy begins with a "Victory Lap" around the ballpark. (There is also an optional one-mile route.)

Participants can set up teams, share their stories, and ask for support from family and friends. If you raise at least \$100, you get a prized Walk For Wishes T-shirt. Teams are already raising money: You don't want to fall too far behind in this walk! Register your team today and share why wishes matter to you!

Make-A-Wish.
2020 WALK FOR WISHES®

We continue to monitor the counsel of authorities as the COVID-19 outbreak continues to affect our communities. If a decision is made to adjust the August event for the safety of all involved, we will notify participants as soon as possible. We encourage you to follow Make-A-Wish Northeast New York social media channels for the latest chapter developments.



SPRING/SUMMER CALENDAR

IMPORTANT NOTE: As we look to our summer schedule of events, we want to express our profound gratitude for the individuals, groups, businesses, and organizations that dedicate their time and talents each year to fundraising events on behalf of Make-A-Wish Northeast New York. Their combined supports brings in approximately \$500,000 each year for local wishes — and we couldn't achieve our mission without their efforts.

Due to the ongoing public health crisis, all events listed below are subject to change — either by date, format or cancellation. For the most updated information, please check the calendar on neny.wish.org or contact the chapter at neny@neny.wish.org.

JUNE

June 4 **Make-A-Wish When Stars Align Virtual Gala**
Facebook/YouTube

JULY

July 11 **Wish Fest**
Amsterdam, New York

July 22 **NYS Laborers' Golf Classic**
Saratoga Springs, New York

July 25 **Wack's Ride 2020**
Queensbury, New York

July 25 **American Legion Post 337 Golf Tournament**
Gloversville, New York

AUGUST

Aug. 1 **2020 Walk For Wishes®**
Troy, New York

Aug. 3 **Kingsway Community Annual Golf Tournament**
Schenectady, New York

Aug. 13 **Play It Forward 518 Golf Tournament**
Clifton Park, New York

Aug. 15 **Bobbie Arseneault Memorial Family Fun Day**
Averill Park, New York

Aug. 29 **Annual Wish Family Picnic and Make-A-Wish Night at the Tri-City ValleyCats**
Troy, New York

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 17-20 **Capital Cup for Kids**
Clifton Park, NY

Sept. 23 **12th Annual Tech Valley Charity Golf Tournament**
Saratoga Springs, New York

The Stars Align through Wish Heroes

Local "American Idol" star Madison VanDenburg has committed to being a Wish Hero as well as perform at Wish Fest.



These past few months have been an unprecedented time at Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, and in chapters throughout the world. But thanks to a new campaign, many of you are stepping forward to make sure that we have the funds needed to grant wishes as soon as we are able.

Beginning on April 29 — World Wish Day — we kicked off our *Wish Heroes* campaign in celebration of 40 years of wish granting and Make-A-Wish supporters! Our *Heroes* are sharing their powerful stories to help their friends, neighbors and networks understand why wishes matter and to seek

their support. They have committed to raising \$1,600 each in support of wishes; that comes out to asking 40 people for \$40 in honor of 40 years of magical wishes.

Their powerful message will help us make sure that the wish kids currently waiting for their wishes to be rescheduled won't have to wait a moment longer than is necessary. We are so grateful for their support and their belief in the Power of a Wish®!

If you are interested in becoming a *Wish Hero*, please email Director of Development Kirsten Broschinsky at kbros@neny.wish.org.

27th Annual Holiday Campaign Celebrates Region's Generosity

After great kickoff events in November at Crossgates Mall and Champlain Centre, the 2019 Adopt-A-Wish Holiday Campaign is winding to a close. Because of our community's generosity, the campaign raised nearly \$212,000 to directly support the granting of local wishes.

The chapter expresses its gratitude to Trustco Bank for its continued role as the Presenting Sponsor and for selling stars at all of its local branches. Additionally, thank you to NYSCOPBA for renewing its support as Wish Champion Sponsor, and to sponsors Ethan Allen, PhRMA, Albany PAL and Glens Falls National Bank. For the second year,

the campaign reached even larger audiences thanks to the Day of Wishes Telethon on CBS 6 Albany, with support from the Albany Broadcasting Company, followed by an Evening of Giving at Colonie Center.

The campaign's true success depends on the hundreds of volunteers at schools, businesses and throughout the community. Thank you for your time and talent to make this year's campaign another resounding success!



To register or donate to a team, go to
<http://site.wish.org/walkneny>



Jack and Bear: Fur-Ever Friends

Bear is not a bear — he is a dog. But he is more than a dog. He is a friend, a companion, an aide ... and a wish.

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Jack met his wish and new best friend Bear, a chocolate Labrador puppy that will be trained as a service dog to be a companion and help with everyday tasks.



Shortly after the reveal at the Vischer Ferry Volunteer Fire Company, Jack, sister Peyton and the rest of the family quickly bonded with the ridiculously adorable Bear. (The name was chosen because it is a word Jack can say.)

“He’s going to be a forever friend for him,” mom Meghan said. “He’s going to have a great bond with that dog that is going to be unbreakable.”

With family, friends, firefighters, wish granters Kirsten Broschinsky and

Mary Ellen Olenyk and other well-wishers looking on, Jack, 3, squealed in delight as Bear frolicked in his yet-to-be-trained way.

Eventually, Jack, who has undergone a liver transplant and has cognitive challenges, will be able to rely on Bear to help him with tasks such as going up stairs and picking up things — as well as being a faithful friend.

This is a wish that will be with Jack and this Clifton Park family not just today and tomorrow, but for years to come, providing not just joy but a sense of independence for Jack.

“That’s why we went this route,” dad John said. “This is something that will be with him for the long term.”

The parents thanked Make-A-Wish Northeast New York. “It has been an amazing and humbling experience,” the mom said.

At the reveal, Jake dined on his favorite — chicken fingers and fries — and a cake featuring a picture of his new best friend was served.

Grandparents beamed, and even media members delighted at the antics of the puppy, who after an hour or so curled up on a dog bed for a much-deserved nap.

In a matter of hours, Bear brought hope, strength and joy to a 3-year-old and all around him. He is more than a dog.

He is a wish.



This Workout Worked Out for All

Thank you to Mary Carey for organizing yet another highly successful Zumba fundraiser at Hudson High School in Hudson for Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, and to the eight other instructors and all who participated. The fourth annual installment of this unique fundraiser raised more than \$2,600 toward granting life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses right here in the 518 and 838 area codes!

Note to Readers

A complete listing of Community Fundraisers and Kids for Wish Kids (Local Funds, Local Wishes) will appear in our next edition of *Wishmaker*.

Cole Heads to Game of a Lifetime

When Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Cole went to Dick’s Sporting Goods at Crossgates Mall with his family, it was supposed to be a trip just to get soccer shoes for his brother, Dillon.

A memorabilia display in the footwear section featuring Cole’s favorite team, the Liverpool Football Club, caught his eye. Cole was even wearing a team jersey that night.

Assistant store manager Jon Brochu told Cole he had something that might also interest him in the back. He soon emerged with wish granters Deb Benziger and Michelle Arsenault, who told the shocked 18-year-old from Castleton that not only was the entire display for him and his family, but that his wish to go to a Liverpool game at its historic home pitch Anfield in England is being granted.

At the time of his wish reveal Liverpool was well ahead in the Premier League standings, but Cole is no bandwagon jumper: The University at Albany freshman has been a fan of the Reds for



about five years. (He even knows the chants and songs.) Cole and his brother saw the team play earlier this year at Yankee Stadium.

What makes Cole’s wish experience even more special was the January Liverpool game the family attended was against Manchester United — Dillon’s favorite team. The 14-year-old brother got a Man U jersey, like the other gear courtesy



of Dick’s. (Sister McKenzie, 10, called dibs on a favored scarf, which made store manager Mike Tesoriero smile.)

The game was played on a perfect January day and started beneath a gorgeous sunset. Liverpool dominated much of the match and beat its rival 2-0 to stay undefeated on the season. And, as Cole predicted, wish dad Paul called the atmosphere “amazing.”

TYLER GOES BEHIND THE STEEL CURTAIN



Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Tyler was not in awe when he met his heroes on the Pittsburgh Steelers after watching the team practice at the UPMC Rooney Sports Complex in Pittsburgh on a September Friday. The 18-year-old was smiling, laughing, interacting with the team — and the players were smiling and laughing with him.

These Steelers connected with the charismatic teen.

“Meeting all the team was really nice,” said Tyler, of Malone. “They were all friendly. They’re all down to earth — really nice guys.”

When wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster met Tyler on the field, the star asked him if he was going inside the facility, because he had something to give him. The receiver got caught up with something, and the two did not meet up again. But the receiver did not forget about Tyler.

The next day, a special delivery arrived for Tyler at his hotel: a pair of cleats and gloves, autographed by Smith-Schuster.

That Monday night, the teen, who is battling chronic kidney disease, went to the Steelers-Cincinnati Bengals game at Heinz Field, and visited the radio broadcast booth. He even later danced with the Steelers’ mascot!

“It was the weekend of a lifetime, honestly,” said Tyler, whose wish was assisted by Make-A-Wish® Greater Pennsylvania and West Virginia. “I had a lot of fun, walked around the stadium, and the Steelers game was awesome.”

“Make-A-Wish and this weekend meant a lot because I know I went through a lot. It really did.”



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Guelcher Joins Board of Trustees

Make-A-Wish Northeast New York welcomes Andrew Guelcher to its Board of Trustees.

Guelcher, who joined the Board in 2020, is dealer principal of Mohawk Chevrolet in Clifton Park and general manager of Mohawk Honda.

Prior to his current position, Guelcher worked at Mohawk Honda for more than five years, first as operations manager and then as general manager.

Before moving to the Capital Region more than five years ago, Guelcher worked in auto industry leadership positions in Pennsylvania. The University of Pittsburgh-Bradford graduate was honored by the Central

Penn Business Journal with its Forty under 40 recognition, which noted his commitment to business growth, professional excellence and community service.

In addition to Make-A-Wish Northeast New York, Guelcher is involved as a volunteer with Special Olympics New York, which bestowed him its 2019 Game Changer award. He also volunteers as a youth basketball coach and works on various community service projects through Mohawk Auto Group's community service initiatives.

Guelcher and his wife Jessica have three children and live in Saratoga County.

Old Friends Finally Meet



Before a Disney On Ice show at Times Union Center, Mickey Mouse and friends revealed to Make-A-Wish Northeast New York wish kid Jacob and family were going to Walt Disney World® Resort!