



# HOPE IS ESSENTIAL

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Make-A-Wish<sup>®</sup>  
ILLINOIS



Dear Friends of Make-A-Wish,

"20/20" is the term for having clear vision.

At Make-A-Wish Illinois, we entered 2020 with a clear path for achieving our vision of reaching every eligible child. For both wishes and revenue, we were well-positioned to have the biggest year in our chapter's history. Plans were in place to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Make-A-Wish, fulfilling meaningful wishes to amazing destinations, and deepening engagement with our communities and medical partners.

Along with everyone else, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted us in unprecedented ways. We have postponed hundreds of travel wishes, cancelled fundraising events all over Illinois, and have focused on operating in ways that are safe for our families, volunteers, and staff.

**2020 has been the most rigorous test of our vision to date, and despite all of these challenges, we are proud to report that our vision has never been more clear.**

The incredible adaptations we've made in the face of this pandemic have shown the resilience and strength of our families, our volunteers, our staff and community partners. In the temporary absence of travel wishes, we continue to fulfill especially impactful wish journeys. In fact, these wishes have displayed a remarkable level of creativity and innovation, resulting in lifted spirits, self-discoveries, and joyful moments during difficult times. We invite you to read on in this report for some fantastic examples of the variety of wish journeys our children are currently immersed in.

We are so proud of our volunteers and our staff who have adjusted to this new reality, especially as more children continue being referred to us, increasing the number of children who need wishes.

During this crisis we have focused our sights on our core values, particularly compassion, inclusion, and community. We have declared our commitment to equitably serving every eligible child, especially in our communities of color, as part of achieving our vision.

To our medical partners who refer children with critical illnesses to us, you deserve special recognition for the challenges you have confronted this past year. We deeply appreciate your extraordinary work to care for our most vulnerable children, especially during this crisis. You are all Health Care Heroes in our eyes.

To our donors and community partners, you have shown us how essential hope is. The trust you place in us gives us the confidence to know that our vision will be achieved.

During this time of refocusing, we are actively preparing to reemerge stronger.

Your continued support for our continued clear vision has never been more important.

Best wishes to you,

**Tom Ellman**  
Chair, Board of Directors

**Stephanie Springs**  
Chief Executive Officer



# LEADERSHIP

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*Chief Development Officer*

Daryl M. Thomann  
*Chief Operating Officer*

Bridget O'Connell  
*Vice President of Mission Delivery*

Ryan Blackburn  
*Vice President of Marketing*



*I wish to have  
a shopping spree*

Joseph, 5  
cancer



## REACHING EVERY CHILD

In 2018, Make-A-Wish Illinois embarked on an intentional initiative rooted in our longstanding commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The focus was on communities where we identified that the number of children served and volunteers engaged was not at the same level as other areas of the state. The result was a program with a primary focus on four Chicago neighborhoods with sizeable communities of color, modeled after successful community engagement work already being done in several other areas of Illinois.

Building relationships with local health clinics, attending neighborhood meetings and offering easy entry engagement opportunities are just some of the ways that our staff built trust and success. Each year of the Targeted Community Engagement initiative has shown measured, steady progress as well as insight into how to reach wish families and volunteers in non-traditional ways.

In Fiscal Year 2020,

- A Chicago Neighborhood Council was formed of community leadership volunteers with representation from the targeted areas and key hospitals serving those areas.
- Volunteer recruitment continued to be strong, with a 66-percent increase in volunteers serving the targeted Chicago communities.
- Events to involve current and alumni families were planned, providing opportunities for families to connect with each other and the organization in free, appealing ways. While in-person events were postponed, virtual event opportunities provided a touchpoint with Make-A-Wish.

Looking forward, Make-A-Wish Illinois will continue to work to **deepen the connection** in these communities and use learnings from these last few years to explore other parts of our service area which may be currently underserved, ensuring that **every child with a qualifying condition** has the opportunity to experience a life-changing wish.

*I wish to have  
a puppy*

Allison, 13  
leukemia







# MISSION INNOVATION

Keeping the health and safety of wish children, their families and volunteers top of mind always, the challenge of creating meaningful wish journeys for children with critical illnesses in the midst of a global pandemic seemed insurmountable at first.

## *Wish Kids Need Us Now*

Children served by Make-A-Wish are already facing uncertainty and fear related to their illnesses. Our team knew that wish children needed hope and joy now more than ever and set out to find new ways to build resilience for children who must wait even longer for their wishes.

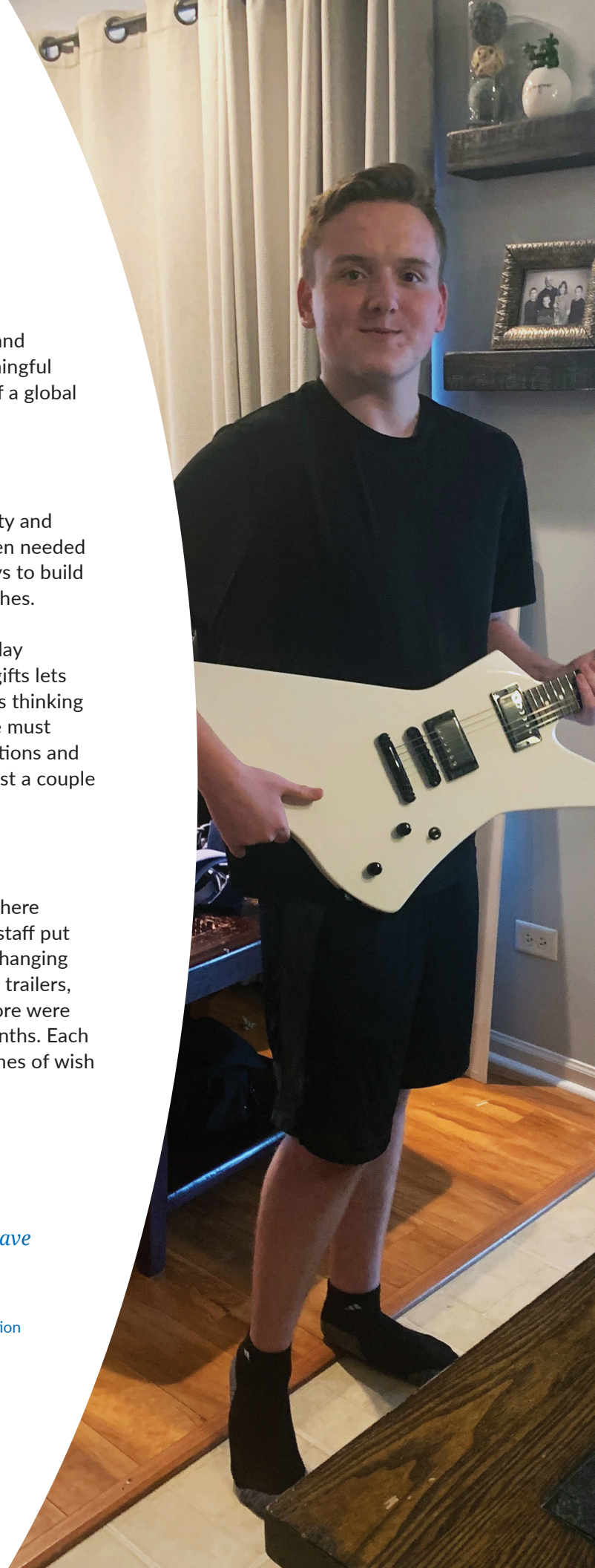
Keeping spirits up through creative wish boosts such as birthday parades, physically distanced meetings and small, thoughtful gifts lets wish children know that the larger Make-A-Wish community is thinking of them, fostering a sense of belonging even though everyone must stay apart. Leveraging technology for more frequent conversations and marshalling support from talented community members are just a couple of the creative ways uncovered to build hope.

## *We are still granting all of the wishes we can.*

While wishes involving travel or large groups are postponed, there are many other wishes that could be granted. Volunteers and staff put their heads together on imaginative ways to make those life-changing and impactful experiences happen. Companion animals, travel trailers, private shopping sprees, musical instruments, playsets and more were just some of the wishes granted in the spring and summer months. Each day brings new and innovative ways to fulfill the heartfelt wishes of wish kids, restoring strength and building hope.

*I wish to have  
a guitar*

**Logan, 15**  
cardiac condition



MAKE-A-WISH ILLINOIS

# Financials



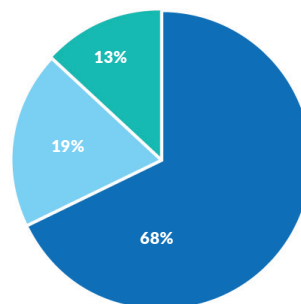
## Fiscal Year 2020

*Year ended August 31, 2020*

Total Revenue	\$12,297,482
Total Expenses	\$10,589,458
Total Net Assets	\$12,906,703

### *Operating Expenses\**

Program Services	\$ 7,183,617	●
Fundraising	\$ 2,006,317	●
Management and General	\$ 1,399,524	●



*\*In a typical year, the program service expense ratio for Make-A-Wish Illinois is approximately 80%. Due to COVID-19 and widespread health and safety restrictions enacted mid-year, wish granting operations were impacted with all travel wishes and wishes involving large groups postponed. We anticipate granting all of those wishes as soon as it is safe to do so, likely in fiscal year 2021 and into fiscal year 2022, in addition to all of the wishes that continue to be granted within the safety guidelines.*

Copies of our audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2020,  
are available upon request. Call 800.978.9474.



# 390

Wishes granted in fiscal year 2020

# 675

Children referred to Make-A-Wish in fiscal year 2020

# 1,266

Wishes on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions

# 1,500

Active volunteers in Illinois

# 16,000+

Wishes granted in Illinois since 1985



*I wish to have  
a shopping spree*

Paola, 11  
cancer



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