

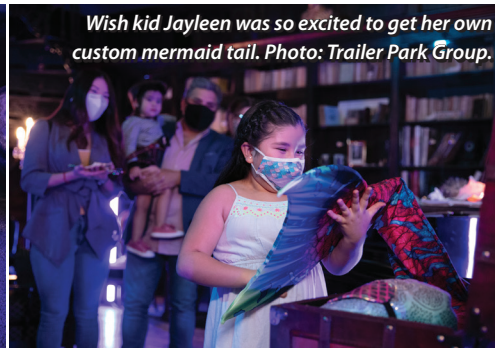
# Make-A-Wish of Greater LA

## For over 40 years, transforming lives one wish at a time

BY MIKE KALLHOFF



Wish kid Jayleen gets her wish to swim with a real mermaid. Photo: Trailer Park Group.



Wish kid Jayleen was so excited to get her own custom mermaid tail. Photo: Trailer Park Group.



Wish kid Joseph and his Dad attend Super Bowl LVI at SoFi Stadium.



Wish kid Gabriel learns to use a firehose with the help of his dad and a Glendale firefighter. Photo: Trailer Park Group.



Wish kid Vaughn and his new puppy who he named Rocky. Photo: Ryan Hartford, Eclipse Media.

Despite suffering from a tumor, Los Angeles native Jayleen (age 7) is joyful and full of energy. She has a vivid imagination and was very excited to share her passion for mermaids with our team at Make-A-Wish. She said she knows mermaids really exist and has even seen a couple herself, so her wish was to swim with a real-life mermaid.

Being able to give a child with a critical illness the opportunity to wish for anything in their imagination is an honor we at Make-A-Wish don't take lightly. We have a team of expert wish-granters ready to tackle the impossible.

For Jayleen, not only would she get to swim with a mermaid, but we would weave wish magic throughout every second of her experience and, ultimately, spark hope to fuel her recovery.

There's a common misconception that Make-A-Wish only serves terminally ill children. In fact, most wish kids go on to live healthy lives into adulthood — and cite their wish as a turning point in their recovery.

A growing body of research demonstrates how wishes promote mental and emotional well-being for children facing trauma from a critical illness. In a recent impact study, more than 90% of pediatric doctors surveyed said that they'd witnessed their patients overcoming feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety and depression after their wish. Three out of four doctors went as far as to state that a wish could improve a child's medical outcomes.

"At a time when families are dealing with unplanned hospital stays and uncomfortable treatments, a wish can provide children with the chance to reclaim a piece of their childhood and a sense of control," said Dr. Shoba Srikantan, MD, FAAP and chair of the Make-A-Wish National Medical Advisory Council. "After coming back from a wish, many of my patients exhibit a renewed sense of hope and greater compliance with

their treatment, which is why I — and many of my peers — consider a wish to be an important part of a child's treatment plan."

By granting transformational wishes, Make-A-Wish has brought hope to children with critical illnesses for over 40 years. Through the magic of a wish, a child with a critical illness replaces fear with confidence, sadness with joy, and anxiety with hope.

Despite restrictions and uncertainty due to Covid, the Los Angeles chapter of Make-A-Wish granted over 400 wishes since the start of the pandemic in March 2020: having a puppy, going to the Super Bowl, meeting a celebrity, being a firefighter and many more.

Thanks to generous support from Trailer Park Group, an entertainment marketing agency in Hollywood, Make-A-Wish Greater LA also granted Jayleen's wish to be a mermaid. We turned a mansion into a hall of maritime curiosities and surprised Jayleen with a real-life mermaid (this is Hollywood after all!) swimming in the backyard pool. Jayleen got her own custom fin, mermaid lessons and a children's book featuring her as the mermaid. The best part for our team was seeing Jayleen ask our mermaid a long list of questions: "Have you met a pink dolphin? What do you eat in the sea? Have you ever met a human baby?" This was followed by a sweet introduction to Jayleen's new baby sister!

Jayleen's mom shared that receiving the diagnosis was incredibly hard, but the wish experience brightened the entire family. "We will always have it in our memories, and it was a wonderful experience," she said. "It is a beautiful thing to do for children."

Due to the pandemic, Make-A-Wish has an unprecedented number of children with critical illnesses waiting for their wishes — more than 650 children in LA alone. To learn more or to see how you can support, visit [wish.org/la](http://wish.org/la).

Mike Kallhoff is President & CEO of Make-A-Wish Greater Los Angeles.