

WISHES

Make-A-Wish[®]
NEBRASKA

★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

Official Newsletter of
Make-A-Wish Nebraska

Spring 2023



I wish to have a shopping spree
Jayden, 13
cancer

wish.org/nebraska

Together, we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.



Brigette Young, President and CEO of Make-A-Wish Nebraska, with wish kid Julia

Dear Friends,

Throughout 2023, we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of Make-A-Wish Nebraska's founding. Thanks to the incredible support of the local community, Make-A-Wish Nebraska has granted more than 3,000 wishes across the state over the past 40 years.

For our wish kids who are fighting critical illnesses, they experience extreme mental and emotional challenges every day. But a spark of hope can immediately launch a child onto a journey filled with exciting possibilities, creating a turning point in their treatment and recovery.

A wish forever renews emotional strength and restores hope for a lifetime. Wishes are important and we are thankful to everyone who has supported our mission and our wish kids for the past 40 years. We look forward to continuing to grant wishes for many years to come.

As we begin celebrating this momentous occasion, we are reminded that wishes are powerful. Wishes provide hope in dark times. Wishes are forever. Thank you for helping us transform lives for 40 years!

Sincerely,

Brigette Young
President/CEO

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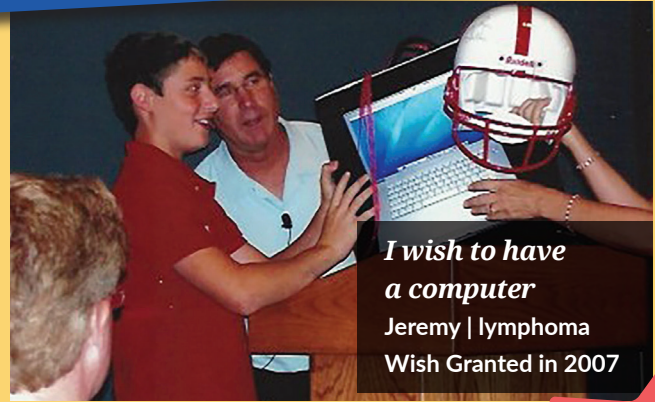
Courtney Highbanks
Development Director
- Greater Nebraska

Chloe Wise
Wish and Development Coordinator
- Greater Nebraska

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF GRANTING WISHES



I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
 Brenda | cancer
 First Nebraska Wish Granted in 1983



I wish to have a computer
 Jeremy | lymphoma
 Wish Granted in 2007



I wish to have a hot tub
 Ruby | liver disease
 3,000th NE Wish Granted in 2022

2023 FISCAL YEAR - WISHES SINCE SEPT. 1, 2022

Ronan, 9	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Eric, 4	brain tumor	I wish to have a dinosaur playhouse
Emberlyn, 8	congenital disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Oliver, 10	cancer	I wish to go to Hawaii
Ruby, 10	liver disease	I wish to have a hot tub	Karson, 6	genetic disorder	I wish to have a camper
Jacelyn, 16	lymphoma	I wish to go to Hawaii	Emily, 10	brain tumor	I wish to go to Disneyland®
Anthony, 18	congenital heart disease	I wish to have a FBI experience	Charlotte, 11	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Grayson, 7	congenital heart disease	I wish to have a semi-truck play structure	Nahavy, 12	wilm's tumor	I wish to have a gaming computer
Jonah, 9	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Remie, 5	kidney disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Reece, 7	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Grace, 10	kidney disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Oliver, 4	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Caysen, 6	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Keira, 14	autoimmune disorder	I wish to go to Hawaii	Wyatt, 4	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Andres, 4	kidney transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Kathryn, 6	cancer	I wish to have a tea party with Elsa & Anna
Raymond, 15	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Brooklyn, 7	heart condition	I wish to meet Minnie Mouse
Alexis, 18	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Julia, 7	blood disorder	I wish to go to Hawaii
Haylee, 8	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Benjamin, 17	cancer	I wish to go to Hawaii
Kenzi, 8	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Peter, 16	cancer	I wish to go to the Bethesda Game Studios
Rylee, 6	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Jonah, 12	leukemia	I wish to go to Hawaii
Jayden, 8	liver transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Gabriel, 14	brain tumor	I wish to have a room redo
Alaska, 8	genetic disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Lily, 7	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Declan, 3	genetic disorder	I wish to go to Colorado	Elyn, 11	lymphoma	I wish to meet Guy Fieri
Olivia, 5	genetic disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Gabriel, 18	leukemia	I wish to have a college scholarship
			Elijah, 11	brain tumor	I wish to have a corgi puppy
			Gage, 13	heart transplant	I wish to go to the Daytona 500
			Easton, 10	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
			Kohen, 9	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®



I wish to have a swimming pool

Lia, 4
leukemia

Lia's Wish Story

Lia was almost 2-years-old when she was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). Doctors' visits and 2.5 years of intense chemotherapy became Lia's new normal. Her family learned all about ports, chemo, and survival rates. Lia was hospitalized the entire first month after her diagnosis. The following 2.5 years were filled with ER visits and long hospital stays.

"Instead of Lia continuing on at daycare and learning how to say her friends' names and continuing to learn early childhood vocabulary, she instead learned the names of her doctors and nurses who would become like family to us instead of daycare friends," said Lia's mom, Carrie. "She learned the names of different chemotherapy medications instead of the names of things at the playground, because we were forced to live in extreme isolation and couldn't go to playgrounds or be in public anymore because of being immunocompromised."

Despite the impact her diagnosis had on their family, Lia and her parents found silver linings in the toughest of times. Lia's diagnosis brought their family closer together, it made them grow stronger in their faith, and it showed them how much they were loved by friends, family and the community.

"Friends, family and strangers rallied around us to help in all the ways when we were going through this trial," said Carrie. "This was definitely true for our

Make-A-Wish experience. It helped us not feel so alone and gave us all hope when we were living in isolation and going through the unimaginable. Make-A-Wish donors, volunteers and staff, cared so much about seeing our precious Lia have her wish fulfilled."

When Lia found out she would be receiving a wish, she initially wished for M&Ms! After thinking longer about her wish and all the things she loves, Lia decided to wish for an above ground pool instead.

"Being in the water is her favorite thing. Some people call her a 'fish' for that reason, but she is quick to correct them that she is not a fish, she's a mermaid," said Carrie.

For Lia and her family, her new pool was more than just a fun place they can swim and play. Lia's wish gave her the hope and motivation she needed to comply with her treatments and make it through all the challenges she was enduring while going through chemotherapy.

"Her pool gave us all something to talk about and look forward to. We would talk about the fun she would have swimming in her pool and it took her mind off of the pain, vomiting every day and fear for those moments," said Carrie. "We dreamed of days of being able to be reunited with family and friends and have them over to swim."

Lia's pool is special because it is something her and her family can enjoy for years to come. It is a place where she will be able to make countless memories, but it is also a space where she can exercise and regain her strength after all her chemo treatments. Wishes like Lia's are more than a singular moment, they are a symbol of strength, joy and the hope that anything is possible.

"When you donate to Make-A-Wish, you are truly giving children renewed strength, motivation and hope to fight their illness and bring families closer together. You truly help make a difference," said Carrie.



Jayden's Story

When a wish is granted, a child experiences hope. For many of our wish kids, a wish is a turning point in their medical journey that opens the door to exciting possibilities. A wish allows a child to reclaim their childhood and experience transformative joy.

For 13-year-old Jayden, his wish came at time when he needed it most. After endless doctor's appointments, blood draws, surgeries and medications, Jayden's wish for a shopping spree allowed him to spend time having fun, laughing, and doing the things that made him happy.

Jayden's medical journey began in October 2020 when he began complaining about knee pain. After several doctor's visits and many tests, it was discovered that Jayden's entire left leg was full of cancerous tumors. Not long after he was diagnosed with pseudomyogenic hemangioendothelioma, Jayden lost the ability to walk and had to use a wheelchair and crutches to get around. Shortly after his wish was granted, and 18 months after he first started treatment, Jayden made the brave decision to have his left leg amputated. He now uses a prosthetic leg, which he received exactly 2 years to the day from his initial cancer diagnosis.

Jayden and his family have had to endure so much over the past few years. Despite everything though, Jayden has kept his sense of humor and maintained a positive attitude throughout his cancer journey. His wish played a part in that positive outlook.

"Jayden was able to look forward to something instead of dreading each day," said Jayden's mom, Kristina.

"We had a countdown going until wish day, which also happened to be his birthday. His 13th birthday will go down in history as one of the best!"

Jayden loves gaming and has been playing video games since he was a toddler. He chose a shopping spree for his wish so he could upgrade his gaming area at home. Jayden is also very passionate about helping those in need and he used some of his shopping spree funds to buy items for local homeless shelters.

Jayden's wish provided him and his family with the hope they needed during a difficult time. As best said by Jayden's mom, Kristina:

"Make-A-Wish brings joy and happiness to each Wish Family in immeasurable ways. It wasn't 'just' a shopping spree for my son; it was the joy of riding in a limo for the first time in his life. It was surprising him with an entire VIP section set up at his favorite restaurant, Freddy's. It was spending the whole day with his mom and dad, having fun, something that hadn't been done in months. It was the core memory of coming home with an entire limo full of things he



I wish to have a shopping spree
Jayden, 13
cancer

purchased and laughing hysterically as we tried to figure out how we were all going to fit back inside the limo on the ride home. There was, quite literally, no room left! These are experiences you're giving a child who desperately deserves a moment of joy and laughter, where they can forget about their pain, struggles and fears and just be a child again."



Hope's Story



I wish to go to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter®

Hope | heart defect
Wish Granted in 2011

Written by Hope, Wish Alum

I was born in March 2000 in Lincoln, Nebraska. I was born with a heart defect. The doctors told my mom and dad when I was born, they would likely have only 10 hours to 10 days with me. But then, one heart surgeon, Dr. Kim Duncan, saved my life by operating on me at Children's Hospital in Omaha.

I have had health problems all my life. I was on oxygen until I was a year and a half old. By the time I was 10, I had been hospitalized multiple times and had more than 10 surgeries.

In May 2010 when we went in for a routine appointment, the doctor noticed that my liver was enlarged. He decided to do some tests and the results were not good. The doctor told us that I had tumors on my liver, and that the only way to get those tumors out of my body was for me to have a liver transplant ASAP.

We had to go through an assessment process for organ transplantation and as we did that, the doctors found some problems in my heart. The cardiologists determined that I needed surgery before they could sign off on me receiving a liver transplant.

Dr. Duncan, who performed my first heart surgery at 2 weeks old, performed this new surgery too. They put in a new valve and aorta.

Surgery was supposed to last 8 hours but ended up lasting 16 hours because of complications. It was a tough recovery for me, and I had to stay in the hospital for 2 weeks. I ended up getting a staph infection and had to get a pic line put in. I had to carry around a backpack full of antibiotics all day and change my lines out twice a day for over a month.

Once I was healthy enough, I was placed on the liver transplant waiting list. I finally got the call that a liver had been found and was a match on December 20, 2010. The transplant happened on December 21st and miraculously I went home on December 25th. The nurses said it was the fastest recovery they'd ever seen!

After I got home, the recovery was hard. I had to go to the hospital every day to get poked for labs. I also had to take 24 pills a day so my liver would stay happy in its new home.

One day, one of my doctors told me that he recommended me for Make-A-Wish. I was amazed. It was so exciting to think about going anywhere or doing anything. It was hard to pick my one wish.

Mike and Dawn, my wish granters, talked with me a lot and listened to the things I dreamt about. Eventually, I decided on the best wish ever – to go to the Harry Potter Theme park and Disney World. I am a huge Harry Potter fanatic. This trip gave me something to look forward to while I was recovering and going through such hard times.

June 2011 finally arrived and we got to go on our trip! It started out with a limo ride to the airport. Then, when we arrived in Florida, we drove to the fabulous Give Kids the World Village.

While we were there, we were treated like royalty. We got to have ice cream anytime we wanted, even for breakfast! I even got to place my wish star in the Tower at the Castle of Miracles. They told us that my Star will stay in that tower forever.

We went to all the Disney parks and then the amazing Harry Potter World at Universal Studios. We had special buttons that allowed us to get to the front of any line at the parks!

Unfortunately, after my wish trip, we found out that my heart was having more problems. In 2012 I had heart surgery again, and they replaced my valve, again - this time with a mechanical valve.

There were complications during this last surgery and I had to have a second surgery to put a pacemaker in. Since all of this though, I've been able to share my story with lots of people and talk about my wish experience.



So, why are wishes important?

They are important because it gives kids like me the chance to make memories that will last a lifetime. It gives us a special time to celebrate the good things in life rather than dwelling on health issues. It gives us "HOPE" to continue fighting.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my mechanical heart, and I want to say that Make-A-Wish has given me and my family something to remember for the rest of our lives. Thank you for supporting Make-A-Wish!

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Gary and Nancy Byrne

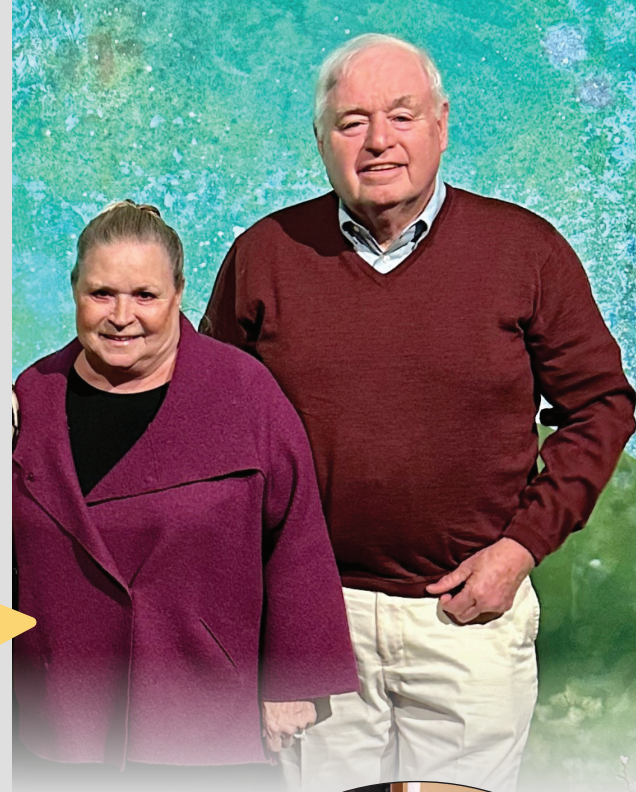
Gary and Nancy Byrne have supported Make-A-Wish Nebraska for many years. However, it was when their granddaughter, Hannah, received her wish in 2011 to go to Walt Disney World® that they knew this was an organization they wanted to become even more involved with by attending events, donating and helping fund wishes.

"I think our favorite thing about Make-A-Wish for Nancy and me is the joy we have seen in the faces of Make-A-Wish kids when their wishes come true," said Gary. "In addition, we have learned the experience provided by Make-A-Wish Nebraska gives a wish family a great deal of relief from the stress which accompanies children with critical illnesses."

Over the past few years, Gary and Nancy have increased their involvement with Make-A-Wish Nebraska. In 2020, Gary joined the Make-A-Wish Nebraska Board of Directors. In 2022, Gary and Nancy helped co-host a fundraising event in North Platte called Pot O'Wishes.

Pot O'Wishes is a St. Patrick's Day fundraising event filled with mingling, cocktails, delicious hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction, and of course, granting life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses. The 2022 event was a huge success, raising over \$57,000! This year's event took place on March 16th and raised over \$63,000!

Donors like Gary and Nancy are why wishes continue to be granted. Their support provides hope and joy to our local wish families.



"It's easy to be upbeat when visiting with people who are considering supporting Make-A-Wish. Not only is it a wonderful organization, genuine and caring, but granting wishes for children really does make a huge difference," said Gary.

Thank you, Gary and Nancy for your dedication to our organization and most importantly, our wish kids!

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of our wish kids who have passed away since our last publication

Elijah, 20
cancer
I wish to have a Utility Terrain Vehicle
(Wish Year 2020)

Esther, 6
brain tumor
I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2022)

Benjamin, 16
brain cancer
I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2022)

Listed are wish kids we have been made aware of, we apologize for any unintentional omissions.

Make-A-Wish[®]

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If you know someone who would like to receive our mailings, or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please contact our office by email info@nebraska.wish.org or call 800-760-9474.

To refer a child:

Visit wish.org/nebraska
Call 800-760-WISH (9474)

Together, we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

Events

Wine, Whiskey and Wishes
May 11, 2023 | Omaha

Norfolk Golf Tournament
May 22, 2023 | Norfolk

Crawl for Cancer
June 3, 2023 | Omaha

**Fox in the Hen House
Golf Tournament**
July 22, 2023 | Lincoln

Evening of Wishes Gala
August 17, 2023 | Kearney

Wine, Whiskey and Wishes
September 14, 2023 | Lincoln

**Creighton School of Medicine
Walk for Wishes**
September 16, 2023 | Omaha

Learn more at wish.org/nebraska



Join us April 29th for our annual *Blue Jean Ball: Wishes are Forever* as we celebrate 40 years granting wishes in Nebraska! The fun-filled evening will include some very special wish stories, highlighting the life-changing impact of a wish, as well as silent and live auctions raising funds to grant even more wishes for children battling critical illnesses in Nebraska. Get your tickets today at wishesareforever.org or scan the QR code above. *Hope to see you there!*