

Make-A-Wish®  
NEW JERSEY

★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

# Hope *Matters*

..... 2023 NEWSLETTER .....



I wish to  
have a tractor  
**Judah, 18**  
blood disorder



# President's Message

**Thomas P. Weatherall**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends,

A friend recently suggested a good read for me, *Shelter From The Storm: Caring for a Child with a Life-threatening Condition*. In it, author Dr. Joanne Hilden explains the dynamics that often occur within a family that has such a special child... families such as the ones we at Make-A-Wish meet on an almost daily basis.

Dr. Hilden writes to parents, "You are trying to care for [your child] at the same time that you are dealing with your own emotions .... Everyone involved will be going through a time of emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physical struggle .... Suddenly doctors and nurses are in control of so much of your child's life. But remember that your parental instincts have served you well in the past and will continue to do so. Your role as your child's guardian and protector has not been taken away; it is only being partially shared by experts in health care." Dr. Hilden goes on to use the phrase the "Care Team", which is essentially the combination of family members and health care professionals who are caring for the child. And at times, this includes extended family, friends, and neighbors too.

I think Dr. Hilden would agree that when we come into the lives of children and their families who are facing life-threatening medical conditions, that we are members of the Care Team as we've been told for now over 40 years that a wish can bring a profound impact on the child's, and their family's, well-being. By virtue of your support, YOU too are on this very special team, as well!

In fact, sometimes it's not "who" but "what" makes an impact from a care team perspective. Case in point, consider Cody's wish story that was recently featured on Sunday TODAY with Willie Geist -

"In 2018, a boy with a rare condition that prevented him from walking or talking met a horse that changed his life, and many others. When Cody Dorman was born with Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome, doctors told his parents he likely would live for only two years. But he was twelve when the Make-A-Wish Foundation brought Cody and his family to Gainsborough Farm near Lexington, Kentucky to meet a gentle six-month-old horse. With Cody in his wheelchair, the foal walked right over and put his head in Cody's lap. The two became fast friends, and the horse's owners named him Cody's Wish.

Cody became a regular at the track as his buddy won race after race, including last year's Dirt Mile at the prestigious Breeders' Cup.

*"Here's the wire, the wish has come true! That one's for you, Cody! Cody's Wish has won the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile!"*

Then just last weekend, Cody's Wish was back in the Breeders' Cup at Santa Anita Park in California, for his final

race before retiring. In a moment almost too dramatic to be real, the horse came from last place to beat the Preakness champion by a nose.

*"Cody's Wish takes the lead! I think he won it by a nose on the wire over National Treasure! Thank you, Cody, and thank you Cody's Wish!"*

Cody was waiting for his friend in the Winner's Circle. The next day, Cody passed away.

In a statement, mom and dad said, "We always knew this day would come, but we were determined to help Cody live his best life for however long we had him."



Cody Dorman, who inspired a horse and the country, died last Sunday. He would have been 18 next month."

On behalf of our board and team here at the castle, thank you for your ever generous and consistent support. On behalf of the children and families we serve, thank you for rising to the challenge to be an extension of their care team. We wish you a wondrous and fulfilling holiday season and New Year.

Deeply grateful,

**Tom Weatherall**  
President & CEO  
Make-A-Wish New Jersey







# Jonah Stands Tall Among the Sequoias

I wish to go to California to see sequoia trees

**Jonah, 6**  
Burkitt's lymphoma

Jonah was diagnosed with Burkitt's lymphoma when he was just five years old, after receiving surgery for an enlarged lymph node on his neck.

"We were shocked and devastated as we tried to navigate what the next steps would be," his mom Becky shared.

Early detection gave Jonah a good prognosis, though with a cancer diagnosis, he would still need to undergo a grueling treatment process.

"For three months he had to endure weekly chemo, hair loss, a rare infection, an extended hospital stay and 15 doses of medication a day at home. It was a traumatic experience for our whole family," Becky continued.

"Even now that he is considered cured, we are still dealing with the psychological and behavioral impacts

that Jonah struggles with and how they impact his twin sister and eight-year-old brother."

Jonah's cancer diagnosis and treatment took away many aspects of a normal childhood, including going outside and playing and hiking.

"He has always particularly loved trees," Becky shared. "I had told him from a young age that someday we would go see the really big trees in California."

When Make-A-Wish entered Jonah's life, he knew just what to wish for - to see those big sequoia trees out West.

During Jonah's wish, his family found themselves in the center of Sequoia National Park, basking in the resilience of trees that had been around for thousands of years - a resilience not unlike that of their brave six-year-old.

"It was so heartwarming to see him doing what he loves again after so many months of being sick and having to get his strength back," Becky reflected. "We had an amazing time hiking, going inside the trees, horseback riding and even seeing a bear! Jonah was delighted and was so proud to become a Junior Ranger at the park. He kept telling everyone with a big smile that he was the reason we got to go on this trip! Jonah's wish absolutely made a life-changing difference to our family. It has given us a new focal point for this painful year and provided an opportunity for us to begin healing and reconnecting as a family. Though we are still navigating his emotional healing from this ordeal, the memories we made on the trip serve as a reminder that we can have great experiences as a family even when things are tough and that the kindness of strangers can change everything."





# A Royal Ball Fit For Princess Andi

I wish to meet Princess Ariel at the Walt Disney World® Resort

Andi, 4

rare neurodegenerative disorder



Imagine receiving news that your child has a critical illness, a rare genetic disorder known as ataxia-telangiectasia, that will slowly rob them of neuromuscular control, yet their cognitive abilities will remain untouched. For Andi's family, this news brought unimaginable heartbreak and a fierce determination to keep Andi as mobile as possible, for as long as possible.

"When we first found out, it was easily the worst day of our lives," shared Lauren, Andi's mom. "It broke our hearts in ways we can never explain. After taking the time to grieve the life we thought Andi would have, we pivoted to celebrating all that Andi can do. Her doctors have told us that she will lose her ability to walk around age ten, and her life expectancy is anywhere from 19 to 25 years of age. But we are doing everything within our power to push these limits so that she is with us for much longer."

When Andi declared her wish to go to the Walt Disney World® Resort and meet her favorite Disney Princess Ariel, she had no idea just how much Disney magic awaited her. To their surprise, Andi and her family would be one of 50 wish

families invited to Disney's "Once Upon A Wish Party", a special event that was a fairytale come to life, complete with a Royal Ball for Disney princesses and princes.

"To have an entire Royal Ball with every princess was so beyond Andi's wildest dreams," Lauren shared. "We truly didn't know that anything like that was even possible, but Make-A-Wish and Disney made it happen!"

From the moment the family arrived, Disney cast members and volunteers greeted them and proclaimed Andi as royalty. After breakfast, the heart of Andi's wish came true - a meet and greet not only with her favorite princess Ariel, but with actress Halle Bailey who portrays Ariel in Disney's live-action *The Little Mermaid*. And the surprises kept coming - Elsa, Anna and Olaf from Disney's *Frozen* gave Andi and her sister Brynn royal lessons, teaching them how to curtsy and dance, and Andi was gifted a Princess Ariel costume, crown,

sash and magic wand to wear to the Royal Ball the following night.

At the Royal Ball, Andi's joy and confidence shined through as she posed for pictures in her costume and danced the night away with more than 30 Disney princesses and characters.

"It was really special to be there with other wish families who were going through similar journeys," Lauren recalled. "These little warriors were not sick and tired, they were dancing around thoroughly living their dreams in the happiest place on Earth. The memories and photos we have from that day are truly family treasures for us and will be something we can reflect on during future difficult times as Andi's condition progresses. It was really special that we

got to go on this trip before Andi is wheelchair bound, so that she could walk up to meet her dream princesses and feel like the most special little girl. This trip more than restored our hope, strength, and joy to our family."

Andi's wish was more than a vacation or a party - it was a testament to her resilience, a celebration of her life and proof of the unwavering support of those who help to make wishes come true.







# Leam's Tropical Turtle Adventure

## I wish to go to Hawaii

Leam, 9  
spindle cell sarcoma

When he was just five years old, Leam's parents heard those devastating, life-altering words – your child has cancer. Life took a turn and the future seemed unrecognizable. Hopes and dreams they once envisioned for their young son changed to facing life one day at a time, learning more about Leam's diagnosis, the treatment protocols and focusing on maintaining a positive outlook while they navigated the terrifying unknowns.

"You never think it's going to be your child," Leam's mom Sina shared. "We were robbed of a lot of things. It feels like just yesterday, being told that they found a mass in his chest. It was devastating, it shook our world. But he went through it so gracefully, I do not know how else to describe it. He is a special kid."

Leam has always loved turtles and often thought about the day he'd finally see the majestic creatures, known as Honu, up close and personal. After a long and difficult battle, Leam



knew that a trip to Hawaii – for not only him, but for his entire family – was his one true wish.

On a warm spring day in Manalapan, New Jersey, nine-year old Leam pulled up in a limousine to The Learning Experience, thinking he was participating in an activity for kids who recently declared their wish. Little did he know that The Learning Experience was amidst its nationwide annual "Let's Grant Wishes!" campaign that has raised over \$4 million for Make-A-Wish across the country, and that his wish was about to be granted.

The Learning Experience and Make-A-Wish surprised Leam with a tropical celebration in his honor and shared the news that his wish to go to Hawaii and meet the sea turtles was granted, and he was headed for the Aloha State in just one week. The celebration included Hawaiian dancers, fire breathers, Kona Ice and some Jersey Shore turtles.

The weeklong adventure was everything Leam and his family had hoped for and more. From the beautiful beaches, to enjoying local cuisine, to snorkeling on the North Shore, taking a submarine ride and of course, a sea turtle tour, Leam was able to be a kid again, and make lifelong memories with his family.

"It wasn't just a simple getaway from work and school, it was celebrating his life," Sina shared. "That's what made it so much more epic. And the culture of Hawaii – it's not just in your head, it's really all around you. It was a good place to heal. Hawaii's culture and the nature around us was therapeutic, it was good medicine."



2023

# Celebrating 40 Years



📱 Scan the QR code or visit [nj.wish.org/40th](https://nj.wish.org/40th) to watch James' episode of *George to the Rescue* and learn more about the wishes we granted at our Walk & Roll For Wishes, our 12,000<sup>th</sup> wish and the Wish Bus!



## WORLD WISH DAY WALK & ROLL FOR WISHES

April 29<sup>th</sup> marks the global anniversary of the day in 1980 that inspired the founding of Make-A-Wish and is fondly known as World Wish Day. This year, we celebrated this important day, along with our chapter's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, by hosting our World Wish Day Walk & Roll For Wishes at American Dream in East Rutherford, presented by the Battista Family and Gusto Grill. Over 600 supporters gathered for an inspirational day, raising over \$150,000 to help make future life-changing wishes come true.

Three wishes were celebrated during the event, including James' wish **to have an accessible movie room**, granted in partnership with our dear friends at *George to the Rescue*, Morgan's wish **to give to the Comfort Zone Camp** and Jace's wish **to have a Spider-Man themed camper**, which was granted as a complete surprise through a live video feed during the program!

The event was a testament to the unwavering commitment of the entire New Jersey community that continues to provide the essential support and vital funding needed to deliver hope, strength and joy to more children with critical illnesses. ✨





## THE GRANTING OF OUR HISTORIC 12,000<sup>TH</sup> WISH

This July, 18-year-old Judah experienced the surprise of a lifetime, when his wish for a Kubota Tractor was granted during a celebration at the Samuel & Josephine Plumeri Wishing Place with Make-A-Wish staff, alumni, volunteers and supporters of our mission.

Judah's wish marked a historic milestone for Make-A-Wish New Jersey, as the 12,000<sup>th</sup> wish granted since our chapter's founding in 1983. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July themed event engaged the community in a day filled with games, food trucks, ice cream and a celebration of our impactful mission.

Judah courageously battles thalassemia, a life-threatening genetic blood disorder. He lives on a farm where he hopes to cultivate and grow all sorts of vegetables on his own. Judah's Tractor-Loader-Backhoe is known for its versatility and will be ideal for the many different projects Judah intends to use it for. He also is now able to



keep up with his brothers on the farm, something he has struggled with his entire life due to his medical condition.

Due to Judah's diagnosis, his parents Jennie and Ron shared that he does not often talk about the future. Since the granting of his wish, they shared how happy they are to see Judah filled with hope for the first time in his life, and that his wish is the reason for that new-found hope.

"You always want your children to have hope," Judah's dad Ron reflected. "We can want the best for our children, but unless they want that too – he is the one that has to put the effort into the hope, he's the one that has to stay with it every day. To finally see him starting to step out of "the end" and into "what can be" thanks to Make-A-Wish is definitely a blessing." ★



## ALL ABOARD THE WISH BUS

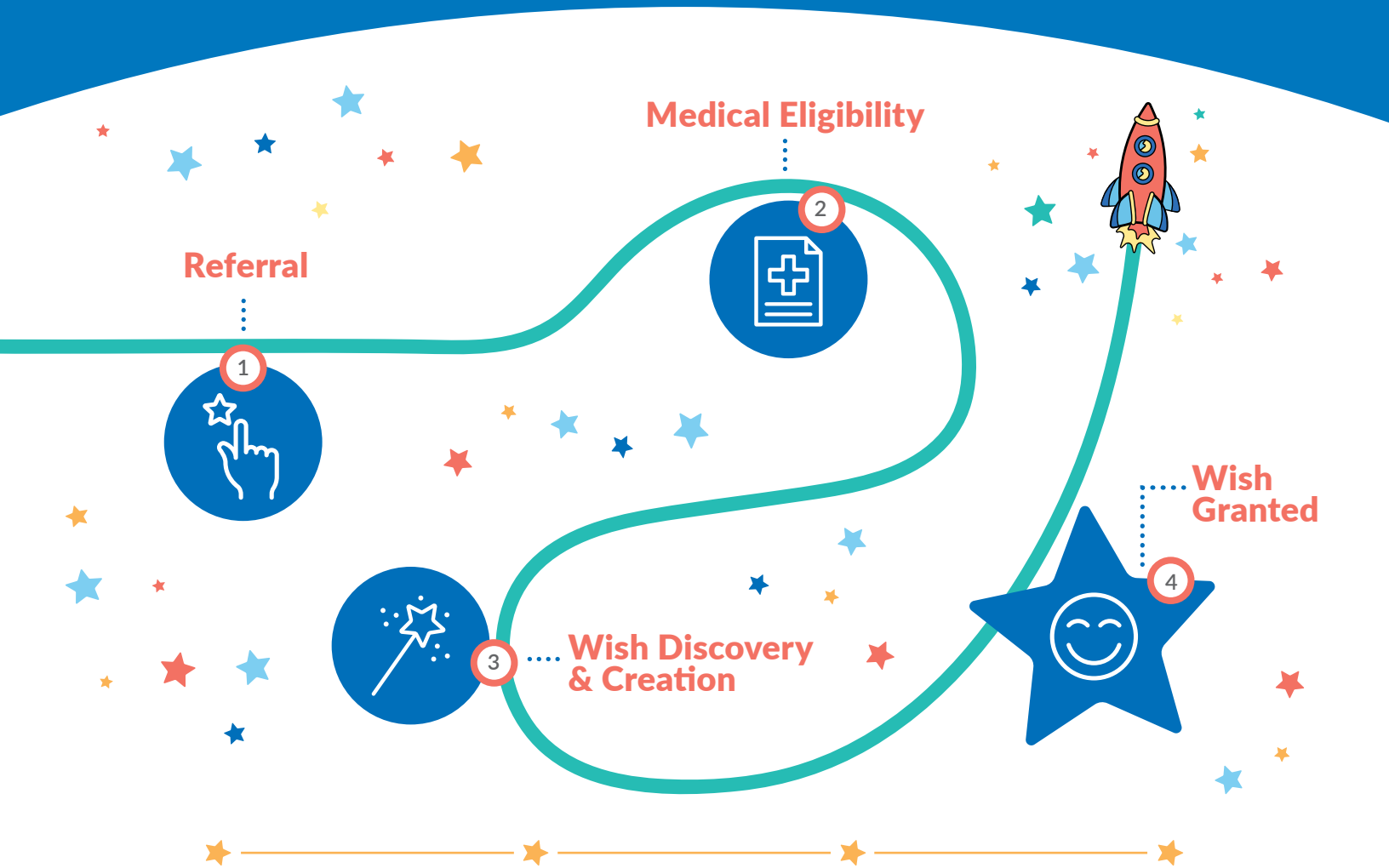
Thanks to our dear friends, the Crowley family, our Wish Bus provides us with the opportunity to take our magical and whimsical castle, and our profound mission, on the road. The Wish Bus will travel to wish kids' homes, hospitals and medical treatment facilities, major sporting events and concerts, airports for travel wish sendoffs, and many more places throughout New Jersey and beyond. It will support our mission everywhere it goes and will invite the public to engage in deeper, more meaningful ways with our cause. Look for the Wish Bus and be sure to "climb aboard"! ★



# How We Make Wishes Come True

We have an ambitious vision – to grant the wish of every eligible child in New Jersey. We believe that wishes change the odds for children fighting critical illnesses. Wishes have the ability to help kids look past their medical conditions, decrease families’ anxiety and bring entire communities together.

These four steps to granting a wish build upon each other to create unforgettable experiences for wish kids and their families. Visit [nj.wish.org/refer](http://nj.wish.org/refer) to learn more about eligibility or to refer a child today.



## STEP 1 Referral

We rely on medical professionals, parents, family members and children themselves for referrals.

## STEP 2 Medical Eligibility

Children who have been diagnosed with a qualifying critical illness, and are between the ages of 2½ and 18 at the time of the referral, may be eligible for a wish.

## STEP 3 Wish Discovery & Creation

Our dedicated staff and volunteers meet with the child and their family. They awaken the child’s imagination to envision the seemingly impossible.

## STEP 4 Wish Granted

We create an unforgettable and personalized experience driven by the child’s creativity to create lifelong memories for the entire wish family.

### REFERRAL SPOTLIGHT

Thank you to our leading referral sources!





I wish to meet the New York Football Giants

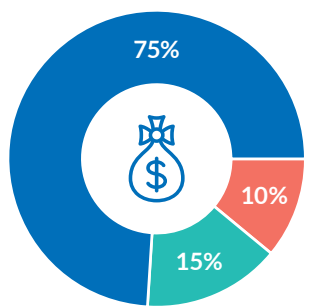
Eli, 10  
bone marrow transplant



# You make life-changing moments like these happen



Make-A-Wish New Jersey relies on the support of generous donors like you to create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.



## HOW YOUR GIFT IS SPENT Fiscal Year 2023

- 75%** Wish Granting
- 15%** Fundraising
- 10%** Administration



## WISHES GRANTED Fiscal Year 2023

- 336** I wish to go
- 102** I wish to have
- 14** I wish to meet
- 1** I wish to be
- 1** I wish to give

### WISH IT FORWARD

## JOIN OUR WISH ALUMNI GROUP



Once a wish is granted, a child's journey with Make-A-Wish is far from complete. In fact, it is just the beginning! Led by Assistant Director of Mission Integration, and a wish alum herself, Megan Crowley, the Make-A-Wish New Jersey Alumni Group embraces our mission to experience the continued joy that comes with being a wish alum. It joins together fellow wish families to share their stories with supporters, and engage in special events, corporate campaigns, referral initiatives and other fun, impactful activities that help drive our mission forward.

For more information, visit [nj.wish.org/alumni](https://nj.wish.org/alumni) or email [alumni@nj.wish.org](mailto:alumni@nj.wish.org).



I wish to have a Sweet 16  
Priscilla, 18  
liver transplant

## JOIN OUR LEGACY OF WISHES SOCIETY




The **Legacy of Wishes<sup>SM</sup> Society** honors those generous individuals who have made us aware of their inclusion of Make-A-Wish New Jersey as a beneficiary in their will or other estate plans. This distinguished group also includes those whose forward-thinking generosity has come to fruition in leaving a lasting legacy of hope, strength and joy for children with critical illnesses. We thank you for your belief in the power of a wish, and hope you will consider strengthening our ability to achieve our vision, to grant the wish of every eligible child, in the years to come.

If you have already included a planned gift to Make-A-Wish New Jersey, please consider letting us know so we can welcome you to our Legacy of Wishes Society! For more information or questions, please contact Matt McGovern, J.D., Director of Planned Giving, at [609-371-9474](tel:609-371-9474) or [mmcgovern@nj.wish.org](mailto:mmcgovern@nj.wish.org).

### TYPICAL BEQUEST LANGUAGE:

*"I give the sum of \$\_\_\_ or \_\_\_% to the Make-A-Wish Foundation<sup>®</sup> of New Jersey, Samuel & Josephine Plumeri Wishing Place, 1384 Perrineville Road, Monroe Township, NJ 08831 (tax id: 22-2488495) to be used or disposed of as the Board of Directors deems appropriate in its sole discretion."*



 To assist in creating your estate plan, we have partnered with **FreeWill**, a free online estate planning tool. To learn more, scan the QR Code or visit [nj.wish.org/freewill](http://nj.wish.org/freewill).



## DONOR SPOTLIGHTS



## THE DUNKIN' JOY IN CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION

"As a franchisee I am proud to be part of The Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation and to be able to partner with other wonderful non-profits such as Make-A-Wish New Jersey. Our franchisees are extremely generous and it's so nice to be able to spread love and help others in need, such as the children served by Make-A-Wish."

— William Bori  
Franchisee



## THE WISHING PLACE SHINES BRIGHTER THAN EVER

Thanks to Monroe Township resident and Make-A-Wish New Jersey Board Member Ernie Feist and his wife Sylvie, the Samuel & Josephine Plumeri Wishing Place now shines even brighter! In honor of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of wish granting in New Jersey and in tribute to Ernie's late parents, Gail and Ernest, the Feist family generously gifted a new exterior illumination system that will continue to celebrate and welcome wish kids, their families and all those who visit us.



## WAYS TO HELP

### ADOPT-A-WISH



By fully or partially funding a wish, the Adopt-A-Wish® program offers a unique opportunity to have a direct and tangible impact on the life of a wish child, their family and their communities. Visit [nj.wish.org/aaw](https://nj.wish.org/aaw) for more information.

### GIVE THE GIFT OF A WISH



This holiday season, honor someone special with a donation in their name. Your gift will serve as a lasting tribute to your loved ones and make a difference in the lives of the children we serve. Make your gift at [nj.wish.org/donate](https://nj.wish.org/donate).

### STOCKS & SECURITIES



Give the gift of a wish by donating stock or securities. A gift of stock to Make-A-Wish New Jersey can benefit you in two ways: you may receive a charitable income tax deduction for the full fair market value, while potentially avoiding capital gains taxes on appreciated stock. Call **609-371-9474** for more information.

### DOUBLE YOUR DONATIONS



Many companies encourage employees to donate to their favorite charities by matching their contributions. That means the impact of your gift may be doubled or possibly tripled! Visit [nj.wish.org/matching](https://nj.wish.org/matching) for more information.

### WHEELS FOR WISHES



Your unwanted vehicle can help make wishes come true! To learn more, visit [newjersey.wheelsforwishes.org](https://newjersey.wheelsforwishes.org).

### MORE WAYS TO GIVE



For additional information, contact our Development Team at **609-371-9474** or [development@nj.wish.org](mailto:development@nj.wish.org).

Make-A-Wish.

# WISHES IN FLIGHT

## HELP WISHES TAKE FLIGHT BY DONATING YOUR AIRLINE MILES AND POINTS

Each year, Make-A-Wish New Jersey grants hundreds of wishes that involve air travel for children battling critical illnesses. From wishes to travel to tropical island destinations, to visit world famous amusement parks, or even to meet a favorite celebrity, wish kids and their families board airplanes daily to reach their wish destinations around the world.

You can donate your unused airline miles and offset the cost of travel wishes. Every mile counts, and once you donate your miles to our mission, they never expire!

 Help wishes take flight at [nj.wish.org/miles](https://nj.wish.org/miles).

American Airlines   DELTA  
jetBlue  UNITED 

I wish to go  
to Hawaii

Emery, 5  
soft tissue cancer





★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

**Make-A-Wish® New Jersey**

Samuel & Josephine Plumeri Wishing Place  
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## THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 PARTNERS

Our chapter is proud to partner with companies on both the national and state level through innovative and customized sponsorship programs to help us continue to work toward our goal of granting the wish of every eligible child in New Jersey.

