

WISHES

Make-A-Wish[®]
NEBRASKA

Official Newsletter of
Make-A-Wish Nebraska

Spring 2024



*I wish to go to Walt
Disney World[®]
Sutton, 4 | Palmer
neurological disease*

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 Sam

Dear Friends,

It started with a single wish on April 29, 1980: 7-year-old Chris, struggling with leukemia, wanted to be a police officer for a day. Six people answered the call, rallied the entire community, and granted a wish that lifted Chris up during his darkest days. These original WishMakers were inspired by the impact the wish had on Chris and vowed to do more. A global movement was born.

In 1983, WishMakers in Nebraska helped spread the mission of Make-A-Wish across the state. Since then, with the help of these local WishMakers, we have been able to grant more than 3,100 life-changing wishes to children battling critical illnesses across the state.

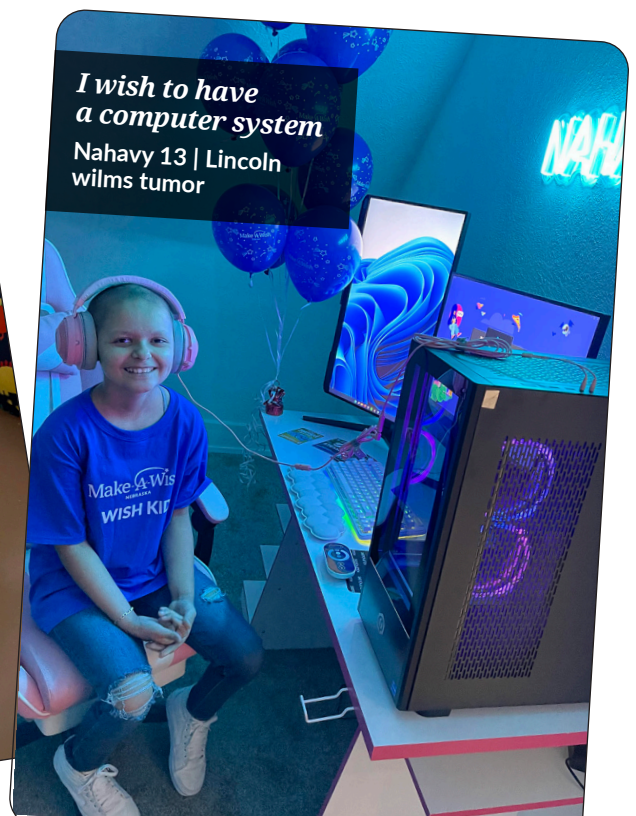
But our work is far from done. In the next 20 minutes, a child will learn that they have a critical illness. And 20 minutes later, another. As long as children face this devastating reality, they'll need WishMakers to help give them piece of their childhood back.

Because wishes don't come true by luck or chance. They come true because of WishMakers. From small donors to big corporations, from caring, everyday individuals to A-list celebrities. We are powered by their passion. We depend on their talents. We grant more wishes because of their continuous commitment and support to a cause bigger and more important than themselves. We are nothing without our WishMakers.

Thank you for being a WishMaker in our community and helping to spread hope and joy to those that need it most.

Sincerely,

Brigette Young
President/CEO



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2024 FISCAL YEAR - WISHES SINCE SEPT. 1, 2023

Orion, 8	cancer	I wish to meet the Unspeakables	Andrew, 6	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Hawaii before I lose my eyesight
Harper, 8	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet princesses	Keely, 7	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and ride all the rides
Alexis, 14	leukemia	I wish to go to Universal Studios® and see Jurassic Park	Caleb, 17	kidney transplant	I wish to go to Mall of America
Alexandria, 5	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet princesses	Brianah, 9	nervous system disorder	I wish to have a camper
Krayton, 5	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and see alligators	Ethan, 11	blood disorder	I wish to have a shopping spree in Omaha
Oliver, 11	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and ride all the rides	Justys, 16	leukemia	I wish to have an online shopping spree to buy electronics
Caiden, 7	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Miles, 15	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go whale watching in Hawaii
Gavin, 10	congenital heart disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Tiimothy, 18	cancer	I wish to go to Bethesda Studios
Caleb, 15	nervous system disorder	I wish to have an online shopping spree to buy gaming stuff	Kynzlee, 3	congenital heart disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® to meet the princesses
James, 4	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	David, 18	chronic kidney disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Amirah, 8	sickle cell disease	I wish to go to Super Nintendo World™	Ella, 16	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Hawaii
Riley, 17	bone marrow transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®	Aaron, 14	brain tumor	I wish to have an online shopping spree
Tyler, 9	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go to Super Nintendo World™	Collin, 18	bone marrow transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and Sea World®
Bryson, 11	chronic kidney disease	I wish to go on the Jurassic Park Tours where the movie was made			
Chloe, 11	cancer	I wish to have the zoo brought to me			
Henry, 10	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go to Legoland®			
Jade, 18	cystic fibrosis	I wish to meet The Rock			



I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Sutton, 4 | Palmer neurological disease

Sutton's Wish Story

Four-year-old Sutton is known to be a social butterfly. He loves anyone and everyone and because of this, he is known around his community for being a boy with the big smile. Like a lot of children his age, Sutton attends pre-school, which he loves. He also loves derby cars, watching Disney movies with his family and playing outside.

However, unlike most children, doctors' appointments are a part of his everyday life. Sutton battles a genetic disease called Leukodystrophy, which is a neurological disease that breaks down the myelin in his brain so it's no longer there to protect his nerves. Because of this, Sutton's ability to do simple tasks like walk and use the bathroom become tough for him to do on his own.

When Sutton and his family found out he would be receiving a wish, they knew this wish was an opportunity to bring some hope and joy to their family after a difficult diagnosis.

"Sutton's wish was important because the process started about two weeks after his diagnosis," said Sutton's mom, Whitney. "When we were trying to navigate his diagnosis and what our life would be like, and his wish gave us hope and an adventure we would get to embark on in nine months!"

Sutton chose Walt Disney World® as his wish because he loves all things Disney, but his two favorites are Mickey Mouse and Toy Story. He also wanted to make sure his older sister, Lennon, could enjoy the wish as well and have a chance to meet all her favorite Disney princesses.

Although his parents knew his wish was being granted months in advance, they decided to keep it a secret from Sutton until a week before their trip to make it an extra, special surprise.

"Being a typical 4-year-old, we knew if we told him too far in advance he would be very impatient with the process. The week leading up to Disney he was so excited! We had a countdown that our wish granters made that helped him have a visual of when we would get to leave for our trip," said Whitney.

Sutton's wish provided him and his family with the hope they needed during a difficult time. As best said by Whitney:

"I would say if you are looking for a way to give a family who is going through a hard medical diagnosis some hope, support Make-A-Wish. Your donation will give a child and a family a time to forget all of the hardships and focus on a positive, life-changing experience instead."



Annika's Story

WRITTEN BY
ANNIKAS MOM, AMANDA

Annika was diagnosed with a brain tumor in July of 2021. Her first surgery was in Omaha in September of that year but unfortunately, they were unable to get it all and discovered it was a Chordoma brain tumor which is a rare cancer that only effects one in a million people each year. It is especially rare in children. The stress of the surgery also impacted her heart, and we discovered that she has Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy. After spending a few weeks in the hospital, we were finally able to take her home but then, we had to start the journey of finding a doctor that specialized in Chordoma. We found one in Pittsburgh, PA and that is where her second surgery took place. The surgeon there felt that he was able to get the entire tumor out, but it did have some impact on her vision. We spent about a month there while Annika recovered and now, we must return each March for MRI scans to make sure the tumor has not returned as it can have five reoccurrences.

Despite her illness, Annika has always been a very happy kid. She is clever and has a dry, sarcastic sense of humor. She can usually out-wit you on anything. She has always lived life fully and is willing to jump in and try anything. She absolutely loves to travel and we often rely on her to navigate the airports when we have to fly. She has become an expert on getting to and from her medical appointments out of state.

For Annika, Hawaii has always been a dream trip. The moment she found out her wish was being granted, that was

all she could think about. It was freeing for her and she didn't have to think about anything else, just enjoying the trip.

One of her dreams was to drink a tropical drink out of a pineapple that had a little umbrella in it and that was the first thing we did the day we got there. She had always had a vision of palm trees and sitting on the beach in paradise and that is exactly what she got.

Not only did we sit on the beach, but we also went to Kualoa Ranch – a private nature reserve. The staff there were so friendly and treated her like a queen. We went on a submarine ride to the bottom of the ocean and saw a ton of fish and turtles. And we ended the trip with a beautiful Luau which gave us all the feels of Hawaii. It was an unforgettable experience for all of us!

For wish families like ours, when your child has an illness such as a brain tumor and you are watching them fight for their lives you want the world to see

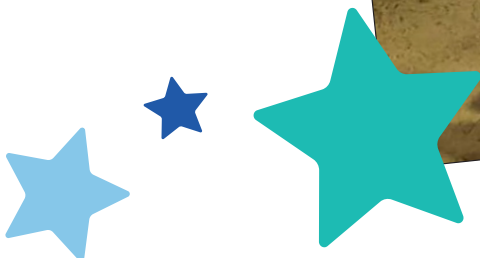


how brave and strong this child is.

Make-A-Wish comes in and says "We see your child. They deserve something for all they have been through." The wish gives them joy and happiness. It gives them something to look forward to and it gives them a moment to be free.



*I wish to go to
Hawaii*
Annika, 15 | Lincoln
malignant brain tumor



World Wish Month 2024: *Mya's* Story

Each April, in honor of the founding wish and the WishMakers who started our organization, Make-A-Wish celebrates "World Wish Month." This year, Make-A-Wish is recruiting the next generation of mountain movers, heart-forward make-it-happeners, donors, volunteers, partners and collaborators. To see the impact WishMakers can have on wish kids, read Mya's story below:

When Rebecca and Elias left the hospital with their daughter Mya, they thought they were headed home with a healthy baby. "You see what you want your kid to look like, and you know, kind of envision what it's going to be as a mom. And we had no idea," Rebecca said.

During their second month well-baby appointment, doctors told the family something was wrong. Rebecca responded: "I don't know what you're talking about, my daughter is perfect." But Mya was not breathing normally; they learned she may only have 18 months to live.

"It was devastating for me, because we thought everything was ok," Rebecca said.

The couple persevered and found a gene treatment program for Mya. "We were told that we weren't going to be able to get on it - and amazingly, we got on it," Elias said. "She got that treatment, and [today] she's 5. It was very stressful at first, but she is a miracle."

Today, Mya uses a wheelchair. Smiley and spontaneous, she likes to say hello to everyone. She continues to defy the odds with accomplishments, such as graduating preschool.

"She is a bright star," Elias said. "She brings joy to everybody that she meets."

When Make-A-Wish came into Mya's life, she surprised everyone with an imaginative request: Mya wished to meet and ride a unicorn. But not just any unicorn. Mya wanted to meet the unicorn she'd been dreaming up - a unicorn named Clover.

"I love unicorns and I wanted to meet one in real life," Mya said. "Thinking about my

wish made me feel calm. It made me feel special-er than anyone."

During her Wish Journey, the community was invited to share Clover sightings across social media with Mya, building her intrigue and joy. When her whimsical wish day arrived, Mya felt "fancy" in her dress and received a princess's welcome at the local equestrian center.

"We pulled up and the horses led us in, and Mya was really excited about that. She was like, 'Oh my gosh, look! Horses!'" Elias said. More clues awaited Mya as she was invited on a playful scavenger hunt. "Clover?! Where are you?" Mya called along the way.

Magically, Clover appeared in the distance. She gracefully walked to Mya, her silky white mane adorned with colorful flowers. "When she saw Clover, she lit up," Elias said. After spending quality time petting and riding Clover, Mya opened

unicorn-themed gifts and enjoyed a princess picnic with her family and friends.

"It's really been good to just let her be a kid," Rebecca said. "Now that she knows she's capable of riding a horse, I think maybe she'll kind of move forward ... I kind of always leave it open because she always surprises me with her capabilities," Rebecca said.

"I don't doubt anything she'll ever do," Elias said. "I don't want to put any limits on her."

Mya and her family will always remember Clover, and as they look to the future, can draw hope and joy from the rejuvenating experience.

"She's magical," Mya said. "I actually really do love her."

Everyone has the power to help make a wish come true. Everyone has the power to be a WishMaker. Because all it takes to make wishes come true, is *you.*



Make-A-Wish
NEBRASKA



Learn how you can become a
WishMaker and make more wishes
like Mya's come true today.
wishmaker.org

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Nebraska Association of Student Councils

Since 1989, Make-A-Wish Nebraska has had the privilege of working with the Nebraska Association of Student Councils (NASC) as their state-wide charity partner. Since this partnership began, NASC has raised over \$1.4 million through a variety of fundraisers such as t-shirt sales, concession stands, penny wars, Wish Weeks, etc. Each school fundraises in their own unique way and with an impressive network of over 50 high schools, the support these student councils provide to local wish kids across the state is unparalleled. In the 2022-2023 school year alone, 33 high schools across Nebraska raised money to help grant local wishes. Collectively, they raised over \$82,000 throughout the school year.

“Make-A-Wish is an organization that spreads joy and in addition, for our students, spreads purpose. Donating to a charity oftentimes is a “give” scenario- it goes into the organization. With Make-A-Wish, it is a “get” scenario - our students are able to watch a wish transform a child’s life. They get to see the direct result of their work. The smiles, the letters of gratitude, the positive impact on the families of the wish children are all the direct result of the efforts of Student Councils across the state who have dedicated their time and energy to granting those wishes,” said Kyrie Nehls, Nebraska Association of Student Councils Executive Director.

Thanks to all their support, NASC has helped grant over 200 wishes across the state since 1989, an impressive feat that has not gone unnoticed. In November 2023, NASC was honored with the “2023 Outstanding Student Group in Philanthropy Award” from The Association of Fundraising Professionals in Nebraska.

We are grateful for everything NASC has done for our wish kids and we are excited to continue working together to make even more wishes come true!



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

Chloe, 11
cancer
I wish to have the zoo brought to me
(Wish Year 2023)

Teo, 15
neuromuscular disorder
I wish to have a shopping spree
(Wish Year 2023)

Richardo, 14
epilepsy
I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2019)

Wyatt, 19
cancer
I wish to have a L1440M Jon Boat
(Wish Year 2022)

Jade, 9
brain tumor
I wish to meet Mickey Mouse
(Wish Year 2023)

Evelyn, 3
metabolic disorder
I wish to go to Walt Disney World®

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

Make-A-Wish®

NEBRASKA

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1005 South 107th Avenue, Suite 102
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Lincoln satellite office
8033 South 15th Street, Suite B
Lincoln, NE 68512

Kearney satellite office
412 East 25th Street, Suite D
Kearney, NE 68847

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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 16, 2024 | Omaha

Norfolk Golf Tournament

May 20, 2024 | Norfolk

Crawl for Cancer

June 1, 2024 | Omaha

Truck Center Companies Benefit Concert

June 8, 2024 | Omaha

Evening of Wishes Gala

August 15, 2024 | Kearney

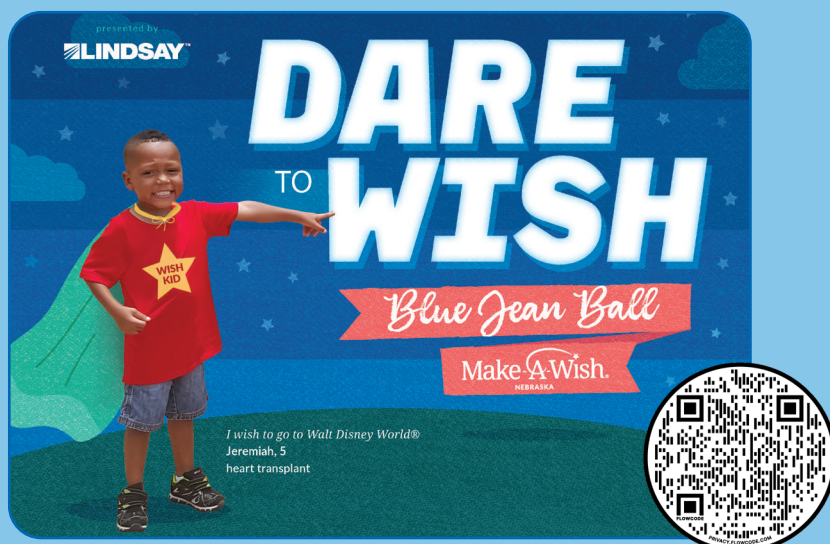
Wine, Whiskey and Wishes

September 12, 2024 | Lincoln

Creighton School of Medicine Walk for Wishes

September 14, 2024 | Omaha

Learn more at wish.org/nebraska




presented by
LINDSAY

DARE TO WISH

Blue Jean Ball

Make-A-Wish
NEBRASKA

I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Jeremiah, 5
heart transplant



Join us April 27th for our annual *Blue Jean Ball: Dare to Wish!* 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 daretomakeawish.org or scan the QR code above. *Hope to see you there!*