

I wish to meet my  
favorite singer/  
songwriter  
Hattie, 9  
cancer

Make-A-Wish®  
MID-SOUTH



# Best Wishes

FALL 2024

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Get ready to cheer...YOU helped Make-A-Wish Mid-South grant our 7,000th wish this year! That's 7,000 remarkable kids across Arkansas, West Tennessee, and North Mississippi who have experienced the life-changing impact of a wish come true. We are honored to work alongside you, providing joy to these families outside of the unimaginable medical circumstances they face.

Check out our 7000th wish on the opposite page, Emery's wish for her very own art shed. This young lady brought abundant flair to her wish journey and her role in helping to design her own special space. She inspired us all with her creativity and ambition. We can't wait to see all that she will create and accomplish in this space!

And speaking of milestone moments and new spaces, did I mention we're all moved in at our new Make-A-Wish Mid-South headquarters in the Clark Tower in East Memphis? We are immensely grateful for the many people who came together to create an inspiring space for our entire team, amazing volunteers and our wish families- past, present and future.

We are confident that this new space will support our strategy to help us grant the wish of every eligible child. As we are introduced to more children than ever qualifying for a wish experience, we are positioning Make-A-Wish Mid-South to fulfill these growing wishes and secure the resources they'll require. We'll need all hands on deck- volunteers, donors, wish alum families- to rise to the occasion and meet this steady growth of more life-changing wishes.

There is truly so much to celebrate as we soak in these milestone moments this month!

Best Wishes,

**Casey Tansey**  
President and CEO

*Staffers Joanna  
Blankenship and Ashli  
Bixler*

*Staffers Scott Elliott  
and LaWanda  
Johnson*



**Make-A-Wish**  
MID-SOUTH



# Make-A-Wish®

MID-SOUTH

# 7,000 WISHES

At the heart of our mission at Make-A-Wish Mid-South is the collaboration and input from wish kids themselves. Emery's wish wasn't just about creating something special; it was about creating something that truly reflected her passion for art. She was intimately involved in every step of her wish, making her art shed her very own!



*I wish to have my own art shed*  
**Emery, 9**  
 Respiratory disorder

## Wish Journey and Community Engagement

A transformed life, off to change the lives of other children - many of whom will grow into adulthood.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# Officer Payton reporting for Wish Granting



Steven Payton's journey with Make-A-Wish Mid-South began in an unexpected yet heartwarming way. As a School Resource Officer (SRO) in Russellville, Arkansas, Steven met a young student named Brayden who was undergoing treatment for a respiratory disorder.

Whether it was visiting Brayden in the hospital, engaging in epic Nerf battles, or bringing several police canines to the hospital parking lot, Steve made it his mission to be a beacon of light for Brayden during those tough times.

"He was hospitalized for 75 days during that school year, and I would just go and see him. I didn't know his parents, but I knew Brayden," Steven shared.

Later, Steven had the chance to join in Brayden's wish celebration, and he was hooked. Steven wanted to get involved in making more kids' days.

When he and his wife, Sara, heard that Make-A-Wish Mid-South was seeking volunteers in their area, they didn't hesitate to get involved.

"They just wanted a bunch of people to learn how to grant wishes. I was the only guy, but I just wanted to grant wishes and make a kid's day."

Since joining the Central Arkansas Regional Board two years ago, Steven has been instrumental in granting wishes in his community. This year alone, Steven and Sara have brought wishes to life for nearly a dozen kids. From arranging dream trips to organizing unforgettable celebrations, their dedication to the cause is evident in the joy they bring to each child's life.

"The cool part about Make-A-Wish Mid-South is everybody's got one goal, and that's making kids wishes come true. Whether it is through board work and fundraising, granting wishes, or meeting families at the airport, our goal is the same: grant a wish," Steven said.

Steven's work as a police officer with the Arkansas State Police only adds to his dedication to serving his community. Whether through his role in law enforcement or his volunteer work, Steven continues to be a source of support, hope, and kindness for kids battling critical illnesses.

Through their tireless efforts, Steven and Sara Payton embody the spirit of Make-A-Wish, proving that a small act of kindness can spark a lifelong commitment to making wishes come true.



Learn more about volunteering today at:  
[midsouth.wish.org/volunteer](https://midsouth.wish.org/volunteer)

# Inspiring the Next Generation of WishMakers: The Impact of the Kids for Wish Kids Program

The Kids for Wish Kids program is more than just a fundraising initiative—it's a powerful movement that's inspiring the next generation of WishMakers across the Mid-South. From Memphis to Jonesboro, Nettleton to Springdale, students at Kids for Wish Kids partner schools rally around wish kids, channeling their energy and compassion into making life-changing wishes to life.

These young leaders are teaching us all a lesson in empathy and kindness, proving that age isn't a barrier in making a difference. Balancing sports, homework, and a passion for granting wishes, they work tirelessly to raise money for kids like them to experience unforgettable adventures—whether it's a trip to Disney or a week at the beach.

For these students, the Kids for Wish Kids program goes beyond just a volunteer opportunity or a chance to ditch their uniforms for a day. They understand the real impact of their efforts. They're not just raising money; they're granting wishes and changing lives within their own communities



If you're inspired by the dedication of these young WishMakers and want to get your child's school involved, reach out to the Make-A-Wish Mid-South team member who coordinates for your state. Together, we can continue to empower students to lead with empathy, kindness, and share the power of wish granting.



Scan with your phone's camera to watch the amazing video of John Paul's wish, granted by Arlington Schools!

Salttillo High School  
Salttillo, MS



# Wish Kids

*I wish to have a movie night party*

**Liam, 7**  
nervous system disorder



*I wish to go to the Walt Disney World Resort*

**Remington, 8**  
leukemia



*I wish to go swimming in Hawaii*

**Emma, 7**  
leukemia



*I wish to go to Animal Kingdom*

**Charlie, 4**  
respiratory disorder



*I wish to have a gaming setup*

**Zhamir, 17**  
blood disorder

*I wish to go to Walt  
Disney World Resort*

**Daisy, 13**  
leukemia



*I wish to meet  
Minnie Mouse*

**Shay, 6**  
heart transplant



*I wish to go to the Tesla  
Factory in California*

**Lane, 9**  
nervous system disorder



*I wish to sit courtside  
for a Memphis  
Grizzlies game*

**Zamari, 6**  
leukemia



*I wish to go to  
VidCon*

**Davis, 7**  
cancer

*I wish to go to  
the beach*

**Anna, 17**  
rare disease



## REFER A CHILD FOR A WISH

Referring a child for a wish takes only a few minutes, and you only need basic information. A child can be referred by themselves, a family member, or a medical professional.

Start the process today at [wish.org/refer](http://wish.org/refer)



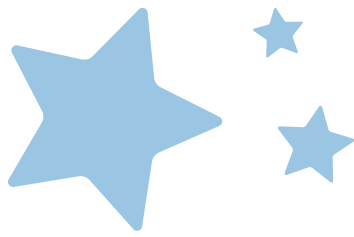
# The Wish of Many Colors



*I wish to meet my  
favorite singer/  
songwriter*

**Hattie, 9**  
cancer





"I want a pig," exclaimed wish kid Hattie. She was sitting in the kitchen with her Make-A-Wish Mid-South packet splayed before her.

"Hattie Lu, we already have a ton of animals that your Daddy takes care of for you. He does not want to take care of a pig too! For your wish, don't you want something we could never give you?!" said her mom, Kady.

"Like what?" countered Hattie.

"Well, do you want to go somewhere you've never been?! Or meet someone famous? Like a Green Bay Packer? Or Dolly Parton?" Hattie's eyes lit up and her mouth gaped.

"Do you really think I could meet Dolly Parton?" Hattie asked.

"We can sure try!" said Kady.

Meet wish kid Hattie. She's a spunky, energetic nine-year-old who's obsessed with Dolly Parton. She has Dolly Parton vinyls, fact books, Dolly CDs, and endless Dolly outfits. Her grandfather even created a "coat of many colors" for her and for Christmas she asked for a neon Dolly sign for her room. Hattie loves Dolly.

But the Hattie today isn't the Hattie you would've met a few years ago.

Hattie was sick with what her mom Kady thought was a common cold, but she wasn't getting better. Hattie visited urgent care, her doctor's office, and multiple emergency rooms and still doctors told Kady to wait it out- she should be turning a corner soon.

But when Hattie became weaker and sicker, Kady rushed her to the emergency room yet again.

Within days, Hattie was on a ventilator with two collapsed lungs, multiple failing organs and an illness no one could seem to diagnose.

For nearly a month Hattie had a machine breathing for her and a feeding tube providing her nutrients. It was then they learned Hattie not only had cancer but also an extremely rare inflammatory disease- both



of which were unheard of in children.

It was three months before Hattie started to "turn the corner" and 367 days before she was in remission.

Fast forward back to that moment in the kitchen when Hattie is dreaming up her wish.

"I think I want to try to meet Dolly Parton," said Hattie.

And so it was recorded, Hattie wanted to meet Dolly Parton, and if she couldn't do that, "Sorry, mom, but next, I still really want a pig," she said.

As you may imagine, Dolly Parton is a busy lady, but certainly not too busy to grant wishes for kids like Hattie with critical illnesses.

The day of her wish finally arrived, and Hattie was over the moon. She and her family had been staying at Dollywood for a few nights and soaking up all things Dolly. Hattie was wearing her favorite pink sequin sweater with stylish layered bellbottom jeans. When Dolly arrived, she greeted the family with a warm smile and immediately complimented Hattie's style. They chatted about what Hattie had been through and all the music that Hattie loves (mostly Dolly's).

Hattie then joked with Dolly that she had originally wished for a pig but her dad shut it down.

Dolly looked over to her dad, Wes, with a knowing smile and said, "Well you know...some wishes really do come true."

Hattie left her wish experience with her coat of many colors signed, and the best possible Dolly memories anyone could imagine. And we can confirm...the family still does not own a pig.



Make-A-Wish®

# WALK FOR WISHES®

Walk For Wishes 2024 was a blast! A record number of wish alum gathered for a celebratory breakfast in the morning and together we celebrated a live wish granting! A huge thanks to the Northwest Arkansas Regional Board, the many committed local sponsors, all of the community supporters, and wish families who joined us this year. We can't wait to see you again in May of 2025!



# DISHES FOR WISHES



Thank you to all of the sponsors, the Host Committee, restaurants, and hundreds of guests who gathered to celebrate and support Mid-South wish kids. As long as kids face critical illnesses, we know they'll have the life-changing impact of a wish...and it's all thanks to you.



# KTCS Make-A-Wish Radiothon

# Calendar of Events

The River Valley made a huge impact for wish kids at this year's 21st Annual KTCS Make-A-Wish Radiothon! This fundraising effort wouldn't be possible without our committed partners at KTCS and Gray Brothers Equipment. The mower giveaway was a huge surprise and a success. The live-on-air wish granting was adorable, too! Thank you to the incredible volunteers and donors who are bringing wishes to life for River Valley Kids through the radiothon!



Gray Brothers  
Equipment, INC



The 21st Annual Make-A-Wish Golf Classic celebrated another awesome year on the course, complete with Pronto Pups, MemPops, wish kid lemonade stands and a sold-out tournament! Thank you to our event committee for making this special event possible. Be sure to stay tuned in for the location of next year's event in June!



## Evening of Wishes

The Venue at Westwind | North Little Rock

**October 12**

## Have-A-Heart Wishathon

Jonesboro, AR

**February 14**

## Wine For Wishes

The Cadre | Memphis, TN

**February 21**

## KTCS Radiothon

Ft. Smith, AR

**April 11**

## Dishes For Wishes

The Kent | Memphis, TN

**April 27**

## Walk For Wishes

Arvest Ballpark | Springdale, AR

**May 3**

## Volunteer Trainings:

**Wish Granter 101, Virtual**  
September 22, 2 - 4:30 p.m.

**Wish Discovery Training**  
Little Rock, AR  
November 12, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

**Wish Discovery Training**  
Memphis, TN  
November 12, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Learn about these events  
and more at [wish.org/midsouth](http://wish.org/midsouth)



**Memphis**  
5100 Poplar Ave., Suite 300  
Memphis, TN 38137

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**Central Arkansas**  
320 Executive Court, Suite 101  
Little Rock, AR 72205

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**Northwest Arkansas**  
One West Mountain, Suite 108  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

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# wishful GIVING



*unwrap* THE POWER  
OF A WISH *today.*

More than 4,000 children will be diagnosed with a devastating critical illness this holiday season. Now, more than ever, the hope and joy of a wish is the most valuable gift you can give – because it means you’ve given these children a better chance of surviving and thriving.

**DONATE NOW** [wish.org/midsouth](http://wish.org/midsouth)

