



GRANTING HOPE, EMBRACING THE FUTURE



Dear Friends and Supporters of Make-A-Wish[®] Illinois,

Looking back on fiscal year 2024, we are pleased to share this report highlighting some of the key events and accomplishments that enabled us to grant a record number of 790 unique wishes for children across the state.

Some of the wishes granted over the last year include dozens whose planning was disrupted by the circumstances of the pandemic. This accomplishment is a testament to the dedication and assistance of so many WishMakers including our staff, volunteers, medical partners, local businesses and corporate and foundation supporters.

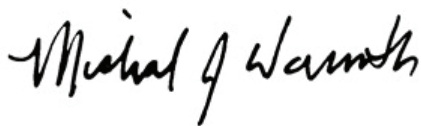
Over the last year, we are proud to have reduced wish timelines overall, creating those life-changing experiences when they will have the most benefit to the wish child's well-being. We also made headway in our efforts to reach more children from traditionally underserved communities. Our focus on technology in fiscal year 2024 is already helping to grow both efficiencies in processes and communication and is something we will wholeheartedly continue in the next year.

Having now granted the bulk of the wishes delayed, we expect to grant more than 700 wishes this year. This number will include the remaining holdover wishes from the pandemic.

Fiscal year 2025 will be a time when we do some focused groundwork to position the chapter to grant more wishes in order to serve our Illinois families. With the exciting evolution of our wish volunteer program and planned strategic investments to achieve revenue growth, we will continue to grant high-quality wishes as we do the work necessary to grow and welcome the expanding number of children who will need us in future years.

Thank you again for your steadfast support of our mission to create life-changing wishes for Illinois children with critical illnesses. Being ready and able to grant wishes when children need them most remains our top priority, and we could not change lives without WishMakers like you by our side.

Best Wishes,



Mike Warmuth
Chair, Board of Directors



Stephanie Springs
Chief Executive Officer



Leadership



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Chris Rother

Visit wish.org/illinois/our-chapter for a full list of staff.

MISSION

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



*I wish to
visit Hawaii*

Kimber, 6
liver transplant

Impact



BY THE NUMBERS
FISCAL YEAR 2024



790

Unique, life-changing wishes were granted to 790 Illinois children.

715

Qualified referrals received from medical professionals and families.



1,300

Families currently in the wish planning process - from discovery to creation.



1,000

Dedicated volunteers at every level helping to grant wishes and raise resources.



17

Wish children hosted who visited from other chapters to have their wishes granted in Illinois.



“While this was the hardest time of my life as a father, knowing Violet’s prognosis, her wish allowed me and Madeline (Violet’s mother) to recharge too. It gave us the strength to treasure these priceless moments with our little girl, soaking in the wonder through her eyes.”

-Steve, wish parent

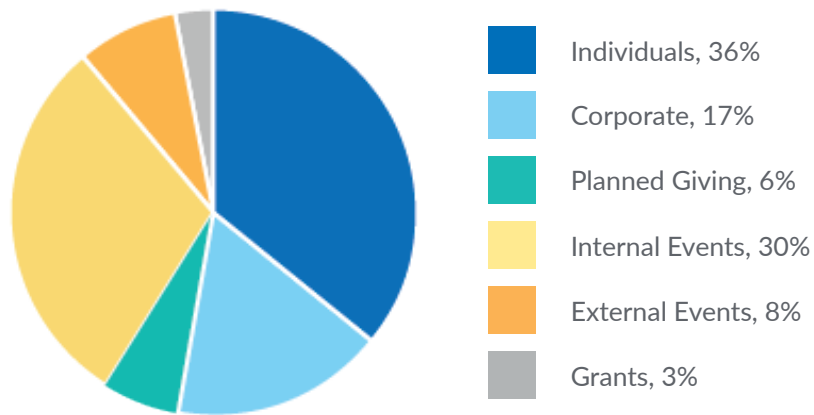




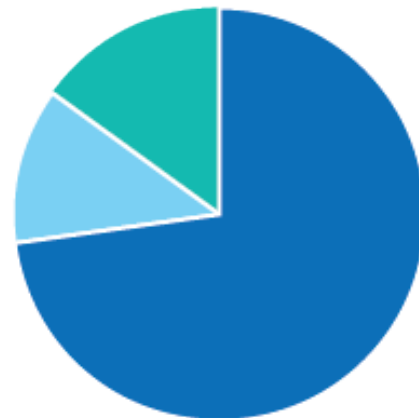
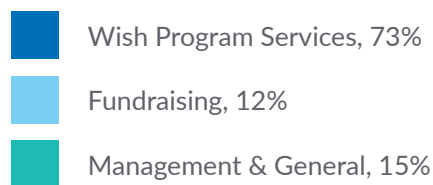
Your Gift Matters

Wishes are funded by everyday people – WishMakers - who take action to support children with critical illnesses through personal gifts. Monetary contributions from individuals and community fundraisers are vital to making sure every child with an eligible condition can have a life-changing wish experience. Combined with support from corporate partners, every gift, large or small, is essential to making wishes come true.

REVENUE SOURCES



EXPENSE RATIO



Make-A-Wish has once again been recognized as the #1 Most Trusted Nonprofit Operating Locally Across 50 States. We are proud to uphold this mark of quality and excellence based on 2024 Morning Consult data. Thank you to our valuable supporters who have positioned Make-A-Wish to be the nation's leading children's wish-granting organization, operating in every community in the United States.

MAKE-A-WISH ILLINOIS

Financials

Fiscal Year 2024

Year ended August 31, 2024

Total Revenue*	\$16,506,279
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Total Expenses	\$17,002,893
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Total Net Assets	\$17,823,337
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**includes in-kind support*

Operating Expenses

Program Services	\$12,423,926
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Fundraising	\$1,956,730
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Management and General	\$2,622,237
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BUSINESS & DONATION MAILING ADDRESS

Make-A-Wish Illinois
200 W. Monroe St., Suite 1801
Chicago, IL 60606-5072

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A Year in Wishes

I wish to attend the MLB All-Star Game

Diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer, at age 13, Tyler from Park Ridge learned his wish would be granted after throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at a White Sox game. An avid baseball player himself, Tyler persevered through hours of physical therapy and conditioning and was determined to play again. His wish gave him something to look forward to and occurred shortly after he was cleared to play again.



I wish to visit Walt Disney World

Isaac, 8, from Round Lake Beach was diagnosed with leukemia. Make-A-Wish volunteers worked with the local fire department to give Isaac a parade in anticipation of his wish. During his wish, the family enjoyed morning swims in the pool, going to as many attractions as possible, and appreciating each second of traveling together. His mother was thrilled to see him bond with his siblings and have fun without worrying about any doctor visits.

I wish to have a Quinceañera

An important rite of passage in many Latino communities, Fabiola, 15, from Chicago, had dreamed of celebrating her Quinceañera with her family since she was a little girl. Diagnosed with a life-threatening autoimmune disorder, the special birthday celebration full of religious and family traditions took on even more meaning for her. She was excited to work with Make-A-Wish to create the “Enchanted Nights” themed celebration she had always envisioned.



I wish to have a shopping spree

Curious and analytical, Elliot, 15 from Collinsville, likes K-pop music and technology. Diagnosed with a respiratory disorder shortly after birth, frequent treatments and doctor visits are part of her daily life. For fun, she likes to be outside and make videos with her cousins for YouTube. She’s very close to her family and for her wish, she wanted to shop with her sister. Several stores created a personal shopping experience for Elliot, and she and her sister enjoyed a great day.



Across the state, WishMakers worked together to create **790 unique and meaningful wishes** in fiscal year 2024. Wishes unite families through life-changing experiences that help them cope and grow stronger, bringing entire communities together to rally around them in moments of unforgettable joy. A spark of hope can change everything.



*I wish to be
a CTA operator*

Idris, 9
congenital heart condition

Idris Finds Hope on the Rails

Idris, an outgoing 9-year-old with congenital heart disease from Chicago, loves riding the train with his grandpa and family. He knows every stop!

Diagnosed with a congenital heart condition at birth, Idris has endured several surgeries and procedures to treat his illness. When he learned that he could ask for anything he wanted from Make-A-Wish, he immediately shared that he wanted to be an operator of one of Chicago's famous CTA elevated trains.

Make-A-Wish enlisted the help of the Chicago Transit Authority who made it official - Idris would be an operator on the Green Line, the train closest to his home that ferries riders from Chicago's west side to the Loop.

It was an incredible day as a special CTA charter train on the Green Line pulled up to his stop full of well-wishers, including some of his medical providers, riding just for him. As friends and family boarded the train, Idris received his official uniform and met his co-operator for the day. Soon the train was on its way with Idris riding right up front for his on-the-job training.

With a wide smile, he learned all about the important work of being a CTA operator and made several announcements to the riders. He shared this excitement with his brother as he invited him to make announcements too.

With a special stop to meet his fans from the CTA operations team and the news media, Idris guided the train around Chicago's Loop one more time before leaving to see yet another group of supporters from Make-A-Wish sponsor GATX, a company with their own ties to the railroads.

The day ended with a celebration in Union Station's Great Hall with family and friends. His mom Catherine shared that having the support of the community and people like Make-A-Wish, her generous employer and the medical staff was so important as their family dealt with his health challenges.

Whenever Idris jumps on the train in the future, he is sure to have warm feelings of this day filled with joy, love and support.



I wish to be a CTA operator

Idris, 9
congenital heart condition



“I’m overwhelmed with joy and excitement. He is surrounded by a lot of love today.”

- Catherine, Idris' mom



WishMaker Spotlight Volunteers

1,000

Active volunteers
across Illinois

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES

- Associate Board
- Walk for Wishes Committees
- Wish Ball Committee

REGIONAL COUNCILS

- Champaign Area Council
- Chicago Neighborhood Council
- McLean Area Council
- Metro East Area Council
- Moline Area Council
- Peoria Area Council
- Quincy Area Council
- Sangamon Area Council

It is only with the dedication of nearly 1,000 volunteers at all levels of the organization and across the state that Make-A-Wish Illinois can deliver hope with a life-changing wish experience. From wishes to hospital outreach, fundraising events and the board of directors, volunteers are the heart of Make-A-Wish.

In fiscal year 2024, Make-A-Wish Illinois began a project to revamp the ways that volunteers support wishes, creating a position that focuses on wish celebrations. The role helps build anticipation as the child and family move toward wish fulfillment. The result will be an enhanced volunteer experience while providing a more equitable, high-quality experience for families.

Below: Volunteers and staff come together on World Wish Day for Idris' wish.

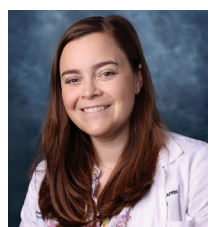


WishMaker Spotlight Medical Partners

317

Treatment facilities
and hospitals

Every wish begins with a referral. Our outreach team worked with medical professionals at 317 clinics across the state, and sometimes in other states, to qualify (and disqualify) wish referrals. After a child's condition is verified and the child discovers their wish, our staff connects with the treatment team to ensure a child's wish is appropriate for their current health status. Read more medical partner stories at [wish.org/illinois/our-stories](https://www.wish.org/illinois/our-stories).



"Make-A-Wish offers them happiness for their day-to-day life outside of the hospital and diagnosis, and helps to keep them going."

With a background in pediatric nursing, Megan Masters is a nurse practitioner who works with patients diagnosed with neurological conditions at Lurie Children's Epilepsy Center. Though familiar with Make-A-Wish, she learned so much more as she has referred patients over the last few years.

Early in her career, like many medical professionals, she was under the impression that the qualifying conditions for Make-A-Wish were limited and only for patients with a poor prognosis. Learning that a number of critical illnesses would qualify, including many of the life-threatening nervous system disorders she sees through her own work, was a key discovery for Megan, who soon saw how wish experiences could benefit her patients.

Having something happy like Make-A-Wish to talk about is one thing that resonates with Masters and many medical partners who refer their patients. With conversations that typically revolve around medications, clinical, and sometimes upsetting, medical topics, talking about a wish can strengthen the relationship between patient and doctor, supporting better outcomes for treatment.

Logistics Property Company

In 2018, Logistics Property Company (LogiPropCo) was looking to celebrate their success of it's first year in business in big and meaningful way. Bringing their most important stakeholders together, they planned a celebration that would double as a fundraiser for Make-A-Wish Illinois.

Every year since, Logistics Property Company has commemorated its anniversary by bringing all employees together, along with national lenders, contractors, suppliers, vendors, and partners, to raise money for Make-A-Wish.

LogiPropCo and its employees have become increasingly involved in making wishes come true over the years.

"Supporting Make-A-Wish was a natural choice for us at Logistics Property Company. We believe in the transformative power of granting wishes and the hope that it brings to children facing critical illnesses along with their families," said Jim Martell, Chief Executive Officer at Logistics Property Company. "Our ongoing partnership with Make-A-Wish has been incredibly rewarding for our team. Knowing that our efforts help bring joy and strength to these children and their families is deeply fulfilling."

This year's fundraiser brought in nearly \$500,000 for Make-A-Wish. To date, the company has raised more than \$1 million to help provide life-changing wish experiences for children facing critical illnesses.

"We are grateful to those who helped us achieve such success with their generous donations," said Martell. "Community involvement is a key component of what we stand for as an organization, and we will continue our commitment for years to come."

"Every wish granted creates hope and renewed energy for wish kids," said Make-A-Wish Illinois CEO Stephanie Springs. "Logistics Property Company and their donors have been amazing supporters, and we are thrilled to celebrate another year of partnership so that together, we can create more life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses."



LogiPropCo's Executive Vice President Aaron Martell serves on the Make-A-Wish Illinois Board of Directors.



Five LogiPropCo employees teamed up to go Over the Edge in the urban rappelling fundraiser for Make-A-Wish Illinois in 2024.



Wish families have been invited to all of LogiPropCo's anniversary events to share their stories.



WishMaker Spotlight

Community Engagement

The volunteers of the **Chicago Neighborhood Council** provide meaningful connections resulting in expanded local presence in communities of focus.



Make-A-Wish Illinois partnered with **Protiviti's Chicago Latin/Hispanic Employee Network Group** for a happy hour gathering to encourage new WishMakers.



Expanded wish celebrations with the **Chicago Police Department Chicago Knights** baseball club (pictured below).

Leading the Make-A-Wish Illinois Inclusive Engagement Initiative (IEI), **Marimar Gutierrez**, community engagement manager, has been instrumental in ensuring that these communities are seen, heard, and supported. The initiative focuses on 31 zip codes across the Chicagoland area, including the west, southwest, and south sides of Chicago; neighborhoods with children who may qualify and volunteer support that are often underserved through traditional engagement methods. Her approach is not just about outreach; it is about genuine connection and empowerment.



Through her visionary leadership, Marimar's efforts have led to numerous new partnerships within these focus areas, significantly expanding engagement and supporting progress of the chapter's vision to deliver hope to every child with an eligible condition. The result includes the chapter's ability to grant 93 wishes to children from these areas, building new referral sources, actively participating in health fairs and community events, and cultivating relationships with health organizations. Her commitment has resulted in recruiting 21 new volunteers representative of these communities who are now dedicated wish granters and ambassadors for our mission.

Recognized by the Chicago Neighborhood Council, Marimar was nominated to join [The Change Collective](#), a leadership program focused on empowering local change makers. Through this program, Marimar has gained invaluable insights into best practices for engaging with diverse and vulnerable groups. Marimar has demonstrated the courage and vulnerability needed to navigate challenging conversations, ensuring that our mission remains inclusive and equitable.

Marimar Gutierrez was recognized with 2024's DEIB Change Maker Award from Make-A-Wish® America for her strong leadership in guiding, influencing and generating action while advancing the understanding and awareness of others.



WishMaker Spotlight *Signature Events*



In January 2024 at Penguin Plunge in Ottawa, plungers, committee members, sponsors, and community members raised more than \$81,000 to support wishes.



Hosted by the Associate Board, *I Wish to Party* welcomed nearly 600 guests for a cocktail reception in Chicago. A lively night included restaurant bites and touching mission moments.



Brave rappellers went Over the Edge in August raising more than \$200,000 for wishes. Participants included wish alumni, volunteers, local sports teams and even media.



Walk for Wishes fundraising events were held in six locations statewide, bringing out wish families and hundreds of WishMakers for an inspiring morning to celebrate wishes.



A very successful evening, Wish Ball raised \$2.8 million through the generosity of guests and sponsors, including Presenting Sponsor **GATX**. Co-emceed by ABC 7 Chicago's **Val Warner** and **Molly**, a wish alum, guests enjoyed a full evening including moving remarks from **Steve Napleton**, parent to wish child **Violet**. The night ended with a performance by comedian **Jim Gaffigan**.

WishMaker Spotlight Community Fundraising

In fiscal year 2024, nearly 100 community fundraisers organized their own events to benefit Make-A-Wish Illinois in support of wish granting. From golf outings to holiday light installations and talent shows to rodeos, creative events brought people together in exciting ways while raising funds for future wishes.

In the far north suburbs of Chicago, the **Wish Classic Gymnastics Meet**, co-hosted by **Vernon Hills Gymnastics** and **Ultimate Gymnastics** welcomed hundreds of gymnasts over three days raising more than \$20,000. It was the 24th year of the Wish Classic, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars over its history and bringing participants and spectators into the WishMaker community.



Community organized events benefiting Make-A-Wish Illinois play a crucial role in helping to raise awareness and provide resources to grant wishes. When it comes to fundraising for Make-A-Wish Illinois, the only limit is your imagination. Whether it's through athletic events, lemonade stands or birthday fundraisers, passionate supporters rally their networks to grant wishes in their communities.

WishMaker Spotlight Alumni Families



ABOVE: Ellie Stotz, sister of wish child John, shared the impact of her brother's wish to visit the Florida theme parks with more than 500 guests at the Associate Board's I Wish to Party event in February 2024.

RIGHT: (left to right) Scotty Kay, on-air personality from US 99.5FM Chicago, Grandpa Bob, Finnegan and Coleman Kuzniar at Over the Edge in August 2024. Bob and Finn fundraised to rappel and Coleman was on hand to award medals to all Over the Edge participants.

The Make-A-Wish Illinois Alumni Community is more active than ever helping to share the power of a wish through their involvement as volunteers, fundraisers, event speakers, and ambassadors of the Make-A-Wish mission.

Including wish recipients, parents and siblings, alumni families have stepped up to wish it forward by speaking at all major Make-A-Wish Illinois events. More than one dozen alumni and their families joined Over the Edge by raising funds to rappel in support of future wishes. Countless alumni families also volunteer in many ways by granting wishes, staffing referral outreach events with medical partners and serving on various committees including the young professionals Associate Board.



WishMaker Spotlight

Individual Gifts

A tragic fall just days after her engagement changed Pam Schieler's life in ways she never could have imagined. With a long recovery from the injuries, Pam's fiancé Corey knew they needed something to think about outside of their day-to-day of doctor's appointments, surgeries and therapy. Corey booked them a trip to look forward to; it was just the turning point the couple needed to get their lives back on their intended life trajectory.

Corey had his own life-threatening medical issue around that time and it further solidified their current attitude to live life to the fullest every day, since no one knows what tomorrow brings. As they returned from their honeymoon, they met their neighbor's daughter, Cait, hosting a fundraiser to get a service dog. Cait was living with a genetic condition that often caused her to break bones. Pam and Cait bonded over their similar healing journeys and soon the trio were fast friends. They threw themselves into helping Cait get her service dog.

Bringing the community together for Cait's cause inspired Corey to get involved with Make-A-Wish. A few years later Pam officially joined and together they enjoy creating excitement and positive distractions for their wish kids since they know first-hand that having something to look forward to is powerful medicine.

"Every new wish brings back those feelings of optimism and hope for us," Corey shared. "We find our work with Make-A-Wish incredibly heartwarming and fulfilling; giving back in this way is what Pam and I want to be remembered for."

In addition to their volunteer efforts, the Schielers know that financial contributions are needed to ensure wishes are granted. They are committed to making generous personal annual contributions and have included Make-A-Wish Illinois as part of their estate plans.

The key elements of Make-A-Wish mirror their deeply held personal values – resilience, hope and family – so giving back through supporting wishes comes naturally to them.

"Giving can make all the difference because it creates opportunities for magical things to happen," Corey said.

Through Make-A-Wish, the couple has made many meaningful connections with wish families and the businesses and groups that support wishes in the community. Inviting others to be part of the magic by participating or giving is one of the couple's favorite parts. They find there is a snowball compounding effect of positive energy when more people can be part of granting a wish.



"We started giving back because Cait inspired us...we continue to do so because every time we do, we think of and honor her."

Pam (left) and Corey (far right) with wish kid Kai and her parents Malik and Kaila. The Schielers have been wish granting volunteers since 2010, granting more than 40 wishes.

By naming Make-A-Wish Illinois in your estate plans, you can provide the resources necessary to grant inspiring wishes for children now and in the future.

Sample Bequest Language

For an unrestricted gift that allows Make-A-Wish to determine how to use the funds based on the most pressing needs, use the following language for your will and/or trust:

I give the sum of \$___ or ___% to Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Illinois, 200 W. Monroe St., Suite 1801, Chicago, IL 60606-5072 (tax id: 36-3422138) to be used or disposed of as the Board of Directors deems appropriate in its role discretion.

Have You Included Us In Your Will or Estate Plans?

If your will and estate plans already incorporate a gift to benefit Make-A-Wish Illinois, please let us know. We would like to thank you. By letting us know, we can ensure that we fulfill your gift exactly as you intended.

Information you share will be kept confidential and we respect any desire to remain anonymous.

For more information, contact:

Lisa Bakker
Individual Giving Director
312.602.9464
lbakker@illinois.wish.org