



A wish to
remember

*Serving the Triangle
to the Coast.*

ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2024

Make-A-Wish[®]
EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA



Bradee, a basketball enthusiast from Fort Gay, West Virginia, faced a life-threatening situation at the age of 13 when doctors diagnosed him with a rare disease requiring a kidney transplant. His aunt stepped forward as a donor in a heartwarming display of love and courage. Following successful surgery, Bradee not only recovered but also resumed playing basketball. As part of the 2024 ESPN “MY WISH” series, we were with Bradee as his wish to attend the UNC-Duke game at Cameron Indoor Stadium came true, a testament to the life-saving impact of organ donors.


“I couldn’t really believe it. It was like I was in a dream. I still don’t believe it to this day really.” – Bradee

During his time in Durham, Bradee toured the Blue Devil basketball facility with Coach Scheyer, met the entire team, and even spent one-on-one time with legendary Duke Men’s Basketball Coach Mike Krzyzewski. All this happened BEFORE attending the game. Bradee attended the game with his family, joining the coaches and players for a once-in-a-lifetime honorary introduction to the Cameron crazies. When asked what his favorite moment was, Bradee said with a big grin, “Getting to meet Coach K!”



I wish to go to UNC vs Duke at Cameron Indoor Stadium

Bradee, 18
Fort Gay, West Virginia
kidney transplant




Scan this QR code to watch Bradee experience his wish!



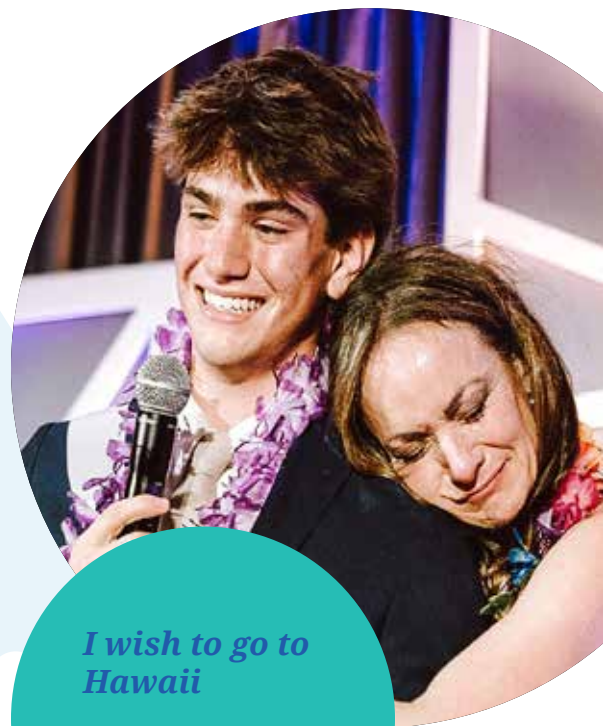
Letter from our *team*

FY24 was a great year for our Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina chapter, with many incredible accomplishments to highlight. As always, we steadfastly believe in our mission to grant life-changing wishes to children with critical illnesses across 49 counties in Eastern North Carolina. With the support of our Wish Community, we broke records for revenue generated and wishes granted and hosted our most successful Wish Ball ever. Additionally, we delivered on an ever-growing list of amazing, unique wishes – ranging from trips to Disney and Hawaii, college football and basketball experiences, pirate ships sailing in backyards – and even a beach-front mermaid gathering! Our goal remains the same: to reach every eligible child in our chapter area and grant their wish. Since our chapter's first days in 1986, we have granted over 4500 wishes to children and families across Eastern North Carolina.

While we grieve the losses of several members of our Wish Community over the past year, we also respectfully celebrate the unique wish experiences we have provided for ALL kids and families. Reflected by the chapter granting a record-breaking 212 Wishes!! Simply put, we can only achieve our mission with the dedication of our staff, board, and volunteers in partnership with the resolute support of our donors, partners, and distinguished medical community across our area. Over the past twelve months, we significantly expanded our

scope of individuals, corporations, organizations, and foundations committed to our impactful mission and desiring lasting relationships that sustainably deliver the critical resources necessary to reimagine granting even more wishes. From internal events like Wishmaker's Gala in Wilmington, Trailblaze Challenge in the Appalachian Mountains, and Wish Ball – our annual celebration in Raleigh – we embrace every opportunity to cultivate relationships across Eastern North Carolina.

In addition to these annual marquee events, we promote many extraordinary engagements for the diverse supporters, volunteers, and organizations that make Eastern North Carolina great. This community engagement is how we share a passion for Make-A-Wish's mission to deliver unbelievable, life-changing experiences for our Wish Kids, their siblings, and families who jointly battle critical illnesses. Looking forward, we stand poised with great energy and resolve to deliver an outstanding 2025. Uplifted by the enduring Make-A-Wish mission, our Board, Staff, and Volunteers remain resolute to make a difference...one child at a time. Leveraging the best of our incredible wish-granting year across Eastern North Carolina! In doing so, and with your help, we expand the scope of our message while spreading hope and joy to those in our Wish Community as we reach for the stars to achieve another record-breaking year.



I wish to go to Hawaii

Nolan, 17
Wake County
leukemia

With gratitude,

**The Staff and Board of Directors
at Make-A-Wish® Eastern North
Carolina**

“Through all this, our goal remains the same, to reach every eligible child in our chapter area and grant their wish.”

Delivering on our *mission*

A wish is so much more than a fleeting moment — it imprints a memory that stays with a child and their family, especially during the most challenging times. For children facing critical illnesses, a wish offers a break from the rigors of treatment, bringing joy, hope, and something beautiful upon which to hold and remember. These moments are far more than experiences — they are lasting reminders of the strength and resilience found in the face of adversity.

The wonder and awe make a wish unforgettable: its lasting impact fortified by the hope it generates. Thank you for creating these cherished memories for children and families.

Every wish we grant becomes a moment to treasure at Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina.

It's not just about fulfilling a dream; it's about creating an unforgettable experience — one that brings joy, hope, and lasting memories to children and their families. A wish stays with them forever as a beacon of hope in difficult times, making each wish one to remember. For over 38 years, Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina has served all medically eligible children who reside in the 49-county chapter area east of the Orange/Alamance County line — serving the *Triangle to the Coast*. We aim to reach **every eligible child** in our chapter area and grant their wish. Since our inception in **1986**, the organization has granted more than **4640 unforgettable wishes at zero cost to the families we serve**. We operate solely with and through the generous contributions of individuals, corporations, organizations, foundations, over 150 volunteers, our staff, and the Board of Directors.

MISSION

To create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

VISION

To grant the wish of every eligible child in our chapter area.

BELIEF

A wish experience can be a game-changer for a child with a critical illness.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

Make-A-Wish® shines a light of hope for children fighting critical illnesses when they need it most. A wish helps a child replace fear with confidence, sadness with joy, and anxiety with hope.



I wish to have a full gaming setup

Javion, 13
Cumberland County
heart condition

To be eligible to receive a wish, the child: 1) must be diagnosed with a critical illness, e.g., a progressive, degenerative, or malignant condition that is placing the child's life in jeopardy; 2) must be older than 2½ years and younger than 18; and 3) has not received a previous wish from Make-A-Wish or another wish-granting organization.

WE CELEBRATED WORLD WISH MONTH!

We celebrated World Wish Month in April with our WishMaker's Wanted campaign. Siblings Brandon & Eric eagerly awaited their wishes when local WishMakers, the Bobby and Amy Sasser Family, stepped up and donated \$15,000 to make it happen. The brothers both received their wishes in April, and this philanthropic effort inspired our local wish community to give back, raising over \$28,000 through this first-time effort.



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

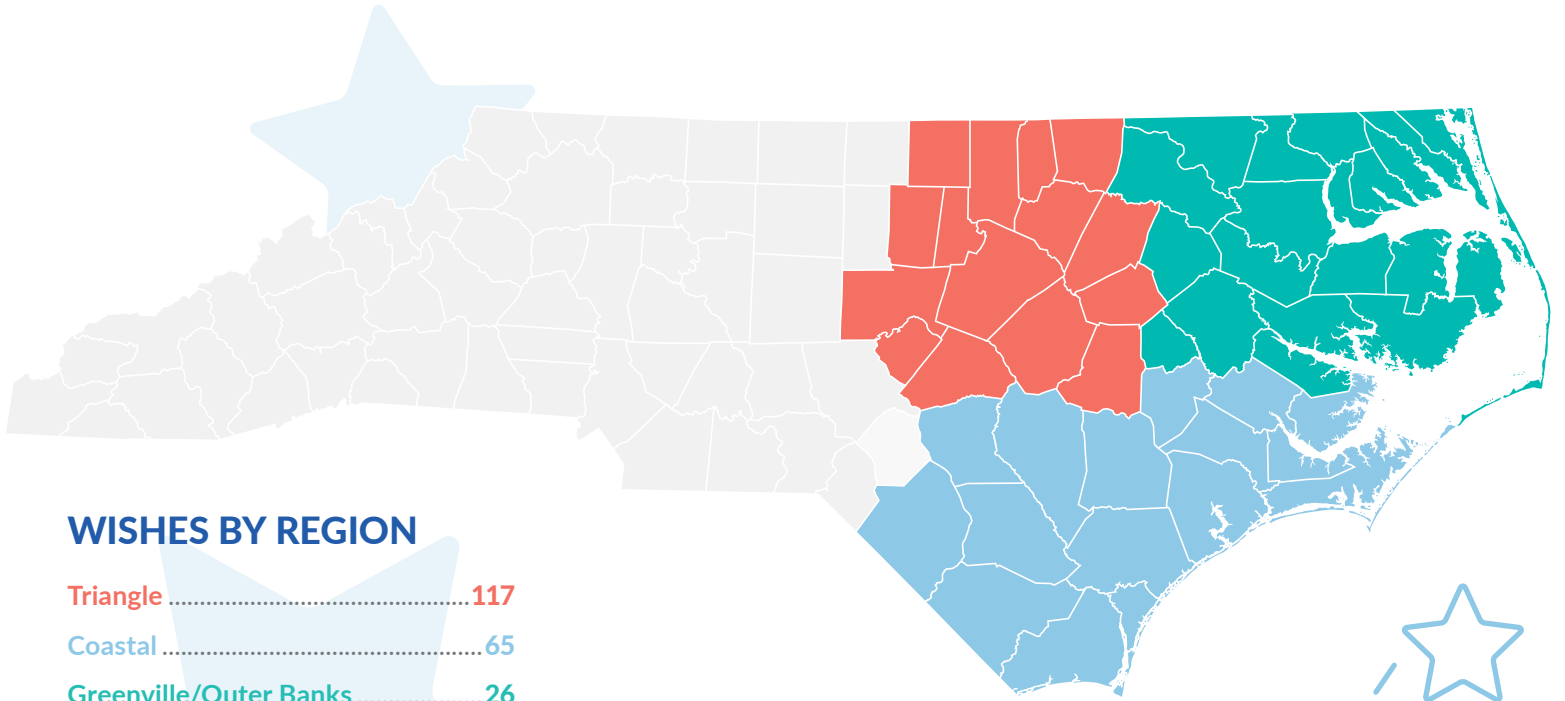
Brandon, 10
Wake County
cancer

*I wish to have
a pirate ship
playset*

Eric, 6
Wake County
end-stage kidney
disease



2024 – A year of making wishes come true



WISHES BY REGION

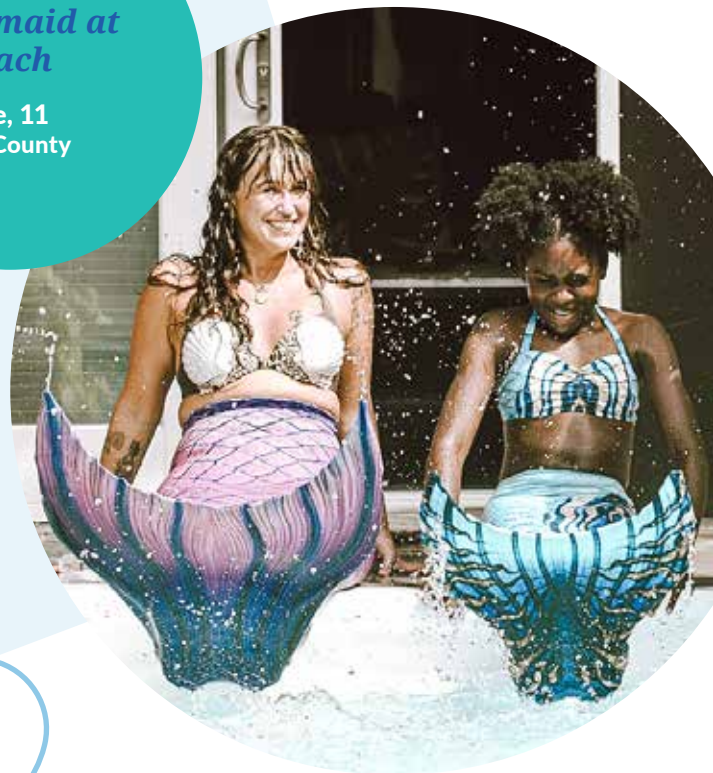
Triangle	117
Coastal	65
Greenville/Outer Banks	26
Out of Territory/Relocation	4

I wish to go to the Dolphin Research Center in Florida

Victoria, 19
Pamlico County
rare disorder

I wish to meet a mermaid at the beach

ChyAnne, 11
Franklin County
leukemia



FY2024 impact

Organization wishes granted to date **4,640**

Total wishes granted in FY2024 **212**

The average cost per wish **\$7,500**

Total number of referrals **393**

Total number of volunteers **124**

Number of wishes granted in their preferred language (Spanish) **18**



A celebration to *remember*



Emely, from Orange County, had long dreamed of having a traditional quinceañera, a celebration that carries deep meaning in Latino culture. The quinceañera marks a significant rite of passage, symbolizing a young girl's transition into womanhood at the age of 15. For Emely, this important milestone was made even more special by her journey and the challenges she faced along the way.

Diagnosed with leukemia, Emely endured difficult treatments with incredible strength. After everything she had been through, her quinceañera represented more than just tradition; it was **a day of joy, victory, and renewal**. A celebration of her resilience and triumph over critical illness.

The quinceañera traditions, rich with cultural heritage, played a central role in Emely's celebration. In the months leading up to her big day, she eagerly searched for her perfect dress and carefully selected accessories. She envisioned hair and makeup styles reflective of her personal style. Emely chose her closest friends and family to be part of her court of honor for a deeply meaningful celebration. From the elegant venue The Palladium Event Center in Burlington to the customized decorations, everything was carefully designed to make Emely feel like royalty on her special day.

The festivities began with a limo ride to a nearby outdoor garden, where Emely participated in a breathtaking photoshoot with Jimena B Photography. Emely's family honored her with a special ceremony and blessing, offering heartfelt words of love and encouragement. The day was filled with love, laughter, and joy in celebration of Emely.

Emely's quinceañera was more than a dream fulfilled. It was a day that celebrated her strength, her culture, and the love of the community that stood by her through thick and thin. **A day to be remembered for a lifetime.**

Una celebración para *recordar*

Emely, del condado de Orange, siempre soñaba con tener una quinceañera tradicional, una celebración con mucho significado en la cultura latina. La quinceañera marca un importante rito de paso, simbolizando la transición de una niña a mujer a los 15 años. Para Emely, esta celebración fue aún más especial por las dificultades que se enfrentó en el camino.

Diagnosticada con leucemia, Emely afrontó los tratamientos difíciles con una fuerza increíble. Después de todo lo que había pasado, su quinceañera representaba algo más que una tradición: era **un día de alegría y victoria** al vencer su batalla contra su enfermedad.

En los meses que precedieron a su gran día, buscó ansiosamente el vestido perfecto y seleccionó cuidadosamente los accesorios. Imaginó peinados y maquillajes que reflejaran su estilo personal. Emely eligió a sus amigos y familiares más cercanos para que formaran parte de su corte de honor en una celebración signficante. Desde el lugar elegante -el Palladium Event Center de Burlington— hasta la decoración personalizada, todo se diseñó al detalle para que Emely se sintiera como la realeza en su día especial.

Comenzaron las festividades con un paseo en limusina hasta un jardín donde Emely participó en una impresionante sesión de fotos con Jimena B Photography. La familia de Emely la honró con una ceremonia especial y una bendición, ofreciéndole palabras sinceras de amor y aliento. El día estuvo lleno de amor, risas y alegría para celebrar a Emely.

La quinceañera de Emely fue más que un sueño cumplido. Fue un día que celebró su fuerza, su cultura y el amor de la comunidad que la apoyó en las buenas y en las malas. **Un día para recordar toda la vida.**

*I wish to have
a quinceañera*

Emely, 15
Orange County
leukemia



A year to *remember*

Generating positive impact, lasting memories, and unwavering hope.

WE CELEBRATED OUR 4,500TH WISH!

17-year-old Indigo, affectionately known as Indi, faced a difficult battle when she was diagnosed with a brain tumor at 14. During treatment for her brain cancer, Indi experienced the love and care of the nurses, doctors, social workers, and volunteers at UNC Children's. Indi's medical team members nominated her for a wish during her treatment to create a focused perspective of joy and hope. For her wish, she made a toy store to provide comforting gifts for residents at UNC Children's Hospital, the same place where she endured the rigors of her treatment regime. Indi's wish marked the 4,500th wish granted by Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina – a milestone 38 years in the making.

“It's been a long journey, but I'm now in remission. I'm forever grateful for the life-changing support from UNC Children's Hospital. My wish is to give the kids at UNC Children's the same joy and comfort I received during my time there.”



I wish to give gifts to the children at UNC Children's Hospital

Indigo, 17
Wake County
brain tumor



Scan this QR code to watch our 4,500th wish granted!

A RECORD SETTING YEAR!

Wish Ball: Our most significant event ever, the 2024 gala raised \$672,000! The highlight of the evening came after 17-year-old Nolan shared his incredible health journey with the attendees. Unaware of our mischievous plans, a surprise awaited as he stood at the podium: the granting of his wish to go to Hawaii. As his family joined him on stage to celebrate the news, Hawaiian leis made it through the joyous crowd, giving Nolan an emotional standing ovation.

Inaugural WishMaker's Gala: Our Wilmington community raised a record \$381,000! This signature event brought a slice of southern charm and hospitality to Wilmington, showcasing a tantalizing collaborative menu from some of the area's most renowned chefs. Wowed, the sold-out crowd reveled to live music and exciting wish-granting opportunities, including Rowan's desire for a LEGOLAND® adventure!

LEGO building was a big part of Rowan's treatment as he battled cancer. He and his parents put together a new LEGO set during each treatment. Building LEGO sets was an outlet for Rowan during all of his treatments, so having his wish granted to go to LEGOLAND® certainly came full circle!



I wish to go to LEGOLAND®

Rowan, 6
New Hanover County
cancer



Your *generosity* brings *wishes* to life for families

Our FY2024 Finances



REVENUE

Public Support (Cash)	\$2,944,000
Public Support (In-kind)	\$1,109,000
Investments/Grants	\$151,000

EXPENSES

Wish Program	\$2,239,000
Management and General	\$1,937,000
Fundraising	\$258,000

VERIFIED FY2024 NUMBERS

Top 5 wish types

Walt Disney World® Resort	82
Shopping Spree	26
Domestic Travel (not incl. HI)	24
Computer/Electronics	16
Celebrity/Sporting Events	15

Age range

2.5-5 years	27
6-8 years	45
9-11 years	36
12-14 years	36
15-17 years	55
18+ years	13

Illness types

Leukemia	42
Brain Tumor	30
Cancer	30
Nervous System Disorder	20
Lymphoma	17
Respiratory Disorder	14
Blood Disorder	12
Other	47

Real people, uniting communities, making an *impact*

We know that creating unforgettable wishes would not be possible without the dedication, creativity, and generosity of our incredible donors, partners, volunteers, and champions. We are honored to welcome new supporters and grateful to continue working with our long-standing partners. Together, you make every wish a moment to remember, and to us, you are all the true heroes behind the hope of a wish.

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Running Outside the Lines



In August 2020, Connor Kitson, a Wake Forest High School student, embarked on a journey that would change lives. He joined the school-wide effort, Kids For Wish Kids, to help grant local wishes for children with critical illnesses. This was his first encounter with Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina, and it ignited a passion in him. His desire to make a difference led him to launch his own Color Run, Running Outside the Lines (ROTL), with the sole purpose of donating 100% of the proceeds to Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina.

After graduating high school, Connor's commitment to our cause did not waiver. Despite the demands of college, he found a way to continue his work. He initiated a six-month leadership project for high school students throughout the Triangle, teaching them the essentials of project management, sales, marketing, and operations to support the Color Run. This initiative not only expanded the reach of the Color Run but also empowered a new generation of leaders.

Many students throughout the Triangle and local partners contribute to making the ROTL 5k successful. One partner being Gladwell Orthodontics. Connor approached Dr. Jason Gladwell with Gladwell Orthodontics about sponsorship opportunities, and through that, he additionally learned about Gladwell's Charity Cafe program. The Charity Cafe is now another amazing fundraising endeavor for Make-A-Wish Eastern NC in addition to a major partner of the color run!

To date, the ROTL leadership program has brought together six area high schools, jointly raising over \$70,000 to grant local wishes. Since the initial introduction with Gladwell Charity Cafe, that partnership has helped bring in an additional \$20,000. Connor is now a senior at Hampden-Sydney College majoring in Economics and Business with a minor in Leadership in the Public Interest. He still manages the leadership team for the colorful, fun-for-all-ages, 5k he founded. The ROTL leadership team is gearing up for their 5th annual run on January 4, 2025!

“I love working with Make-A-Wish Eastern NC because I’ve been able to see the tangible impact of our team’s donations. It’s been incredible to play a role in the wish-granting process and work with such talented student leaders.”

— Connor Kitson



CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Wilmington Dermatology Center delivers hope!

The incredible team at Wilmington Dermatology Center, led by Dr. Rosalyn George and her husband, Ed George, shines as a beacon of hope for wish children in our coastal communities. The support from the Wilmington-based business began in 2012 with a presenting sponsorship for a local fundraising event that blossomed into an enduring, 12-year partnership. Dr. George shared, "One of the reasons why I partnered with Make-A-Wish was its mission to deliver impact within your local community. Knowing that kids in my community are receiving the benefit of my support and being able to see that in action is extraordinarily powerful." In addition to Make-A-Wish event support, Wilmington Dermatology Center hosts other fundraisers like their annual Tree of Wishes and STAR events that focus on supporting wish kids

with wish celebrations and send-off parties. Through their partnership, over \$200,000 poured into our wish community to grant local life-changing wishes. As a result, Ed George now serves as a valued member of the Board of Directors, helping guide the future success of our chapter.

"Knowing kids in my community receive the benefit of my support and seeing that in action is extraordinarily powerful."

— Dr. Rosalyn George



WDC
WILMINGTON
DERMATOLOGY
CENTER

TOP NATIONAL PARTNERS



Walgreens



MAGGIANO'S
LITTLE ITALY



TOP LOCAL PARTNERS



Wish *highlights*

A couple more life-changing wishes you made possible in 2024.



We wish to have an accessible backyard

Lina, 8 & Malachi, 6
Wake County
nervous system disorder



Siblings Lina and Malachi were both diagnosed with Leigh's Syndrome, a mitochondrial disorder that has affected every aspect of their lives. An accessible and sensory-focused backyard provides them with safe outdoor access, thus providing opportunities to enjoy nature in various ways. The biggest goal was to channel enrichment opportunities for which the siblings engage, experience, and enjoy. Over two dozen local businesses and organizations partnered with us to bring this incredible wish to life, as did members of the local gardening community and Make-A-Wish volunteers assisting with the workdays. *In memory*: Lina passed away in September 2024. Her wish brought the family so much joy and created memories to cherish.

“Words really can’t express how grateful we are to have had the beautiful summer with our backyard and will always treasure those memories with Lina.”

— Jennifer, wish mom

“The entire day was special — Rhett would tell you it was ‘the best day ever.’ Rhett has been outside driving to parks and around the neighborhood more this month than he has his entire life. He tells everyone about his McQueen car and rides every single day with the biggest smile.” — Kelsey, wish mom



I wish to have a Lightning McQueen golf cart

Rhett, 4
Onslow County
congenital heart disease



More *wishes* to come in 2025

As we close out this year, we thank you for being an essential part of making wishes unforgettable. Your help creates memories that last a lifetime, and we can't wait to see what new moments of joy and hope we'll bring to life in 2025. Here's a glimpse of what's to come!

OUR 2025 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

1. Wishmaker's Gala on March 27, 2025 in Wilmington.

Our premier event in our coastal communities can't be missed!

2. World Wish Month in April 2025 throughout our chapter area.

Join our local celebrations as we commemorate our origin and humble beginnings of the mission of Make-A-Wish.

3. Trailblaze Challenge weekend from May 2-4, 2025 in Winston-Salem.

Hike 27.4 miles from Hanging Rock to Pilot Mountain while granting life-changing wishes.

4. Wish Ball on August 7, 2025 in Raleigh, NC.

Join our signature celebration of wishes for Eastern North Carolina.

Your unwavering commitment and support have helped create unforgettable moments for countless wish families across our state. The memories you've made possible are remarkable. Thank you.

To be a part of one or ALL of these celebrations, scan the QR code or head to wish.org/eastnc/our-events



Our court of *honor*

Board of Directors

CHAIR

Melisa Weston

Senior Vice President of Marketing
US Radiology Associates

VICE CHAIR

Jeff Donahoe

Regional Director of Enterprise
Sales, Datadog

SECRETARY

Deb Waltz

Vice President Quality Assurance,
Cullinan Therapeutics

MISSION DELIVERY CHAIR

Deb Waltz

Vice President Quality Assurance,
Cullinan Therapeutics

GOVERNANCE CO-CHAIRS

Sarah Joyce

Assistant Vice President of
External Communications,
Genpact

FINANCE CHAIR

Dr. Charles Williams

Globally-seasoned C-Suite
Executive | US Navy Captain
(Retired) | Doctorate in Finance

DEVELOPMENT CHAIR

Jeff Donahoe

Regional Director of Enterprise
Sales, Datadog

Kristen Koch

America's Talent & Learning
Leader, Hitachi Energy

MEMBERS

Dr. Nicholas Befera

Assistant Professor of Radiology,
Duke University Health System

Marcus Ginyard

Vice President & Real Estate
Advisor, Medalist Capital

Joe Overby

Corporate Secretary & General
Manager, Overby Marine Sales and
Service Inc.

Alicia Belle

Founder & Owner, Mega Raleigh

Eran Gordon

Chief Financial Officer, R&D
Solutions, IQVIA

Erica Smith

Clinical Director, One Eighty
Counseling

Mary Wills Bode

Senator, North Carolina Senate
District 18

Stacy Lindley

Senior Vice President, IQVIA

Brian Washburn

Vice President & Head of Sales, U.S.
Rare Diseases, Sanofi
CEO & President of the Bruce
Washburn Foundation

Linsay Boyce

Partner, L.W. Cooper Law Firm

David Maggio

Corporate Environmental Health
& Safety Director, Clancy & Theys
Construction Company

Bryan Wilson

Director of Learning & Performance,
EVERSANA

Ed George

Co-Founder & Executive Director,
Wilmington Dermatology Center

Tom McDonald

Senior Account Manager, Presidio



3809 Computer Drive, Suite 201 Raleigh, NC 27609 | (919) 821-7111 | info@eastnc.wish.org

wish.org/eastnc

