

# ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025

*I wish to meet  
a unicorn*

**Valentina, 12**  
cancer

Make-A-Wish®  
ILLINOIS



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Dear Friends and Supporters of Make-A-Wish Illinois,

As we reflect on fiscal year 2025, we are pleased to share this annual report highlighting the milestones, stories, and accomplishments that helped us grant **709 unique wishes** to children across Illinois. Each wish represents a child, a family, and a moment of hope made possible by a community of supporters like you.

In 2025, we affirmed our commitment to building the capacity needed to serve the children who will rely on us in the years ahead. We focused intentionally on preparing for growth—welcoming more **WishMakers** into our mission, expanding partnerships across the state, and ensuring that children from underrepresented communities have equitable access to the joy and transformation a wish provides.

We also broadened our fundraising opportunities so that every supporter can engage in ways that reflect their personal values, passions, and abilities. Whether through monthly giving, special events, corporate partnerships, or community-driven efforts, our donors continue to fuel the heart of our mission.

Behind every wish granted is a dedicated network of staff and volunteers whose commitment inspires us daily. This past year, we continued to strengthen our workforce and enhance the technology and systems that make our work possible. By integrating new platforms and improving existing ones, we increased efficiency, improved collaboration, and laid the foundation for the expanded work ahead.

WishMakers—our volunteers, donors, referral partners, corporations, and advocates—are essential to our mission. We simply could not do this work without your belief in the power of a wish. We remain focused on welcoming even more WishMakers into our community to help change the lives of children with critical illnesses.

Fiscal year 2026 marks a special milestone as we celebrate **40 years of wishes** in Illinois. More than **19,000 children** and their families have experienced the life-changing impact of a wish since our founding. As we honor this legacy, we are equally focused on the future—pursuing diverse and ambitious revenue growth, investing in people, programs, and technology, and strengthening our chapter’s foundation so we can grant more wishes than ever before.

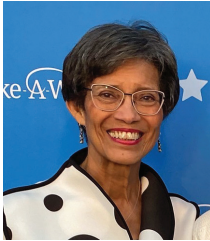
As we celebrate our 40th birthday, we know our work is far from finished. **Until every wish is granted**, we remain steadfast in our commitment—doing it for the love of wish kids and for the countless lives a single wish can change.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our mission and for helping us bring hope and joy to Illinois children with critical illnesses.

Best Wishes,



*Tom South*  
Tom South  
Chair, Board of Directors



*Stephanie Springs*  
Stephanie Springs  
Chief Executive Officer

FINANCIALS

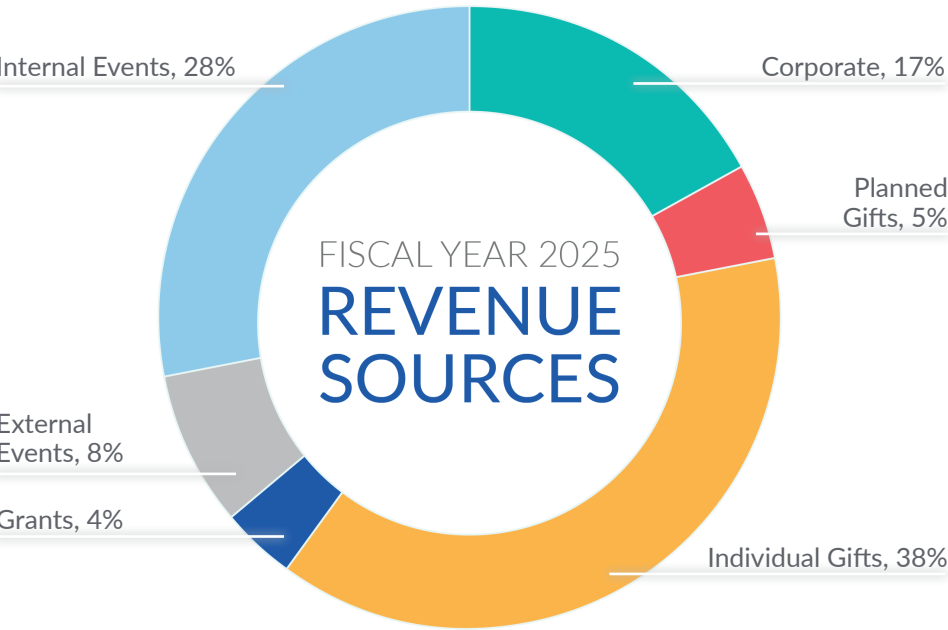
Fiscal Year 2025  
Year ended August 31, 2025

Total Revenue*	\$14,608,402
Total Expenses	\$16,776,976
Total Net Assets	\$15,654,763

\*includes in-kind support

Operating Expenses

Program Services	\$12,423,926
Fundraising	\$2,248,514
Management & General	\$2,664,740



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



 **709**  
wishes  
GRANTED

**1,150**  
wishes  
IN PROCESS 

 **647**  
referrals  
QUALIFIED

**967**   
volunteers

 **54**  
staff

 **70%**  
program  
EXPENSES

WHAT DID CHILDREN WISH FOR?

<b>477</b> WISHES TO GO	<b>185</b> WISHES TO HAVE	<b>2</b> WISHES TO BE	<b>44</b> WISHES TO MEET	<b>1</b> WISH TO GIVE
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CHILDREN SERVED BY AGE AT WISH



Jamaria's Wish



*I wish to have  
a Marines  
experience*

**Jamaria**  
nervous system  
disorder

Living with a life-threatening nervous system disorder, Jamaria is funny and sensitive and very sociable with many friends and family who adore him. Though he has had several challenging medical setbacks, he is always looking for opportunities to smile and laugh.

With a deep admiration and devotion of the U.S. Marines Corps, Jamaria expressed his wish to have an up-close experience with the Marines. According to his family, watching the Marines gives him a sense of joy and security.

Working with dedicated volunteers and community partners, Make-A-Wish Illinois helped bring Jamaria's vision to

life for a truly unique experience. Thanks to a connection made by Blue Star Families and with their support, the United States Marine Corps invited Jamaria and his family to participate in several exclusive events during Marine Week Chicago, as part of the 250th birthday celebration of the Marine Corps. Each event was special for Jamaria, culminating in this event created just for him.

He and his family, along with approximately 200 guests, gathered on the Outdoor Terrace at Chicago's Willis Tower for a ceremony hosted by local partner GATX Corporation. With an official United States Marine Corps

Color Guard, the event included the United States Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon and the Quantico Marine Band. With heartfelt remarks honoring Jamaria from Colonel J.J. Wilson, the commander of Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force 250 and Mike Warmuth, chair of the board of directors for Make-A-Wish Illinois, Jamaria's excitement was evident as he looked around at all the uniformed Marines assembled, eyes widened to take it all in.

After the ceremony, Jamaria was eager to meet many of the Marines in attendance and take photos. Showered with gifts, hugs and kind words from Marines and other esteemed guests, he seemed to levitate with joy.



**"This is all he has ever wanted,"**  
Jamaria's mother Nora said.

Sharing the rich traditions of the Marines and the pageantry of it all brought the community together in support of Jamaria, and he was thrilled.

**"It meant the world to our family that everyone was there just for him,"** Nora continued. **"It was clear he felt every bit of the love and encouragement surrounding him."**



# A YEAR IN *wishes*

*I wish to have  
a playhouse*

**Jesse, 11**  
heart condition



*I wish to visit  
Walt Disney World*

**Cali, 8**  
blood disorder



*I wish to  
visit Hawaii*

**Samuel, 8**  
congenital heart disease



*I wish to meet the  
St. Louis Cardinals*

**Kade, 16**  
leukemia



*I wish to meet the  
Jacksonville Jaguars*

**Blaze, 8**  
congenital heart condition



*I wish to have  
a parade*

**Oaklynn, 10**  
nervous system disorder



*I wish to meet  
Steph Curry*

**Isiah, 9**  
respiratory disease



*I wish to visit  
Walt Disney World*

**Brandon, 4**  
congenital heart disease



*I wish to attend  
WrestleMania*

**Jaxon, 14**  
liver disorder



*I wish to have  
a Quinceañera*

**Nyella, 17**  
liver transplant



# Donor Spotlight

## MIKE & STEFANIE WARMUTH A Transformational Gift Sparks Hope

With humble beginnings in a small Wisconsin town, Mike Warmuth's early life on a farm instilled the values of strength, determination, and resilience. Though he never imagined a long career in the health industry, it was there that he came to understand how those core principles shaped the impact he could have on others.

As he retired from a long and successful career as a senior executive with Abbott, the multinational medical device and healthcare company based in northern Illinois, Warmuth was looking for a way to give back. His work with Abbott focused on formula for babies in the NICU to help with their development and growth. He said when he saw the babies' reactions to this formula, his eyes welled up with joy to see them respond, knowing that they would thrive and survive. Grateful for the health and well-being of his own children and inspired by

the families with medically complex children who he met through his work and with enthusiastic support from his wife Stefanie, Make-A-Wish Illinois became a way Mike could help directly.

Beginning as a wish granting volunteer in 2019, he worked directly with wish families. As he learned more about the true impact of a wish experience, he knew he had more to contribute. He soon became a member of the board of directors where his experience both professionally and as a volunteer contributed to the growth and stability of this large chapter. Mike led the Fund Development board committee and then the Compensation Committee, serving as vice chair of the board before being elected chair of the board of directors in 2023. An astute strategic thinker and leader, Mike also joined several task groups to further develop

chapter strengths and resources. When he and his wife Stefanie pledged a leadership gift to kick off the Wish Kids Need Us Now campaign to sustain program services through the pandemic, it was because he understood and appreciated the strategic focus of that campaign. Their gift inspired many others, ensuring that impactful experiences for families continued though the pandemic. Over the years, Mike, Stefanie and their family have extended their generosity in a variety of ways to support the work of Make-A-Wish Illinois. From a gift to the new office space campaign to the inclusion of Make-A-Wish Illinois in their estate plans, Mike and Stefanie often encourage friends and colleagues to support the mission by inviting them to events and sharing personal stories of the wishes Mike has helped to grant. He is a strong advocate for board members to volunteer as wish granters, so they

truly understand the impact of their work; he regularly partners with board members new to wish granting to mentor them into the role.

As his tenure as chair of the board of directors came to an end at the end of fiscal year 2025, Mike remains committed to creating life-changing wishes for children with critical illness more than ever. In June, he and Stefanie pledged a substantial gift of \$3M to Make-A-Wish Illinois, the largest individual gift the chapter has ever received, bringing their total commitment to more than \$3.5 million.

Mike's example and commitment has inspired many others to become involved. Recently, friends and colleagues raised \$250,000 to endow a wish in perpetuity in honor of Mike and his work with Make-A-Wish Illinois, ensuring his impact lasts for generations to come.

“We are so grateful to Mike and Stefanie for their incredible leadership, generosity, and trust in our vision to reach every child with an eligible condition to give them a life-changing wish experience. Their generosity has not only touched our wish families, but it has also inspired so many others to join in making wishes come true.

Stephanie Springs  
CEO, Make-A-Wish Illinois



Left: Mike joins wish partner Hilary Mikulich for Cyrus' wish to be a superhero in 2021. Right: Stefanie and Mike Warmuth generously donated to the office space campaign naming the Community Conference Room in honor of Mia, a wish child.



Left: Mike with Ellie Stotz, sister of wish alum at the 2024 Over the Edge fundraiser. Right: Mike and wish partner and fellow board member Jerry Darko teamed up to grant Ahmad's wish for a shopping spree in 2024.





# Corporate Partners

“Working with local companies invested in supporting our wish kids and their families is a true joy. Seeing the local impact they are making really inspires so much enthusiasm for the mission, and we are grateful for every company that step ups to help us reach even more children who are waiting for wishes.

Beth Murnane  
Corporate Giving Director, Make-A-Wish Illinois

Looking for ways to engage employees and clients, **Business Office Systems (BOS)** created an event to bring these groups together at their Roselle headquarters in a meaningful way. Now in its fifth year, the BOS Indoor Charity Golf Classic is a fun afternoon of mini golf and camaraderie benefiting Make-A-Wish Illinois. Parents of wish kids Kevin and Olivia, siblings both diagnosed with a life-threatening respiratory disorder, shared their family’s journey with their critical illness and the positive impact of a wish experience for their children. This year’s event raised more than \$45,000, more than any previous year.



Through **FCL Cares**, the charitable arm of **FCL Builders**, the company’s September 2024 Vegas Night event brought employees and business partners together for a great cause, raising \$140,000 for Make-A-Wish Illinois, thanks to the generosity of sponsors, vendors and attendees.

Guests heard firsthand from wish recipient Finn and his mom about the lasting power of wishes for children fighting critical illnesses. “Supporting a cause that fulfills the dreams of children facing critical illnesses brings a sense of pride,

community connection, and a shared purpose,” said Cayla Dodaro of FCL Builders. “It demonstrates our commitment to giving back and making a tangible difference in the lives of families during challenging times.”



**GOLFING FOR WISHES** is a long-running community-organized annual fundraiser in Will county. This was a record breaking year for this event, raising more than \$120,000 at the late summer event held at the Links of Carillon in Bolingbrook.



Through a series of events in western Illinois near their Litchfield headquarters, **MCKAY NAPA AUTO PARTS** continued their commitment to supporting children with critical illnesses through Make-A-Wish Illinois. Their donation of \$82,500 this fiscal year brings their total giving to more than \$897,000 since the partnership began in 2003.



Statewide **WALK FOR WISHES** events were held in four locations, bringing wish alumni, community supporters and volunteers together in support of future wishes. Participants heard directly from wish families about the power of wishes, enjoyed refreshments as well as music and costumed characters. In some locations, exciting wish reveals and celebrations were also part of the program. Sponsors, teams and individuals raised more than \$175,000.

# Community Fundraisers

Community events benefiting Make-A-Wish Illinois play a crucial role in helping raise awareness and provide resources to grant wishes. Whether organized by community members or the chapter, their success relies on passionate supporters rallying their networks to grant wishes across Illinois.



Created by Ultimate Gymnastics more than 25 years ago, the **WISH CLASSIC** hosted by Ultimate and Vernon Hills Gymnastics brings dozens of young athletes together. Held annually in north suburban Waukegan the event brings the Make-A-Wish mission into every aspect.



Dozens braved the chilly weather for the **PENGUIN PLUNGE** at SkyDive Chicago in January 2025. Teams and individuals raised just over \$100,000 in this fun winter fundraiser.



# Volunteers

“Planning wish celebrations makes me feel alive and happy. I always want to go one step beyond and try to get the most out of the journey for these families. I honestly found my purpose when I became a Make-A-Wish volunteer. It truly is an amazing experience that you are part of something bigger and brighter, and for just a little moment can bring hope, light, laughter, and joy to someone who might not always feel this way.

Alecia Owen-Lato  
Wish volunteer and  
wish alumni parent



## 2025 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Providing volunteers with the tools and connections they need to successfully create life-changing wish experiences is a top priority for Make-A-Wish Illinois. This fiscal year, through surveys, conversations and analysis of trends, staff explored ways to find areas of improvement to increase volunteer satisfaction and engagement. In addition to the monthly newsletter for all volunteers, a weekly communication to wish volunteers and in-person recognition events, these resources were added:

- **Wish Boost Drop-off Tour** - Our staff delivered boost and ice breaker toys for wish kids, as well as other helpful materials for wish granting, to several locations in the state for volunteer pickup. This concept extended to the northern Illinois Walk for Wishes locations, where attending volunteers could pick up more wish granting supplies.
- **New Wish Connection Discussion Group Sessions** - Supported by staff, a regularly scheduled virtual call for active wish volunteers centering on topics of Wish Discovery or Wish Celebration offers volunteers the opportunity to share best practices.

  
**285**  
New  
VOLUNTEERS  
ADDED

  
**246**  
Event  
VOLUNTEER JOBS  
COMPLETED

  
**757**  
Wish  
VOLUNTEERS  
ACTIVE



TYLER DICKMAN  
Volunteer Leadership Award  
  
Associate Board Member,  
Wish Volunteer



DEBI CURTIS  
Wish Impact Award  
  
Bilingual Wish Volunteer



BRIAN McMEANS  
Agile Award  
  
Wish Volunteer



PETER TERKILDSEN  
Agile Award  
  
Wish Volunteer



DR. SHIMONI DHARIA  
Healthcare Partner  
Leadership Award  
  
Chapter Medical Advisor  
Referral Partner



BRETT TAYLOR  
Volunteer Fundraiser Award  
  
Bleachernation Blogathon



DUNLAP HIGH SCHOOL  
Youth Fundraising Award  
  
Kids for Wish Kids



BETH FUNNEMAN  
Community Impact Award  
  
Community Fundraiser, Wish  
Volunteer



JUAN SOLIS  
Belonging Champion  
  
Community Council Member,  
Wish Volunteer

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

During National Volunteer Week (April 20-26, 2025), Make-A-Wish Illinois recognized the contributions of several outstanding volunteers across the state who create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses. These dedicated WishMakers share their time and talent to bring strength and hope to wish children and their families through their varied and impactful contributions.

In addition to these volunteers, hundreds more WishMakers give of their time and talents in numerous ways across the state.



# Alumni Community



## Part of the magic of a wish is sharing it with others.

Through the Wish Alumni Community, wish kids, parents and siblings meet and support other wish families. Drawn together because of their wish experiences, they help make even more wishes come true. Many alumni families choose to Wish It Forward by sharing their story to inspire others, volunteering, getting their company or church involved or contributing toward the mission in other ways.

Top: Wish Alumni gathered to celebrate World Wish Month with the Chicago White Sox in April 2025. Left: Local volunteer Corey Scheiler and family teamed up with Radar Farms and the ISU Chi Omega chapter to welcome several wish alumni families for fall fun. Center: In June, the Heartland Mule Riders Association invited southern Illinois alumni families to their summer 2025 gathering, where they raised funds to support Make-A-Wish Illinois. Right: Wish Kid Eleni's family shared the life-changing impact of her wish experience with attendees at the 2025 Golfing for Wishes fundraiser.



*"In 2018, I was granted my own wish on a Disney Cruise! That trip gave me more than just an incredible adventure; it gave me joy, hope, and unforgettable memories with my family. Experiencing the magic of a wish firsthand showed me just how powerful it can be to have something to look forward to, something that makes you feel special and cared for. Now, I walk so other kids can feel that same spark of hope."*

Gianna, wish granted 2018  
2025 Walk for Wishes, Gianna's Starlight Squad

# Medical Partners

*"Wishes give patients and families the chance to step outside their harsh reality and for that moment, they no longer feel like patients or caregivers. They are simply just living."*

Medical professionals like Kelly Kramer, a longtime nurse practitioner supporting pediatric oncology patients and families at University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital, play a key role in both hands-on care and the Make-A-Wish referral process.

While medical advancements have helped improve many patient outcomes, the reality of treatment is still exhausting physically, mentally, and emotionally.

By referring patients to Make-A-Wish Illinois, medical professionals like Kelly are helping to change the narrative for kids facing a devastating diagnosis. Not only is she working to treat her patients, but also to improve their overall quality of life and well-being. She sees the power of a wish and continues to advocate, encourage, and support every child with an eligible condition to experience it.



Kelly Kramer  
APRN, MSN, CPNP-PC, CPON  
University of Chicago Medicine



FISCAL YEAR 2025  
REFERRAL SOURCES

### Top Referring Medical Partners

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago  
Advocate Children's Hospital  
University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital  
OSF Children's Hospital of Illinois / St. Jude Midwest Affiliate  
HSHS St. John's Hospital  
La Rabida Children's Hospital

### 42 Medical Facilities Submitting Qualified Referrals

#### CHAPTER MEDICAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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SW Care Manager  
Pediatric Sub-Specialty Clinics/Dept of Ambulatory Care Management  
Rush University Children's Hospital

**SHIMONI DHARIA, MD**  
Division Director  
Pediatric Pulmonology  
Advocate Children's Hospital

**BREANNE FISHER, MSN, APRN, CPNP**  
Director of Ambulatory APP Practice & Professional Development  
Neurology and Epilepsy Center at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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**SARAH MITCHELL, MD**  
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Palliative Care  
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**ERIKA VUCKO, MSN, FNP-BC, AGN-BC**  
Division of Genetics, Birth Defects and Metabolism  
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago



# In Wish Memorium

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024 - AUGUST 31, 2025

Every year, thousands of lives are touched by the lasting power of a wish because of the generosity of our donors. We remember those children whose wishes live on in family memories, but who are no longer with us.

<i>Aaliyah</i>	<i>Simon</i>	<i>Rosalynn</i>	
<i>Abigail</i>	<i>Caroline</i>	<i>Dalaynna</i>	<i>Antwan</i>
<i>Gwendolyn</i>	<i>Kody</i>	<i>Hanna</i>	<i>Brian</i>
<i>Ella</i>	<i>Isla</i>	<i>Skylar</i>	<i>Colton</i>
<i>Layla</i>	<i>Levi</i>	<i>Jaxen</i>	<i>James</i>
<i>Ava</i>	<i>Elias</i>	<i>Giovanni</i>	<i>Makanda</i>
<i>Damauri</i>	<i>Aislynn</i>	<i>Zoë</i>	<i>Grant</i>
<i>Kyra</i>	<i>Peter</i>	<i>Logan</i>	<i>Muhammad</i>
<i>Raymond</i>	<i>Daniel</i>	<i>Olsen</i>	<i>Aubrey</i>
<i>Parker</i>	<i>Jade</i>	<i>Ryan</i>	<i>Noah</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Emily</i>	<i>Laney</i>	<i>Aries</i>
<i>Emilio</i>	<i>Jonathon</i>	<i>Jamir</i>	<i>Gabriella</i>
<i>Lauren</i>	<i>Maisa</i>	<i>Demetrius</i>	
<i>Nicolas</i>	<i>Chrisiyah</i>	<i>Elias</i>	

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