

# Wish Maker

*I wish  
to go  
to the  
MLB  
World  
Series!*

**Dodgers**  
**Walker, 16**

*Hodgkin's Lymphoma*



# Together,

**WE CREATE LIFE-CHANGING WISHES  
FOR CHILDREN WITH CRITICAL ILLNESSES.**

## Reflecting on a Year of Impact

This past fiscal year has been one of remarkable generosity, resilience, and hope. Together with our donors, volunteers, partners, and community supporters, Make-A-Wish® Mississippi proudly granted 117 life-changing wishes for children across our state.

Each wish represented more than just a single moment of joy—it was a turning point in a child's journey, a reminder of possibility during treatment, and a source of strength for entire families. From trips that created cherished memories, to technology that opened new opportunities, to experiences that fulfilled lifelong dreams, every wish granted was made possible because of you.

When you donate to Make-A-Wish Mississippi, you are not only giving children renewed strength to fight their illnesses, you are also bringing families closer together and uniting entire communities. You don't just impact lives—you transform them.

As we celebrate the 117 wishes fulfilled this year, we also look ahead to the many children still waiting. With your continued support, we are prepared to meet the year ahead with determination and passion, ensuring even more children experience the transformative power of a wish.

The pages that follow illustrate the hope and joy of some of the 117 wishes our chapter granted in fiscal year 2025. We celebrate each and every one of these wishes with you!

Together, we are not only granting wishes—we are building hope, joy, and resilience across Mississippi.

## OUR STAFF



**Allison Tyler**  
President & CEO



**Nikki Smith**  
Finance & Operations  
Director



**Lynette McBrayer**  
Donor Relations and  
Senior Development Director



**Shellie Moses**  
Development Director  
Mississippi Gulf Coast



**Alex Douglas**  
Development Manager  
Central Mississippi



**Kaitlin Childress**  
Development Manager  
Central Mississippi



**Erica Rivers**  
Development Manager  
Golden Triangle & MS Delta



**Jane Walsh**  
Kids for Wish Kids  
Coordinator



**Emily Guest**  
Director of Mission Delivery



**Stacy Craig**  
Senior Wish Manager  
Central Mississippi



**Mechelle Smith**  
Wish Manager  
Golden Triangle & MS Delta



**Hope Broadus**  
Wish Coordinator  
& Office Manager  
Mississippi Gulf Coast



**Lauren Pearson**  
Database Coordinator

601.366.9474  
800-819-4072

 @MakeAWishMS

 Make-A-Wish Mississippi

 ms.wish.org  /mswish

 Make-A-Wish Mississippi

 @makeawishms

# Letter from Board Chair

As the new school year begins and I see the excitement on children's faces, I'm reminded of the mission of Make-A-Wish Mississippi: to grant every eligible child's one true wish.

Because of the outpouring of support from our donors, volunteers, medical partners, and—most importantly—our staff, we were able to grant 117 wishes last year. Each wish represents more than a special moment—it brings hope, strength, and joy to a child and their entire family.

Yet the need never goes away. Right now, we have a pipeline of deserving children waiting for their wishes. With partners like Mississippi Children's Hospital, we are able to identify, reach out, and fulfill those wishes—but only with the continued support of people like you.

I'm often asked: How can I help? The answer is simple—get involved. Whether by serving as a local wish granter, volunteering at one of our events, or making a financial gift, every effort works hand in hand to create the best outcome: a perfect wish.

I'm fortunate to work alongside the most dedicated staff and talented board of directors in Mississippi. Their energy, passion, and commitment to our children inspire me daily and remind me why I chose to return home to raise my family in such a caring, compassionate community.

As we close out FY25 and look ahead to FY26, I invite you to join us in meeting this challenge. Together, we can ensure that every child in Mississippi who qualifies for a wish has the chance to experience the joy and healing that only a wish can bring.



Forever grateful,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Smith".

Joshua R. Smith  
Chairman – Make-A-Wish  
Mississippi Board of Directors



# Board of Directors



**Michael Adcock**  
VP, Population Health  
Magnolia Health Plan



**Landry Adkins**  
Retired



**Jeff Cox**  
Owner  
Birdsong Construction



**Jill Dale**  
Wish Mom



**Sunny Desai**  
President/CEO  
Desai Companies



**Chris Espy**  
Attorney  
Espy Law



**Tondra Hall**  
Human Resources Manager  
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**Sophie Lampton**  
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**Lee Mitchell**  
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**Michael Rozier**  
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**Scott Shoemaker**  
President & CEO  
Shoemaker Homes



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Simmons Erosion Control



**Josh Smith**  
Commercial Lines  
Consultant  
Ross & Yerger Insurance



**Staci Tyler**  
Chief Accounting Officer  
EastGroup Properties



**Michael Usher**  
Retired



**Will Van Kirk**  
EVP  
Van Kirk Wealth Advisors



**Lindsay Varnadoe**  
Attorney  
Morgan & Morgan



**Dr. Dereck Davis**  
Children's of Mississippi  
Pediatric Hematology  
Oncology



**Dr. Marcus Lee**  
Children's of Mississippi  
Pediatric Neurology

# Medical Advisors

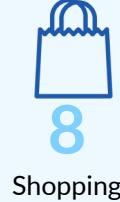
# Make-A-Wish® BY THE NUMBERS

MISSISSIPPI

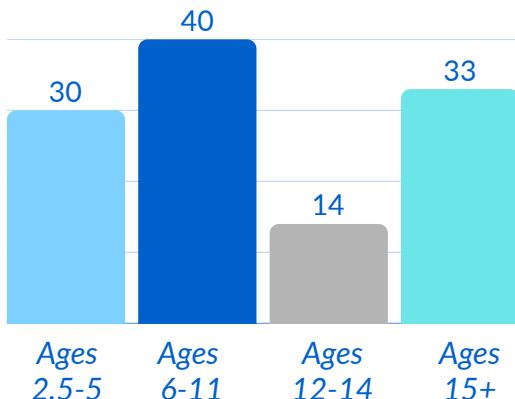
## 81%

of every dollar  
spent is allocated  
to granting  
wishes.

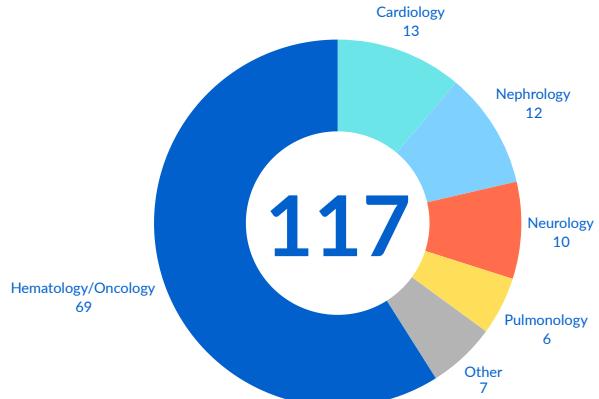
## 117 WISHES GRANTED



### Wishes by Age



### Wishes by Diagnosis



FY 2024

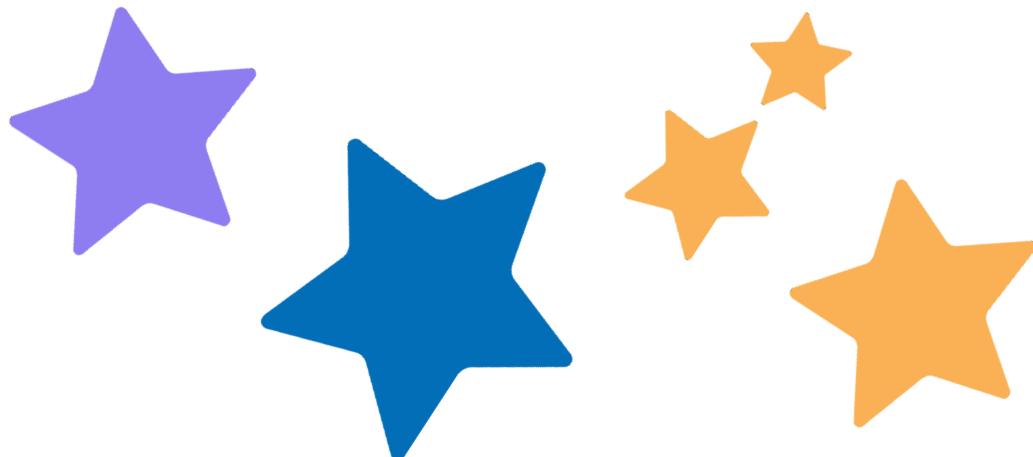
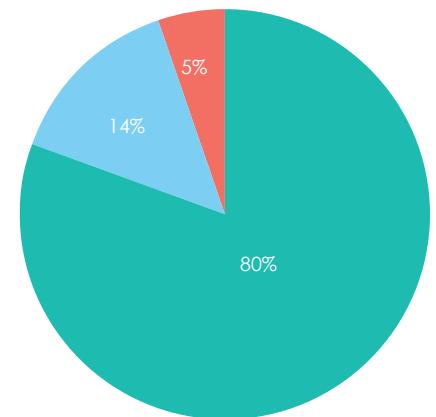
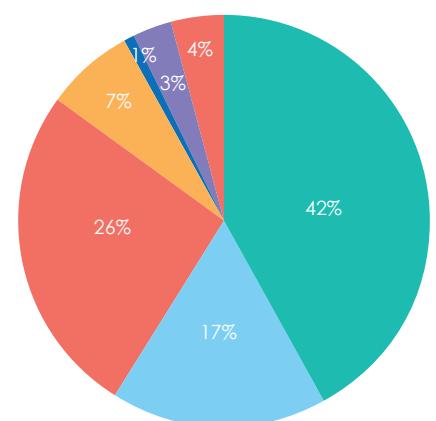
# Financials

Special Events, Net	2,120,997	42%
In-Kind Gifts	837,279	17%
Major Gifts / Planned Giving	1,293,868	26%
Direct Public Support	331,767	7%
Grants	45,200	1%
Corporate Gifts	148,239	3%
Investment Income and Other	222,973	4%

*Revenue* 5,000,323

Program Expense	2,546,021	80%
Fundraising Expense	454,292	14%
Management & General	164,977	5%

*Expense* 3,165,290



# Grateful Every Day

## How a Wish to the World Series Gave Me Back My Life

Each morning when I wake up, I'm grateful — grateful to be here, and grateful to be doing what I love again. But not long ago, I wasn't sure I'd ever get back to feeling like a normal kid.

When I was diagnosed with cancer, life as I knew it changed overnight. Suddenly, the activities I loved were gone. The future I had imagined for myself felt uncertain and the path ahead looked terrifying. But through every painful treatment and every sleepless night, I was never truly alone. My incredible doctors and nurses, my family and friends, and my community stood with me. Their support kept me going, even on my worst days.

And there were plenty of bad days — days when I could barely lift my head, days when I didn't want to talk, and days when I wondered if I'd ever get to play, laugh, or simply feel good again. But in the middle of that difficult time, something extraordinary happened.

One day during treatment, representatives from Make-A-Wish visited me in the hospital. They told me I was going to be a Wish Kid, and that I could dream big — as big as I wanted. That one conversation changed everything. Suddenly, I had something to look forward to. I knew exactly what my wish would be: I wanted to go to the Major League Baseball World Series.



That wish became my beacon of hope. It gave me strength during the hardest parts of treatment. And when my wish finally came true, it was even better than I had imagined.

I wasn't just a cancer patient anymore — I was a kid at the World Series, cheering with my family, soaking in the excitement, and watching Freddie Freeman hit a walk-off grand slam at Dodger Stadium. For a few unforgettable days, I was just a kid again, living a dream and making memories that I'll carry with me forever.

This is the power of a wish — and it's possible because of the generosity of people like you. Your support for Make-A-Wish doesn't just create moments of joy — it provides hope, strength, and light in the darkest times for kids like me who are fighting the biggest battles of their lives.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to everyone who makes these wishes possible. You're giving us more than a trip or a special experience — you're giving us the belief that better days are ahead. And that is a gift I'll never forget.



# Wishes

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

Within these pages, you'll see the faces of strength, hope, and transformation—children whose lives have been forever touched by the power of a wish.

This year, we celebrate 117 wishes granted between September 2024 and August 2025. Each wish represents more than a moment of joy—it's a turning point, a source of healing, and a reminder that brighter days are ahead. Many of these incredible journeys are highlighted in the pages that follow.

As we celebrate the 117 wishes granted this past year, we are reminded that there are still many children in Mississippi waiting for their one true wish. Each wish begins with the generosity of donors, volunteers, and community partners who believe in the power of hope.

Together, we can continue to transform lives—bringing strength to children, joy to families, and inspiration to entire communities. With your continued support, the next wish is waiting to be granted. Because when a wish comes true, it doesn't just change one life—it changes us all.



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Amari, 5**  
Epilepsy



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Addison, 9**  
Cystic Fibrosis



*I wish to go to Hawaii!*  
**Anna, 19**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**A'Mora, 5**  
Leukemia



*I wish to go snow skiing in Utah!*  
**Ashton, 18**  
Cancer



*I wish to see Taylor Swift in concert!*  
**Jolie, 8**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World*  
**Arriyah, 3**  
Congenital Heart Disease



*I wish to have a gaming computer!*  
**Arielanna, 13**  
Cancer



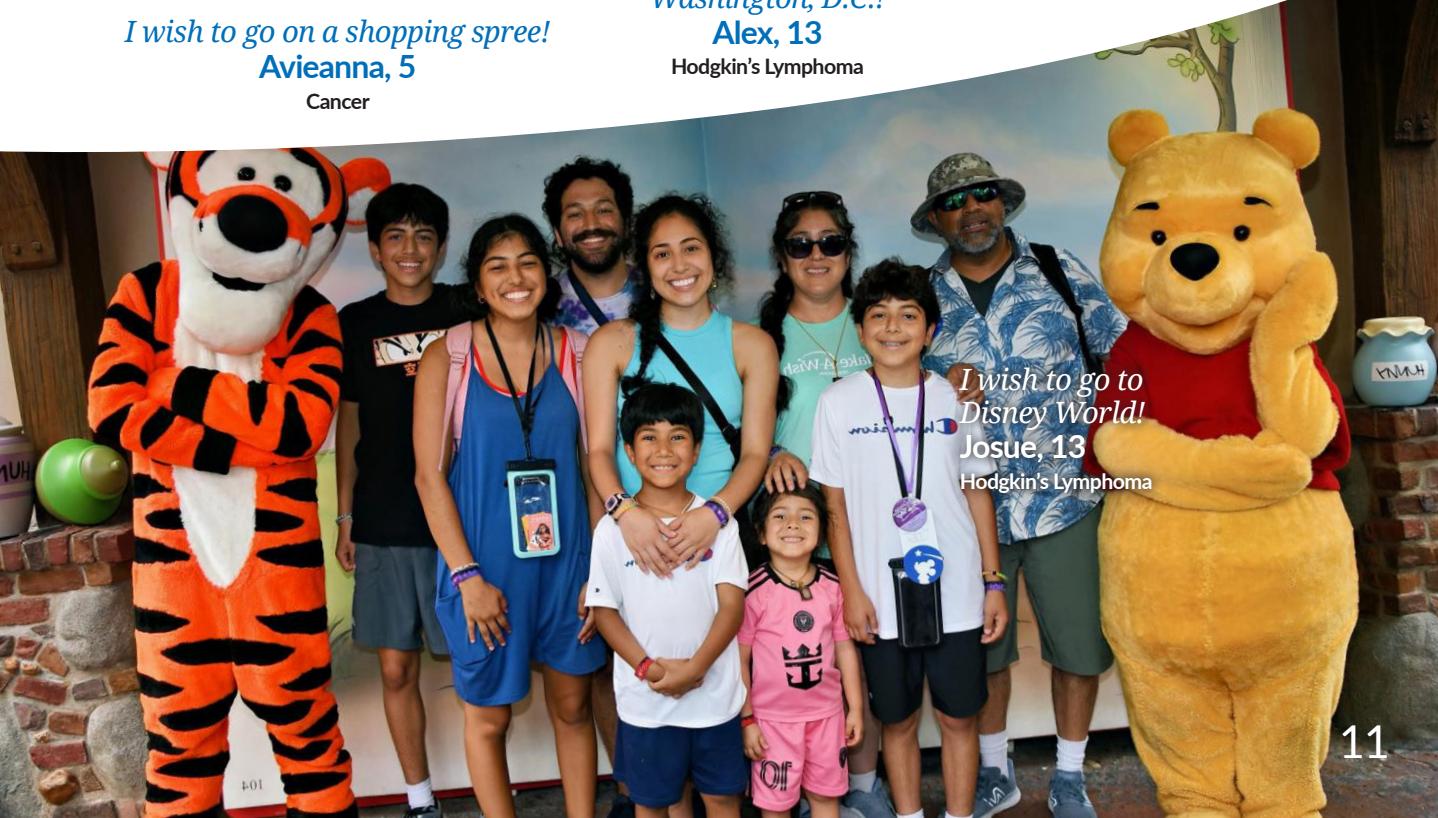
*I wish to go on a shopping spree!*  
**Avieanna, 5**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Washington, D.C.!*  
**Alex, 13**  
Hodgkin's Lymphoma



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Adriana, 8**  
Leukemia



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Josue, 13**  
Hodgkin's Lymphoma



*I wish to have a generator!*  
**Brighton, 3**

Nervous System Disorder



*I wish to meet the  
YouTube influencer  
Unspeakable!*  
**Bentley, 11**  
Heart Condition



*I wish to have an online  
shopping spree!*

**Branson, 18**

Renal Failure



*I wish to have  
a side-by-side!*  
**Cole, 18**  
Cancer

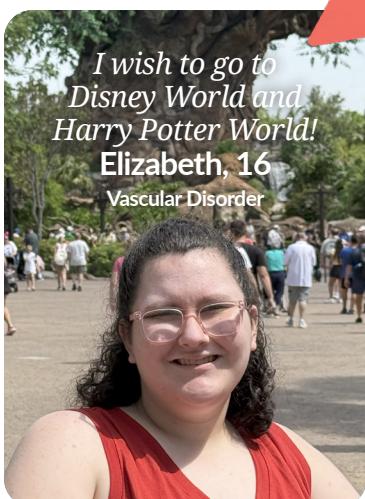


*I wish to go snowboarding  
in Colorado!*  
**Conner, 16**  
Lymphoma



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Cayse, 5**

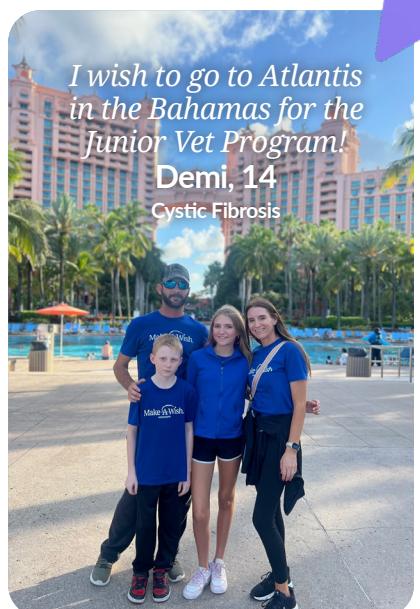
Neuromuscular Disorder



*I wish to go to  
Disney World and  
Harry Potter World!*  
**Elizabeth, 16**  
Vascular Disorder



*I wish to go to  
Disney World!*  
**Deandre, 17**  
Cerebral Palsy



*I wish to go to Atlantis  
in the Bahamas for the  
Junior Vet Program!*

**Demi, 14**  
Cystic Fibrosis



*I wish to go to the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee!*  
**Brooke, 15**  
Cancer

*I wish to go to Animal Kingdom at Disney World!*  
**Evelyn, 7**  
Renal Failure



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Gabrielle, 7**  
Heart Transplant



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Harper, 7**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Waylon, 4**

Congenital Heart Defect



*I wish to go to NYC during Christmas!*  
**Isabella, 18**  
Cancer



*I wish to have a 4-seater go-kart!*  
**Itayyon, 16**  
Renal Failure



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Hannah, 5**  
Congenital Heart Disease



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Poppy, 7**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World!*

**Jacob, 4**  
Cancer



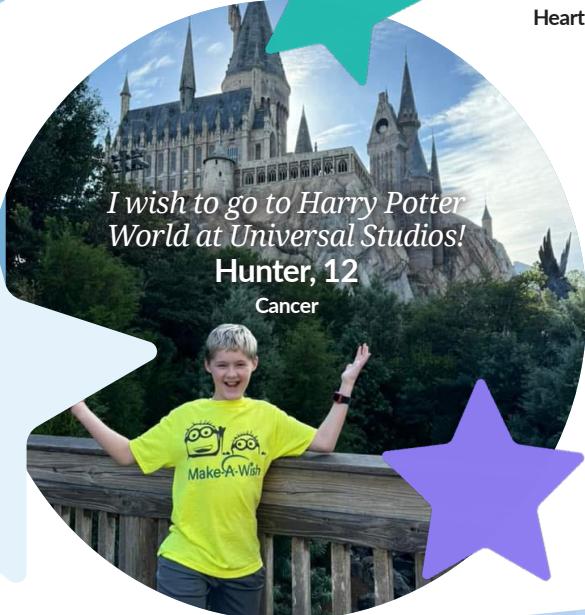
*I wish to go to Disney World!*

**JaLiyah, 3**  
Heart Condition



*I wish to go to LEGOLAND!*

**Juliana, 11**  
Lymphoma



*I wish to go to Harry Potter World at Universal Studios!*

**Hunter, 12**  
Cancer



*I wish to have new gaming electronics!*

**Kannon, 16**  
Leukemia



*I wish to visit the "Yellowstone" set and meet the cast!*

**Davis, 16**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Hawaii!*  
**Keydarius, 17**  
Sickle Cell



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Khaz, 3**  
Cancer



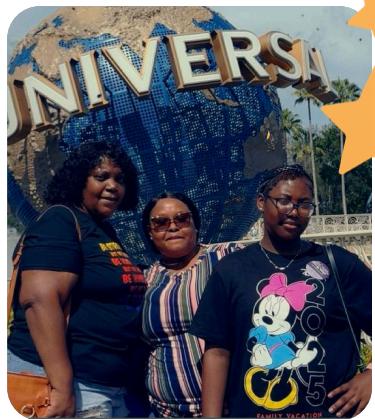
*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Kareem, 4**  
Sickle Cell



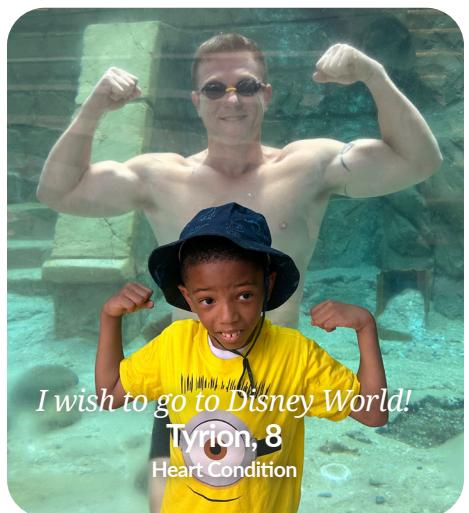
*I wish to go on a shopping spree!*  
**Lauren, 14**  
Renal Failure



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Micah, 4**  
Congenital Heart Disease



*I wish to go to Universal Studios!*  
**Mi'Amour, 13**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Tyron, 8**  
Heart Condition



*I wish to have Envision Glasses; Professional Edition!*  
**Richard, 12**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**William, 5**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Hawaii!*  
**Natalie, 10**  
Bone Marrow Transplant



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**Pailyn, 4**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Aulani, a Disney Resort and Spa, in Hawaii!*  
**Mykelti, 6**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to the Georgia Aquarium & Zoo!*  
**Riley, 4**  
Cancer



*I wish to go to Disney World!*  
**TaJarrion, 2**  
Respiratory Disorder

# Wishes in Waiting

## *Delta's Story*

### *A Daddy's Girl with a Big Wish*

"If it's not how Daddy does it, it's not right," said Delta's mom, Chelsie. Everyone knows Delta is her daddy's girl. But cancer has forced Delta and her father, Hayden, to spend long stretches apart while she receives treatment for leukemia at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis—hours away from their Mississippi home.

That distance has made each reunion unforgettable. In one viral moment, Hayden drove three hours to see his little girl. Delta, bald from chemotherapy but determined, pushed through a hitch in her walk to run into his arms. Chelsie caught the reunion on video, and millions of people online witnessed the joy and love between a daddy and his daughter. "Seeing my little girl," Hayden said, "just melted my heart."

#### **The Road to St. Jude**

In December 2023, Delta—just three years old—was diagnosed with B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. She began a multi-year treatment plan that will continue through 2026. The road has not been easy—she's endured chemotherapy, brain surgery, and long hospital stays—but through it all, her resilience has amazed everyone around her.

"You see a 3-year-old that hasn't been dealt the best of cards since Christmas '23, but not once has she asked why she's here," Hayden said. "She still has the willpower to push through everything."

Her big sister, Dani, has been by her side, carrying Delta's bags and cheering her on. The family has discovered a new definition of strength—one rooted in love, perseverance, and hope.

#### **The Power of a Wish**

In the midst of treatment, Delta learned she would be able to receive a wish from Make-A-Wish Mississippi—a moment her parents describe as life-changing in itself.

When they explained to Delta that she could choose one true wish, she didn't hesitate: "I can go to DISNEY!!!" she shouted with joy.



Delta dreams of meeting every princess, being pampered at the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique, and having the ultimate "girls' day" with her family. Talking about her wish fills her with energy and gives her something magical to look forward to at the end of her treatment.

"We sit and talk about this wish often because it keeps us going," Chelsie said. "It gives Delta motivation to keep fighting. Waiting for a wish gives us hope, excitement, and something BIG to look forward to."

#### **Why Wishes Matter**

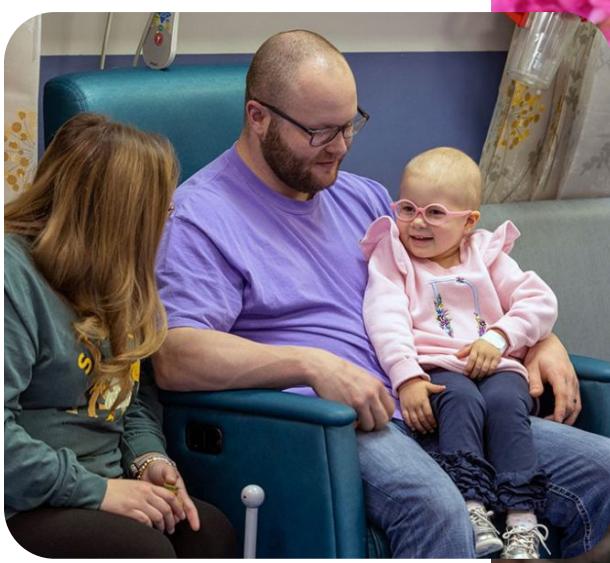
For families like Delta's, a wish is not just a trip or a gift—it's a turning point. Wishes bring joy in the hardest times, unite families, and remind children that they are more than their illness.

Every wish granted by Make-A-Wish Mississippi is made possible by donors, volunteers, and community partners who believe in the power of hope. On average, the cash cost of a wish is \$6,500, and thanks to supporters, 117 children across Mississippi experienced the transformative joy of a wish last year alone.

Delta's story is proof of why Make-A-Wish exists. While medicine treats the body, wishes lift the spirit and remind children to dream again.

For Delta and her family, the promise of Disney is more than a vacation. It's a light at the end of a long road, a celebration of resilience, and a symbol of the love and community that surround them.

Because when a wish comes true, it doesn't just change one life—it changes us all.



# Refer a Child

## to receive a life-changing wish

### Who Qualifies?

Children must meet these criteria at the time of referral:

- Diagnosed with a critical or life-threatening illness (i.e. a progressive or malignant condition) that currently places the child's life in jeopardy
- Older than 2½ years old and younger than 18 years old

### Who Can Refer?

To respect the privacy of families we serve, children who may be eligible to receive a wish can be referred by:

- Medical professionals such as providers (doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant), nurse, social worker or child-life specialist.
- Parents or legal guardians.
- Family members with detailed knowledge of the child's current medical condition.
- Children being treated for a critical illness may also refer themselves if they are capable of doing so.

### How to Refer?

- Visit [wish.org/refer-a-child](http://wish.org/refer-a-child)
- Ask your medical professional to make a referral

**• 98% of medical providers said the wish experience has a positive impact on a child's physical well-being.**



Scan to learn more.



*Explore our volunteer opportunities or choose to become a volunteer today!*

*Use this QR code to learn more at [wish.org/ms/volunteer](https://www.wish.org/ms/volunteer)*

## Hope Needs Heroes, You Can Be One.

By choosing to volunteer for Make-A-Wish Mississippi, you choose to provide **hope** to children and families walking through their darkest times **just miles away from you**. Your time and unique talents are critical to bringing strength and joy to our wish kids. Whether you realize it or not, your time spent volunteering will leave a positive impact on a wish child and their family for the rest of their lives.

### Wish Journey Community Engagement



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

# Mississippi State Athletics

## Turning Sports into a Season of Impact

This past year, Make-A-Wish Mississippi had the honor of partnering with Mississippi State Athletics to showcase the power of a wish. Together, we created unforgettable moments for wish kids and their families—reminding them that hope, strength, and joy can shine even during the toughest battles.

Athletic Director Zac Selmon welcomed wish families to campus for Halloween festivities, where kids enjoyed trick-or-treating with student athletes throughout the athletic complex. Later in the year, MSU Head Football Coach Jeff Lebby, serving as honorary chair of the Starkville Evening of Wishes, hosted wish kids and their families at each spring football scrimmage game. At the Evening of Wishes event, MSU student athletes escorted local wish kids down the red carpet, where Coach Lebby presented each child with a “Hero Award” for their extraordinary courage in fighting critical illnesses.

The impact didn’t stop there. Our 2025 Home Runs for Wishes Campaign raised more than \$70,000 to grant life-changing wishes across Mississippi. Thanks to the generosity of Presenting Sponsor, Simmons Erosion Control, and the inspiring leadership of MSU Baseball standouts Hunter Hines and Stone Simmons, a season of baseball became a season of impact.

As Hunter chased down—and ultimately broke—the MSU career record for home runs, donors pledged gifts for every home run he hit, fueling excitement while funding wishes. Meanwhile, pitcher Stone Simmons partnered with a charitable foundation to turn each strikeout and team win into even more support for wish kids. Together, these efforts—along with Simmons Erosion Control’s leadership—transformed sports milestones into a movement of hope.

Through this remarkable partnership, Mississippi State Athletics, its student athletes, and its staff have united around our mission, helping us bring the joy of a wish to children across our state.





# Contributions

We gratefully acknowledge the generous gifts given to Make-A-Wish Mississippi.

Gifts included were given between September 1, 2024 and August 31, 2025.

**Thank you for your generous support!**

## Wish Trustee \$50,000+

American Online Giving Foundation  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Bracken, Inc.  
Chi Omega Sorority MSU  
Estate of Betty Jane Long  
Everi Payments Inc.  
Jill Flowers  
Larry and Michael Johnson Family Foundation  
ZA Construction, LLC

## Wish Visionary \$25,000+

Birdsong Construction Co, Inc.  
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi  
Boswell Media  
Century Club Charities, Inc.  
Cruisin' The Coast  
D.N.P., Inc.  
Dolly Marascalco  
E. Michael Hohm  
Elizabeth Smith  
Ergon Foundation, Inc.  
H.F. McCarty Jr.  
Family Foundation  
Howard Technology Solutions, Inc.  
Jeff Cox  
Mark S. Jordan  
Family Foundation  
Mike Rozier Construction Company, Inc.  
Sloane & Josh Smith  
The Dusty Club

## Wish Champion \$15,000

Abby & John Ross McCartney  
Aluminum Dynamics  
Beau Rivage Resort

Erin & Aaron Bischofberger  
Feild Co-Operative

Association, Inc.  
Katie & Jeremy Nelson

Lynn & James Prude  
Mamie & Trey Herron

Margaret & Chad Biggs  
Mary Lawrence & Michael

Crow

Pamela & Craig  
Peterhansen

Sarah & Ray Shirley  
Shackelford Construction & Hauling, LLC

Shirley & Duffy McKenzie

Simmons Erosion Control, Inc.

Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Co.

Steel Dynamics

Tina & Mike Murphy

Tito's Handmade Vodka

Tauzin Wealth Management

## Wish Benefactor \$10,000+

BankPlus

Betsy & Wade Creekmore

Brandi & John Coates

C3 Construction Services, Inc.

Chester King Burnham

Charitable Trust

Deborah & Lester Williams

Delta Agriculture

Delta Regional Foundation

Desai Companies

EastGroup Properties

Favre 4 Hope Foundation

Fleet Morris Petroleum, Inc.

Galleria BMW

Gulf Coast Automotive

Group, LLC.

Hannah & Sam Waller

Harlow's Casino Resort & Spa

Jimmy Jon Josey

Kathy & Joe Sanderson  
Kirsten & Austin Golding

Land Rover of Jackson

Larry Saltzman

Lisa & Patrick Busby

Loveland Products

Madison Station PTO

Magnolia Health Plan

McCord Family Foundation, Inc.

Mississippi Baptist Medical Center

Patti & Shorty Snead

Paul and Mary Utterback Foundation

Renee Grey

Scarlet Pearl Casino Resort

Staley & Jeff Lebby

Tennessee Valley Authority

Terri & Bill Iupe

Vange & Matthew Miller

## Wish Maker \$6,500+

Amanda & Hastings Puckett

Angela & Norman Katool

Benchmark Engineering and Surveying

Bienville Orthopaedic Specialists

Brandon High School

Car Donation Foundation

Chi Omega Millsaps College

Community Bank

CSpire

Douglas Express Delivery

Erica & Sunny Desai

Forman Watkins & Krutz, LLP

Gallo Mechanical Services

Guaranty Bank and Trust

Company HQ

J. L. Roberts Mechanical Contracting

Jason Edwards

Jerry Sullivan

Kathryn & Will McCraney

Kimberly Chambers

Liz & Kirk Mehrle

Mary Ann & Davis Richards

McNeely Plastics

Members Exchange Credit Union

Mississippi Nurses Foundation

Nucor Steel Jackson Inc

Ole Brook Pediatric Dentistry

Polles Properties LLC

PriorityOne Bank

Regions Bank

Schwartz & Associates, Inc.

SDI BioCarbon Solutions

Singing River Health System Foundation

Solero Technologies

Southern Pipe & Supply

SouthGroup Insurance Services

Spencer Copeland

Staci & Brent Tyler

StorageMax

The TatoNut Shop, Inc.

Tommy Payne

Viking Investments

Walker Mims

Watkins Construction & Roofing

Will Van Kirk

Xtreme Roofing, LLC

## Wish Innovator \$5,000+

Anonymous

Allison Barrett

Alpha Care Urgent Care

Ann & Rick Calhoon

Audrey & Aafram Sellers

Baptist Memorial Hospital - Golden Triangle

Biloxi Public School District

Blossman Gas, Inc.

Buckner Prosthetics and Orthotics

Cadence Bank

Cal-Maine Foods, Inc.	Ben Cowart	Mandy & Donald Baker	Ann & Josh Raggio
Carr, Riggs and Ingram LLC	Better Business	Marina Little	Ann Elizabeth & Michael Lamb
Centene Corporation	Telecommunications	Maris, West, & Baker	Ann McDaniel
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IP Casino Resort Spa	Clark Beverage	M'Prints	Barry Prather
Island View Casino and Resort	Cypress Lanes	MS Physical Therapy	Beau Soboul
Jay Fenton	Dale & Michael Hill	Mullet Hop Trampoline Park	Beth McDaniel
Jon Mark Jordan	Davis & Crump, PC	Nicole & Allen Anderson	Bill Russell Ford Dealership
Justin Haydel	Design Precast and Pipe, Inc.	North Mississippi Vascular Care	Billy Howard
Lauran & Dean Wingo	Doctors Diet Program of Mississippi	Oak Hill Academy	Blacklidge Emulsions, Inc.
Leslie Usher	Elizabeth & James Mennell	Patricia Jenkins	Blake Chance
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Mark B. Willson	Emry Oxford Foundation	Professional Flooring Supply	Boyce Adams
Melissa & Derek Doyle	Fidelity Charitable	Rachel & Zac Selmon	Brandon Ensor
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Denise De Rossette	Joel Pettit	Moses Electric, Inc.	LLC
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Jerry Lee	Missy & Walt Stephens	SoSo Strong Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation, Inc.	
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# Granting Wishes Together

Granting wishes is something we all have the power to do. Thanks to the heartfelt generosity of our donors and the tireless dedication of our volunteers across Mississippi, we are able to bring hope, joy, and strength to children battling critical illnesses.

We extend our deepest gratitude to each of you who stand with us in this mission. Because of your compassion, more wishes will come true, and more children will discover the hope they need for brighter tomorrows.







# Wish Upon a Par

## How One Family's Support for Make-A-Wish Came Full Circle

Four years ago, Kirk Morgan sent a message to his family's group chat with big news: he was starting a golf tournament to benefit Make-A-Wish Mississippi. A lifelong lover of kids, Kirk was passionate about helping an organization that brings hope and joy to children facing critical illnesses.

He wanted the tournament to have a name that captured the spirit of the mission. After tossing around ideas, his daughter, Betsy Fulton, chimed in with the suggestion that stuck—"Wish Upon A Par." What started as a creative family brainstorm became the name of an annual tradition that raised vital funds for wishes.

What the family didn't know then was just how personal Make-A-Wish Mississippi would become to them.

### Ace's Journey

Before he was even born, Ace's parents, Betsy and Jon Fulton, received news that changed their lives forever. During pregnancy, Ace was diagnosed with a rare and complex heart condition. His cardiologist explained that she had never seen a heart quite like his: the right side had never developed, leaving the left side to carry the load for the rest of his life.



This meant medications, blood thinners, and restrictions from contact sports—things most kids take for granted. But if you ask Ace's mom, she'll tell you that hasn't stopped him from tackling his older siblings with his best wrestling moves. His condition requires careful monitoring, especially staying hydrated, but Ace approaches life with a contagious energy and joy.

### A Wish Becomes Possible

At first, Ace's family never considered that he might qualify for a wish. "I thought Make-A-Wish was only for terminal children," his mom shared. It wasn't until her dear friend, Nikki Smith, encouraged them to explore the process that they learned the truth: wishes are for children battling critical illnesses, giving them hope and strength for the journey ahead.

From the very first call, the Fulton's felt the magic. Volunteers and staff guided them through every step with kindness, making the experience simple, joyful, and full of anticipation. When Ace realized his wish was to meet Mickey Mouse was granted, his face lit up. "His eyes just widened with excitement," his mom said.

### A Trip Full of Magic

From the moment they left for their trip, the Fulton family experienced what it truly means to be treated like royalty. Every detail was handled, every moment filled with magic.

"The VIP treatment was incredible," his mom recalled. "The kids—and us parents too—felt so special. Make-A-Wish Mississippi made everything easy and hassle-free."

For Ace's parents, the most moving part wasn't just seeing the joy on Ace's face—it was watching his siblings light up as well. "Ace has been through so much, but really, his siblings have too. They've endured separations from us, periods of quarantine to protect Ace, and missed out on so many experiences. They deserved this trip and the magic almost as much as he did."

### Full Circle

Today, the family remains deeply committed to Make-A-Wish Mississippi. What began as supporting through the Wish Upon A Par Golf Tournament has become a mission that's now part of their family story.

"No question, I would recommend Make-A-Wish Mississippi to anyone," Ace's mom shared. "Helping bring joy, hope, and magic to these children and their families is not just a good deed—it's an honor."



# 4th Annual Wish Upon a Par

The 4th Annual Wish Upon A Par Golf Tournament, held in Philadelphia on Friday, September 5, 2025, was a remarkable day of generosity, community spirit, and life-changing impact. Thanks to the leadership of committee members Kirk Morgan, Heath Stribling, Stacey Clark, Stacey O'Neal, and Eric Prince—and the incredible support of the local community—the event raised more than \$31,000 to grant wishes for children battling critical illnesses through Make-A-Wish Mississippi.

This passionate committee is deeply connected to the mission, with several members having personally experienced the power of a wish. Their commitment shone through as the day began with a heartfelt message from wish mom Betsy Fulton and her son Ace, as she shared how each wish transforms lives and the vital role of community partnerships in delivering hope and joy. Supporters also had the opportunity to hear from Kenda Williams, a local wish child and proud member of the Choctaw reservation. While she is still awaiting her wish, Kenda shared her heartfelt appreciation for the experience she's had with the organization so far. Her words were a touching reminder of the impact hope can have – even before a wish is granted.

Committee member, Stacey Clark stated, "I can't even imagine what families go through with critically ill kids but if we can put just a little happy in their lives for even a few minutes it's worth all the hard work."

The two-man scramble teed off at 12:45pm, drawing golfers of all levels for a cause bigger than the game. By the tournament's close, the committee and community had not only met their goal—they surpassed it. In its first four years, Wish Upon A Par has raised more than \$100,000, proving what is possible when passion, purpose, and community come together.



# Annual Make-A-Wish Ricky Peden Memorial Golf Tournament



The Annual Ricky Peden Memorial Golf Tournament, hosted at the Beau Rivage's breathtaking Fallen Oak Golf Course, provided golfers with an unforgettable day on the greens—made even more meaningful by the opportunity to putt alongside wish kids on the 18th hole.

This beloved tournament carries a powerful legacy. Ricky Peden played an instrumental role in establishing the South Mississippi Make-A-Wish office in 2001. After his unexpected passing in 2005, the tournament was renamed in his honor, celebrating both his dedication to Make-A-Wish and his enduring impact on the community. Today, Ricky's passion, and the love and support of his family, continue to inspire this event.

Thanks to the generosity of our golfers, sponsors, and volunteers, the tournament not only honors Ricky's memory but also helps make wishes come true for children battling critical illnesses—bringing hope, strength, and joy to families across Mississippi.



# The Old Waverly Golf Classic Raises More Than \$140,000 to Grant Life-Changing Wishes

On October 7, 2024, more than 250 golfers, guests, and volunteers gathered at the prestigious Old Waverly Golf Club for a day filled with sunshine, spirited competition, and heartfelt moments at the annual Make-A-Wish Golf Classic, presented by BRACKEN. By day's end, this inspiring community had raised over \$140,000 to grant life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses across Mississippi.

## A Day on the Greens

From the moment golfers arrived, excitement filled the air. Participants had the chance to take part in raffle prizes, a curated bourbon auction, and a spirited putting contest before heading out to enjoy 18 beautiful holes. The weather was perfect for both the morning and afternoon tee times, creating the ideal backdrop for camaraderie and competition.

Friendly challenges like "Closest to the Pin," "Longest Yard," and "Hole in One," kept spirits high throughout the day. The most memorable moments, however, came when players joined some of our courageous wish kids on the course—sharing smiles, stories, and photos that reminded everyone why they were there.

## Stories That Inspire

Before teeing off, golfers were touched by powerful reminders of the Make-A-Wish mission. In the morning, Brian Lindner opened the round by sharing the moving story of his own daughter's wish journey. Later, before the afternoon group began, the Wilkes family spoke about their son Weston's battle with Cystic Fibrosis and the hope their family has found through Make-A-Wish. Their testimonies brought the mission to life and underscored the impact every dollar raised can have.



## Thank You to Our Event Sponsors



# Tee It Up for Wishes

Presented by Desai Companies

On April 11, 2025, Make-A-Wish Mississippi hosted our annual Tee It Up for Wishes golf tournament at Deerfield Golf Club in Canton. Blessed with beautiful spring weather, golfers enjoyed a full day on the course, connecting with fellow supporters while making a difference for children across our state.

One of the most memorable parts of the day came when participants had the chance to meet some of our incredible wish kids. These brave children shared their stories, reminding us all why this event matters so deeply. Their courage, smiles, and words of gratitude displayed how every dollar raised translates into hope, joy, and strength for families facing the challenges of critical illness.

This tournament wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our sponsors, players, and volunteers who came together to make it a success. From the opening tee shot to the final putt, every moment contributed to something bigger—a future filled with life-changing wishes.

Because of your support, Tee It Up for Wishes was more than just a round of golf; it was a day of impact, inspiration, and community. Together, we are helping to ensure that every eligible child in Mississippi experiences the magic of a wish.



## Thank you, Sponsors!



## Make-A-Wish Volunteer Spotlight

# Meet the Wish Journey Volunteers

For many children, the path from referral to a granted wish takes time—on average about nine months, sometimes longer if health challenges arise. At Make-A-Wish Mississippi, we believe the wait should feel just as magical as the wish itself. That's why in FY25, we launched something new: the Wish Journey Volunteer Group.

Each month, this special group of volunteers gathers to handwrite personalized notes for every wish kid currently in our pipeline. These letters are filled with words of encouragement, love, and hope—reminding children that they are brave, they are special, and they are never alone. Every note is sent with a small goodie, bringing a smile at just the right time.

As one volunteer shared, “It may seem simple, but we know these kids are fighting big battles. If our words can make even one day a little brighter, then it's worth every moment we spend writing.”

Beyond the notes, the group also helps celebrate birthdays, sending cards to each wish kid during their special month. Families have told us how much these gestures mean—that even before their child's wish comes true, they already feel the love of the Make-A-Wish community surrounding them.

The Wish Journey Volunteer Group reminds us all that a wish is more than a single day—it's a journey of hope and joy that begins the moment a child is referred.





On June 14, 2025, Make-A-Wish Mississippi proudly hosted its signature event, the Evening of Wishes Gala, at the Country Club of Jackson. Guests enjoyed an elegant evening of fine dining and inspiration, highlighted by the powerful story of the Mims Family, whose son, Walker, had his wish to attend the Major League Baseball World Series fulfilled in October 2024.

In one of the most memorable moments of the night, Walker helped us create new magic by announcing to fellow wish kid, Kaley, that her wish to go to Hawaii was being granted!

Thanks to the generosity and support of our sponsors, guests, steering committee, volunteers, in-kind donors, and vendors, this year's gala was a record-breaking success. Your commitment to the Make-A-Wish mission ensures that children across Mississippi facing critical illnesses will continue to experience the life-changing joy of a wish come true.

Together, we are transforming lives—one wish at a time.





Make-A-Wish  
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# Evening of Wishes GALA

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# 21st Annual Martini Shakedown

The 21st Annual Martini Shakedown once again proved to be the highlight of the summer social season as sponsors, donors, and guests came together at the Beau Rivage to help make wishes come true. Voodoo Gumbo kept the crowd dancing all night long while guests bid on highly sought-after auction items.

The true highlight of the evening came when wish child A'Morya entered the room to present her one-of-a-kind art piece created to help grant wishes—and then learned that her own wish to go to Disney World was being granted! It was a magical moment that left the entire room inspired.

Thank you to everyone who made this unforgettable evening possible. We look forward to seeing you again next year for the 22nd Annual Martini Shakedown on July 25th at the Beau Rivage!





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS, BOARD, COMMITTEE, VOLUNTEERS, AND EVERYONE  
WHO ATTENDED OR PARTICIPATED IN THE 21ST ANNUAL MARTINI SHAKEDOWN.  
YOU WILL HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN WITH CRITICAL ILLNESS.  
WE THANK YOU AND THEY THANK YOU!



# Starkville Evening of Wishes Grants 42 Wishes

The 2025 Starkville Evening of Wishes, presented by BRACKEN, was a record-breaking night of hope and generosity. What began as a friendly challenge from MSU Head Football Coach Jeff Lebby to surpass last year's 30 wishes turned into something extraordinary—by the end of the evening, the Golden Triangle community had raised enough to fund 42 life-changing wishes for Mississippi children.

## A Celebration of Courage

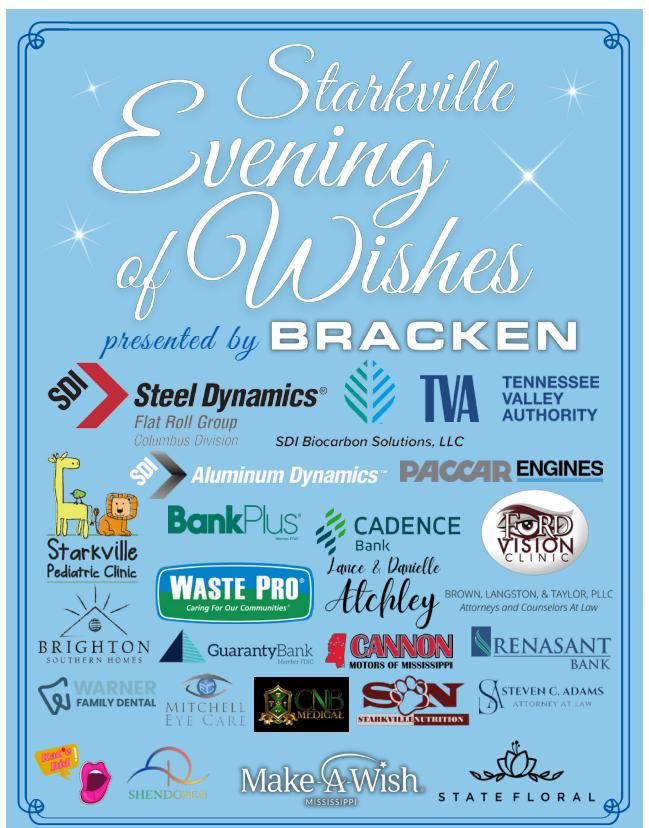
Guests enjoyed a champagne fountain, an elaborate charcuterie board, and lively auctions led by Gaylon McGee, but the true highlight came when local wish kids walked the red carpet as honored celebrities. Cheered on by the MSU Spirit Squad and mascot Bully, each child received an award of courage, creating unforgettable moments for all in attendance.

## Wishes Come True

The crowd was deeply moved by the story of Wish Mom Anna and her daughters, Anna and Ava. Then, in a powerful finale, Event Chair Craig Peterhansen announced the goal had been surpassed and two wishes were granted live on stage—Addison's dream of going to Disney World and Anna's wish to take her family to Hawaii.

## An Unforgettable Impact

Thanks to the remarkable generosity of the Starkville community, the Evening of Wishes not only shattered records but also created memories of joy, strength, and transformation—one wish at a time.





Starkville  
*Evening  
of Wishes*

# Delta Evening of Wishes

The Delta Evening of Wishes took place on November 14, 2023, at Harlow's Casino Resort and Spa, and was a resounding success, raising over \$100,000. The 200+ attendees were immersed in the magic of Wish moments as the stories of Delta Wish kids—Kennedi, Natalie, Kayden, Callie Mae, and Kabrien—were shared, demonstrating the profound impact of a wish.

The evening was filled with excitement, from the carefully curated live auction and wine pull, to a performance by musician Austin Davis from Yazoo City. However, the highlight of the night came when Kayden, one of our wish kids eagerly awaiting his dream to come true, took center stage. With the enthusiastic support of the entire audience, Kayden's wish to go to the Great Wolf Lodge in California was granted!

The Delta Evening of Wishes was an unforgettable night, brimming with generosity, inspiration, and the heartwarming fulfillment of a wish. It was a powerful reminder of the incredible work being done by Make-A-Wish Mississippi and the unwavering support of the Delta community in bringing hope and joy to children with critical illnesses.





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**Delta Evening of Wishes**

**THANK YOU  
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come true!**

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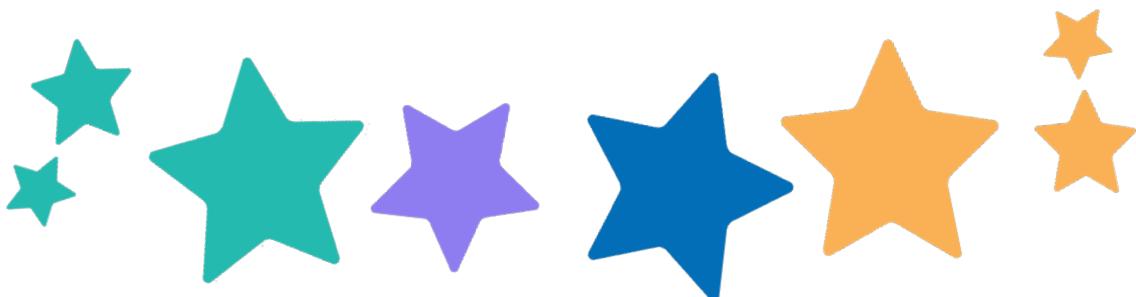
# W.I.S.H. SOCIETY

*women  
inspiring  
strength  
& hope*

The Women Inspiring Strength and Hope (W.I.S.H.) Society is one of Make-A-Wish Mississippi's most inspiring initiatives—created to recognize and celebrate women who are not only thriving in their professional fields but also making a profound impact through their philanthropic leadership. Each honoree is a woman of influence, compassion, and vision, who accepts the invitation to partner with Make-A-Wish by raising the funds needed to grant wishes for local children facing critical illnesses.

These women know that a wish is more than a single moment—it is a turning point. By coming together, they help make the impossible possible, giving children the chance to replace fear with confidence, sadness with joy, and anxiety with hope.

Make-A-Wish Mississippi proudly hosts three W.I.S.H. Society campaigns each year—in Jackson, Hattiesburg, and along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Through these campaigns, dozens of women unite across regions of our state with one purpose: to bring light, hope, and unforgettable joy into the lives of Mississippi wish kids and their families.



# W.I.S.H. Society Jackson



Bethany Stanfill  
Co-Chair



Manisha Patel  
Co-Chair



Natasha Avery



Allison Barrett



Angela Bass



Caroline Bobinger



Rachel Bolanos



Tiffany Boyte-West



Laurie Cutrer



Kashonda Day



Candace Gladden



Mallory Hemphill



Sara Marie Klaus



Rachel Lott



Karly McCoy



Hannah McGraw



LaToya Moore



Ja'Nee Powell



Jennifer Ravenstein



Morgan Schnur



Schneika Stokes



Kaitlyn Vassar



Rashida Walker



Maggie West



Amanda White



Shanda Yates



# W.I.S.H. Society Hattiesburg



Abbie Dungan  
Co-Chair



Ashley Castleman  
Co-Chair



Shelby Ladner  
Co-Chair



Anne Richardson



Beth McDaniel



Brittany Mallion



Dr. Lauren Barry



Breanne Gaubert



Hannah Franklin



Heather Moss



Holleman St. John



Jessica Magee



Jordan Van Cleave



Jordan Wood



Kate Howard



Katie Ebers



Lauren Brescher



Lauren Robertson



Laurie Douglas



Lindsay Glover



Mallory McMahon



Marina Little



Mary Lois Brady



Melissa Martin



Ashley Stauter



# W.I.S.H. Society Gulf Coast



Sherri Carr Smith  
Co-Chair



Vicki Estapa  
Co-Chair



Abbie Rea



Abby Raworth



Amanda Ray



Cari Dunning-Gorum



Eleanor Hartzog



Janet Schnurr



Jenna Swift



Jennifer Walker



Jordyn Rosetti O'Mara



Kameron Simpson



Kelly Lanier



Lauren Vankirk



Maggie Day



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Stormi Knippers



Tori Martinez





The story of Make-A-Wish began with the courage of 7-year-old Chris Greicius, a little boy battling leukemia whose greatest dream was to become a police officer. In 1980, compassionate members of his community came together to make that dream come true. Chris's wish not only left a lasting mark on those around him—it became the spark that ignited a movement. What began as one boy's dream has grown into the world's largest wish-granting organization, touching the lives of millions of children and families across the globe.

Each wish granted transforms fear into strength, sorrow into joy, and uncertainty into hope. These life-changing experiences uplift children, unite families, and inspire communities. Every April, Make-A-Wish honors Chris's legacy through World Wish Month, with April 29 recognized as World Wish Day, the anniversary of his unforgettable wish.

This year, Make-A-Wish Mississippi proudly celebrated the campaign with the support of Howard Technology Solutions, hosting a special evening at TopGolf in Ridgeland. Guests gathered in a private suite to enjoy refreshments, golf, and fellowship—all in honor of the mission. The highlight of the night came with a heartwarming surprise: a wish reveal for young Bentley, who learned his dream of setting sail on a Disney Cruise adventure was coming true.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and community partners, Chris's legacy continues to shine brighter than ever—reminding us that every wish begins with hope.





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# Chi Omega & Make-A-Wish *A Partnership of Hope*

Across the nation, Chi Omega chapters embrace a mission bigger than themselves—partnering with Make-A-Wish to grant life-changing wishes for children battling critical illnesses. Here in Mississippi, chapters at Mississippi State University, Millsaps College, and The University of Southern Mississippi raise more than \$80,000 each year, making an extraordinary impact for local wish kids.

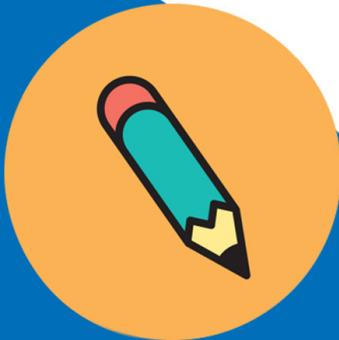
At the University of Southern Mississippi, the Epsilon Delta Chapter rallies campus through Wish Week and its much-loved SongFest dance competition. The evening always ends with the most powerful moment—a wish reveal for a local child. In spring, their playful “Wishes for Wishes” grilled cheese fundraiser keeps the campus engaged and giving.

The Chi Delta Chapter at Millsaps brings campus together through their high-energy Lip Sync Competition, where a wish kid serves as guest judge, and their lively spring “Chi-O Crawfish” boil, turning food and fun into hope for children.

At Mississippi State University, the chapter’s Limelight fundraiser raised an astounding \$52,237.80—enough to grant eight wishes. Disney-themed performances lit up the stage, all in honor of Lee, the Wish Child of Honor. His mom, Martha, a Chi Omega alumna, shared through tears: “I never dreamed I’d be here as a wish mom, seeing, firsthand, the impact of what you’re doing.”

From crawfish boils to dazzling performances, Chi Omega chapters across Mississippi are proving that when young women come together for a cause, extraordinary things happen. Their creativity, energy, and compassion bring joy to families and make wishes come true for children across the state.





## Kids Leading the Way to Wishes!

Kids for Wish Kids® isn't just a program—it's a movement where students, schools, and youth groups take charge and prove that kids really can change the world! By partnering with Make-A-Wish Mississippi, young people become the visionaries, the planners, and the doers behind creative fundraisers that bring life-changing wishes to children fighting critical illnesses.

From brainstorming bold ideas, to building action plans, to watching their visions come to life, these students don't just raise money—they raise hope. Along the way, they discover the power of leadership, teamwork, service, and volunteerism, proving that every single one of them has the ability to make an extraordinary impact.

And the results speak for themselves! In FY25 alone, 57 schools across Mississippi joined forces, raising an incredible \$115,000 to help grant wishes. That's 115,000 reasons to believe in the power of kids helping kids.

When kids lead with passion and creativity, communities rally, wishes come true, and lives are forever changed.





# *I wish to go to Cancun!*

**Kensleigh, 11**  
Sickle Cell

Our vision is to grant the wish  
of every eligible child in Mississippi.

Join us to make more wishes come true.

**[ms.wish.org](https://ms.wish.org)**

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