



★ YEARS OF WISHES ★



Make-A-Wish
MID-SOUTH
★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

Best Wishes
SPRING 2026

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wish.org/midsouth

As we celebrate 40 years of Make-A-Wish Mid-South, we're filled with gratitude for the extraordinary community that has made this milestone possible.

For four decades, generous donors, dedicated volunteers, compassionate medical professionals and committed staff have come together to create hope and healing for children with critical illnesses across West Tennessee, Arkansas, and North Mississippi.

Together, you have helped deliver more than 7,250 life-changing wishes – each one a powerful reminder that a single moment of joy can change the course of a family's journey and restore strength when it's needed most.

While we proudly reflect on all that has been accomplished, our eyes are firmly set on the future. The next generation of wish kids is already waiting, and their imaginations call us forward with renewed purpose and urgency.

As we step into our fifth decade of service, we remain committed to deepening community partnerships and ensuring every eligible child receives an equitable, meaningful wish experience.

Thank you for being part of our story and for helping write the hopeful chapters still to come

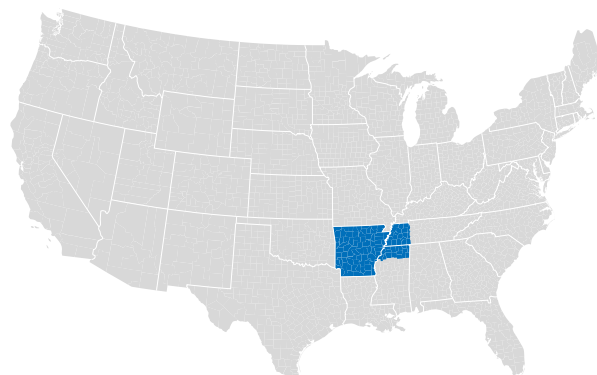
With gratitude,
Casey Tansey, President & CEO

Pictured above is Casey Tansey in 2003, with wish kid Landon and Scott Elliott (in his first volunteering role).



JOIN THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY MAGIC TODAY:

- ★ **For \$40 a month**, you can help deliver hope all year long! Your steady support ensures more families experience hope, strength, and unforgettable moments when they need them most.
- ★ **Help us secure 40 new volunteers to celebrate 40 years!** Step into a meaningful volunteer role as a Wish Granter. Help guide wish journeys, support families, and bring hope to local children. Your involvement makes every wish possible.
- ★ Learn more and join the 40th Anniversary fun at wish.org/midsouth/celebrating-40-years-wishes



Make-A-Wish[®]
MID-SOUTH

Serving Arkansas,
West Tennessee and
North Mississippi

wish.org/midsouth



• WISH KID TO WISHMAKER •

Shaped by a *Wish*

In the kitchen of Cakes by Mom and Me in West Memphis, Lori Laird is known for creating desserts that make celebrations feel memorable. Today she's a beloved baker and a mom, but her connection to Make-A-Wish Mid-South began decades ago, when she was a teenager in the 90's facing a critical illness.

"I was a nerd; I loved school," Lori shared. "Straights As, pageants on the weekends." Then life changed. Diagnosed with leukemia in 1992, Lori started chemo several times a week with spinal taps every other week. **"I missed every single Monday for two and a half years, but my school worked with me."**

In 1993, a social worker shared with Lori that she qualified for a wish. "I remember thinking, 'I can get a wish now?'" Raised to be a very practical child, Lori didn't want a flashy trip. "Everybody kept listing big wishes, but I wasn't used to that. I wanted something that would help me keep up and get to college: a computer."

Her wish was granted during the holiday campaign. "I was in the hospital—platelets, fever, the whole thing—and the nurses were acting so odd, feeding me cups of ice." Lori chuckled as she reminisced. "Then Ron Olson and Kelly from FM100 just waltz in. They had this red sequin dress. If my fever stayed down, I could go to my wish celebration."

Lori's fever settled, and the next day she was able to get dressed and get ready for the celebration. "It was nice because the nurses and staff were with me. They always hear about the wish, but sometimes don't get to see it."

Lori's wish to receive her computer did more than connect her to classmates. **"My wish helped me finish school, start college, and even led me back to Make-A-Wish as an intern. I went to school to be a fundraiser!"**

And the sweet twist? Lori's high school sweetheart, who escorted her during her wish celebration and by her side during treatment, is now her husband.

"It's been 30-plus years, and I still talk about it. Look what it does, not just for the wish recipient but for the whole family."

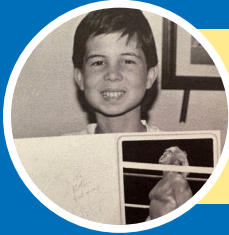
As Make-A-Wish Mid-South celebrates 40 years of wishes, Lori's story reminds us that a single wish can shape a lifetime.

Make-A-Wish[®]

MID-SOUTH

★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

This timeline honors the people and moments that have powered 40 years of wishes at Make-A-Wish Mid-South. From our earliest volunteers to today's community of supporters, these milestones tell the story of hope in action.



100th wish granted to Matthew who wished to meet wrestling legend, Hulk Hogan.

1986



1990



1992



1993



Make-A-Wish Foundation of Memphis becomes Make-A-Wish Mid-South, expanding into Arkansas and North Mississippi.

Fifteen-year-old wish kid Lacasey, from Mississippi, becomes the first and only civilian (at the time) to ever sit at the President's desk during her wish to visit the Oval Office.

1995 1996



1999



2001



2002



The Make-A-Wish Foundation of Memphis is founded by Jim Forbis, who becomes the first Board Chair. It's the first chapter in Tennessee and helped facilitate the creation of the two other Tennessee chapters.

Patricia Brown becomes CEO and Executive Director.

The Stories of Light radio campaign kicks off its first year with FM100's Ron Olson, Steve Conley and Karen Perrin. The campaign later became the holiday campaign.

The first John Daly Make-A-Wish Golf Classic is held.

Fulfill a Dream, a wish granting organization founded in 1981 in Fort Smith, AR, merges with Make-A-Wish Mid-South.

The average cost of a wish jumps to **\$5,000**. Today, the average cost is \$10,000.

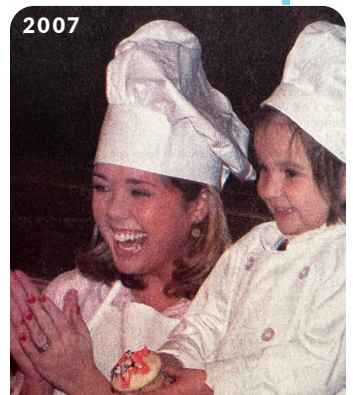
Tony's wish is the first wish granted. Tony wished to travel in a Winnebago to meet actress Tammy Faye Bakker. Volunteers had only one week to plan his wish!



Tayde's wish to meet the Pope is granted.



The first Have-A-Heart Radiothon in Northeast Arkansas hopes to raise \$3,500 – enough to grant a single wish. It raises \$22,500 the first year.



Women's collegiate fraternity Chi Omega chooses Make-A-Wish as their national philanthropy alliance. *Pictured is Ole Miss Chi Omega Maggie with four-year-old wish kid Anne.*



The inaugural Walk For Wishes® is held in Northwest Arkansas.

Make-A-Wish Mid-South receives the Mary Ann Dawkins endowment. To this day, it is the largest single gift in Make-A-Wish Mid-South history.

Make-A-Wish honored for the first time, and every year since, as the Most Trusted Nonprofit Operating Locally Across 50 States by Morning Consult.



The first KTCS Radiothon is held, benefiting Make-A-Wish Mid-South.



The first Dishes for Wishes is held at Felicia Suzanne's Restaurant.

2024 2025



2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2015

2016

2017

2019 2023



The first Shaun Micheel Golf Tournament is held.

The first Heart-Filled Radiothon is held in Central Arkansas.



5,000th wish granted!

Casey Tansey becomes Make-A-Wish Mid-South CEO after beginning as a Make-A-Wish intern in 2001. Pictured with wish kid John.

The first World Wish Month is established to celebrate the power of a wish, culminating on April 29th, the anniversary of the first wish ever granted.

2,000th wish granted!



Liz Nelson becomes the second CEO & Executive Director. Pictured with wish kid Victoria.



Sam's wish to have a baseball field is recognized with a national award.



6,000th wish granted to six-year-old Gabby, who wished to meet a unicorn.



7,000th wish granted to nine-year-old Emery, who wished to have an art shed.



The first Fishes for Wishes event is held.

3,000th wish granted!

The Power of a Wish

One Volunteer's Impact on Hope

• MEDICAL SPOTLIGHT •

For more than two decades, Beverly Esposito devoted her career to being a social worker, walking alongside children and families facing some of the most challenging diagnoses imaginable. During her years working with children, she witnessed firsthand how a spark of hope could transform even the heaviest of moments.

“Most of those kids are really ill,” Beverly shared. “But when I mentioned Make-A-Wish, the kids lit up. First it was curiosity, then wonder and shock.”

What moved Beverly the most was how a wish gives children something that’s uniquely theirs. “It wasn’t something mom or dad or doctors could decide. They could have their own voice heard,” she said. That sense of validation mattered deeply. “Their childhood has gone by the wayside. When they’re in active treatment, that’s all the focus. A wish lets them be a kid again.”

After decades of referring children for wishes at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, transitioning into a volunteer role as a Wish Granter felt like the most natural next step. “I was so excited to be on the other side of that,” Beverly said. “It’s immeasurably valuable to be physically present. The minute I made my first call, I felt like I was on a team. It was so nice to see all that work come to fruition on the other side.”

Beverly’s years of experience have shown her what medicine alone can’t always give. “A wish is a rush of endorphins. Everyone gets a rush of excitement and joy like ‘Man, that felt good!’ It’s an affirmation. It reassures kids that hope is real. A wish fills up their tank again.”

For Beverly, the privilege of witnessing families’ relief and wonder never gets old. “It’s spiritual and emotionally uplifting. It makes you humble. Witnessing that joy is a gift for sure.”



If you know a child who is battling a critical illness and could benefit from a life-changing wish, refer them today. Scan the QR code or visit wish.org/refer.



Four Decades of Heart *Glee and Dick's Legacy of Compassion*

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

As Make-A-Wish Mid-South celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, it's impossible to tell the story of this chapter without celebrating two people who have been here since the very beginning: Glee and her husband, Dick.

Their journey with Make-A-Wish Mid-South began before the chapter officially opened its doors in 1986, rooted in a shared belief that bringing joy to a child facing a critical illness is one of the most meaningful gifts a person can give.

For Glee, the spark ignited when she saw the impact of a wish granted, firsthand. "I loved seeing the smiles on wish kids' faces," she said, "Helping them forget what they're going through, even for a moment, means everything."

Dick's path began even earlier, volunteering on the board of a similar organization in the early '80s before it merged with Make-A-Wish Mid-South.

Over time, he has witnessed the profound ripple effect of a single wish. One child they supported at 16 is now a mom of twins. Another child's outlook, even their medical outcome, shifted after receiving a wish.

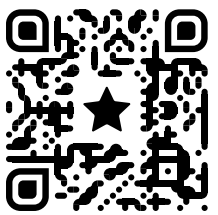
"You see the results and the fruits of your labor," he said, "that means something."

The memories that stay with them range from tender to surprising to humorous. Glee recalls a young girl who beat the odds and later sent a picture of her ringing the bell, signifying one chapter with her critical illness was finally over. Dick laughs, remembering a wish kid with a pet skunk, one of many moments of unexpected joy.

Four decades later, the experience of being a Wish Granter continues to shape their gratitude and perspective. "We're blessed," Glee simply said. Dick added, "Whatever little time you give helps somebody."

Their message to anyone considering volunteering? Go at it with an open heart. The joy you create lasts far beyond the wish itself.

Give your time. Become a Wish Granter with Make-A-Wish Mid-South, and change a life, including your own.



Scan the QR code or visit [wish.org/midsouth/volunteer](https://www.wish.org/midsouth/volunteer) to learn more and begin your journey in bringing life-changing wishes to kids in our community.





I wish to have a shopping spree
Stacie
wish granted, 1997

Wish

• ACROSS THE

Ink Gives BACK

Special thanks to Ink! for donating wish family tee shirts.



I wish to have a horse trailer
Drew
wish granted, 2009



I wish to go to Italy
Whitten, 17
blood disorder



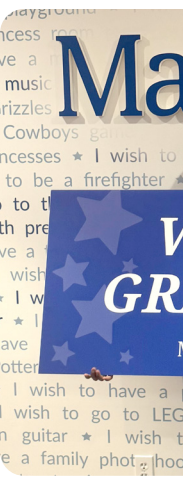
I wish to go to the Walt Disney World® Resort
Za'mya, 10
blood disorder



I wish to go to Destin, Florida
Remy, 8
cancer



I wish to meet Alan Jackson
Tiffany
wish granted, 2003



I wish to go to the Walt Disney World® Resort and LEGOLAND®
Salvador, 9
kidney disease



I wish to meet my favorite princesses
Addison, 5
congenital heart disease



I wish to have a shopping spree
Deborah
wish granted, 1993

I wish to go to Disney's Animal Kingdom® Park
Mackenzie, 7
congenital heart disease

KIDS

E DECADES •



I wish to have a shopping spree
Emmalyn, 10
 liver transplant



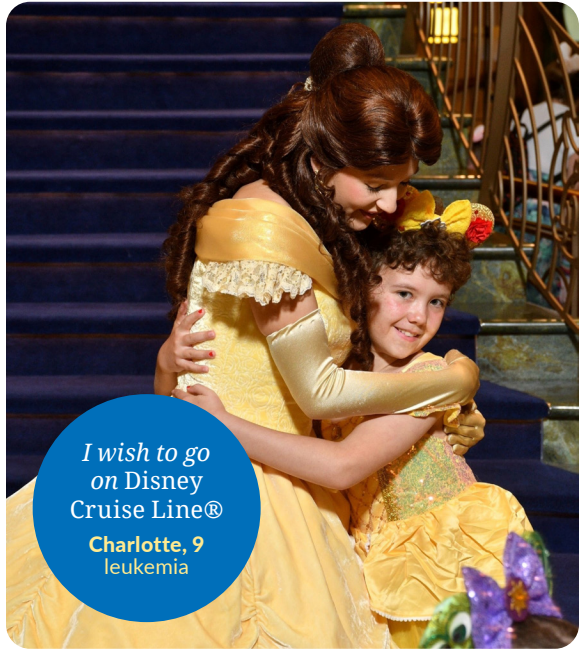
I wish to meet Leonardo DiCaprio
 wish granted, 2019



I wish to go to Hawaii
Arthur, 6
 brain tumor



I wish to have braces
Nyla, 15
 blood disorder



I wish to go on Disney Cruise Line®
Charlotte, 9
 leukemia



I wish to meet my favorite YouTubers
Emma, 16
 cancer



I wish to meet Blippi and Meekah
Florence, 5
 leukemia



I wish to go to the Walt Disney World® Resort
Lailaa, 14
 cancer

Wine for Wishes



The Make-A-Wish Mid-South Associate Board did it again – this year's Wine for Wishes was a ball! Started in 2011 by community young professionals, Wine for Wishes often sells out, packed with people ready to party for wishes! Every sip and bid helped fund another life-changing wish.

A huge thanks to the Associate Board and all the WishMakers who partied with us, and have for years, at Wine for Wishes!



WAITERS for WISHES

serving dishes | granting wishes



In its third year, Waiters for Wishes 2025 celebrated NWA wishes alongside Hogs Basketball!

Wish alum Madeline and her family wowed the crowd with her wish to go to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™ and the impact it had on their whole family.

Thanks to our celebrity waiters and supporters, together, we are serving up more life-changing wishes for kids in NWA! Go Hogs!



Evening of Wishes



Our legacy event, Evening of Wishes, was the highlight of the season in Central Arkansas and The Venue at Westwind was packed with WishMakers dressed to impress. Together, we celebrated a dazzling night complete with a diamond pull, incredible food, live auction and a moving and powerful wish story from Abigail and her family.



Make-A-Wish
MID-SOUTH
★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

CALENDAR of EVENTS

**KTCS
Wish-A-Thon**
April 10, 2026
Fort Smith, AR

Walk For Wishes
April 18, 2026
Springdale, AR

Dishes for Wishes
April 26, 2026
Memphis, TN

Volunteer Training
May 4, 2026
Virtual

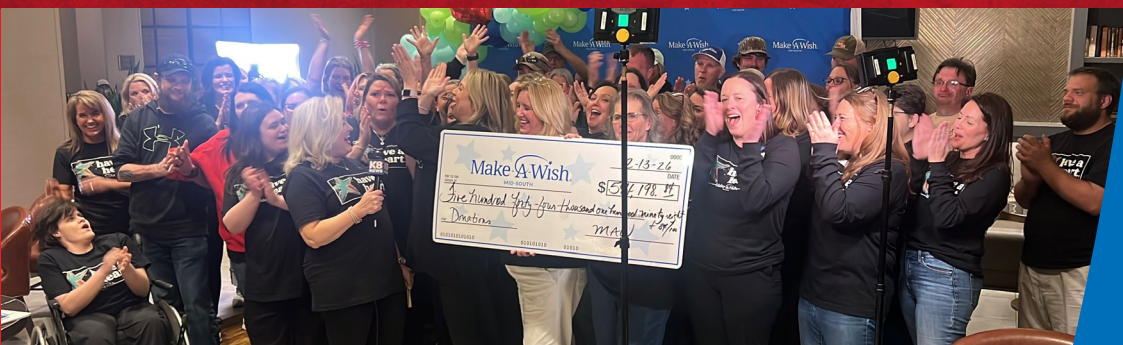
**Mid-South
Golf Classic**
June 15, 2026
Collierville, TN

Evening of Wishes
Fall 2026
Little Rock, AR

Have A- Heart Wish-A-Thon



This year's Have-A-Heart Wish-A-Thon proved once again that Northeast Arkansas has the biggest heart for wish kids – raising an astounding \$544,198 in a single day! Born from an idea in 1999 from Christie Matthews, the 28th Annual Have-A-Heart Wish-A-Thon continued in roots of generosity, deep community support and uplifting and highlighting wish kids and alum from across the decades. Every dollar raised means more wishes coming to life for kids fighting critical illnesses.



For more details about these events and more, visit wish.org/midsouth.

Make-A-Wish®

MID-SOUTH

★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

Memphis

5100 Poplar Ave.
Suite 300
Memphis, TN 38137

Central Arkansas

320 Executive Court
Suite 101
Little Rock, AR 72205

Northwest Arkansas

One West Mountain
Suite 108
Fayetteville, AR 72701

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Make-A-Wish®

MID-SOUTH

★ CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF WISHES ★

wishmakers wanted

TERRI
Volunteer

ALLIE
Youth
Fundraiser

SOPHYII
11, autoimmune disorder
I wish to be
a nurse

BJ
Donor

DR. JESSICA
Medical
Partner



YOU are essential.
Stethoscopes optional.

As long as children face devastating critical illnesses, they'll be counting on WishMakers like you to create the hope and strength they need to fight.

Become a WishMaker® at wishmaker.org

Make-A-Wish®

