Make-A-Wish®
NEBRASKA

Year-in-Review

A LOOK BACK AT THE WISHES FROM OUR LAST FISCAL YEAR
SEPT. 1, 2025 TO AUG. 31, 2026



I wish to go to Hawaii
Harley, 5 | Cozad
cancer

wish.org/nebraska

Make-A-Wish®
NEBRASKA

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



Brigette Young, President/CEO
Make-A-Wish Nebraska, with
wish kids Caleb and Ben

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the past year, my heart is filled with gratitude. Because of the generosity of caring individuals like YOU, Make-A-Wish Nebraska granted ***128 wishes*** for local children with critical illnesses this past fiscal year. Each wish was a powerful reminder that hope can shine even in life's most difficult moments.

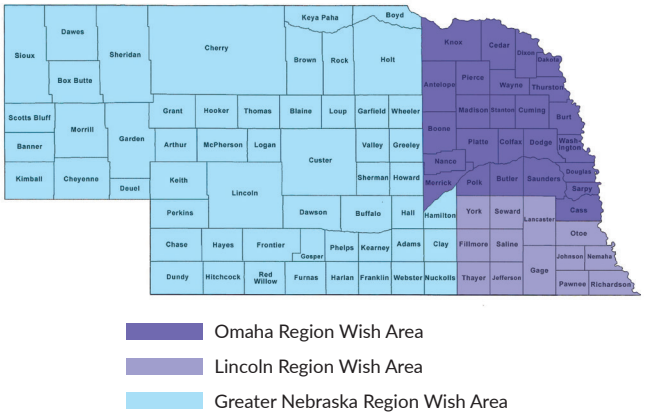
Behind every wish is a child facing extraordinary challenges and a family searching for moments of light during an uncertain journey. Whether it was a wish to travel, meet a hero, enjoy a shopping spree, or experience something they had dreamed about for years, these wishes created lasting memories and gave families something joyful to focus on beyond hospital visits and treatments. Your support made those moments possible. Thank you for standing beside these children and helping them experience the life-changing power of a wish come true.

While we celebrate this incredible milestone together, we also know that our work is far from over. There are still over 160 children across Nebraska waiting for the hope and renewed strength that a wish can provide. As we look ahead, I am inspired by what we can accomplish together. With your continued partnership, we can reach every eligible child and ensure they don't spend one unnecessary day waiting to experience the transformative impact of a wish.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for helping us create hope, strength and joy one wish at a time.

Brigette Young
President/CEO

Statewide Impact



Since 1983, more than **3,500 wishes** have been granted in Nebraska.

100% Local – Our mission is delivered across the entire state of Nebraska.

The average cost of a wish is **$10,000.**

Every August 31st we reflect back on another incredible fiscal year of granting wishes. With the help and generosity of individuals and companies from across the state, we were able to grant **128 unforgettable wishes** to children in Nebraska with critical illnesses this fiscal year.

Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Board Chair: Ryan Peterson, Truck Center Companies
Vice Chair: Chris Richardson, R&R Realty
Treasurer: Gonzalo Ledesma, First Interstate Bank
Secretary: Jon Blumenthal, McGrath North
Past Chair: Kayla Hansen, Medical Solutions

Medical Advisor

Dr. Jenna Allison, Children's Nebraska

Members

Mike Abramson, Frankel, retired
Vickie Ahlers, Baird Holm, LLP
Dawn Becker, Jacobsen, Orr, Lindstrom & Holbrook (Kearney)
Kyle Canning, Scoular
Kathy English, Children's Nebraska
Rahul Jalali, Union Pacific Railroad
Lisa Jansen, Nebraska Hematology-Oncology (Lincoln)
Bryce Juedes, Landscapes Unlimited (Lincoln)
Nico Marasco, Berkshire Hathaway Home Services
Michelle Murdock, Life Specialist at Justin Thompson Agency - American Family (North Platte)
Stacy Neil, Omaha Friends Council Liaison
Justin Riviera, Cushman & Wakefield/The Lund Company
Luke Tieso, Gallagher
Sarah Wischhof, Union Bank & Trust (Lincoln)
Megan Woita, Woita Homes, Inc./Realtor SimliCity Real Estate (Lincoln)
Brigette Young, Make-A-Wish Nebraska

Staff

HEADQUARTERS

1005 South 107th Avenue, Suite 102
Omaha, NE 68114
Phone (402) 333-8999

Brigette Young
President/CEO

Linda Hogrefe
Vice President/CDO

Jennifer Shuman
Program Services Director

Emily Marston
Director of Marketing & Communications

Courtney Nelson
Director of Community Outreach

Madeleine Berner
Wish Granting Coordinator

Erin Cassano
Office & Database Manager

Alisa James
Office Assistant

Romy Reicks
Bookkeeper

Karen Lewis
Program & Office Assistant

Renee Osborn
Office Assistant

LINCOLN OFFICE

8033 South 15th Street, Suite B
Lincoln, NE 68512
Phone (402) 475-9474

Melissa Davis-Schmit
Vice President, Lincoln Region

Mindy Lubeck
Wish & Development Manager, Lincoln Region

KEARNEY OFFICE

412 East 25th Street, Suite D
Kearney, NE 68847
Phone (308) 234-6612

Chloe Wells
Development Director, Greater Nebraska Region

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of our wish kids who have passed away since our last publication

Braedan, 24
progressive lung disease
I wish to go to Clearwater, FL
(Wish Year 2016)

Everett, 9
leukemia
I wish to go to Universal Studios® and Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2025)

Genesis, 19
rare autoimmune disease
I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2017)

Keyton, 16
gastrointestinal disorder
I wish to go to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™
(Wish Year 2026)

Liam, 13
brain tumor
I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2024)

Penny, 14
nervous system disorder
I wish to go to Universal Studios® and Walt Disney World®
(Wish Year 2022)

Listed are wish kids we have been made aware of, we apologize for any unintentional omissions.

Ben and Jagger's Wish



I wish to be a Husker Football Player
Jagger, 14 and Ben, 18 | Omaha
neuromuscular disorder; brain tumor

Life can change in an instant.

For some families, it begins with a symptom that seems small—a headache, a lingering pain, a feeling that something just isn't right. Then comes the doctor's appointment, the tests, and eventually the words no parent is ever prepared to hear.

For Ben's family, it happened during what was supposed to be a fun-filled trip to Walt Disney World®. Ben had been complaining of headaches and then started saying his face felt numb. At first, his parents weren't overly concerned. Maybe he was tired. Maybe he was growing. But when they returned home and visited Children's Nebraska, everything changed.

After hours of testing in the emergency room, a doctor pulled Ben's mom aside and delivered the devastating news: Ben had a brain tumor.

For Jagger's family, the news came differently but carried the same weight. At age 2, genetic testing revealed that their young son had Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a progressive disease that would forever alter the future they had imagined for him.

"It's hard when you have this healthy baby boy that you think is going to play sports and have this great life," his mom, Sarah, shared. "And then you realize that all changed that day."

From that point forward, both families faced a reality filled with uncertainty. Hospital stays. Treatments. Procedures. Long nights spent worrying about what tomorrow might bring.

Yet through it all, it was the children who often became the source of strength.

When Ben met with Make-A-Wish, he didn't need time to think about his wish.

"I want to be a Nebraska Cornhusker."

Jagger's answer was just as immediate.

"I want to be a Husker for a day."

For two boys facing challenges far bigger than any child should have to face, Nebraska football wasn't just a team. It was something to look forward to. Something exciting. Something normal. Something hopeful.

Thanks to Make-A-Wish Nebraska and the incredible support of Husker Athletics, those dreams became reality.

The boys received behind-the-scenes access that most fans only dream about. They toured facilities, met coaches and players, walked through the stadium tunnels, stood on the field, and experienced game day as honorary members of the program.



But the wish wasn't just about football. It was about creating memories that had nothing to do with illness.

One of Jagger's mom's favorite memories is a simple one. Their hotel room overlooked Memorial Stadium, glowing against the Nebraska night sky. She remembers watching her son stand at the window, staring out at the stadium that represented everything he loved.

"It was like all his dreams were coming true," she recalled.

For Ben's family, the most meaningful moments came from seeing him welcomed with open arms. He introduced himself to the team, shared his story, and was treated not as a patient, but as a teammate.

His sister, Ella, remembers watching the joy on Ben's face and knowing just how much it meant.

"To see him get to spend time with the people he looks up to most—he was just so excited."

For Ben and Jagger, and other wish kids like them, a wish is not simply a trip, an experience, or a special day. It's the reminder that even in life's hardest moments, there is still hope and joy to be found.

Ben summed it up best:

"My wish showed me that there's good stuff in life. My wish gave me hope again."

For Ben, Jagger, and every child waiting for their wish, that hope is life-changing. A wish doesn't take away a diagnosis, it gives children and families a chance to breathe, to dream, and to make memories that shine brighter than the darkest days they've faced. Moments of hope that can last a lifetime.





NOVEMBER 2025

Kinsley's Wish



I wish to go to Walt Disney World®

Kinsley, 8 | Ponca
leukemia

When Kinsley was just five and a half years old, she was diagnosed with High-Risk B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. This devastating news impacted her and her family's lives in tremendous ways. For them, it became more than a diagnosis, as countless days and nights at the hospital became part of their daily routines.

In nearly two and a half years, Kinsley endured more than most people will face in their entire lifetime. She required 27 blood transfusions, battled pancreatitis twice, and spent a week in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, including two days on a ventilator and dialysis after a chemotherapy medication caused a blockage in her liver. She lost her hair twice, spent Christmas, New Year's, and her sixth birthday in the hospital, and made countless trips to the emergency room. Yet, even in the face of unimaginable hardship, Kinsley and her family met each obstacle with remarkable strength and resilience.

At such a young age, Kinsley has a deep desire to help others and has an incredible amount of empathy. She loves to run, has a playful personality, and has a lot of fight in her, which helped her immensely through difficult times. She is described by her family as a spitfire, with tons of energy and passion for life.



Just three weeks before Kinsley's diagnosis, she had the opportunity to go to Walt Disney World® with her family and completely fell in love with the joy and magic it brought her. When she was referred to Make-A-Wish, she knew exactly what she wanted: to go back to Walt Disney World® with her family. The opportunity to make unforgettable memories with her family again and embrace being a kid during the challenges of her health journey meant the world to Kinsley and her family.

"After 2 years of isolation and missing out on so many things, it was wonderful to be together, just the 4 of us making memories again," said Kinsley's mom, Samantha.

Today, Kinsley's story has thankfully turned a remarkable corner. On February 18, 2026, she proudly rang the Bell at Sanford Children's, marking the end of treatment after more than two and a half years of hospitalizations, procedures, and challenges. In May, another milestone followed when her port was officially removed, a moment that symbolized just how far she had come.

These days, Kinsley has traded hospital rooms for classrooms and is living life to the fullest as a second grader. She is thriving, making memories with family and friends, and enjoying the everyday moments that once felt out of reach. Make-A-Wish is honored to have played even a small role in Kinsley's journey, celebrating alongside her family as they continue moving forward with hope, strength and joy.

"Make-A-Wish helps kids get to take a trip and feel normal for a short bit, or maybe do something for their home to help make them feel like a kid. It's something we will cherish and be grateful for forever," said Samantha.

Today, instead of focusing on the hard journey she endured, Kinsley gets to look ahead and focus on the adventures that still await her.



DECEMBER 2025

Grant's Wish



I wish to go to Universal Orlando Resort's Epic Universe
Grant, 6 | Ashland
leukemia

When six-year-old Grant began experiencing unexplained arm pain, his family never imagined it would lead to a life-changing diagnosis. After four months of searching for answers, Grant was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in September 2024.

Like many families facing a critical illness, Grant's family found themselves navigating a world suddenly filled with hospital visits, treatments, and uncertainty.

Despite the challenges, they worked hard to keep life as normal as possible. Grant missed most of his preschool year while undergoing treatment, but through it all, he continued to face each day with remarkable resilience and optimism.

Those who know Grant describe him as a social butterfly who truly knows no stranger. He loves spending time with family and friends and can often be found shooting hoops, building with LEGO bricks, riding his bike, or bouncing on the trampoline. His outgoing personality and joyful spirit have helped carry his family through some of their hardest days.

When the time came to choose a wish, Grant carefully considered all of his options before making a decision that perfectly reflected what matters most to him: family. He wished for a trip to Universal Orlando Resort's Epic Universe, giving his entire family the chance to step away from treatments and simply be together.

That wish became an experience they will never forget.

There was a limousine ride, hotel decorations, a chance to meet the pilot before boarding their flight, and front-row seats at shows throughout the trip.

Every detail made Grant and his family feel celebrated and cared for.

"It meant so much to all of us to have a break from treatment and just enjoy time together," Grant's parents, Ethan and Kaitlin shared.

For a family whose days had been centered around appointments and medical care, the trip provided something priceless: the opportunity to create joyful memories. Instead of focusing on treatments, they spent their time laughing together, exploring new adventures, and soaking in every moment.





Harley's Wish



I wish to go to Hawaii
Harley, 5 | Cozad
cancer

WRITTEN BY
HARLEY'S MOM, NELEIGH

Harley is such a sweet, joyful and adventurous little (almost) 6-year-old. She has the biggest heart and a personality that can light up any room. She loves spending time with her family and friends, especially her little sister, and she is happiest when she is at big family events with all her cousins.

She loves learning, exploring, being outside and using her imagination. She has a curious heart like her dad and is always asking questions and wanting to know how things work. More than anything, Harley is happiest when she is simply being a kid.

Harley was diagnosed with Wilms tumor, a form of kidney cancer, on May 1, 2024. At the time, I was 20 weeks pregnant with our second daughter. Harley went through surgery to remove the tumor along with the kidney it was attached to, and a port was inserted for treatment. She went through one week of radiation and 10 months of treatment all while our family was preparing to welcome a new baby. Four months into her treatment, we welcomed her baby sister, Lennie, which made an already overwhelming season feel even more bittersweet.

Harley's diagnosis changed our family in ways we never could have imagined. It was a season filled with fear, uncertainty and many moments we wish we could forget but it also showed us just how strong Harley is and how much love surrounds our family. We learned to slow down, cherish the little things, celebrate every good day and never take ordinary moments for granted.

We had heard about Make-A-Wish before Harley's diagnosis, but we never imagined that our family would one day be on the receiving end of a wish. We learned that Harley was eligible for a wish from a wonderful support person who worked with us during her radiation appointments.

At first, we were a little taken aback. We remember thinking, "Harley shouldn't qualify for this. There are children who have it so much worse." But we quickly learned that Make-A-Wish isn't about comparing one child's journey to another, it's about giving children and their families something joyful to look forward to during an incredibly difficult time.

What started with a little hesitation became such a beautiful blessing for our family. Make-A-Wish gave us something to celebrate together and created memories that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives. We are so incredibly grateful that someone encouraged us to say yes.

Harley chose Hawaii for her wish because, in her words, she wanted to "swim with the dolphins, see sea turtles and be where Moana lives!" She has always loved animals and being in the water. Hawaii sounded like the most magical place she could imagine. It was also Harley's first time seeing the ocean!

After everything Harley had been through, it was so special to watch her get excited about something purely because it sounded fun and adventurous. Hawaii became more than just a destination; it was something for her to dream about and look forward to and we loved watching her imagination run wild as she planned her perfect trip.

There are honestly so many memories from Harley's wish that our family will never forget. One of the most special memories was watching her in the ocean for the very first time. After everything she had been through, seeing her out there in the water, completely carefree and happy, was something we will always treasure. And, of course, swimming with the dolphins was one of Harley's absolute favorites!

We got to watch her experience so many things she dreamed about, and for those days, there were no appointments, no treatments, and no cancer. Just Harley being a happy, carefree kid.

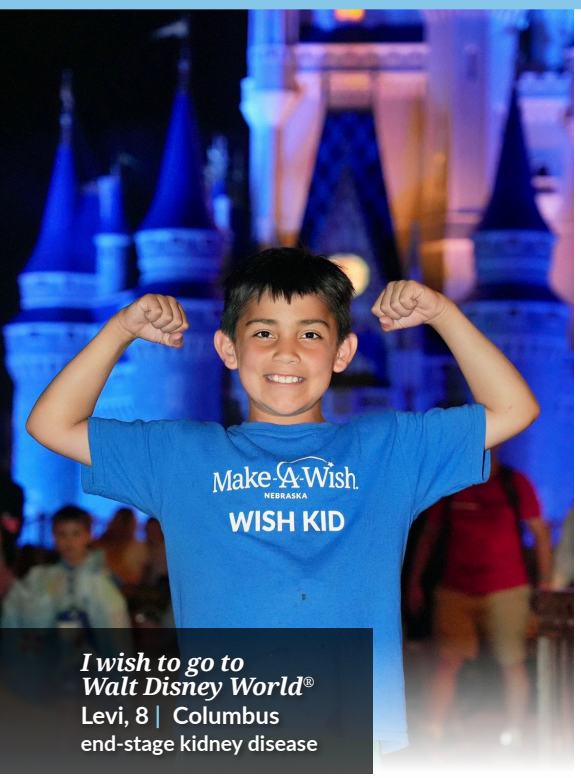
Seeing her face light up as she experienced Hawaii for the first time is something we will never forget. As her parents, getting to watch that after everything she had been through meant more to us than we could ever put into words.

For our family, Make-A-Wish gave us the opportunity to put cancer on the sidelines and simply enjoy planning and dreaming about this trip as a family. You may never fully know the impact your generosity has on a family, but we can tell you firsthand, it matters. It brings joy into some of the hardest seasons a family will ever walk through. We will forever be grateful to everyone who helped make Harley's wish come true.





Levi's Wish



I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Levi, 8 | Columbus
end-stage kidney disease

WRITTEN BY
LEVI'S MOM, SAMI

Our son Levi was born with a WT1 gene mutation that led to nephrotic syndrome and chronic kidney disease. His kidneys didn't have a normal filtration system and every time he urinated, he would lose protein. These proteins control things such as his blood pressure, thyroid levels, and cholesterol. Levi came into my life in May 2018 when he was less than a year old and needed to start albumin infusions 3 times per week and I was his nurse.



Unfortunately, Levi's parents were unable to care for him, and he was placed in foster care. We became his foster parents in October 2018 and officially adopted Levi and his brother, Mason, in August 2020.

Until summer of 2024, Levi's condition had been relatively stable with routine appointments and labs needed every 3 months. In May of 2024, Levi's labs started to take a turn for the worse, indicating his kidney function was worsening. In August, our world turned upside down when Levi had been approved for a transplant evaluation at UNMC. During that appointment, we met with his doctor who quickly realized Levi was a lot sicker than initially thought and within 48 hours, Levi was in surgery having a hemodialysis line placed with dialysis starting that afternoon. This meant driving to Omaha 3 times a week for 4 hours, integrating numerous med changes, diet changes, and fluid restrictions into our lives. Levi was able to start peritoneal dialysis in the first part of November, and our house, along with his room, became a hospital as he was hooked up to a machine for 10 hours a night.

We got the call in February 2025 that an organ match had been found, and Levi had his transplant that same month.

Today, I can say Levi is a "normal medical" 8-year-old boy. Yes, he still takes numerous medications and has frequent doctors' appointments, but we have a somewhat normal life including ball games, swimming, and BBQs with friends.

The biggest impact was on our family. Our other 3 children became accustomed to having only one parent at home or having a family friend stepping in for rides, meals, or taking pictures at their activities.

During all this craziness, a social worker mentioned Levi had been referred to Make-A-Wish. Our wish granters visited us, and Levi made the decision to go to Walt Disney World®.

As we got closer to the travel date, it gave our whole family something to look forward to. This trip gave us a sense of normal – something we hadn't felt in a long time. In all reality, the wish is not only for the child, it was for the whole family. We were able to go to Florida for 5 full days and not have a worry in the world. We stayed at Give Kids the World Village®, which is a magical resort for children with medical needs and their families. All our meals were provided for us and they were amazing. There was endless ice cream from 7 am – 9 pm, swimming, games, activities, and fresh cookies brought to our room. We went to Walt Disney World® for 3 days, Sea World® and Universal Studios®. This experience gave my kids part of their childhood back. We met Disney characters and princesses and even my teenage girls became giddy. We were able to go to the front of the lines on amazing rides that transported us to different worlds. We ate snacks, watched parades and were exhausted at the end of each day.

A Make-A-Wish experience gives families the ability to be normal with no doctors, labs, needles or bright hospital lights. These children are warriors. They can tell you their medication, medical history, and which vein to use for lab draws all while having the ability to dream about being a princess or superheroes for just a while.



MAY 2026

JurNee's Wish

At just 12-years-old, JurNee was diagnosed with myxopapillary ependymoma, a rare spinal cord tumor. JurNee's 9.3 cm long tumor was found and removed, but this was unfortunately not the end of her journey. Two years later, at age 14, she developed a chronic neurological disorder.

JurNee had to undergo yet another surgery and six weeks of full brain and spine proton radiation at Mayo Clinic, as the tumor had returned and spread to her thoracic spine. It has been an incredibly hard journey for her and her family with countless hospital stays, surgeries, appointments, radiation, chronic pain, and uncertainty, but despite everything, JurNee has shown only determination and optimism.

For a while, JurNee and her family's lives were defined by appointments, radiation treatments, surgeries, and the daily challenges that come with a critical illness. Then, a referral to Make-A-Wish from the Mayo Clinic brought a welcome change in focus. For the first time in a long while, JurNee had something exciting to look forward to. Rather than concentrating only on what she had been through and the medical journey still ahead, she was given the chance to dream, plan, and celebrate what made her happiest. Through Make-A-Wish, JurNee was able to focus on joy, possibility, and the future she envisioned for herself.

JurNee has a deep love for being outdoors and creating new memories with her family. She is passionate about exploring ancient places, making discoveries, and looking at the world beyond just what she knows.

She dreams of one day traveling the world as an archaeologist, sparking the perfect idea for what she wanted her wish to be: a camper to travel in with her family.

Throughout her wish experience, JurNee was given the chance to step away from the realities of her medical journey. Free from the constant focus on appointments and treatments, JurNee was able to simply be a kid again, creating moments that her family will cherish for years to come.

"It wasn't just about having something fun. It represented adventure, independence, exploration, and all the places she still wants to go. After everything she has been through, I think that is one of the most beautiful parts of her wish. She isn't letting her illness define the rest of her story," said JurNee's mom, Jes.

Some of JurNee's happiest moments are found in life's simple joys, the moments when she can laugh, dream, and simply be herself without her illness taking center stage. Her remarkable ability to find joy in the midst of challenges is inspiring, and she refuses to let her diagnosis define who she is or what she can achieve. As a big dreamer with an even bigger heart, JurNee reminds us of the importance of embracing the little things, looking toward the future with hope, and finding reasons to celebrate joy, even when the road ahead is difficult.

"When your child is sick, there are so many things you can't control. Make-A-Wish gives them something they can dream about, look forward to and choose for themselves," said Jes. "And when you see the joy it brings to a child who has already been through so much, you understand that the impact goes far beyond the wish itself."



I wish to have a camper
JurNee, 15 | Dakota City
brain tumor





Elena's Wish



I wish to have a "favorites day"
Elena, 4 | Lincoln
kidney disease

Elena's parents were made aware of her kidney problems before she was even born.

During pregnancy, ultrasounds revealed obstructions in Elena's kidneys. What no one knew then was just how much of her young life would be shaped by hospitals, procedures, and uncertainty. As the years passed, Elena endured countless doctor visits, tests, blood draws, hospital stays, tube feedings, and medications. Her kidney function gradually declined, and eventually her medical team determined that a kidney transplant would be necessary. On May 8th, Elena received the life-changing gift of a kidney transplant.

For Elena's parents, the diagnosis was hard to come to terms with. It meant learning to navigate a future they never expected, while balancing the needs of Elena's two older brothers, who often sacrificed their own time and activities as the family focused on Elena's care. Yet through it all, Elena never let her illness define her.

"She is quite literally a ray of sunshine," her mom, Kate shared. "Her name actually means 'shining light,' and she has grown into just that."

At just four years old, Elena is everything you would expect a little girl to be. She loves pink, princesses, and spending time with her family. As the youngest sibling, she is fearless when standing up to her brothers, but they are also the ones who make her laugh the hardest. Her parents describe her as resilient, sweet, and full of life. Despite everything she has faced, Elena continues to play hard, laugh hard, and love hard.

While the life-changing surgery she received marked a major milestone, recovery brought its own challenges and emotions. Elena's life has switched from preventing kidney failure to maintaining her new kidney. However, her family found hope in knowing that something special was waiting on the other side. Months before her surgery, Elena had been referred to Make-A-Wish. When it was time to choose her wish, she knew only a few things for sure: it had to involve pink, princesses, and her family.

With help from her wish granters, Angela and Cari, Elena's dream became a one-of-a-kind "Favorites Day" filled with pink, princess and all her favorite things.

Every detail was designed with Elena in mind. There was a limousine ride, princesses, games, swimming, special souvenirs, and of course, cake. That day, the medical appointments and hospital memories faded into the background as Elena simply got to be a little girl surrounded by the people and the things she loves most.

"The timing of Elena's wish could not have been more perfect," Kate said. "To go from watching Elena endure a very serious and complicated surgery to having the time of her life just a short time later was the biggest gift. Also, having the wish already planned before the surgery really gave us something to look forward to during the harder moments of her recovery. It was extremely fortifying and encouraging after a very scary time."

Today, Elena's journey continues. She will require frequent monitoring and lifelong medication to protect her new kidney. But thanks to her transplant, she now has the opportunity to focus less on preventing kidney failure and more on just enjoying childhood.

And when her family looks back on this chapter, they won't remember just the fear or the uncertainty. They'll remember a little girl in pink, surrounded by princesses, laughing with her brothers, and shining as brightly as her name promised she would. They'll remember a day when joy took center stage. And they'll remember how a wish helped bring their family comfort during the time when it was needed most.







Freyja's Wish





I wish to have a Bubble Bonanza Pool Party
Freyja, 3 | Omaha
respiratory disorder

From the very beginning, Freyja's story has been one of resilience. Born unexpectedly at just 22 weeks, Freyja arrived into the world under extraordinary circumstances. What followed were challenges only a few families could imagine. Because of her prematurity, she developed a severely narrowed airway, and she continues to navigate life with a nervous system disorder and a respiratory disorder. Yet despite every obstacle placed in her path, Freyja's family says she faces each day with remarkable determination.

Today, it's often the simplest moments that make Freyja happiest. She loves playing with bubbles, loves being in the water, despite having a trach, and treasures time with her favorite person: her grandmother.

Freyja and her family learned about Make-A-Wish through a social worker at Children's Nebraska. When it came time to choose a wish, the answer was easy. Freyja's love for bubbles and water inspired a "Bubble Bonanza Pool Party." The timing couldn't have been more perfect as the celebration coincided with her third birthday, creating an unforgettable day filled with family and fun.

For Freyja's mom, one of the most meaningful moments was seeing just how many people came together to celebrate Freyja. Nurses who had helped care for her, cousins and other family members who adore her, all showed up to make her day extra special.

After everything Freyja has endured, the party represented so much more than a birthday celebration. It was a chance to pause, make memories, and focus on joy. Most importantly, it was an opportunity for everyone who loves Freyja to celebrate the incredible little girl she is.

"I birthed a little miracle," her mother, Zuri, said. "Seeing her persevere and take on every challenge with such a strong-willed tenacity for life inspires me every day. I don't think I can ever truly express how grateful I am to be her mother."

Stories like Freyja's are only possible because of generous supporters who help create moments of hope for wish kids and their families. Her mother's message to anyone considering supporting Make-A-Wish is simple:

"Do it. You never know what kind of people you'll meet or stories you're going to hear that could inspire you."

For one unforgettable day, the medical equipment, appointments, and treatments that have shaped so much of Freyja's young life, faded into the background. Instead, there were bubbles drifting through the air, splashes in the pool, and the laughter of a little girl surrounded by people who love her. Freyja's wish was a celebration of a fighter, a miracle, and the joy that can be found even after life's most difficult moments.







MEDICAL REFERRAL SPOTLIGHT: SHELBY

For families navigating complex medical diagnoses, having someone in their corner can make all the difference. As a social worker in the Neurology and Neurosurgery Clinics at Children's Nebraska, Shelby spends her days doing exactly that, helping families access resources, overcome barriers, and find support during some of life's most challenging moments.

"Most of my job involves advocating for patients and families and reducing barriers to care," Shelby shared. "I also walk alongside families experiencing difficult diagnoses to ensure they know the right support systems they may need are in place."

Part of that support includes introducing eligible children and their families to the wish process. Working with patients facing diagnoses such as epilepsy, Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, and rare neurological disorders, Shelby often has the privilege of sharing a message that brings hope during an otherwise difficult time.

"Wishes are so important because they provide a light and something positive to look forward to," she said. "It's incredibly uplifting to discuss wishes with patients because they only ever light up with excitement about the possibility of doing something they never thought they would be able to do otherwise."

Over the years, Shelby has helped refer children for wishes as unique as they are. From a specialized wheelchair and an adaptive bike to an in-home playroom designed for accessibility, each wish reflects a child's dreams and interests. One family's Disneyland® wish remains especially close to her heart.

While a trip to Disney may seem like a familiar wish, the experience became something much more. The family was celebrated from the moment they boarded their flight, with fellow passengers cheering them on as they traveled to have their wish granted. Throughout their trip, they were recognized and embraced by those around them.

Later, the child's mother shared with Shelby that she cried nearly the entire trip, overwhelmed by the kindness, joy, and memories they were creating together.

For Shelby, that's the true impact of a wish.

"I believe referring families for wishes offers dedicated time for them to spend with each other," she said. "It provides experiences the family can look back on and remember during tough times."

In the midst of treatments, appointments, and uncertainty, Shelby helps families discover something invaluable: hope, empowerment, and moments of joy that last long after the wish is granted.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Truck Center Companies

For 32 years, Truck Center Companies has been a steadfast partner in helping bring hope, strength, and joy to children facing critical illnesses across Nebraska. Through extraordinary generosity and an unwavering commitment to our mission, they have helped create life-changing experiences for hundreds of local wish families.

That commitment was on full display during this year's annual benefit weekend at Indian Creek. On June 12, supporters gathered for an unforgettable concert featuring country music star Casey Donahew, whose high-energy performance helped inspire a night filled with purpose and generosity. Guests also heard from wish alum MadisonRose and her family, who shared the story of her medical journey and the joy she experienced during her wish to Hawaii. Her powerful testimony reminded everyone in attendance that a wish is far more than a trip. It is a source of hope, resilience, and healing during some of life's most difficult moments.

The celebration continued the following day at the annual golf tournament, where community members, sponsors, and supporters came together with one shared goal: helping to grant more wishes. The result was truly remarkable. Truck Center Companies presented Make-A-Wish Nebraska with a gift of more than $703,000, bringing their lifetime giving to more than $6.3 million. In total, their generosity has helped grant over 840 wishes for local children!

Year after year, Truck Center Companies shows what it truly means to lead with heart. Their partnership goes far beyond fundraising—it is a promise to show up and to help create moments of joy for every child we serve. We are deeply grateful to Truck Center Companies for their unwavering support, compassionate leadership, and belief in the power of a wish. Their commitment continues to change lives and bring hope to Nebraska children who need it most.



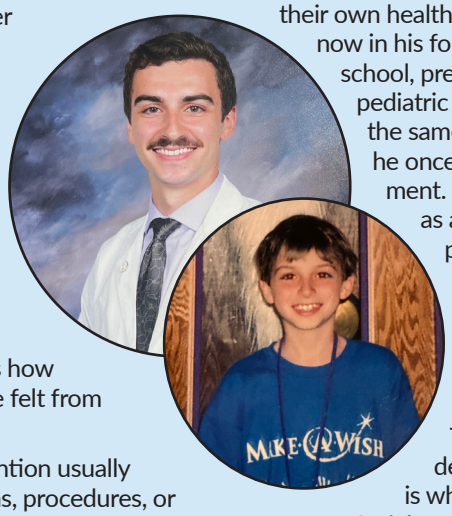


Creighton University School of Medicine

Every year, the Creighton University School of Medicine community laces up their running shoes for Walk for Wishes, a student-led 5K fundraiser supporting Make-A-Wish Nebraska. This year, the event carried special meaning for two of its student leaders.

Tyler and Kealy, the president and vice president of the Creighton University School of Medicine Make-A-Wish Club, are both wish alumni. Years after receiving wishes that brought hope and joy to their own families during some of life's most difficult moments, they are now helping create those same experiences for other children facing critical illnesses.

For Tyler, his wish came when he was 7-years-old, after fourteen months of chemotherapy. His family traveled to Orlando, where they visited Walt Disney World® and stayed at Give Kids The World Village®. While he remembers the attractions and excitement of the trip, what stands out most is how different the experience felt from treatment.



"During treatment, attention usually meant tests, meds, scans, procedures, or adults worrying about me," Tyler recalled. "My wish changed what that attention felt like. People were focused on whether I was having fun."

After years defined by treatment and recovery, the wish gave Tyler and his family something they desperately needed: a chance to simply be together and celebrate life. The experience became a bright chapter in a difficult season and created memories they still treasure today.



For Kealy, who was diagnosed with cancer as a teenager, her wish also took her family to Orlando, where they visited Walt Disney World®, Universal Studios®, and SeaWorld®.

By the time her wish was granted, she had completed treatment, but the experience gave her family something equally important.

"Being able to go on an extended trip together gave us time to reset and reconnect," she said. "It was a very special trip for us."

The kindness her family experienced through Make-A-Wish left a lasting impression as well. Her family remained close with one of their wish granters for years afterward, a testament to the relationships and care that often extend far beyond the wish itself.

Today, both Tyler and Kealy are pursuing careers in medicine, inspired in part by their own healthcare journeys. Tyler, now in his fourth year of medical school, previously worked as a pediatric oncology nurse on the same hospital floor where he once received treatment. Kealy's experience as a teenage cancer patient inspired her dream of becoming a pediatrician after witnessing the compassion of her own care team.

That shared desire to serve others is what drew them to Creighton's Make-A-Wish Club and ultimately into leadership roles.

"When I found out this opportunity existed, I had an immediate gut feeling I wanted to be involved," Tyler said. "It was one of those full-circle moments."

For Kealy, supporting Make-A-Wish has always been about giving back. "Getting involved with Make-A-Wish is such a fun and meaningful way to pay it forward," she said.

Their leadership helps power Walk for Wishes, a beloved Creighton tradition organized entirely by medical students. Since its inception, the event has raised more than $163,000 to help grant life-changing wishes for Nebraska wish kids. This year's Walk for Wishes was held on October 3 at Chalco Hills Recreation Area, where participants came together and raised over $3,400 to bring hope and joy to local wish kids and their families.

For Tyler, helping lead the event created another meaningful full-circle moment. Standing among participants and supporters, he reflected on the fact that years earlier, people he would never meet had donated so his wish could come true. Now, he was helping do the same for another child.

Kealy experienced a similar realization when she met a current wish child at the event and shared that she, too, had once received a wish.

Those experiences are reminders that the impact of generosity extends far beyond a single day. The children whose wishes are granted today grow up carrying memories of joy, hope, and the knowledge that a community cared enough to help them feel seen and celebrated.

"You may never meet the child whose wish you helped support or see that experience firsthand. Your contribution can still give a family something hopeful to look forward to and a chance to enjoy time together during a difficult period," Tyler said. "I still remember my own wish many years later, so I know how much those experiences can matter."

Thanks to dedicated partners like the Creighton University School of Medicine and student leaders like Tyler and Kealy, that cycle of generosity continues, helping ensure more children experience the hope, joy, and healing of a wish come true.



2026 FISCAL

Blaklee, 14, Omaha	transplant	I wish to have a camper
Kolton, 16, Omaha	respiratory failure	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Eleanor, 5, Fairmont	gastrointestinal disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet princesses
Audrey, 6, Kennard	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet princesses
Addison, 6, Crofton	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go on a Disney Cruise Line®
Peter, 4, Lincoln	kidney transplant	I wish to go to Disneyland® and ride Mater's Junkyard Jamboree
Anthony, 5, Bennington	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® on my birthday and celebrate with my twin
Everleigh, 7, Bellevue	blood disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet princesses
Austin, 18, Lexington	congenital heart disease	I wish to meet the Dallas Cowboys
Journie, 4, Omaha	end-stage renal failure	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet Moana
Riggs, 8, Platte Center	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Skylar, 9, Omaha	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® & swim with dolphins at Discovery Cove
Xayvior, 13, Omaha	rare metabolic disorder	I wish to go to Oahu
Addison, 9, Lincoln	brain tumor	I wish to go to Maui
Giovanni, 13, Kearney	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to a Charger's game
Mateo, 10, Columbus	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go to the Omaha Zoo and Children's Museum
Nicholas, 17, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to have a 2018-2019 Panini Prizm Basketball Hobby box
Elizabeth, 12, Lincoln	autoimmune disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Noah, 8, Peru	congenital heart disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and Universal Studios®
Joshua, 10, Omaha	blood disorder	I wish to have an online shopping spree for a PS5
Shelby, 4, Omaha	nervous system disorder	I wish to have a travel trailer
Ben, 18, Omaha	brain tumor	I wish to be a Husker Football Player
Jagger 14, Omaha	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to be a Husker Football Player
Willow, 4, Valley	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to have a shopping spree for a power wheels truck
Jase, 12, Tilden	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Janessa, 17, Bellevue	kidney disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Kinsley, 8, Ponca	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Landon, 16, Holdrege	cancer	I wish to go to Maui
Jailyn, 18, Howells	rare disorder	I wish to have a college scholarship
Kendri, 12, Sargent	cancer	I wish to go to Anna Maria Island
Aiden, 13, Omaha	blood disorder	I wish to go to the Macy's Day Parade
Jack, 4, Bennington	kidney transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Grant, 6, Ashland	leukemia	I wish to go to Universal Orlando Resort's Epic Universe
Evan, 9, Omaha	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Rhylee, 3, Fremont	genetic disorder	I wish to go to Mall of America
Zoey, 12, Omaha	gastrointestinal disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® to meet Anna and Elsa
Tyler, 18, Dalton	leukemia	I wish to go on the Carnival Jubilee Cruise Ship
Booker, 11, Imperial	cancer	I wish to go to a Denver Broncos game
Breckyn, 8, Broken Bow	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Everett, 9, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to go to Universal Studios® and Walt Disney World®
Aaron, 11, Schuyler	genetic disorder	I wish to have a big chair to watch sports
Harley, 5, Cozad	cancer	I wish to go to Hawaii
Bexton, 5, Kearney	leukemia	I wish to swim with and help sea turtles
Jacob, 14, Malcolm	metabolic disorder	I wish to have a hot tub
Finnley, 5, Omaha	cancer	I wish to go to the San Diego Zoo
Luke, 11, Malcolm	metabolic disorder	I wish to have a lift for a hot tub
Colin, 13, Albion	heart transplant	I wish to meet Stephen Curry
Sophie, 4, Omaha	brain tumor	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Olin, 5, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and see Toy Story
Mykah, 11, Lincoln	leukemia	I wish to go to Universal Studios® and Walt Disney World®
Ailyn, 11, Lexington	nervous system disorder	I wish to have a medical bed
Julian, 8, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Erin, 17, Papillion	cancer	I wish to go to Hawaii
Levi, 9, Columbus	end-stage kidney disease	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Francisco, 16, Lincoln	leukemia	I wish to go to Hawaii
Maddox, 4, Seward	respiratory failure	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Masen, 10, Fremont	Huntington's disease	I wish to go to Theater of the Sea in Isamorado, FL
Damion, 5, Omaha	blood disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Titus, 10, Blair	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to the Dream Onyx Resort & Spa in the Dominican Republic
David, 10, Fordyce	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go on a RCCL Cruise - Wonder of the Sea
Nathaniel, 10, Dodge	vascular disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Raylan, 13, Omaha	cancer	I wish to have a gaming computer
Layne, 14, Utica	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to have an all-terrain standing track chair
Kyle, 18, Auburn	lymphoma	I wish to build a gaming unit
Olive, 4, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to have a shopping spree in Omaha and go to the zoo
Delaney, 13, Lodgepole	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Celeste, 10, Omaha	congenital heart disease	I wish to have a play structure
Taya, 17, Kearney	cancer	I wish to go to Rome
Merrit, 17, Cedar Bluffs	tumor	I wish to go to Hawaii
Molly, 7, Elkhorn	nervous system disorder	I wish to have a backyard patio
Adalynn, 5, Albion	heart transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Jony, 13, Lincoln	kidney disease	I wish to go to NYC
Phoebe, 7, Kearney	cancer	I wish to go to visit Legoland, Universal Studios®, and the Kennedy Space Center
JurNee, 15, Dakota City	brain tumor	I wish to have a camper
Miyah, 9, Omaha	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Alexis, 16, Hastings	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Mason, 4, Minatare	heart condition	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Reese, 18, Culbertson	lymphoma	I wish to go on a Caribbean Cruise
Abel, 9, Omaha	heart transplant	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Christian, 8, Omaha	blood disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet Mickey and The Avengers

YEAR WISHES

Hope, 12, Papillion	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Elladee, 12, Wayne	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Cecilia, 9, Wahoo	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Kamari, 3, Lincoln	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet princesses
Paris, 12, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Isaiah, 4, Omaha	cancer	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
James, 6, Omaha	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Universal Studios® and Walt Disney World®
Elena, 4, Lincoln	kidney disease	I wish to have a "favorites day"
Hayden, 17, Denton	congenital heart disease	I wish to go to the Ariana Grande concert
Liam, 10, Lyons	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Autom, 16, Norfolk	lymphoma	I wish to go to Oahu
Avery, 16, La Vista	cancer	I wish to go to Hawaii
Kimberly, 13, Omaha	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Freyja, 3, Omaha	respiratory disorder	I wish to have a Bubble Bonanza Pool Party
Marelin, 3, Fremont	respiratory failure	I wish to have a shopping spree
Liam, 6, Columbus	leukemia	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Samantha, 12, David City	respiratory failure	I wish to have a love seat to sit with my mom
Ryder, 11, Ravenna	brain tumor	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Kolter, 14, Ainsworth	neuromuscular disorder	I wish to go to Disneyland®
Brooklyn, 9, Omaha	respiratory failure	I wish to have a 9th birthday celebration.
Colin, 16, Omaha	kidney disease	I wish to go on an Alaskan Cruise
Landen, 17, Scottsbluff	lymphoma	I wish to be an engineer at Boston Dynamics
Jessalyn, 18, Marquette	nervous system disorder	I wish to have a gazebo
Brenley, 10, Omaha	cystic fibrosis	I wish to go to Lake of the Ozarks
Kai, 18, Wymore	respiratory failure	I wish to have a virtual shopping spree
Abram, 18, Scottsbluff	autoimmune disorder	I wish to go to Hawaii
Daniel, 12, Bellevue	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World® and meet Mickey Mouse
Aiden, 11, Omaha	nervous system disorder	I wish to go to Walt Disney World®
Keyton, 16, Bennington	gastrointestinal disorder	I wish to go to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™
Kaden, 18, Kearney	end-stage renal failure	I wish to meet meet Jimmie Johnson at the Daytona 500





Make-A-Wish®
NEBRASKA

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

Headquarters
1005 South 107th Avenue, Suite 102
Omaha, NE 68114

Lincoln satellite office
8033 South 15th Street, Suite B
Lincoln, NE 68512

Kearney satellite office
412 East 25th Street, Suite D
Kearney, NE 68847

/MakeAWishNebraska

@MakeAWishNE

@makeawishnebraska

If you know someone who would like to receive our mailings, or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list please contact our office by email info@nebraska.wish.org or call 800-760-9474.

To refer a child:
Visit wish.org/refer-a-child
Call 800-760-WISH (9474)

#1 MORNING CONSULT® 2026
Most Trusted Nonprofit Operating Locally Across 50 States
MAKE-A-WISH®

Events



Thanks to the Johnson-Wissing Family Foundation - Nick & Kaleigh Johnson, wish kid Theo found out his wish to go to Universal Studios® was being granted at the 2026 Kearney Evening of Wishes gala.

Turkey Trot
November 26, 2026 | Omaha

Wish Ball
February 20, 2027 | Lincoln

Pot O'Wishes
March 18, 2027 | North Platte

Blue Jean Ball
April 24, 2027 | Omaha

Wine, Whiskey and Wishes
May 13, 2027 | Omaha

Visit wish.org/nebraska to learn more about our events