

WISHES

Make-A-Wish® Illinois ★ Winter 2016



Haylee Celebrates Hope

Nothing makes six-year-old Haylee's eyes sparkle more than Disney princesses. Diagnosed with acute lymphoma, Haylee loves to draw, paint, and sing, but above all else she loves everything Disney according to her mom Melissa. The Rapids City family learned about Make-A-Wish through Melissa's work and referred their daughter shortly after diagnosis.

"When we told her she could decide her wish she didn't even hesitate, she said Disney World."

Make-A-Wish soon sent Haylee and her family to central Florida for fun at Walt Disney World® Resort. There, Haylee experienced riding her first roller coaster and spinning madly in the tea cups. Most of all, Haylee enjoyed having dinner with all the Disney princesses.

"We had such an amazing time, but what impacted our lives the most was being able to be there as a family and celebrating Haylee's fight and beating cancer!"

"Being able to be there with no worry of hospital stays or chemo but instead just worrying about which princess we would meet that day was truly amazing," Melissa added.

Wish Granters: Mary Beth Eggers, Jennifer Rowe
Referred by: Parents

WISH IMPACT: In His Own Words



Tyler spoke to Make-A-Wish donors several weeks after his wish to attend the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil was granted. Diagnosed at birth with a congenital heart condition, Tyler loves gymnastics and performing. The following is an edited excerpt of his remarks on September 12, 2016.

Four year old me was excited to begin this new gymnastics adventure while my mother was simply grateful for a way to channel my seemingly unlimited energy. Neither of us was aware of how this sport would come to shape my life.

I had come to adore gymnastics. It had become a part of me. I had risen to the top of the podium and I had also fallen short. Regardless, I could never wait for the next time I got to fly across the pommel horse or soar on the high bar. I spent the next several years dreaming

of becoming an Olympian. I knew in my heart that if I continued to train hard, I could make the 2016 Olympic team. And I knew that when I made that team, when my time came, I would represent my country to the best of my ability. While I watched the 2008 Beijing games, all I could think was, "Give me 8 years, and I'll be there."

Then, my dreams were shattered. I went to my biannual cardiologist appointment and after proudly watching a video of my ten-year-old self at the state meet, my cardiologist congratulated me before pulling my mom aside. After speaking with my mom briefly, she called me into her office as well. I bounded in, but quickly discovered that my mother and doctor were not as enthusiastic as I was. They looked at me sorrowfully and my cardiologist said what I will never forget, "I am sorry to tell you that because of your hypoplastic left heart syndrome, I cannot allow you to continue participating in gymnastics. The exercises are too stressful on your already overwhelmed heart."

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In Their Own Words: Wish Impact

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I cried that night. And the week after. And the month after. And I continued to cry through middle school and into junior year of high school. I cried that three open heart surgeries had kept me from my dreams. That nothing would ever touch my love for gymnastics. I eventually found other activities to participate in, but none of them satisfied the gymnast still lurking inside me.

Then in 2015, the phone rang. It was Make-A-Wish, and they told me I was eligible for a wish following a referral from my cardiologist. It didn't even take me a week to decide that I wanted to go where I knew I would always end up, the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. A year later in August of 2016, my family and I boarded a flight to Brazil for the trip of a lifetime.

And that is how I ended up in the dark stadium of Maracanã, cheering along with thousands of other voices brought together by a common humanity. And when the lights blasted on and the confetti fell, when the samba music began to play and the dancers came out, I knew that I was where I was meant to be all along, just simply by a different route. I understood that my heart is a struggle that is a part of me and that I can choose whether I want it to define me or not; and that I, just like everyone in that stadium, am a part of something far greater.



Tyler, his sister and his parents traveled from Oak Park to Rio in July. In addition to attending the opening ceremonies, they attended a men's gymnastics event among others and bonded with the other wish families from around the world who were visiting Brazil for their wishes.

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MAKE-A-WISH
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We grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy.

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WISHES GRANTED



Sarah Swims in Bahamas

Though she can be shy with strangers, Sarah, 8, from south suburban Matteson is very outgoing at home with her siblings and around her cousins. Diagnosed at birth with a life-threatening hematologic disorder, her mother referred Sarah to Make-A-Wish.

Sarah really wanted to swim with the dolphins at the Atlantis Resort. She had seen a video online and knew that is what would make her the happiest. She re-watched the videos several times before her wish and was very excited that her family would be there too.



From the limo to the resort and everything in between, Sarah enjoyed sharing every minute of her trip with her family as her wish indeed came true when she swam with Tamera the dolphin in the Bahamas (pictured above).

“The granting of her wish made her feel very special,” Sarah’s mother explained because Sarah was so excited and so happy to be able to ‘take the family on vacation.’

“Although we are already a close-knit family, this trip made us even closer.”

Wish Granters: Colleen Schmitt, Barb Vaughn

Referred by: Parents

These and dozens of other wishes were recently granted by Make-A-Wish Illinois. For more wish stories, visit illinois.wish.org.

Sharing Europe Inspires Sara



19-year-old Sara, diagnosed with a brain tumor, has loved the history and culture of Germany since she first visited the country during high school. For her wish, she wanted to go back and explore further with her mother.

Through Make-A-Wish, Sara and her mother flew to Berlin to visit some of the most famous sites including the beautiful and historic Brandenburg Gate, the moving Sachsenhausen concentration camp and the remains of the Berlin Wall. While there, Sara and her mother had the opportunity to dine in the iconic TV tower Berliner Fernsehturm, enjoying a traditional German meal while taking in the breathtaking 360 degree view of Berlin.

After their time in Berlin, Sara was able to visit her friend who lives in the southern part of the country. She spent time with her friend and her friend’s family while exploring the countryside of Germany. They discovered a few castles and visited The Black Forest.

“This experience has given me a greater hope to continue my education in German and travel to Germany to study. As well as a desire to do more for my family.”

Wish Granters:

Sue Heng, Karli Kerrschnieder

Referred By:

Jon Werner, University of Iowa Children’s Hospital

SEASON OF GIVING

With your help, Make-A-Wish Illinois is restoring hope and building resilience for thousands of children and their families each year through wishes. Often a turning point in a child's illness, a wish brings families together and provides lasting memories.

If you have not yet made an end-of-year gift to support Make-A-Wish Illinois, please consider making your tax-deductible gift before December 31.

You can include Make-A-Wish Illinois as part of your year-end giving by **donating online** at www.illinois.wish.org or by **mailing your donation** to Make-A-Wish Illinois, 640 N. LaSalle Dr., Suite 280, Chicago, Illinois 60654-3754.

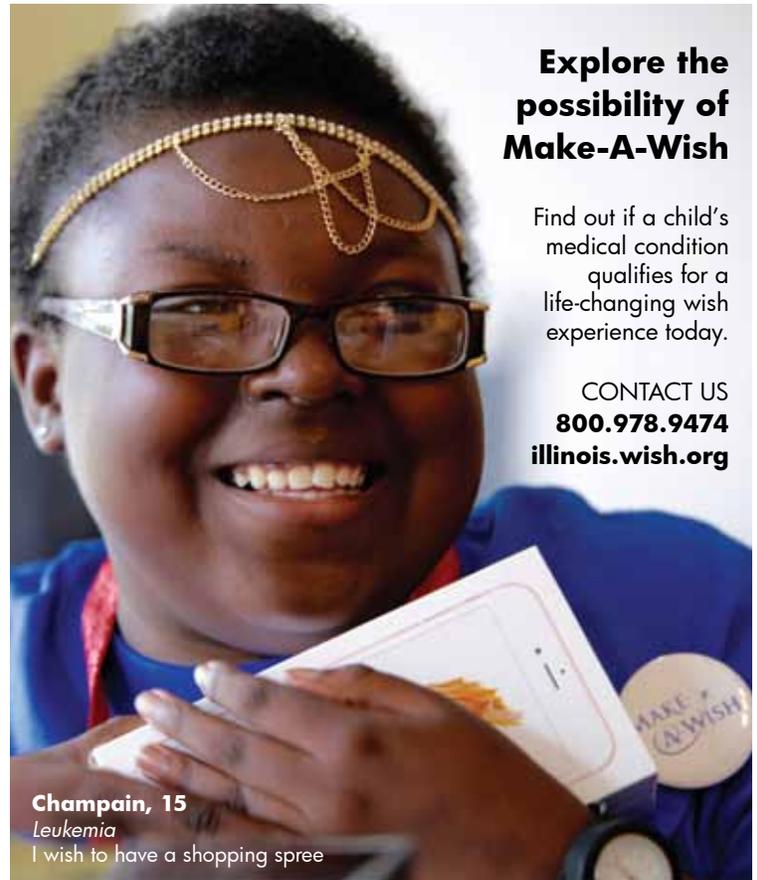
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Explore the possibility of Make-A-Wish

Find out if a child's medical condition qualifies for a life-changing wish experience today.

CONTACT US
800.978.9474
illinois.wish.org



Champaign, 15
Leukemia
I wish to have a shopping spree



WISH BALL 2017 - SAVE THE DATE

May 20, 2017 | Navy Pier, Chicago

Wish Alumni, Community Come Together at Walk for Wishes®

Thank you to the many teams and individuals who came out to the Walk for Wishes events in 2016. Your participation raised more than \$250,000 and will help make wishes come true for many children in the coming year. Make your plans to walk with us next year! Find information at illinois.wish.org.



walk
FOR **wishes**®



TOP (l to r): Chicagoland (Elk Grove Village), Champaign BOTTOM (l to r): Edwardsville, Moline.