

# About Make-A-Wish Foundation® International

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

### BEGINNINGS OF THE MAKE-A-WISH FOUNDATION

In 1980, Chris Greicius was a seven-year-old boy being treated for leukemia. Whenever he saw a police officer, he saw everything he wanted to be. Law enforcement officers heard about Chris' wish to be a police officer and responded to the call. A police helicopter flew him to headquarters for a tour, a ride in a patrol car and a ceremony making him the first-ever honorary state patrol-man in Arizona history. They also presented him a custom-tailored uniform, motorcycle helmet, campaign hat and the motorcycle wings he earned on his own battery-powered bike. Many of those responsible for fulfilling Chris' wish wanted to do the same for other children with life-threatening medical conditions and founded the Make-A-Wish Foundation in November 1980.

### POWER OF A WISH

Families, friends, medical professionals, and communities can be touched by the simple, innocent wish of a child. A wish sends a positive message of hope, strength, and joy to a child when they need it most. The wish experience has the power to reignite the flames of life, creating a journey of optimism for a child and their family. "The relationship between our emotions and our body's immune system is indeed complex. There is evidence emerging from several scientific studies that demonstrate how laughter can positively affect the immune system by enhancing function on a cellular level." – Dr. Keith Y.C. Goh, one of the world's leading neurosurgeons, and Make-A-Wish Foundation International Chairman

### GLOBAL REACH

Interest in granting the wishes of special children like Chris quickly spread to other countries. In 1993, Make-A-Wish Foundation International was officially formed to serve five countries outside the U.S. that were already granting wishes. Make-A-Wish Foundation International serves children outside the United States while the Make-A-Wish Foundation® of America serves children within the United States. Today, the Make-A-Wish Foundation is the largest wish-granting organization in the world and can be found in 100 chapters and over 35 countries. Over 240,000 wishes around the world have been granted since its inception.

### COUNTRIES

## Backgrounder

Written by Glenn Tester

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The 36 Affiliates of Make-A-Wish Foundation International include:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium South
- Belgium Vlaanderen
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Denmark
  
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- India
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
  
- Korea
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Pakistan
- Panama
- Peru
- Philippines
  
- Portugal
- Singapore
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Turkey
- United Arab Emirates

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- United Kingdom

## ELIGIBILITY

We grant the wishes of medically eligible children who:

- have been diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition
- are at least 3 years of age, but have not yet reached their 18th birthday
- have not received a wish from another wish-granting organization. The child's physician determines whether a child is medically eligible to receive a wish.

## THE WISH PROCESS

Every wish is a memorable experience for the wish child, the family and those who participate in the wish. The Foundation follows a process to create memorable wish experiences for each wish child:

### STEP ONE: The Wish Referral

Out of respect for the privacy of the children and families Make-A-Wish Foundation International serves, only these sources may refer a child:

- a medical professional treating the child (doctor, nurse, social worker or child-life specialist);
- the child's parents or legal guardians;
- the potential wish child.

### STEP TWO: Determining the Child's Eligibility

Children who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition and are at least 3 years of age but have not yet reached their 18th birthday may be eligible for a wish. The treating physician determines whether a child is medically eligible to receive a wish. A child also must not have received a wish from another wish-granting organization to qualify. Make-A-Wish Foundation International grants wishes to children who qualify for our services without regard to race, creed, religion, sex, economic status, or national origin. Make-A-Wish Foundation International respects the privacy of the children and families we serve. We consider all wish child information confidential and will not discuss the information with outside parties unless it is needed for the wish, and the parents or guardians have consented.

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### **STEP THREE: Choosing a Wish**

Once the child is deemed medically eligible, we send one of our enthusiastic wish teams to learn the child's one true wish. These passionate individuals help children explore their imaginations for the experience that will thrill and inspire them. Wishes generally fall into one of these categories: I wish to have... I wish to be... I wish to go... I wish to meet...

### **STEP FOUR: Making a Wish Come True**

Finally, our wish granters create an unforgettable experience driven by the wish child's creativity. The experience enriches the lives of the children, their families and sometimes their entire community. All members of the wish child's immediate family take part in the wish whenever possible, and all wish expenses are fully covered by the Foundation – giving the wish child and family a respite from the stress of dealing with a life-threatening illness. In many cases, a wish experience is a source of inspiration for children undergoing difficult medical treatments and a positive force that helps them overcome their obstacles.

## **FUNDING SOURCES**

Make-A-Wish Foundation International finances its endeavors through individual contributions, corporate donations, grants, and other assessments. The organization also relies on in-kind contributions to lessen the cost of goods and services. For the fifth straight year, Make-A-Wish Foundation International received the highest four-star rating from the United States' largest independent evaluator of charities, Charity Navigator, for outstanding performance and commitment to fiscal responsibility.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

Thousands of volunteers around the world generously give their time, talents, and energy to fulfill the Make-A-Wish mission. In 2008 alone, nearly 30,000 volunteers served Make-A-Wish offices around the world in a variety of capacities including wish granting, office administrative support, special event planning and coordinating, Web site design, fund-raising and much more. Individuals can offer to volunteer by visiting [www.worldwish.org](http://www.worldwish.org) or by contacting their local Make-A-Wish office.

## **WISHES BY THE NUMBERS**

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Since its founding in 1980, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has granted more than 240,000 wishes around the world. In 2008 alone, over 20,000 wishes were granted. 13,425 were granted by the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America and 7,165 were granted outside of the United States, led by affiliates of Make-A-Wish Foundation International. Much like their imaginations, children's wishes cover an almost limitless spectrum. From wishing to be a ballerina to meeting a favorite celebrity, from receiving a new laptop computer to visiting a glamorous destination, wish children have enjoyed unforgettable, inspirational wish experiences around the world. The most requested wish continues to be visiting a Disney theme park. Disney helps grant more than 6,000 wishes each year around the world, including visits to the Disney Parks, Disney Cruises, meeting Disney Characters, attending sporting events and visiting TV and movie sets.

### **ABOUT THE MAKE-A-WISH FOUNDATION**

The Make-A-Wish Foundation® grants the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy. Founded in 1980 when a group of caring volunteers helped a young boy fulfill his dream of becoming a police officer, the Foundation is now the largest wish-granting charity in the world. The Make-A-Wish Foundation® of America grants the wishes of children in the United States and its territories through its 65 chapters, while Make-A-Wish Foundation International serves children outside the United States in over 35 countries on five continents. With the help of generous donors and over 30,000 volunteers, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has granted more than 240,000 wishes worldwide since inception. For more information about how you can share the power of a wish®, visit the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America Web site at [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org) or the Make-A-Wish Foundation International Web site at [www.worldwish.org](http://www.worldwish.org)

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