

# Tomorrow's *wish*

2012: *Twenty years*  
*Twenty wishes, forever*



MAKE A WISH.  
MAINE CHAPTER

*“Like a bolt out of the blue  
fate steps in and sees you through.  
When you wish upon a star  
Your dreams come true.”*

Thus sang Jiminy Cricket in the Disney® classic, Pinocchio. Everyone can relate to the yearning expressed in the lyrics and melody of “When You Wish Upon a Star.” But for a sick child, it can be especially poignant. Like the Blue Fairy of Pinocchio, the Maine chapter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation® grants wishes to special boys and girls with life-threatening medical conditions.



In 2012 the Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Maine will celebrate its 20th anniversary. In honor of this milestone we are embarking on our first ever endowment campaign.

We have enjoyed wonderful growth since 1992 – boasting more volunteers and more wishes per capita than most other states. However, as an independent chapter of the national organization, this campaign is vital to our continued momentum.

Currently we’re able to fulfill approximately 70 wishes per year. Yet, studies indicate that there are closer to 90 Maine children diagnosed annually with a life-threatening condition. Our goal is to increase our wish granting capacity to meet this need. An endowment of \$2.4 million will generate the funding necessary to grant those 20 additional wishes per year at an average cost of \$6,000 per wish.

*Like the twinkle of a distant star,  
the power of a wish radiates out from the child  
on whom it is bestowed and touches  
friends and the community near and far.*

Consider Brandi, whose wish was granted shortly after September 11, 2001. The lives she touched with her selfless desire are too numerous to count. You’ll read more about Brandi, as well as Kyle, Taylor and Dan in what follows.

We hope you, too, will feel the magic.





## A Medical View of Wish Granting

*“A positive attitude is often the single-best therapy.”*

– Jon Donnelly, M.D.



Jon Donnelly, M.D. is a Pediatric Cardiologist at Maine Medical Center and a medical advisor to the Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Maine.

“In a medical environment that’s always looking for the next pill or the latest protocol, we sometimes need reminding that support of a patient’s emotional health can be the best medicine. As a pediatric cardiologist, I work with seriously ill kids who have had every procedure available, and for some of them, Western medicine has reached the end of the line. Time and again, I’ve seen what a powerful tool the granting of a child’s fondest wish can be. The shifts in attitude are life changing, for the kids and everyone around them.

“Many of my patients—children with serious cardiac issues—have a hard time socializing with their peers. They are sometimes ostracized at school because they look different; they’re often less developed physically and therefore unable to join in activities with other boys and girls. The world is not an equal playing field for them; depression and low self-esteem are common. This can be compounded when parents unintentionally treat sick children as victims by becoming overprotective. The lives of these children are riddled with emotional and psychological suffering which translates into a more pessimistic impression of their physical health.

“Having a seriously ill child in the family is hard on siblings and parents alike. The granting of a wish is an opportunity for parents to see their child truly celebrated. It’s a chance for the whole family to forget about the drama of their daily lives and enjoy some healing time together. Wishes create a chain reaction of good things. I’ve seen family dynamics shift and become less illness-focused. Everyone benefits.”

## Where Will Your Money Do The Most Good?

Over the years, potential donors have expressed an inclination to put their money toward the “real work” of medical research. Dr. Donnelly has a unique perspective on that.

“There’s a perception that I’ve encountered that wish-granting is fluff. I disagree. I believe that a positive attitude—the ability for a chronically ill child to view himself or herself as normal, as opposed to as a victim of their illness—is the single-best therapy. The wish experience helps them to do just that and it truly does have a ripple effect.

“Having been in medical research, I can tell you that the effectiveness of those dollars is uncertain. On the other hand, I have never known a wish not to have immense (and immediate) positive effect on a boy or girl.

✨ **“How many opportunities do we have in life to write a check and know that those funds are going to directly enrich a life that has known more than its share of suffering?”**

**“I truly believe that it in an ideal world, the work that Make-A-Wish® is doing would be part of every holistic treatment plan.”**



*“I choose to volunteer for Make-A-Wish over other organizations because I know exactly where the money is going. I get to know the families and see tangible results of donations to kids right here in Maine. I really, really believe in the mission of Make-A-Wish.*

*“On one wish, I went to the hospital to deliver a letter to a boy who was trying to decide if he wanted to continue to fight for his life. His health had declined and so had his motivation. I handed him a packet that outlined his wish and spelled out the wonderful experiences that were about to be granted. He tucked that letter into his pajamas and told me, with increasing strength, that he was ready to go on his wish. He focused on this wish. He planned for it, dreamt about it and eventually experienced it. That was quite a few years ago and he is now a healthy young man who has accomplished great things so far. In fact, he works for the place where he went on his wish!”*

– Jackie Goulet  
Volunteer, 13 years  
Biddeford

*“I can never thank Make-A-Wish® enough for what they did for me. They’ve been there for me and my family throughout my illness and I am always going to be there for them.”*

– Brandi Bouchard

## *An Angel Named Brandi*



BRANDI BOUCHARD, *“I wish to give angel pins to all children who lost parents on September 11.”*



### BRANDI BOUCHARD, AGE 18, OAKLAND

In 2001, Brandi Bouchard was an energetic cheerleader at Messalonskee High School in Oakland. The sudden discovery of a lump on her thigh was believed to be activity-related. But after six months of physical therapy, the lump had grown in size and become increasingly painful. On September 10th Brandi learned it was a tumor. The following week, while the country mourned the losses of September 11, Brandi was diagnosed with synovial sarcoma, a rare childhood cancer.

Shortly after her surgery, on her eighteenth birthday, Brandi met her wish granting volunteers. “I told my friends and family I wanted a trip to Alaska, because I didn’t want anyone to talk me out of what I really wanted. My wish was to give guardian angel pins to the children who lost loved ones in 9/11.” Brandi began chemotherapy treatments directly after the attacks and was unable to participate with the rest of her school in volunteer outreach to the victims.

She drew a picture of the pin she envisioned, an angel with a star, and a young Maine artist brought the design to life. Brandi also wrote some words to accompany each gift. *“An angel may not take away the pain. An angel may not bring someone back. But remember, you will always have a guardian angel by your side.”*

“I knew it would be a very long time before the recipients would come to know the truth of those words, but I wanted them to feel comforted.

“When my Make-A-Wish® grantors asked if I’d like to go to New York to deliver the pins, I got really excited. They took me, my brother and sister shopping and bought us outfits for the trip. They gave us spending money and took us to dinner to celebrate. They did so much I didn’t expect.”

In New York, Brandi was deeply moved when she visited Ground Zero. She brought hundreds of angel pins along with her—by this time her wish had grown to include giving pins to Port Authority

workers, firefighters and police officers. One of the highlights of her trip was visiting the Statue of Liberty on a fire boat with a company of new friends.

At one elementary school she met a young girl who lost both her parents on September 11. Brandi told her story to the class and invited the children to ask questions. The little girl was the first to raise her hand. Brandi learned later that it was the first time she had spoken since the tragedy.

Brandi had a second tumor removed in 2004 and continues to suffer from neuropathy. But her spirit is as strong as ever. She has a loving family and support system that includes her boyfriend, Scott, and their daughter, Taylor Marie.

Last Christmas Brandi, along with her boyfriend’s family, adopted a unit of soldiers in Iraq. Each of the 150 troops received two angel pins, one to keep and one to send home to a loved one. This year, Brandi and Scott are planning to sell T-shirts printed with the guardian angel message. They hope to raise enough money to grant a wish for another deserving Maine child.

*Brandi has given out thousands of angel pins since 2001 and continues to do so. She trusts her intuition to reach out to those in need of comfort. Because, as she says, “The smallest acts of support and kindness can help more than you may ever know.”*

*“Because of Kyle’s illness and our involvement with Make-A-Wish®, I’ve seen children who are gravely ill—children with very little life left in them—smile because of Make-A-Wish. Kids who look and feel different because of the challenges they face are treated like special, special people and it means the world to them. It meant the world to us.”*

—John Fitzherbert

## Music, Baseball and Make-A-Wish



KYLE FITZHERBERT, “I wish to go to Disney World®.”



### KYLE FITZHERBERT, AGE 4, BATH

Even as a toddler, Kyle Fitzherbert was a bright and happy boy, despite the fact that he was born with a rare form of Nieman-Pick disease, a condition in which the body is unable to metabolize fat. He was on oxygen most of his life and was never supposed to live past two. He made it to 14. And he loved every minute. Kyle’s extraordinarily positive outlook helped him live a life that was rich and full, if tragically short. His passions and his connection to Make-A-Wish® were what fueled him.

“My son, Kyle, was challenged far more than most children,” says John Fitzherbert. “But he never asked, ‘Why me?’ He always laughed and never complained. He lived twelve years past his life expectancy. I believe Make-A-Wish, music and baseball were largely responsible for giving us that extra time.”

Kyle was actively involved in the Bath Little League. He progressed from mascot to ball boy to coach, an activity that he shared with his father. He even sat on the board of directors. Kyle also loved music. Despite an oxygen tank as a constant companion, he played the drums and performed in the school band, jazz band and percussion ensemble.

At the age of five, Kyle’s spleen was removed. John stayed out of work for over a year, caring for his son while he recovered from the surgery. It was a difficult time for the whole family. “When someone suggested Make-A-Wish to us, we were initially reluctant. We thought it was an organization for terminal kids. We didn’t like to think that way about Kyle.”

Kyle really wanted to go to Disney World®, but his parents were concerned about taking an oxygen-dependent child on a plane and staying away from home. They eventually relented, because Kyle really wanted it. “From the minute we gave in, the trip unfolded like a dream. And it was just what we all needed,” says John.

“The Make-A-Wish Foundation had everything covered. A limo picked us up to take us to the airport and there was someone to meet us at every stage.” The Fitzherberts stayed at the Give Kids the World Village, a special place for Wish Kids and other children suffering from life-threatening illnesses. “When Kyle saw those kids, he was far more concerned about their well being than his own. For the first time it struck him that he wasn’t the only one with challenges.”

*Kyle’s wish was the beginning of his life-long involvement with Make-A-Wish. He was just five years old when he told his parents he thought the family should try to raise money for Make-A-Wish to help another child have their wish granted. John Fitzherbert calculates that, at the end of the day, they raised enough for three.*

Make-A-Wish meant more to Kyle Fitzherbert than a trip to Disney World®. More than meeting professional athletes, Bill Cosby or the Blue Angels—all of which the organization enabled him to do. Make-A-Wish was a compassionate lens through which his world was filtered. There’s a monument to Kyle Fitzherbert, erected by the Bath Little League at the ball fields not far from his home. Your endowment contribution would be an equally permanent way of honoring this gentle soul who meant so much to so many.

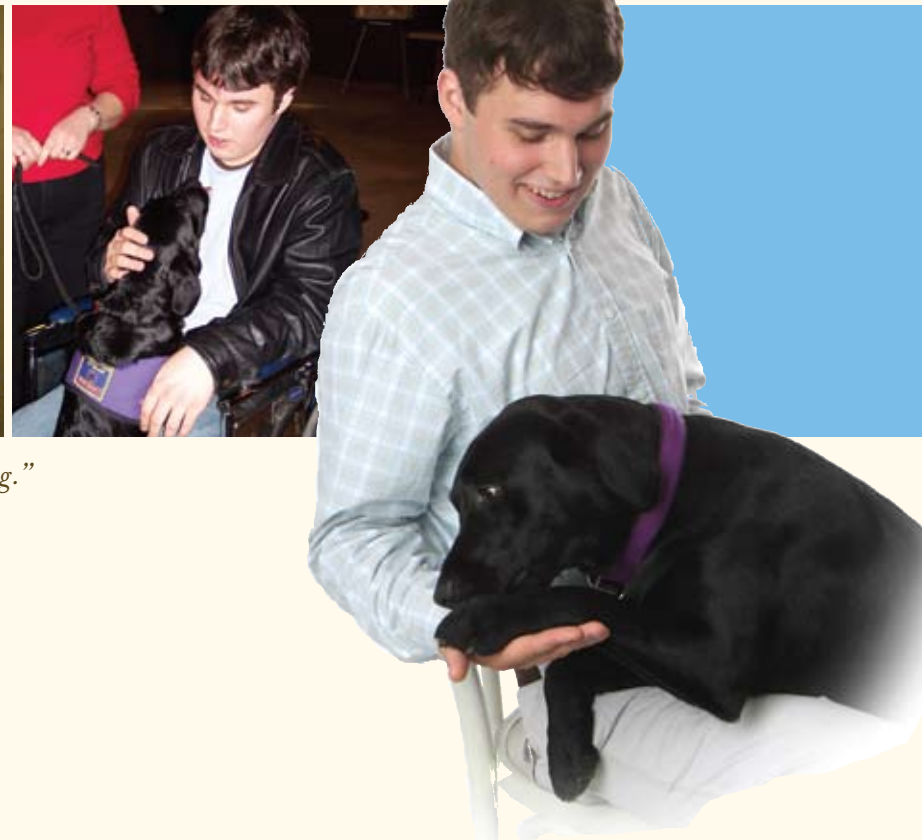
*“Make-A-Wish® is a way to bring joy and a sense of purpose to those who have to cope with circumstances in their lives that they haven’t asked for. You can’t put a monetary value on that.”*

– Alanna Stetson

## *Nara the Black Lab* – the wish that keeps on giving



DANIEL STETSON, “I wish for a service dog.”



### DANIEL STETSON, AGE 18, HOLDEN

As a child, Daniel Stetson had difficulty keeping up on family hikes, and sometimes, seemingly for no reason, his legs would give out. A quiet boy, Dan never complained, although he was clearly physically challenged. He attempted to play hockey. Yet even with the personal attention of a dedicated coach, the sport eluded him. Dan was never very vocal. One Holden teacher thought he was unwilling to participate in class, but his mother, a nurse at Eastern Maine Medical Center, suspected that something was wrong.

At ten, Dan was diagnosed with both Asperger’s syndrome and muscular dystrophy. The two conditions make a tough combination. The progressive muscular deterioration of MD requires constant psychological adaptation, but people with Asperger’s have difficulty with change.

Perhaps the toughest acclimation for Dan was the introduction of the wheelchair. “That wasn’t easy for him. He didn’t want to give in to the disease,” says his mother, Alanna Stetson. “Even today, he’s still able to walk a bit. It’s sheer determination.”

Dan suffers a new sorrow with each loss of physical ability. When he was 17 and weathering a particularly despondent period, his pediatrician suggested that Make-A-Wish® might lift his spirits.

Dan was energized at the prospect of having a wish granted, and it didn’t take him long to settle on his heart’s desire: a service dog. It wasn’t the sort of wish that could be granted overnight, given the training required. An unforeseen car accident and dog-napping made the waiting period unusually long. But, eventually, the stars aligned to bring Dan together with his black lab Nara.

“The first time we went to visit her at the trainers’ home, she went right up to Dan and cocked her head, as if she were asking, ‘Am I for you?’”

“Today, she’s his best friend. I believe this dog had a mission in life; she came here for Dan. I never saw him beam the way he did on the day we brought her home.”

Nara means joyous in the Navajo language, but she has brought far more than joy to Dan’s life. Nara recently passed her exam as a therapy dog so that Dan can bring her to nursing homes, as well as the pediatric ward at EMMC. “Dan is a very caring individual,” his mother explains. “If he sees others in pain, he wants to reach out to them because he knows what it’s like to hurt. But the Asperger’s limits his ability to communicate. With Nara, he can reach out and help others, while staying in his comfort zone. We call her the gift that keeps on giving.

*“The emotional support that Dan receives from Nara bolsters him so that he’s not overwhelmed by the chronic sorrow that’s always lurking for him in the shadows. She’s like a ray of sunshine that keeps him from that dark tunnel of sadness. I believe Nara reminds Dan every day who he truly is and who he has become through all of his challenges. She is a priceless gift.”*

*“It’s not just a trip, a shopping spree or a new pet. It’s a gift of kindness that is magically transformative and resonates long after the wish has been granted.”*

– Michelle James



## Granting wishes

— one glass of lemonade at a time



TAYLOR ANN JAMES, *“I wish to meet the princesses.”*



### TAYLOR ANN JAMES, AGE 4, SOUTH BERWICK

When a small bump appeared on Taylor James’ eyelid, the doctor thought it was just a sty. Weeks later, after the bump had doubled in size, then doubled again, it was quickly removed. At just three years-old Taylor was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare childhood cancer.

It was the beginning of a year-long journey for Taylor and her family: 48 weeks of chemo and two months of radiation. “Taylor weathered the chemo well,” says her mother, Michelle. “Eventually her hair fell out, but it didn’t bother her. She enjoyed helping her daddy shave his head to match hers. She was so young, she didn’t have any fear around the word ‘cancer.’ That was a blessing.”

When a nurse at the Maine Children’s Cancer Program told John and Michelle James about Make-A-Wish® they, like so many others, had thought the program was only for terminal children. Toward the end of Taylor’s treatment Michelle sent an e-mail to Make-A-Wish. Still amazed at the response she says, “I got a phone call back within the hour.”

Taylor’s wish was that of any self-respecting four year-old girl: She wanted to meet the princesses, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella. So the family was swept off to Disney World®. “We were all suffering emotionally from Taylor’s ordeal,” says Michelle. “The trip gave us a week in which we could let go of medical concerns and spend time enjoying each other. Because Make-A-Wish took care of every possible detail, they gave us the space to do just that.”

Taylor’s older sister, Jessica, now 21, was deeply moved by the experience. For her high school graduation present she asked for airfare to Orlando so that she could spend a week volunteering at Give Kids the World, where the family

had stayed. Jessica is currently majoring in art therapy and has applied to become a wish granting volunteer herself.

Taylor, at the age of eight, is all about raising money so more children can have their wishes granted. The James family participates in the Walk for Wishes every year. They call their team, “Taylor Ann’s Triumph” and their numbers are growing. Taylor has recruited friends, parents of friends and even some of her teachers from the Central School in South Berwick.

Around the time of the walk, Taylor posts her pink dinosaur bank at the front door and suggests that all visitors to her home make a donation. She regularly raids the couch cushions and car seats for change. Last year she raised \$100.

When Taylor read the book, Alex’s Lemonade Stand, about a young cancer patient-turned fundraiser, she was inspired to go into business herself. Her father has drawn up plans for a lemonade stand, slated to open this summer at the foot of the James driveway. All proceeds will go to Make-A-Wish.

*“I have seen the difference that Taylor’s wish made in our lives, as individuals and as a family,” says Michelle James. “It continues to influence us. I feel we have all been forever changed.”*

As you've read in the profiles of these four Maine children, the wish experience is far greater than a trip to Disney World® or New York City. Families are made stronger through the reflected gratitude of a child's dream fulfilled. Time and again, wish kids and their parents speak of having a transformative experience. Giving back becomes part of the fabric of their lives and they frequently go into service-oriented careers, as teachers, ministers and healthcare professionals.

Although we share a name and a logo, the Maine chapter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation® operates independently. We are one hundred percent responsible for raising the funds necessary to ensure the survival and success of our chapter, which means that one hundred percent of your gift will be used to grant wishes for Maine children.

The next time you wish upon a star, think about the far reaching consequences and make it a good one. We leave you with a final word from Kyle Fitzherbert, a little boy with a big heart.



On the night of Kyle's Fitzherbert's final open heart surgery, he and his father talked about what he wanted to do when he grew up. After giving it serious thought Kyle said:

*"Papa, I want to work for Make-A-Wish. You know how I'm sick a lot and sometimes I don't have a lot of energy? Think about all the sick Make-A-Wish children. I know how they feel—and some of them feel even worse than me.*

*Make-A-Wish makes sick children smile.  
You said I should do something important with my life.  
What could be more important than that?"*

We can't think of a thing.



*Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Maine*

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OUR MISSION

*The Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Maine  
grants the wishes of children with  
life-threatening medical conditions  
to enrich the human experience with  
hope, strength, and joy.*

