

April 2006



An informational resource for volunteers

Make-A-Wish volunteers making dreams come true

By Melissa Smith, Regional Reporter, Star-Herald

Five years ago, Donna Shores met a boy who changed her life. His name was Tim and he had brain cancer. They met during an airplane ride on the way to Florida. Donna had asked him how old he was, thinking he must be around 11 because of his size. He was 14. She asked him about his baseball cap and he took it off, revealing a scar on his head from the surgery to remove his cancer, only to find out it hadn't been successful. Tim was dying and not expected to live more than a few more weeks. But he was happy, giddy even. He was happy because he was on his way to Florida to watch a space shuttle launch, the one thing he had always dreamed of, a wish that was coming true thanks to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, an organization that grants wishes to sick and dying children. "I just fell in love with the kid," Donna said. She never learned his last name or what became of Tim, but when she came back home to Alliance, she knew she had to do something to help other children like him, and that's when she started raising money for Make-A-Wish. Since 2001, Donna has been donating profits from food sales to groups playing Bingo and having other parties at the local Eagles Club to the foundation. Each year she has given at least \$1,000, sometimes \$2,000. "I think of Tim every year when I send that money in," she said. "I decided to do this for him and for other kids like him. I want other kids to be as happy as he was on that plane."

The presence of the Make-A-Wish Foundation is slowly gaining ground in the Panhandle, with the help of a representative from the Kearney office, Hannah Stone. She is the vice president of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Nebraska, and she is responsible for 55 counties. One of her goals, she said, is to increase the foundation's footings in Western Nebraska. Right now, there is one official wish granter, Maronna Smith of Scottsbluff. Heather Edwards, of Alliance, is in the final stages of completing her paperwork for the program and several others attended training sessions in Gering and Alliance last week to begin their affiliation with Make-A-Wish. Smith, who has been working with the foundation since last year, got involved because she knew someone that was getting a wish and saw the impact that it made. She was able to help make little 6-year-old Christopher Hernandez' wish of having a playhouse come true last month in Scottsbluff. "I do it for the kids," she said. "I love to see their faces. There's nothing better than that look on their faces, especially when they're sick. This gives them something to look forward to." Smith said she was touched by a note she received from Hernandez' mother, thanking her for her help and also telling her how much the playhouse meant to Christopher. "She said he thanks God in his prayers for all of us at Make-A-Wish every night before he goes to bed," Smith said. "It's very gratifying because I know I can make a wish come true. It's a sad thing, but yet it's a good thing. These kids have to have something to help brighten their days." To Edwards, Make-A-Wish is especially personal. She's what's called a Wish Mom, a mother to a child who was granted a wish. Her son, Gage, was given a trip to Disney World when he was 6 years old after first becoming sick with brain cancer. Last summer, two months short of his ninth birthday, Gage died. Edwards said she wanted to get involved with Make-A-Wish because she remembers the precious memories made possible by the foundation for her family, and she wants to share that with others. "Because I've been on the receiving end of it, I know how important it is," she said.

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"When your child is that sick, you want to give them the opportunity to do things and you can't always afford it with all of the hospital bills. Make-A-Wish allows you to give your child something that they really want." Edwards has been involved with granting two wishes, and she said she is looking forward to doing more for more kids. "I love to see the smiles on their faces and see their eyes light up," she said. "At least they're happy for a little while. They are all very special." Stone said Make-A-Wish is currently working on several area cases, including one that would send an Alliance girl and her family to Australia and another that would help a Scottsbluff boy meet Dale Earnhardt, Jr. She said she would still like to have more volunteers from the Panhandle area. Anyone interested can contact her by phone at (308) 234-6612, or email at hstone@nebraska.wish.org.

2006 Calendar of Events

April

29th - Lincoln Federal Savings Bank/Lincoln 18 Hole Golf Tournament at HiMark Golf Course

May

15th - Norfolk Golf Tournament

11th - 14th - Mother's Day Gift Wrap at Oak View Mall in Omaha

June

3rd - Center Stage Danz Quick, Make-A-Wish Recital

10th - "Wheels 4 Wishes" Motorcycle Ride from Lincoln and Grand Island

17th - Outlaw Hotrod Tractor Pull in Papillion

17th - Papillion Days Parade

19th - Omaha Truck Center's 12th Annual Golf Tournament at Tiburon Golf Club

24th - 2nd Annual Fun Run (Dead Man's Hand Riders Group)

TBA - Father's Day Gift Wrap at Oak View Mall in Omaha

TBA - Omaha VW Club Show & Shine

July

4th - Ralston Parade

27th - "Big Red" Red Tie Dinner, Memorial Stadium, Lincoln

TBA - Clueless & Lark

August

26th - Roll 'n Ride

TBA - Danny Gibilisco Memorial Golf Tournament

September

10th - Creighton Run at Lake Zorinsky in Omaha

16th - Midlands Community Foundation Reflection Ball at the Hilton Hotel in Omaha

24th - Knights of Columbus 20th Annual Wish Ride in Nebraska City

28th - Cold Stone Creamery Ice Cream Social - All locations

Wow, What a Weekend!

The first weekend in March proved to be quite a weekend for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Nebraska.

On Saturday, March 4th, the 8th Annual Blue Jean Ball was held at inPlay in Omaha. The night was filled with mingling, dining, dancing, silent, oral and wish auctions. Thanks to the Friends group, who not only made the facility look amazing, but made it a record-setting event. After all was said and done and expenses paid, \$130,000 dollars was raised.

The following night, Sunday, March 5th, a magical evening was spent at the beautiful Rococo Theatre in Lincoln for "A Night with Oscar." The awards were shown on a large screen, while guests ate wonderful food provided by Premier Catering, bid on silent auction items and cast their votes for their favorites to win an Oscar. In the midst of all of this, Ian, a wish child from Lincoln, was told his wish to visit Disney World would be granted. A Night with Oscar also had an impressive night, raising \$87,000. Thanks to Douglas Theatre Co. for sponsoring this event.

Thanks to everyone who attended these events, donated auction items or helped in any way! We will be able to grant many more wishes due to the success of these events!

Things Remembered



On Saturday, April 8th, Things Remembered stores across the nation will celebrate their sponsorship with the Make-A-Wish Foundation by offering a 20% discount to customers in exchange for a \$5.00 donation to the Foundation.

If you have some shopping to do, Things Remembered is a great store to purchase those items and to support Make-A-Wish.



Hannah Stone, VP, did several volunteer orientations and wish granting trainings in March in the Panhandle. Pictured on the left is a new group of volunteers from the Alliance area and the photo on the right is a new group of volunteers from the Scottsbluff area.

Featured Volunteers

Friends of Make-A-Wish - A huge thanks to the Friends, who made the Blue Jean Ball a tremendous success. They went above and beyond the call of duty to raise a lot of money for more wishes. Great job!

Jan Lutz & Lori Kisby - Jennifer and Sarah are forever grateful to Jan and Lori for going to West Point, NE to train four new volunteers from Norfolk, NE and Oakland, NE. These volunteers have been waiting patiently to be trained and Jan and Lori stepped up to the plate to get them trained. It will be nice to have extra volunteers to pull from the north east part of the state. We cannot thank you enough, Jan and Lori!

Stephanie Rick - Stephanie joined Make-A-Wish as a volunteer in January of 2005 with a smile on her face, and to this day generously shares her smile. She completed her wish granting training and is currently working on four wishes. Her joy in working with our wish children is obvious, as she recounts her meetings with the wish families. Stephanie is a student at Union College and has introduced many other students to Make-A-Wish. She will be graduating in May and will be moving to Sarasota, FL. We will be sad to see her leave our Lincoln volunteer team, but our loss is Sarasota's gain, as she has expressed an interest in continuing as a wish granter in their chapter. Good luck, Stephanie!

Terry Nelson, John Morrissey, Kim Cerny, Wendy Lee and Andy Kroeger - These volunteers are a part of our Speaker's Bureau. Public Speaking is not everyone's cup of tea, but these four volunteers do a fantastic job of going out into the community to speak about Make-A-Wish to diverse groups. Since we have such a small staff, we are unable to make personal appearances to each group that wants us to speak. Volunteers like Terry, John, Kim, Wendy and Andy are able to fill our shoes and then some!

April Birthdays

- 1 - Deb Wacker
- 3 - Mark Bronder
- 5 - Deb McCollister, Jim O'Connor
- 7 - Rocky Lewis
- 8 - Tevee Turkel
- 9 - Crista Shuman
- 10 - Jan Parker, Pat Donnelly
- 11 - Margaret Maguire
- 13 - Mike Williams, Audrey Wise-Carrier
- 18 - Amity Linden
- 19 - Julie Gappa, Sarah Sibbersen
- 21 - Andrea Kellough
- 22 - Judy Rosenthal
- 25 - Nancy Davis
- 23 - Deb Hormann, Melissa Nunley
- 27 - Bertie O'Donnell
- 28 - Tim Dycus, Kari Bergsten
- 30 - Bryon Decker, Nicole Weber, Stephanie Rick

This month's quote:

"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

-Mahatma Gandhi

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