



A horseback ride fulfilled this boy's wish.



Meeting his favorite TV policeman was this little boy's wish.

Photos of children courtesy of The Make-A-Wish Foundation

It all begins with a dream or a wish. The wish does not have to be extravagant, but it can be—if you wish. The Make-A-Wish Foundation will grant that wish. The people there care that wishes are fulfilled just as they are wished for. But there are stipulations. First, the wish-maker may not be over 18 years of age. Next, the wish must be the child's own. It cannot be a parent's, grandparent's or anybody else's wish. It must be a personal wish. And lastly, the wish-maker must be terminally ill. It is this last stipulation that makes the wishes so special and the Make-A-Wish Foundation so remarkable—it grants last wishes to dying children all over the country.

"We have always fulfilled every wish that has come in," said Linda Dozoretz, executive director of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America. "We take them on a time basis. A child can be fine one day, and, within a week, they have died. So, we take the child who is deteriorating first."

Make-A-Wish is a unique organiza-

The Make-A-Wish Foundation

by Cynthia Scanlon

tion and so are the people who run it. Linda Dozoretz is confident and self-assured. She runs the organization with top-notch efficiency. She cares about the kids and their last wishes. And it's probably because she's been there.

Linda lost her own daughter to bone cancer. She was diagnosed at 12 and died just short of her 15th birthday. As Linda relays the events that surrounded

her daughter's death and encompassed their lives for that painful period, she is calm and poised. Yet, her hurt and anger still show through.

"For two and a half years, I felt we were going to be the different ones," Linda said. "We weren't going to be the ones who succumbed to bone cancer. We were going to be one of the winners. And there are so few winners."



Photo by Cynthia Scanlon

Linda Dozoretz, executive director of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America.

"Our whole life for those years revolved around what her treatments were. We kept her alive and living normally for as long as possible. And after she died, there was just nothing. I was very, very angry and hostile. How do you fight back? Coming and working with this group, I felt I was turning my feelings into a very positive way of fighting back."

The Make-A-Wish Foundation, which began operation in 1980, runs solely on donations. All arrangements are made and paid for by the foundation. Many of the airlines donate plane tickets for families or sell them at a greatly reduced price. Disneyland has also extended themselves above and beyond the call of duty. Without the major corporations, businesses and caring individuals, Make-A-Wish would not be able to do what they do.

"I think you have to have that initial love of children," Linda said. "We will never stop being amazed at some of the wishes that come about. We're handling a wish right now where a little boy wants

to meet Roy Rogers and Dale Evans and the stuffed Trigger. That's a different generation. Where did he find Roy Rogers? That amazes us."

"We try and protect the children so they're having the best time they can have at their healthiest time."

Linda Dozoretz

Other wishes have included the girl who wanted nothing more than to light the Christmas tree at the White House. Then, there was the little boy who wanted a birthday card. That was it, just a birthday card. And there was the little boy who wanted to be a cowboy for a day.

And who could forget the child who wanted to see what God created, so Make-A-Wish sent him to the Grand Canyon. One of Linda's favorite wishes was the boy who wanted to be like his father, who was a sergeant in the Army. So, they made the boy a colonel in the Air Force and his father had to salute him.

"One of our best victories was the little girl who was taken off the terminal list," Linda said. "And the doctor specifically states it was because of the atmosphere she had with the wish and the pleasure she got out of it."

It all began with a request from a 7-year-old little boy who wanted to be a policeman. Most thought Chris Greicius' dream was an impossibility because he was dying of cancer. But a man by the name of Tom Austin and a group of concerned and loving individuals got together with the Arizona Department of Public Safety to grant Chris his very special wish. They had a uniform custom-made for him along with a helmet and badge. He was flown around in

One child's wish was to light the White House Christmas tree.



a helicopter and treated as a full-fledged police officer for a day.

A couple of days later, Chris was put into the hospital. Two motorcycle officers stopped by to pin a set of wings on his pajamas. By that time, Chris was so full of medication all he could whisper was, "Aw, that's neat."

Chris died the next day. He received traditional police honors at his burial, including a motorcycle escort to the cemetery. His tombstone reads: "Christopher Greicius, Arizona State Trooper."

Believing that there were many other children out there who should be allowed one last wish before they die, a group of people got together and formed the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America. Today, five years later, they have 40 chapters throughout the United States and Canada.

"Originally, there were five of us," said Grace LaScala, the foundation's national secretary. "We had \$75 and a little boy who wanted a wish. We were just a group of people. We weren't even

an organization. Today, we have 40 chapters throughout the country, and yet it still remains simplistic with that human touch. We do one thing. We grant wishes to kids and that's it. We don't go into research or get involved in political things. We just do our thing."

Linda and Grace estimate that over 1,000 wishes have been granted by the various chapters. An exact number of wishes is hard to calculate, Grace LaScala said. "Each chapter does its own wishes," she said. "We don't require them to turn in their wishes, and wishes are in all stages of being granted."

One notable wish is the little boy who wanted to bake chocolate chip cookies at his grandmother's house. The Foundation Board was going to fly his grandparents out to Arizona and put them up in a hotel.

"But that's not really what the child's wish was," Linda said. "And we weren't listening. What he really wanted was to be in grandma's house and bake cookies with grandma."

Because the child was on chemotherapy, it was hard to set a time to send him back East to his grandmother's. Finally, one day, Linda got a call that the child would be off of his treatments for a week. There was no time to make arrangements for discount or donated tickets. So, Linda put the tickets on her charge cards and the family was on the plane that afternoon.

"We try and protect the children so they're having the best time they can have at their healthiest time," Linda said. "And this child being off chemotherapy for a week was a reprieve. So, we had to send him that week or he didn't get his wish."

As far as the future is concerned, both Linda and Grace said they will be around a lot longer granting wishes. Besides, they are busy preparing to grant one of their toughest wishes.

A 13-year-old boy wants a limousine and a blonde for the night. "It was suggested that we give him three blondes," Linda said. "We figured that would be more than he could handle." **MF**