

Sept-Nov 2013

MAKE · A · WISH[®]

Mississippi



Janee
Polycystic Kidney Disease
"I wish to go to Maui!" (2010)
See her follow up story inside!

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

Impact

The day after Janee Townsend returned from her wish, she called Make-A-Wish Mississippi for two reasons: to say thank you, and to ask how she could help.

A story like Janee's is a remarkable testament for a non-profit whose mission is to "grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy."

Janee's journey began at 11 when she was first diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease. Still today, Janee has between 35-50 cysts on each of her kidneys ranging in size from dimes and smaller to as large as golf balls. Her illness is progressive and has continued to intensify over the years. At age 15, she was hospitalized when one of her cysts became infected. Such an infection can put Townsend on bed rest anywhere between three weeks and two months. It was during her hospitalization in Birmingham, Alabama at the age of 15 that she first learned about Make-A-Wish. "My doctor told me about it and asked if it was something I might be interested in, then he referred me," said Janee.



Janee and boyfriend, Alex, returning from a fundraiser in Laurel



Janee receiving check from Painting with a Twist fundraiser

When Janee was 16, her mother received a phone call that would forever alter her outlook. "I remember it like it was yesterday. My mom answered the phone and by the time she hung up she was just crying," said Janee. "I guess I never really thought it would happen to me. I knew my condition was life-threatening, but I didn't think that something good like this would happen for me."

It took Janee several months to come to a decision on what she wanted her wish to be. "I knew I wanted to travel since I've always loved vacation, especially the beach," said Janee before laughing. "And it sounds kind of silly, but I used to watch Elvis movies with my Grandmother, and Blue Hawaii was one of my favorites. I always thought everything was so beautiful there."

When Janee made her decision she got back in touch with the Make-A-Wish staff. Little did she know, her wish was the first Hawaii wish for Director of Operations and Program Services, Judy Philips. Understanding that the wish may take awhile

Wish Stories

to pull together at that time, Janee knew what she wanted and was willing to wait. “I knew I’d never get an opportunity like this again, and I was fine with waiting. How awesome is it to anticipate the whole time that you get to go to Hawaii?” Janee exclaimed.

A month after Janee graduated from high school she left on a trip she’d never forget. “I’ll never forget seeing our room. It was like half the size of my house! It was gorgeous,” she remembered.

“We went snorkeling, deep sea fishing, parasailing, road ATVs in the mountains, spent days on the beach and went to a Luau.” And not just any luau—it was a special luau where Townsend was the VIP.

“I sat in the front row in a space that said VIP and they even announced it. Everything about that trip was awesome,” said Janee.

When she returned home, she picked up the phone the very next day to find out what she could do.

“I had just graduated from high school, and when you are that age you don’t always know what you want to do, but when I returned from my wish I knew exactly what it was for me,” Janee added.

“I wanted to make everybody with a life-threatening medical condition feel the way that I felt on my wish. It was the most amazing feeling I’ve ever experienced—knowing that they put so much effort into making my wish something incredible and special just for me. I wanted to give that to other kids,” said Janee.

Only 18 at the time, Janee had to wait until 21 to begin serving as a wish-granter for the

foundation. Upon turning 21 this past November, Janee went through the training and application process and became a volunteer in January. While she hasn’t had the opportunity to meet with wish families yet, she has been active in fundraising.

Leading the Painting with a Twist fundraiser in Hattiesburg, Janee raised \$210 for the organization. She also spoke at the “Cruisin’ for a Wish” event in Laurel earlier this year. And she plans to keep close to the foundation as she finishes her bachelor’s degree in a few years.

“Make-A-Wish changed my whole life,” said Janee. “It changed the outlook I had on my condition.

I think sometimes kids with these life-threatening conditions tend to have a negative outlook on so much because it seems like they are always hurting and that’s how I felt. I was miserable and depressed throughout high school, but when I

got that wish it made me see that something great could happen to me,” added Janee.

“It continues to change my life everyday. When I get upset about things, or when I have an episode like I did last month, I think about that wish and that I can get up and help others to have an experience like mine—I can be a part of other kids having the opportunity to get out of reality and see the positive things that can happen in their life.”

Now three years later, Janee still tells Make-A-Wish the same two things she did on the day she returned: thank you and what can I do to help.

“It continues to change my life everyday. When I get upset about things, or when I have an episode like I did last month, I think about that wish and that I can get up and help others to have an experience like mine”



KFWK Spotlight



Lawrence County High School's Mu Alpha Theta chapter led another very successful fundraiser for Make-A-Wish® Mississippi this 2012-2013 school year. Throughout the year, the members had fundraiser to raise funds to grant wishes like Mollie Spence's and Lilly Young's. Both of these precious girls had the same wish--to go to Disney World. Their wishes were granted because of the generous supporters who contributed to these fundraisers.

Lawrence County High School's Mu Alpha Theta Chapter planned an awesome check presentation celebration on April 24th. Mollie, Lilly and their families were able to attend and join in the fun. The students presented Make-A-Wish representative, Jane Walsh, with a check for **\$8,250.00!!** This is more than any other school has raised for Make-A-Wish Mississippi this school year! Congratulations and a sincere thank you to everyone who helped make this fundraiser so successful!

Kids for Wish Kids

Special thanks to these schools who raised over \$50,000 for Make-A-Wish this school year:

Biloxi Jr. High
East Central Community College
Germantown High School
Girl Scout Troop #5308
Jackson Academy
Lawrence County High School's Mu Alpha Theta
Madison Central High School
Madison Middle School
Neshoba Central Schools
North Pike School District Schools
Northwest Rankin High School
Oak Grove High School
Our Lady Academy Senior Class
Ocean Springs High School
Purvis High School
Ridgeland High School
Rosa Scott School
Simpson County Academy
Wesson Attendance Center



How you can get involved in Kids for Wish Kids:

Kids For Wish Kids is an extremely popular program for kids because it is managed by kids. Kids For Wish Kids allows students to build leadership skills by forming committees, coming up with fundraising ideas and carrying them out. Teachers and parents often serve as advisors, but ownership of the group belongs solely to the kids involved. Students essentially raise the money to fund a child's wish!

If you would like to help out, please contact Swayze Pentecost at our office at 601-366-9474 ext. 1303 and we'll send you all the information you need.

Wishes

Jewelers for Children



Jewelers for Children began its relationship with Make-A-Wish in 1999, continuing the steadfast support for nearly 15 years. JFC has raised over \$8 million for Make-A-Wish, helping grant over 1,300 wishes in the U.S. since its inception. In FY2013, JFC will donate \$600,000 to Make-A-Wish through the Wish A State program to provide funding to grant at least one wish in each state.

Jewelers for Children granted Cailey's wish to go on a Nickelodeon Cruise. The two best parts of her wish were swimming with the dolphins and getting slimed! She also enjoyed the huge ship and hanging out with another wish-family. Cailey did not want to get off of the ship and is already planning another Nickelodeon Family Cruise. Cailey was treated like royalty and loved every minute of it!

Luxaire

Luxaire is a division of the Unitary Products Group of Luxaire – A Johnson Controls Company. It is a large supplier of heating, ventilating, air-conditioning, and refrigeration products in the United States, and a leading international supplier. Luxaire began its alliance with Make-A-Wish in 2001 and has contributed more than \$2.4 million to date.

Luxaire sponsored Jabari's wish to go to Disney World. He had a fabulous trip that began with a send off party at CiCi's, his favorite restaurant! Jabari and his family stayed at Give Kids the World where he enjoyed seeing all the characters--especially his visit with Santa Claus.



UnitedHealthcare Group



UnitedHealthcare is dedicated to helping people nationwide live healthier lives by simplifying the health care experience, meeting consumer health and wellness needs, and sustaining trusted relationships with care providers. As a part of a three-year, \$3 million alliance, each of Make-A-Wish's 62 chapters is eligible to receive wish-granting funds. UnitedHealth Group has funded more than 1,250 wishes beginning with its initial three-year, \$4.5 million alliance in 2007.

UHC sponsored TJ's wish to go on a shopping spree. They started the day with lunch and a limousine. He visited some of his favorite stores including Gamestop, Best Buy, Aeropostale, and Hibbetts Sports. Among his many purchases were: an X Box and some games, a stereo system, I-Touch 5th Generation Blue, headphones, an I-Tunes gift card, as well as tons of new clothes and new shoes. TJ and his family couldn't have been more appreciative.

Trusted Choice

Trusted Choice is an organization made up of thousands of independent insurance agents. They offer a broad selection of insurance and financial services. Trusted Choice was a \$7,500 sponsor of Make-A-Wish Mississippi's 20th Annual Golf Tournament, held April 26, 2013 at Deerfield Country Club.

Trusted Choice sponsored Morgan's wish to go on a shopping spree. Morgan, her friends and her mother were picked up in a limousine and started their day shopping at the Renaissance at Colony Park. After going to tons of stores, they stopped for lunch at MINT. After a delicious meal, the staff at MINT surprised Morgan with a cake topped with a basketball and the words "LANIER BULLDOGS." Morgan attends Lanier and is a huge fan of basketball! Next, they went to Northpark Mall and shopped at several additional stores. Morgan felt like a real queen when several of the stores presented her with gift baskets upon her arrival.



Volunteer Spotlight

Betty Clements flipped through a photo album she retrieved from her desk—each page filled with smiling faces of children that have made a difference in her life.

They are her wish kids.

Betty, like most wish granters, has a personal connection to the children she's encountered over the past 11 years through Make-A-Wish® Mississippi. Even after granting over 75 wishes, she still continues with the same zeal she had on her first day.

"I still remember my first wish child," said Betty. "She had Cerebral Palsy and wanted a therapy room. I came back to the office, so excited to get started. We got her a therapy room by buying one of those red barns from Home Depot," remembered Betty.. "I went out and I got the sheetrock, electrical work, insulation, ac/heat window unit all donated. I remember when it was all I done I stepped back and thought 'Wow. What a blessing' and I knew this is where God wanted me to be."

Betty's involvement with Make-A-Wish started in 2002 when she began volunteering for the foundation in the office. By 2004 Betty was trained and began going on wishes with her long-

time friend Marlene Crews. Now, Betty volunteers as the volunteer coordinator for the foundation. Recently Betty took on a new part-time staff role as wish coordinator. She finalizes all the details of wishes including itineraries for the families and sending final wish packets.

Even though she is busy in the office, she never forgets her wish kids and continues to meet more and more that are added to that photo album on her desk. "Granting a wish is a joyful experience. It makes you happy to see the child happy—and that smile on their face," she sighed, "that's your reward. It's all you need."



**The complete story was featured in our June email blast. To see the full article visit the volunteer spotlight button at: ms.wish.org/ways-to-help*



WAYS TO GIVE:

Make-A-Wish is able to grant wishes because of your generous donations. Here is how you can continue to make wishes come true:

- * Donate Online at ms.wish.org/ways-to-help/donate-online/
- * Sign up for ACH Bank drafts by calling us at 601-366-WISH(9474)
- * Mail your donations to us at 576 Highland Colony Parkway, Suite 120 Ridgeland, MS 39157

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Mississippi

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Upcoming Events:

September 26th- Eat at Raising Canes!
County Line Road, Jackson

October 26th- Brookhaven Walk for Wishes
Brookhaven

October 26th- Fear the Okra Fun Run
Cleveland

**Contact Jane Walsh at 601-366-9474 ext. 1305 for more information on events or visit our website at www.ms.wish.org*