

Wishes 2008

LITTLE WISHES FOUNDATION

A Children's Hospital of Illinois Foundation, Peoria, Illinois

Thank You

This is the first publication of our Little Wishes Foundation newsletter. It has been a year since the foundation was created, a year since we began asking our friends and family to participate, and a year of experiencing how we can help make lives of little ones much brighter, even for a brief moment. On behalf of the children who want a chance to smile and laugh, we thank you for caring, for sharing, for helping us achieve a source that will touch their lives and perpetuate our ability to help.

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Wishes Newsletter
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The Creation of Little Wishes

Little Wishes is a non-profit, charitable foundation created in 2007 by Cafeteria Alternatives, Inc. It was designed specifically to meet the individual wants of children who are patients at the Children's Hospital of Illinois, Peoria. Cafeteria Alternatives has been involved with the Children's Hospital since 1996 through its business affiliation with OSF St. Francis Medical Center. Although the Children's Hospital Foundation umbrellas many foundations that support research, equipment purchases, housing and medical needs, none address the personal wants of children while they are hospitalized. Whether they are suffering from incurable diseases, birth defects, medical disorders or traumatic injuries, they want to smile and laugh, they want love and compassion and Little Wishes is trying to help.

Over the past 12 years Cafeteria Alternatives has been helping CHOI patients and their families whenever possible. Seeing children struggle with fear and pain and fighting battles for life prompted CA to become involved on a regular basis. Meals are provided to families in crisis; pediatric pizza parties are held weekly for patients, their families and hospital staff; each Tuesday the CA staff goes room to room with hot chocolate (snow cones during warm weather) and treats for the children; dvd players have been purchased for each pediatric room along with portable dvd players children can take with them while waiting for procedures, treatments or testing; a quadriplegic teenager has been provided with a voice-activated computer; a young girl battling a rare bone cancer was able to attend her homecoming, which included dinner with friends, a limo at her disposal and a special outfit; and a grade-schooler whose legs were crushed in an accident received an MP3 player as an enticement to work toward walking again. Cafeteria Alternatives has also integrated CHOI patient therapy with our restaurant by opening the vending machines as a means to help motivate and comfort. Upon successfully completing daily therapy sessions to regain use of their limbs, children can choose whatever treats they want as a reward. These are just a few ways in which Cafeteria Alternatives has been involved and these are the impetus for the creation of Little Wishes Foundation.

Little Wishes Foundation is only about helping children and making a difference in their lives. Its primary focus is to aggressively provide the day to day wants of children whose lives are no longer normal and carefree. Little Wishes also remembers birthdays, holidays, and any special occasion that will bring joy during trying times of hospital stays. In addition to receiving funds from private donations, Cafeteria Alternatives also matches monthly CHOI canister collections which continue to help fund the foundation. To date, Cafeteria Alternatives has contributed over \$67,000 to Little Wishes Foundation and the Children's Hospital of Illinois.

Special Project

Little Wishes Foundation works directly with the CHOI Department of Child Life Services whose staff are our liaisons to each child and their wants. The stories of the suffering of many of these children are heart-breaking. Even with the tremendous skills of the CHOI medical staff and enormous strides in medicine, prayers are sometimes the only hope for many of these patients. Little Wishes has been able to address this by providing prayer blankets to children admitted for care. Little Wishes purchases fabric and members of Caring Hearts Ministry, St. Patrick's Church of Bloomington, and their friends, lovingly create each blanket. The blankets are sewn while prayers are said for the recipient, they are then blessed by the church's pastor, brought to the hospital and each child is able to choose his or her favorite. The blankets are soft and washable, brightly colored with fun prints, and age and gender appropriate. The volunteers also sew labels onto the blankets which lets each child and their family know they are wrapped in prayers and love. Prayer blankets can be used for snuggling, to help calm tears, comfort pain and the cheery prints help create fun scenarios for daydreams. Since the beginning of 2008 we have distributed over 200 blankets to the CHOI children.

Donations

Little Wishes Foundation is new but the idea is not. Helping children who are suffering because of disease or trauma is what our hearts and our faith draw us to. The creation of Little Wishes Foundation allows us to become a part of their reality and gives them one more chance to smile and laugh, even for a moment.

Little Wishes Foundation is a 501c3 organization. All donations to Little Wishes Foundation are administered by the Children's Hospital of Illinois, Peoria. Donations are tax-deductable and acknowledged by CHOI. If you would like to make a donation please make your check payable to Little Wishes Foundation and send it to Little Wishes Foundation, CHOI Foundation, 530 N.E. Glen Oak Avenue, Peoria, Illinois 61637. Donations can be made in your name, given as gifts to honor someone or as memorials.

Spreading The Word

Wishes, the newsletter, will become an annual publication during 2009. It will include stories about the children, special projects, updates on funding and expenses and other information that may be of interest. A web site is currently under construction and will be available later in 2009. If you would like additional information about Little Wishes Foundation please contact Susan Rivard, 309-828-7309.

THE SOUND OF A CHILD'S GIGGLE **NEVER** LEAVES YOUR HEART!