

The Children's Wish Foundation  
Granting Sick Children's Wishes for over 30 Years  
by  
Brian Campbell

All children have dreams of what they want to do, where they want to go, people and places they want to see when they get older. But what about children whose chance for a future is limited? What do they have to dream about? What do they have to look forward to?

That's where the Children's Wish Foundation comes in. Founded in Ontario in 1982, by stay-at-home mom, Laura Cole, the Children's Wish Foundation is now a cross-Canada organization that helps to grant the wishes of children with life threatening illnesses.

The Children's Wish Foundation is the only wish granting organization that is strictly Canadian. An office was opened in 1984 for Manitoba and Nunavut which currently grants up to 50 wishes per year. It originally began as an entirely volunteer run organization. Now there are five staff, but they still rely very heavily on volunteers to keep things running and granting wishes.

Director, Maria Toscano, has been with the Manitoba/Nunavut chapter of the Children's Wish Foundation for 19 years and has watched the organization grow and evolve. She has also seen first-hand the work that the organization does and the results it has achieved. She said, "Once I got involved with the children and the wish granting, I was pretty much hooked. It is very fulfilling and the families are very humble and appreciative."

The Children's Wish Foundation works alongside the Children's Hospital, CancerCare Manitoba, Ronald McDonald House, as well as doctors, nurses and social workers, to connect with children who fit their criteria they help grant as many wishes as they can. Wishes range from trips to Disney World, meetings with celebrities, items to make their life more comfortable, to nearly anything that it is practical to grant. "It really depends on the child's imagination, how far it extends," Maria said. "It could be fishing in Hawaii, or swimming with the dolphins. We even had one girl who went to the Lindt Chocolate Factory in Switzerland."

All wishes are granted one-on-one, meaning that each child and family has their own personal experience. “If it is a trip, it is seven days,” Maria said. “And we have a great partnership with Blue Cross, who provide all the medical insurance, even for these children with pre-existing conditions. It is a huge cost saving for the organization. We work very closely with partners to keep our costs down, so our donors know that the majority of their donations go directly to the wishes.”

The Children’s Wish Foundation receives no government funding, so they rely on donations, sponsorships and fundraising to remain in operation. They have two main fundraising events every year: a gala in February and a golf tournament in June, as well as some smaller events. However, much of their fundraising comes from outside the organization. Maria said, “Most of our funding comes in through third-party community events. We have great relationships in the community with people who help us year after year. It can be a golf tournament, a walk, a barbecue or a motorcycle ride, or any other type of event. We help them out with promotional material, volunteers, whatever they need. We are very fortunate that we have a great community that really believes in our mission and is willing to support us.”

The Children’s Wish Foundation is always looking for more support, through volunteerism, fundraising, awareness, whatever you can do to help.

“Unfortunately, there are more sick children out there than we are seeing, and that’s why awareness is such an important thing to us,” Maria said. “When you help our organization, your donation is tangible; you get to see first-hand where your money is going. What we do for these families is very important, and we can’t do it without our community’s help.”

To help support the Children’s Wish Foundation, go to [www.childrenswish.ca](http://www.childrenswish.ca) and click Manitoba/Nunavut, or call 204-945-9474.