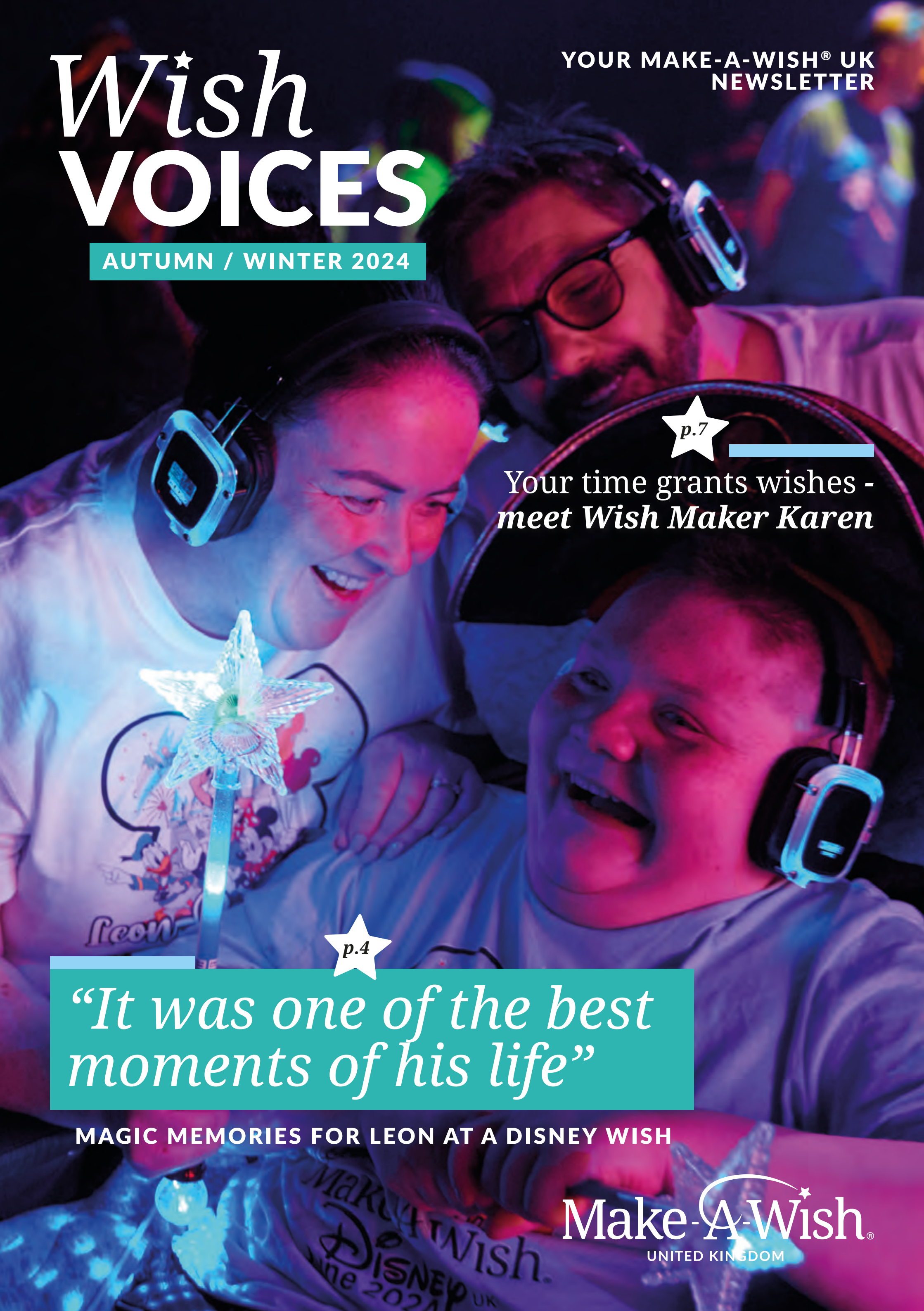
YOUR MAKE-A-WISH® UK
NEWSLETTER

Wish
VOICES

AUTUMN / WINTER 2024



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Your time grants wishes -
meet Wish Maker Karen

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“It was one of the best moments of his life”

MAGIC MEMORIES FOR LEON AT A DISNEY WISH

Make-A-Wish®
UNITED KINGDOM

Wish VOICES

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Make-A-Wish®
UNITED KINGDOM

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Welcome to Wish Voices!

It's a pleasure to share our second edition of the year, filled with inspiring stories and shared successes that are only possible thanks to wonderful people like you.

Before you discover all the magical things that have happened so far this year, I wanted to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude. You are helping us to grant a record number of wishes to children who deserve to wish for more than a life defined by their illness. Thanks to you, we are able to rescue the magic of childhood and create lasting memories families will treasure forever.

In these pages, you'll find the quiet triumphs, the heartwarming moments, and the subtle miracles that your generosity has made possible.

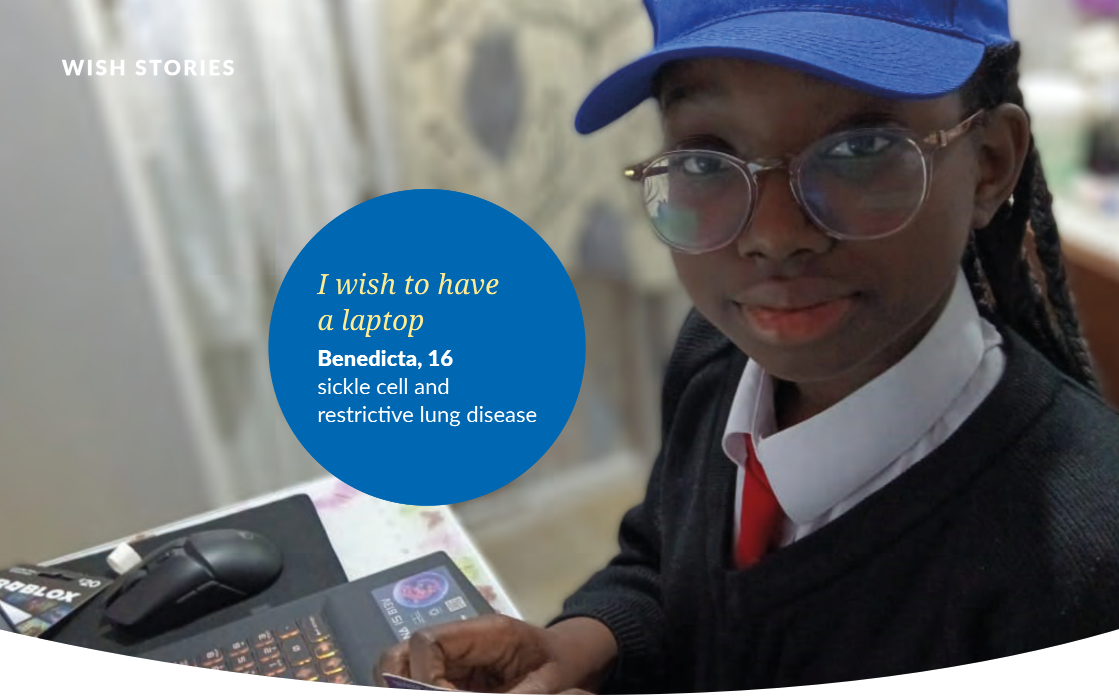
Each page is a testament to the unwavering spirit of our wish children, their families, and the dedicated supporters and volunteers who make wishes come true. A personal highlight for me was attending A Disney Wish which you can read about on page 4. As I'm sure you know, an ongoing goal of ours is to grant more wishes every year, with this in mind we have recently launched our Community Wish Maker volunteering role which you can read about on page 6.

So, I invite you to join us in celebrating the beautiful stories and the meaningful impact that your contributions have made. Your belief in the power of a wish continues to inspire us all.

With warmth and gratitude,

Jason

Jason Suckley
CEO



I wish to have a laptop

Benedicta, 16
sickle cell and
restrictive lung disease

Living with sickle cell disease means that Benedicta is unable to partake in physical activity. A normal cold could also land the teen in hospital, causing a great amount of pain. To add to it all, her restrictive lung disease means that her lungs only hold 65% oxygen - a stark difference from most adult lungs. “I need oxygen to sleep at night,” Benedicta told us.

But her experience with sickle cell and lung disease has motivated Benedicta to become a doctor in the future: “I’ve been inspired by my sickle cell doctor team. I want to help kids like me!”

That’s why her wish to have a laptop was so important: Not only would she be able to play games, something that offers respite from her condition, but she would also be able to use the device to study - aiding her in her dream to become a doctor.

“I’m in year 11, so I wanted something that I can use for studying and playing games to relax” explained the teen. When she heard that she would be getting a new laptop she was thrilled: “I was really happy! I could actually get a laptop that I could use!”

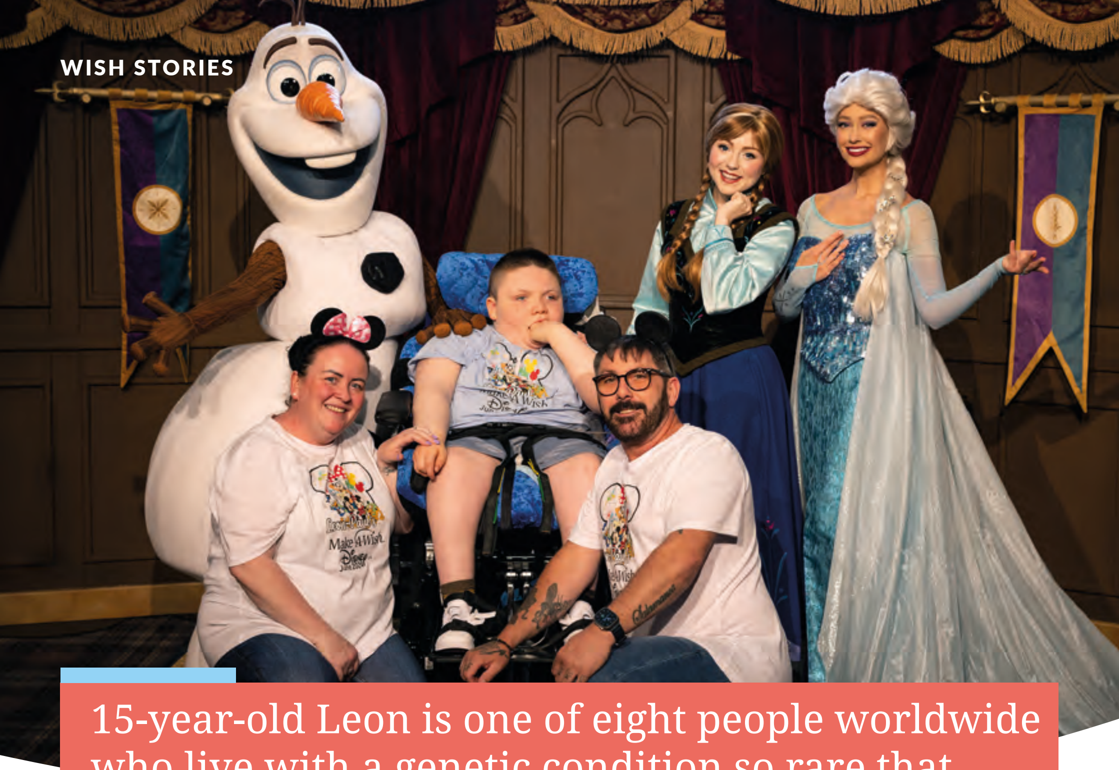
Now Benedicta can use her laptop to study, also taking well-deserved study breaks whilst playing her favourite games.

She told us:

“A lot of hard things happened to me. It’s nice to have something that you may not be able to afford. It’s something that makes you happy! Thank you very much for making my wish possible - I’m so grateful for everything that Make-A-Wish has done for me!”

THANKS TO YOU, WE’RE ABLE TO MAKE WISHES LIKE BENEDICTA’S COME TRUE.

You can make more magical wishes come true by donating at **make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/give-now**



15-year-old Leon is one of eight people worldwide who live with a genetic condition so rare that it has yet to be named. However his wish has allowed his family to make precious memories together while immersed in the magic of Disney.

Leon spent his first year of life away from hospital, a seemingly healthy newborn. But that quickly changed. Mum Toni told us:

“When he was one, he started getting poorly. I remember a doctor taking us into an office in the hospital and telling us that he might only live till six. He was just three at the time. Our world was shattered.” Still Leon’s diagnosis remained unknown.

Following years of surgeries aimed to improve his quality of life, Leon and his family finally got the answer to his mystery condition.

“In 2022 the geneticist got in touch and told us that they found something in his DNA, he has an ultra-rare condition. Only eight people in the world have it,” said Mum.

The condition impacts Leon’s speech and mobility and is so rare that he is the only person in the UK currently known to have it. “It looks like he has the most severity of it, he can’t walk or talk,” said Toni. “It’s a lot - he spends time after time in hospital.”

As well as lengthy hospital stays, his condition pulls him away from childhood activities: “He can’t attend school properly, he had to stop going to parties. He used to go horse riding, but he stopped doing that after his seizures started.”

Life is riddled with uncertainty for the whole family: “It’s hard because you don’t know what will happen with his life. When he was four, we had a massive birthday party because we didn’t know if it would be the last.”

Still, bubbly Leon spreads light and joy wherever he goes: “For what he’s been through and goes through he’s so resilient, strong, and beautiful. So, if he can be strong, so can we.”

Leon’s wish came as a welcome surprise to his parents, who first came to learn about A Disney Wish through Claire House Hospice, Leon’s hospice and a referral partner of Make-A-Wish UK. As Mum explained, “They asked if we’d like to refer Leon for it - it was music to our ears. We haven’t been able to do anything like this since 2019, so we thought to be able to do something as a family away from the hustle and bustle of medical things would be so lovely.”

For Leon’s mum and dad, an opportunity to make positive memories together was much-needed: “We just don’t know what’s ahead for Leon, he spends a lot more time in hospital now.”

As they entered the grounds of Hoar Cross Hall, the location of A Disney Wish, Toni, Pablo, and Leon were immersed in what they referred to as ‘a beautiful bubble’, a world far away from hospital.

The three-day wish involved fun-filled activities for Leon to enjoy, from Storytime with Belle to learning superhero tricks and tips at the Avengers Training Initiative. Throughout the experience, Leon also got to meet his favourite characters including Elsa and her friends Olaf and Anna.

But for Mum, the best part of the wish was the silent disco as it allowed Leon to do something he usually wouldn’t: “He usually goes to bed earlier. To go and have the disco later than his bedtime was amazing!”

Another highlight of the wish for Leon and his family included spending that precious quality time together. As Mum explained:

“To experience it as a family was amazing. We weren’t carers for once, attending medical needs, it was just us with Leon.”

Expanding on the impact of the wish she also told us:

“A Disney Wish was one of the best moments in the last 15 years of Leon’s life. It was catered so well to his disabilities. It was the first time we were able to be a family in a long time. We weren’t tired for once - it was just happy! We got to watch him enjoy everything!”

The wish also provided psychological respite for the whole family:

“From morning till night, during the wish, a lot of his anxiety had stopped. There has always been a prognosis. You’ve always got fear and anxiety, but after that the wish offered escape from that. It was amazing and so many families can benefit from that. We couldn’t be more thankful.”

Wishes are waiting in your community and **we need your help** to grant them!

Hear from one of our Wish Makers on the next page!

We couldn't function the way we do at Make-A-Wish UK without our volunteers. Community Wish Makers are wonderful volunteers who represent us in their local communities. Operating at a local level, the work they do supports us in granting the wish of every eligible child across the country. From organising and encouraging fundraising events in their local area, attending wishes, speaking to local businesses and spreading the Make-A-Wish message, to hosting their own fundraising balls, our Community Wish Makers do it all!

With the demand for wishes growing, we urgently need support to help us to say yes to every eligible child, and that's where you come in. Once our expert team of Wishgranters have designed a child's magical wish, we need your time, skills, passion and energy to bring that wish to life and make it a reality.

This could include reaching out to local companies for their support, inspiring your community to raise funds, delivering gifts to wish children and supporting families on the day of their wish. It's a perfect role for you if you love getting out in your local communities and bringing people together for a good cause. By volunteering your time in your local area, you can help us to grant wishes for critically ill children near you. The reward of knowing you have made a local impact is what our Community Wish Makers love about the role – so why not get involved yourself and support Make-A-Wish UK in your local community!

How do you get involved?

To find out more about the role visit **make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/volunteer-roles**

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Volunteer *Karen*

After my daughter had a wish granted, I wanted to find out more about how Make-A-Wish managed to achieve all they do and how I could help. Knowing first-hand the impact a wish can have on the wish child and the whole family is a great motivator. And so, I became a volunteer Wish Maker in 2016.

Back then, of course, wish visits were almost always in person, but now with video calls being the primary way to capture wishes I love how that has opened up the opportunity to meet wish children from all over the country and I feel really privileged to be a small part of it. I think that really getting to know all about the wish child to help build a true picture for the guys back in the office to start working on building the wish is a real honour. Like lots of volunteers, I work full-time, so the flexibility of how much time you can give each week really works for me too.

And it's not just about the wish discoveries, I've done many other things from bucket collecting at an arena and joining a family on a wish to meet a WWF superhero right up to attending the big events like A Disney Wish and A Night of Wishes. I'm also involved in community wishes and one that stands out is creating a tranquil fairy corner of a garden for a local child, that was hard work and great fun in equal measures and to be that involved in making it happen is really rewarding!

Karen

18,473
the total number of wishes granted since 1986!
(as of July 2024)

£10 could help buy cupcakes for a child whose wish is to have a party

£30 could buy a costume for a child whose wish is to be a superhero

£80 could buy a sensory toy as part of a bedroom makeover wish

1,270
wishes estimated to be granted within our current financial year 2023/24

1,038
wish discoveries were carried out
(where ideas for what a wish could be are explored)

578 incredible volunteers
(197 of which were recruited in 2023/24!)

You can make even more magical wishes come true at **make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/give-now**

The toughest footrace on Earth

Ines' desert dreams and fundraising triumph

The Marathon des Sables is a 250km race through the Moroccan desert. It is the oldest ultra marathon on earth and is still widely regarded as the toughest footrace on the planet, not so much because of the distance, but because of the extreme conditions in which it takes place.

In April 2024 at 16 years old, Ines wanted to be the youngest girl to participate competitively in this event. That was her dream, which stemmed from a passion for running, and a will to put that passion to the ultimate test.

She thought that by doing something so extreme and seemingly impossible, she'd show that anyone can realise their dreams. Choosing to fundraise for Make-A-Wish UK was a no-brainer as she felt incredibly fortunate to be in a situation where she could fulfill her dream, and thought that it would only be fitting if it allowed less fortunate children to realise theirs.

It's safe to say that Ines conquered the challenge and raised a staggering £9,688 in the process.

If you are feeling inspired to help us grant more wishes by taking on a challenge - whether a 250km marathon, or a 5-mile walk - we've got something for everyone at **makeawish.org.uk/wv/events**

I wish to meet Slogo and Jelly

Ewan, 10
brain tumour

“It came out of the blue. He hadn’t been poorly for very long,” said mum Stefanie. In August of 2022, after an MRI scan revealed that her then eight-year-old son had a brain tumour, Mum and Ewan were rushed to Southampton Hospital. Just three weeks after his initial symptoms, Ewan underwent surgery to remove the tumour.

Ewan’s diagnosis not only tore him from his brother and dad - it robbed him of his basic skills. As Mum told us:

“After his surgery, he had lost most of his mobility on his right, so he had to relearn how to eat, walk and write.”

Two years of Ewan’s childhood have been tainted by the implications of having a brain tumour, robbing him of time spent with his brother. But there was one thing that allowed Ewan to connect with his brother whilst in hospital - catching up on their favourite YouTubers Slogo and Jelly’s latest videos.

“He and his brother bond over watching their videos. We used to FaceTime every night, watching their videos is something they could do remotely and then interact about whilst on FaceTime.”

“The night before his brain tumour operation, I said we can put their videos on to put his mind into a good place. When he came round from the operation, he could barely talk but asked to watch their videos.”

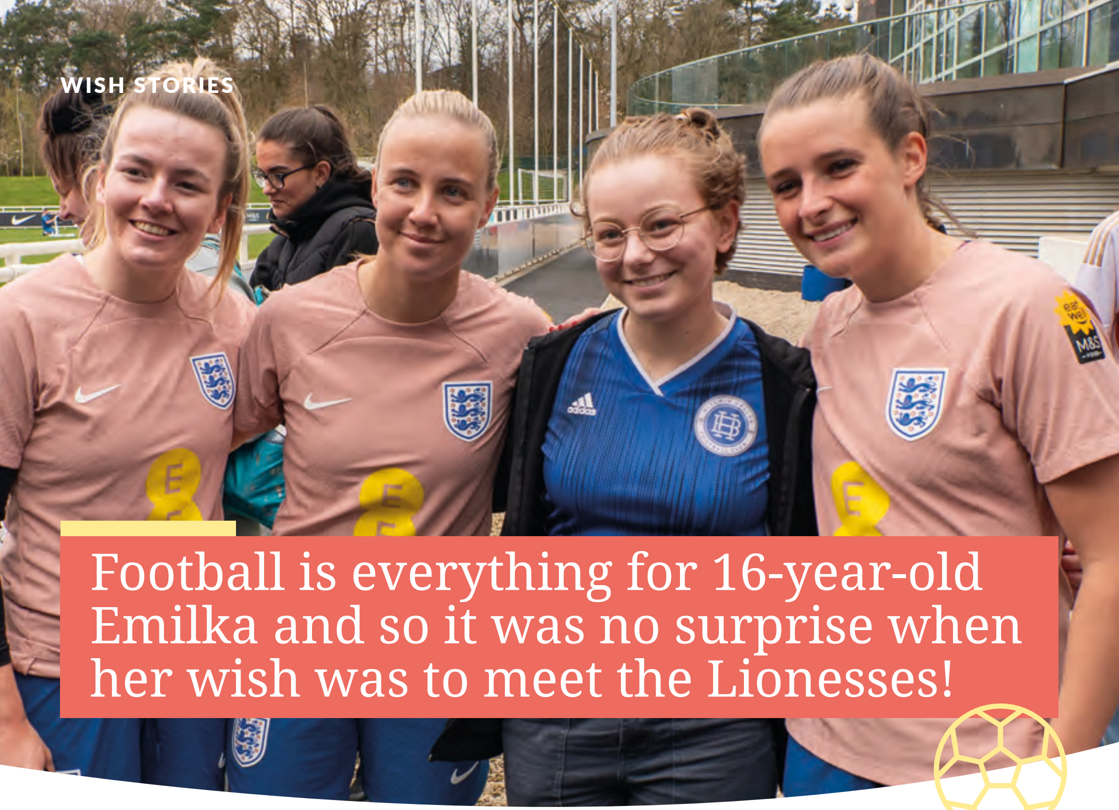
It was no surprise to his family that when exploring ideas for a wish, Ewan wanted to meet his YouTube heroes.

During the wish, Slogo, Jelly and Ewan sat down to play Minecraft, building a mansion with the Minecraft pros which Ewan rightfully named “Not-really-a-mansion” before battling some zombies - Ewan’s favourite part of the wish.

For mum, the highlight of the wish was seeing her son happy: “Seeing him so happy meant so much for Ewan and I, it’s all you want as a parent.”

“He’s getting to that point where he can remember his childhood. The last few years have been lacking in positive memories, so it’s so good to start fresh with good happy ones!”

“Thank you - it doesn’t seem a lot, but meeting Slogo and Jelly made my little boy very happy. It boosted Ewan.”



Football is everything for 16-year-old Emilka and so it was no surprise when her wish was to meet the Lionesses!

"It was really fast," explained mum Marta as she spoke about her daughter's diagnosis. When Emilka started to feel unwell, her GP rushed her to hospital to undergo further testing. Here, it was revealed that she had Good Pastures disease: a rare illness that had attacked Emilka's kidneys.

Following her diagnosis was a long three-and-a-half years of dialysis, followed by a kidney transplant

"It was horrible and such a hard time. One second she was an active girl playing football, the next second she was in intensive care. "

For Emilka, her condition robbed her of playing her favourite sport: "When she started getting ill it stopped everything. She tried to get back to football, but it was too hard."

Whilst undergoing dialysis and unable to play, watching the match on her phone offered her a needed distraction. It was only fitting that when she was offered a wish, meeting the Lionesses was the first thing that came to her mind.

The wish started with a private meet and greet - the highlight of the trip for Emilka. "She showed them her football medals from the cadets. She was excited to share her football story with the players," explained Mum.

"It was amazing to see that she wasn't thinking about her illness, instead she was thinking about what was happening in that moment. The really fantastic thing is that she could choose her wish, something different and special. She could feel fantastic on that day. Now, when we talk about her wish, it gives us some happiness."

Meeting her idols has also taught Emilka to be strong; "The Lionesses are strong, and it showed Emilka that she can be strong as well."

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Give a regular monthly gift

With your regular monthly gift, we can plan for the future. Together we can reach our goal to grant a life changing wish for every eligible child. Even a small donation every month can make a big difference!

make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/give-now

Volunteer

Do you want to have a direct impact on local wishes in your area? By volunteering you can help us raise vital funds and secure gifts in kind to make wishes a reality in your community! For more information please visit:

make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/volunteer-roles

Challenge Events

Take on the London Landmarks Half Marathon, the only half marathon to go through both the City of London and City of Westminster! Famous for celebrating the grand, the quirky and the hidden sights of London, this iconic race is always one to remember. Join the 2025 #WishHero team at

make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/londonlandmarks

Give now

Donate **using the QR code** or at **make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/give-now**

Fundraise

From cake sales, sponsored swims or a quiz night with friends, organise your own fundraising event and help us grant wishes to critically ill children. We will be on hand every step of the way to support you with any materials or support you might need. To take a look at ideas or register your event visit:

make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/fundraise

Amazon Wish List

If you'd like to support with granting wishes, please see our Amazon Wish List below, where you can see a selection of gift cards that we are in need of to grant our shopping spree wishes!

make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/wishlist

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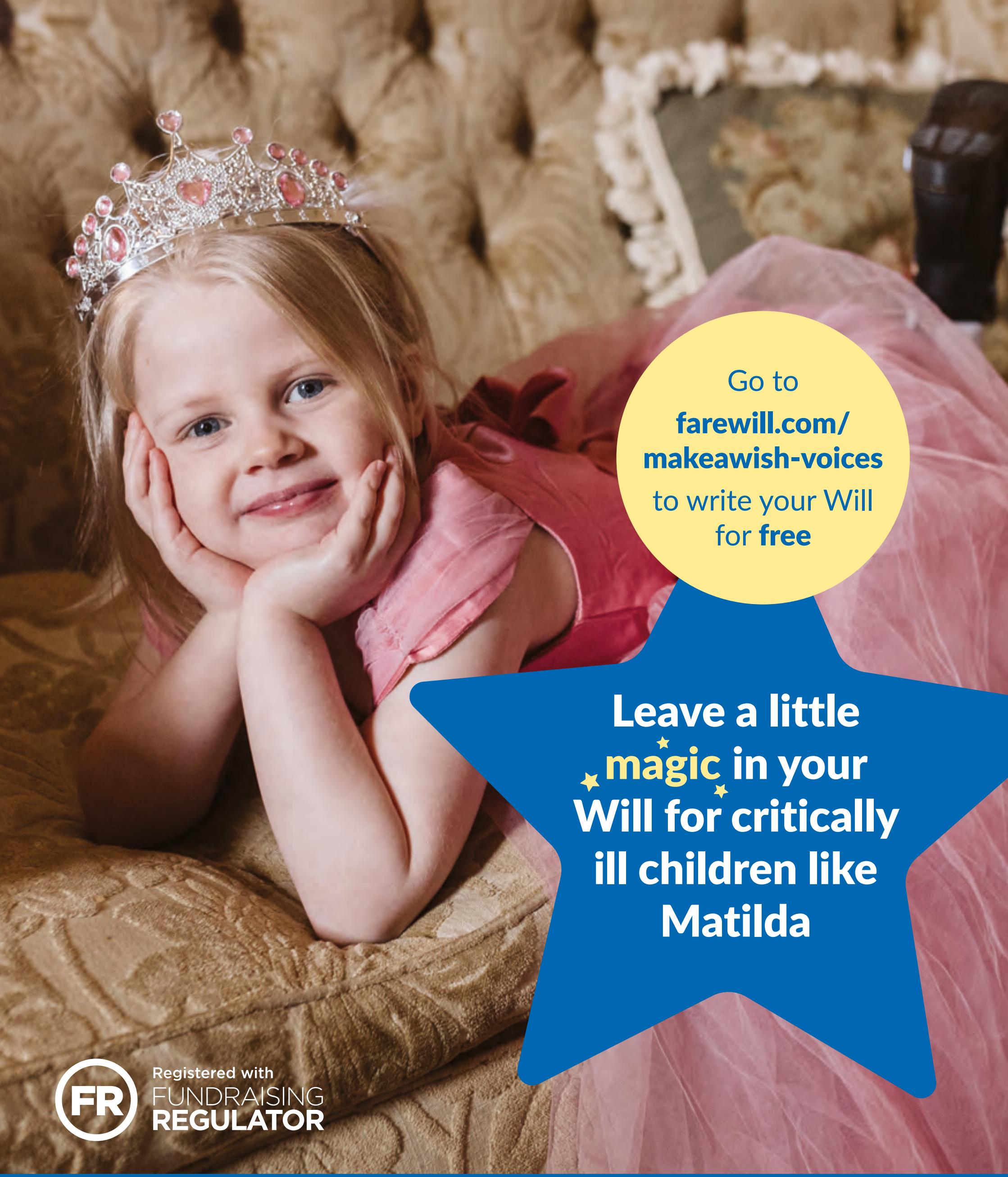
make-a-wish.org.uk/wv/lottery



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