



2018 Spring Newsletter

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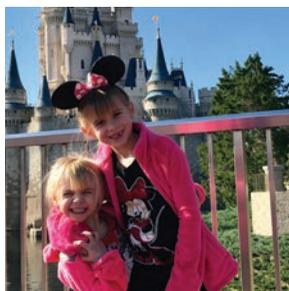
2017 WAS A BANNER YEAR!

172
wishes granted



This year The Rainbow Connection granted a **record breaking 172 wishes!**

These incredible wishes included amazing adventures, shopping sprees, bedroom makeovers, and even a special gaming computer. Some of our wish children got to meet their heroes! Violet played checkers with Elsa and Justin met the San Francisco Giants! Please help us by making a donation, so we can continue making dreams come true.



A Cause for Celebration

Last November, The Rainbow Connection hosted its annual Celebration of Dreams. This kick-off to the holiday season always proves to be an incredible evening full of wonder. This year's event was **SOLD OUT** for the first time ever!

400 guests came together at San Marino Club in Troy to raise more than \$200,000 - a record-breaking year!

"The Violets" from Rochester, and the "Mercy Mimes" and "Mercyaires" from Mercy High School added excitement and fun to the evening. **Kim Russell** from WXYZ also served as the evening's emcee AND new to the runway were **Krista Eschbach** and **Ingrid Todt**, who masterfully hosted the Wish Child Fashion Show.

Twelve adorable Wish Children strutted down the runway showing off holiday fashion provided by our friends at **Walmart**. Each child giggled with delight as they received cheers of adoration from the audience. It was a night we will all remember!

At the end of the evening, TRC Volunteer, **Chad Rinke**, led a campaign on stage with a goal to raise enough dollars to grant 5 wishes. His efforts raised more than **\$56,000 in less than 15 minutes!**

Be sure to mark your calendar for the **2018 Celebration of Dreams on Sunday, November 18!** We are already planning surprises for our guests!



rainbowconnection.org

248.601.9474 • 621 W. University, Rochester, MI 48307



From Our Executive Director

My first year at The Rainbow Connection (TRC) is quickly flying by! After completing a banner year in 2017, (we granted the most wishes ever – 172), as well as updating our website, selling out the Celebration of Dreams event, purchasing new donor software, balancing our budget and connecting with more donors, TRC remains committed to our mission of “Making dreams come true for Michigan children with life threatening medical conditions.” Our unique and compassionate organization helps families focus on something good and positive, giving them hope and lifting their spirits. As we prove time and time again, a dream come true strengthens a family and creates memories that will be cherished long into the future.

I am blessed to work with an amazing team of dedicated employees who work tirelessly to raise money and promote our efforts, making sure ALL of our wishes each year are granted. The TRC Board of Directors are an active part of our mission and key to our success in making dreams come true. Finally, we live in a time when people are generous and thankful and demonstrate their gratitude through financial support of worthy causes. We have gained support through the dedication of our mission and will work hard to maintain that trust by being transparent with all that we do. That is why we hold a Four out of Four Star rating from Charity Navigator!

Every day when I come into my office I pass the Wish Board. This is the board where each child’s picture is placed with a description of their Wish. Children who have yet to identify their wishes are on the left and those who have received their wish for the current year on the right. It is a reminder to me of the courage and strength each one of them possesses in order to get through a day. It is also a reminder that we still need help in raising the money to continue making this all possible. With financial help from the community and individuals, this courage is rewarded with a dream come true.

Your donation, large or small, will make an immediate and direct impact on the wish families we serve.

If you have healthy children, be thankful and hug them often. If it’s in your heart to support those that are not, please donate today at rainbowconnection.org or simply return the enclosed envelope. WILL YOU HELP US?

Thank you and stay tuned we have lots planned for 2018. With your help, there are many more Wishes to be granted!

With great appreciation,

George J. Miller

Car Donation Program

Turn your wheels into wishes! How does it work? You will receive a tax deduction for the Kelly Blue Book Private Seller Value. Best of all you can feel great knowing that your old wheels have been turned into a wish come true for a Michigan child!



To donate your vehicle simply visit our website or call us at [248-218-5306](tel:248-218-5306) and one of our friendly and experienced staff will walk you through the car donation process.

New in 2018

Website Overhaul

Our NEW website offers quick and easy access to wish stories, event registration and volunteer opportunities! Launched in February, the site’s new layout and mobile friendly access makes it even easier to share our mission. This clean, fresh look is brought to us by the work of **Advanced Media Solutions, Mike Zotos**, Marketing Director from Eastern Oil (a LONG time supporter of TRC), and TRC staff. Check it out at rainbowconnection.org.

New Rides

Thank you to **Paul and Amber Housey** for donating a conversion van during the holiday season!

Thank you **John Fox** of Fox Toyota with a deal on our new leased Jetta.

Both of these vehicle will be used to serve wish families across the entire state of Michigan.



Top Rating

The Rainbow Connection has received the **highest rating** by Charity Navigator for the **sixth year in a row!**

What does that mean? The Rainbow Connection has achieved a rating that only 6% of all rated charities receive. It means that The Rainbow Connection out performed similar charities in categories such as financial statements, transparency and accountability.

We are truly honored by this rating and promise to continue to work toward achieving this rating in the years to come.



2017 Highlights

In the Community



Our Dancing Lights

Every year, **Brent Waldrep** of Auburn Hills, spends hundreds of hours putting up 60,000 Christmas lights on his home. These lights are then synced to music for a remarkable, interactive holiday lights display! Taking in donations from visitors, he raised over \$9,100 this past year for The Rainbow Connection.



Leto Strong Golf Outing

Ryan Leto was in his senior year of high school when he was diagnosed with osteosarcoma. Ryan's wish was to go on a cruise with his family. This wish meant a lot to the Leto family. It gave them time away from the hospital and treatments, and allowed them to destress. In 2016, Ryan and his family created the LetoStrong Golf Outing to "pay it forward" to future wish children. To date, the golf outing has raised over \$21,000 to sponsor wishes.



Penn Station East Coast Subs

Rainbow Connection gained a new partner in 2017. Five local area **Penn Station** owners from 12 stores teamed up to grant wishes. For one week in May, \$1.00 for every sandwich sold was donated to The Rainbow Connection, raising nearly \$19,000! Since then, each store has continued to have an impact by including TRC canisters at their registers helping raise donations and share our mission.



Bushido Martial Arts Kick A-thon

Since 2002, Owner **Bob Aldis** and his students have been kicking to make dreams come true for Michigan kids. This year is no exception! Students of all ages, from "little ninjas" to "black belts" will be raising pledges for their annual Kick-a-Thon on May 19th. Thank you Bushido students for your incredible dedication!



Canister Campaign

Do you own a business or know someone who does? Add a TRC donation canister to your counter and help make dreams come true.

Longtime supporter and fundraiser **Susan DeMil** started a canister campaign many years ago for The Rainbow Connection. Thank you Susan for your dedication to this program and for the many dreams you make come true.

To request your donation canister contact **Brenda Moore** at bmoore@rainbowconnection.org

2017 Volunteer of the Year

Our volunteers play such a big role in helping us make dreams come true. Last year alone, 565 volunteers donated over 4,000 hours! We asked our Volunteer of the Year, **Bonnie Demeyere**, to share her experience volunteering with TRC.

Bonnie first learned about TRC approximately 20 years ago through her Firefighter Union, Local 1557. "We've been raising money for them (TRC), sponsoring local wishes, assisting with various projects, and putting on the annual summer picnic for the Wish families".

Bonnie enjoys volunteering for The Rainbow Connection because it is all about the kids and their families. She has developed friendships over the years. "You meet so many great people, and have fun volunteering".

Her favorite experience happened about 15 years ago when a firefighter's wife wanted to help Rainbow. With the help of The Rainbow Connection staff, a "Makeover Day" was organized for wish children and their families. It was an afternoon of pampering followed by a photo shoot that was complete with feather boas and fairy wings.

Bonnie's advice for anyone thinking of volunteering for The Rainbow Connection is to give it a try! "There is so much variety in the different activities you can volunteer for, there should be something you enjoy". She adds, "You can decide to volunteer as little or as much as you like".

We are honored to name Bonnie our Volunteer of the Year!





Kids • Wishes • Hope

621 W. University
Rochester, MI 48307
248.601.9474

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The Rainbow Connection Staff

Executive Director

George Miller

Wish Director

Ingrid Todt

Marketing & Major Events Director

Megan Phelps

Operations Director

Kelly Collins

Community Events Director

Brenda Moore

Wish Coordinator

Nancy Schick

Wish Coordinator & Community Events Coordinator

Kristen McKelvey

Grants & Volunteer Coordinator

Karen Johnson

Operations Coordinator

Rebecca Snay

Marketing & Major Events Coordinator

Jessica Prucknic

Accountant

Ray Lagrou

ITC Made Emma's Wish Come True

Emma was just 13 months old when she was diagnosed with Ependymoma, a form of brain cancer. In a heartbeat, her entire family's lives were changed. Emma, her parents and big sister, Maci, live in South Lyon, but Ann Arbor and Mott Children's Hospital at University of Michigan quickly became their second home.

Emma's wish was sponsored by the very generous employees at ITC in Novi. They even hosted a special picnic to celebrate with Emma and her family.

After all of her treatment was complete, and she was ready to go on her wish, Emma decided she wanted to go to Disney World and meet the princesses. Her wish came true just last month and Emma's mom wanted to share a message about their experience:

"We just returned from the most magical wish trip to Disney World and the experience was much more than a vacation. Words cannot express the way our family feels about The Rainbow Connection. They made this vacation so special for our whole family. From the limo that took us to and from the airport, to the most amazing accommodations at Give Kids The World and the red carpet treatment at Disney World. It was so special to see Emma smiling so much all week. She was back to her old carefree self that she was prior to her treatment. Not only did this very special wish make Emma feel like a princess, it also included her older sister which means so much to us. Words cannot express the gratitude we have for each of you."

Thank you ITC employees for making Emma's wish come true!

