



I wish to go on a Michigan beach vacation

Johanna, 16
seizure disorder

Dear Make-A-Wish® Michigan Supporter,

Doctors first diagnosed my daughter Johanna with a seizure disorder back in 2009 at five years old. At first, they were only absence seizures—brief lapses in attention—but they evolved into convulsive seizures and increased in frequency over time.

Four years ago, Johanna spent her birthday in the hospital hooked up to machines and undergoing countless tests. It was a lonely and scary time. The seizures were only getting worse.

With all of this, the anxiety, depression and panic attacks started to come. She worried a lot about whether the next seizure would kill her. As her condition progressed, school became more difficult because the brain damage caused her to forget things. It was a very dark time for Johanna because she always felt left out by her classmates.

In addition to her advancing seizure disorder, the pandemic changed the hospital visitation rules. We can no longer take Johanna’s younger sister Luna into the hospital with us for her treatments. The separation has been really hard on our family. I watched Luna cry on FaceTime because she couldn’t be with her big sister. Whenever Johanna left the hospital, she would always say, “Mom, I want to have family time.”

To provide some reprieve in Johanna’s life, her rheumatologist referred her to Make-A-Wish. We were surprised she qualified because we thought it was only for cancer patients. Almost immediately, Make-A-Wish volunteers started to send her gifts, and she felt so special. *She thought it was cool that Make-A-Wish treated her like a normal person when so many treated her differently.*

Johanna wished to have a Michigan beach vacation. We live on Main Street with a lot of traffic and noise. She wanted all of us to be together outside and away from it all. It was important to her that her dog Coco joined us. He is her emotional support and an indispensable member of our family.

Make-A-Wish found a dog-friendly cottage in Saugatuck. When Johanna saw the cottage for the first time, she cried tears of joy. She couldn’t believe how big it was. It had a hammock outside and a deck overlooking Lake Michigan. Johanna spent much of her trip on that deck with Coco on her lap, soaking in the sun and looking out at the lake. *Her medical condition felt like a distant memory.*

She was so happy to celebrate her 16th birthday with us away from the hustle and bustle. She woke up that morning sharing a room with her little sister. It was such a difference from how she spent much of the past year separated from us. I can’t begin to tell you how much it meant to all of us to celebrate Johanna together.

Kids like Johanna really need time to be happy and forget about the anxiety and physical pain critical illness causes. *Make-A-Wish came into our lives to make us joyful in the middle of the storm.* Johanna’s wish made her feel like she had a chance to be normal again—and as her mom I am so grateful for that.

All Michigan wish kids deserve to feel the joy and hope that my daughter experienced from her wish. I would like to personally ask you to make a tax-deductible donation today, so that more Michigan children like my daughter can transform their anxiety into hope and experience a wish come true.

Thank you for giving my daughter a chance to feel alive again,

Karla

Karla, wish mom

