

Disney Wish Comes True For 7-Year Old With Chiari

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April 20, 2005 - Seven-year-old Aaron Rhodes is a curious first-grader at Plain View Elementary School with a shy smile, who is always on the principal's list. In his spare time, he loves playing with his Game Boy and Game Cube, taking care of his 25 fish and watching television. His favorite show is "The Proud Family," and he never gets tired of watching baseball and basketball.

For fine dining, he definitely prefers McDonald's above any other restaurant. As far as school goes, he thinks P.E. and recess are the best subjects of all. Unfortunately, his time at recess is spent differently than those of his friends.

Aaron was born with a condition known as Arnold Chiari Malformation, which is caused when the lower parts of the brain protrude down into the spinal canal and places intense pressure on the spinal cord. Any jolt or stress to the head and body can cause paralysis, and those suffering from the disease often experience severe headaches, neck pain, stiffness and difficulty swallowing. Because of his fragile condition, he must be extremely careful and cannot engage in play like other kids his age.

Not long ago his mother, Donna Rhodes, learned about the children's wish-granting organization, Kids Wish Network, while exploring the Internet. After contacting the Florida-based charity and starting the application process, she was delighted to learn her son was eligible for a wish come true. When asked for his No. 1 pick, there was no hesitation. Aaron wanted to go to Disney World in Florida.

Aaron's Kids Wish Network coordinator Kim Tanveer immediately made the arrangements for the family adventure. She secured the airline tickets and theme park passes for his family, booked the hotel accommodations, made dinner reservations at area restaurants, and arranged for spending money and more. The young boy was in for a truly exciting adventure.

Aaron and his family - parents Donnie and Donna Rhodes and 3-year-old sister Sarah - hit just about all the major parks in Orlando, including Animal Kingdom, Sea World, Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure, Disney MGM and Magic Kingdom. They left March 16 and returned home March 20.

"It was just wonderful," Mrs. Rhodes said. "Aaron had a great time."

Later the family had a blast at one of Orlando's most popular stops, the Pirates Dinner Adventure Theater, where they enjoyed a live pirate show and delicious food.

"Aaron is still talking about the pirates," Mrs. Rhodes said.

The family returned home tired but with lots of pictures and even more terrific memories.

"It was all so wonderful. We've been telling everyone about our trip," Mrs. Rhodes said. "Kim was so great with Aaron. She really made him feel so special. He just had an awesome time."

Kids Wish Network is a nationally recognized non-profit organization dedicated to infusing hope, creating happy memories and improving the quality of life for children. If you know a child between the ages of 3 and 18 in need of wish granting services, contact the organization at (813) 891-9374 or call toll free at (888) 918-9004. For more information, visit the Kids Wish Network Web site at www.kidswishnetwork.org.

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