

Granting Wishes that Change Lives

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SPEAKERS

Introduction, Julie, Wil, Terri

- T** Terri 00:00
Make-A-Wish New Hampshire is one of the most recognizable nonprofit organizations in the Granite State. Today we have the opportunity to speak with Julie Baron Make-A-Wish NH President and CEO to learn more about their mission and how you can help. If you're passionate about making dreams come true for kids, then you'll want to stay tuned.
- I** Introduction 00:30
You're listening to Triangle's Making Money Personal podcast, where we engage in real talk about financial matters that affect our community. Today's episode is sponsored by Triangle Credit Union, recently voted best credit union in New Hampshire.
- T** Terri 00:45
Triangle Credit Union, like many New Hampshire credit unions actively supports the fantastic work that Make-A-Wish New Hampshire does for children in the Granite State. On today's episode of The Making Money Personal podcast, we're talking with Julie Baron, President and CEO of Make-A-Wish New Hampshire to learn more about this fantastic organization and the good work that they're doing. Welcome Julie to the show.
- J** Julie 01:11

Hi, Terri, thank you for having me on.

T

Terri 01:14

Absolutely. We're happy to have you on. So let's just start Julie with, you know, we have listeners from all over who have never really heard about Make-A-Wish, or maybe they haven't heard about, you know, just how much that you do for the kids in the Granite State. Can you talk a little bit about Make-A-Wish New Hampshire and what your mission is?

J

Julie 01:36

Absolutely. So we have been in existence in New Hampshire since 1986, granting more and more wishes each year. And our mission is that we want to grant wishes for children to give them that hope for the future, the strength to fight a really, really tough battle, share joy, but really give them that transformative experience. That gives them the tool that they particularly need in order to fight that tough battle.

T

Terri 02:11

That's awesome. So you've been in existence since 1986. Have you been with the organization for that period of time?

J

Julie 02:21

I'm not all of that time. But it feels like I've been with the organization for so long. I've actually been with Make-A-Wish now for the past 16 years. But I knew that my calling was going to be fulfilled when I met my very first wish child. Her name was Morgan. And you know, I remember going out and visiting with Morgan, trying to figure out what her wish was, you know, pulling all the information together, talking with other volunteers and staff and putting all the pieces together, sending her off at the airport. But it really wasn't until a couple of nights later, I was sitting in the office and the phone rang and it was actually Morgan and she was calling me from Discovery Cove on her wish. Her wish was that she wanted to be a dolphin trainer. And I remember this little voice telling me how much she got to swim with the dolphins and feed the dolphins and teach the dolphin Molly how a mimic everything that she did. And it was really in those moments that I started to understand the impact that a wish can have on a child. It's so much more than a gift. It's so much more than something nice to do. It really is a life changing experience for a child to be able to give them this special gift of their heartfelt wish. Because we're looking for that experience, event or thing that can be deeply felt by that child. One that brings them

evidence in overwhelming joy.



Terri 04:02

Oh, that is awesome. I love that. That's a great story. Julie, thank you for sharing that.



Wil 04:08

So Julie, working with Make-A-Wish. It seems like it's a very rewarding experience, obviously. In what ways has brought you a feeling of fulfillment, and please share, give me a story. I know you talked about Morgan, but are there any other stories that you can think of that really just made you feel like this is, I'm meant to do this?



Julie 04:32

Um, you know, it's interesting because I get asked that question a lot. You know, like, what's your favorite wish. Every wish is so unique and so different and gives each child something just a little bit different that they need that, you know, I've started saying I think my most favorite wish is the next one. And ironically enough, we are going to be granting a wish in just a couple of hours, to a young man who is wishing to have a camper for his wish. And just the moments kind of leading up to it. So as we're talking, there are literally volunteers driving the camper over to where we're going to present it to him, decorating it. One of our big sponsors actually got us a big magnet bow that's going to go on the upside of it and all the pieces with chairs set up. A volunteer said to me today, you know, can we decorate the whole site is if they're walking into their campsite, so the fire is actually going to be going when they get there. So it's really so cool, exceeding every child's expectations. But if you ask me that question, Wil, I mean, I can go on for hours and hours. One of my other favorite ones, and this was years ago, before Star Wars had even come back for their big second round, there was a young boy who wanted to meet and defeat Darth Vader. And I remember, you know, we, we were talking with Disney, we were working with them trying to figure out how we put this together. We sent the family down to Florida. And we had this whole thing set up where literally, Darth Vader would call him every night and say I know you young Jedi. At about six o'clock every night, his mom said that he would start shaking at like 5:30 that Darth Vader was going to call him and you know, he had been spending the whole time going to high school. And all I can say is I hope Darth Vader was wearing shin guards because that little boy meant business. And it was the most amazing thing in the whole wide world. But there are there are just a million of those stories because it puts the child in such an amazing place and it gives them something that they've always dreamt of doing, have always wanted to do, and really have never had that opportunity. And it creates this lasting memory for them. Something

that they always will have, you know, some of our wishes are travel, which have been a little postponed right now, but so many of our wishes are also wishes to have.



Wil 07:34

Right. So with this little boy, did you guys, he went down to Florida and defeated Darth Vader down there?



Julie 07:42

Yes.



Wil 07:43

Awesome. That's really, really cool.



Terri 07:49

So I just want to piggyback on that, because I have been always on the peripheral as far as like, you know, watching Doug Taylor as he gets involved in some of these wishes and stuff, but he'll come back to the office, Julie, and he'll just share even his own experience in terms of like getting involved and, and being at the great unveiling. And it's like, I mean, you guys must walk away sometimes and go, you know, we just nailed it.



Julie 08:22

I mean, it's the most amazing feeling in the world to be able to deliver it in a way where we exceed the child's expectations. You know, because sometimes I think the, you know, these children will wish for something and I don't think they think in a million years that it's that it's really going to come true. You know, and so one of the things that we really, really try to do as I was mentioning, it's about the child and what's in the child's mind. So really, we're trying to ask so many why questions of them. So we want to know what's in their mind's eye? Who do they see around them? What do they see happening? So that we can really focus it in on them. I remember a couple of years ago we got a wish in for a little girl. The wish granters came back and they said, We're so excited this little girl wants a Malibu Barbie experience. So volunteers are like planning Okay, we'll send them the Malibu and you know we'll get a house with a circular driveway like in the movie and everything. You know, and the wish granters were savvy enough because we really work with them to say Okay, wait timeout. That's what we think a Malibu Barbie experience is. What does a four year old think Malibu Barbie experience is? And it turns out that she was

really into food. She was a foodie. I don't know how you become a foodie at four or five. But that was really cool about this young lady and she love that Barbie had all these friends that were chefs and the chefs would cook for her. And so it really turned into an experience where she could go out and have a different chef make her meals and work with her and make her feel special every night with Barbie fringe stuff.

T Terri 10:24
That's awesome.

J Julie 10:26
Oh, and we're building a tree house right now, too. I forgot. This week. We're building a tree house too. So I'm pretty excited.

T Terri 10:32
That's fantastic. Is there something like what so is there some really special components about this, this tree house that the child has wished for Julie?

J Julie 10:41
Yes, it's got a fire engine theme to it. So you know, it'll be like a fire station treehouse.

T Terri 10:54
Oh, that's awesome. That's awesome.

J Julie 10:57
Yeah, a fire station treehouse.

T Terri 11:01
That's the best of all worlds right there. Yeah. So Julie. So, you know, again, going back, I'm familiar with, you know, Make-A-Wish New Hampshire. Triangle has had a relationship with your organization for quite a while now. But can you explain a little bit about what credit unions and what Triangle does to help you and your organization and the kids that it serves?



Julie 11:34

Well, the credit unions are literally our biggest heroes. They've been by our side for over 25 years, they've helped us grow as an organization. I mean, when I first came aboard, we were granting 29, or 30 wishes. We are granting over 90 wishes each year, at a pace of one every four days, bringing incredible magic to life. You know, so the credit unions have really helped us grow in so many ways, but one of them really is by sharing their passion for the organization with the with the community, and really being involved in every way, through so many different portals and activities that we do. And Triangle in particular, has been their heart and soul, over the years, always excelled, being a supporter through the calendar program, selling stars, and, most, most recently, with some of the travel wishes that we had to postpone, we decided that we would do parades by these children's homes, just to show them that we still love them with big signs saying that their wish was going to come true. You know, and as soon as we could travel again, we would bring their wish to life. And I was just almost in tears with the support that we got from Triangle Credit Union. You know, Doug, and even a Scott came out. Doug coordinated things, and so many staff members, as well as members came out and helped to join those parades. There was one parade, we had over 50 decorated cars, driving by a young person's house, and it's so cool, they, them and their entire family would come outside and you know, wave and just get all excited as each car would go by. People were dressing up in costume to drive by in cars, streamers, balloons, you know, throwing gifts out to families, you know, it was just such an amazing show of support during a really difficult time. Because so many of our kids are no stranger to isolation. And so it must have been very strange for them to be in their own little isolation. And then, you know, also be dealing with parents that are extra stressed and, you know, a whole different angle put on by community stresses and worries. It's it really, I mean, I get so much strength from these children. It's just unbelievable to, to watch what they're going through. And then, you know, there's a couple different moments in time. When you're sitting with a child and you're talking with them and they're sharing what they're going through. And then all of a sudden you turn it and it's a little bit different and you say, you know if you could have anything if you could go anywhere, you know, what would it be, you know, what would you like for a wish? And then they start thinking and all of a sudden they're forgetting about hospital visits, where they, are what's going on and all they are thinking about and dreaming about is this special, something that is really giving them the opportunity to kind of do something different, and be in a different place and forget about everything. And it's, it's that moment, it's when you see that in their eye, when they know what their wish is going to be and they share that with you. And then they go on in great detail, to be able to give you like the pieces of that as you're asking different questions. What do you see? What do you feel? There was a, a young lady who loved gardening and she loved flowers and being outside and, and she really wasn't able to go anywhere, she was wheelchair bound, and her wish was for a serenity garden. And to hear her describe that in her mind's eye, and

the light flashing in her eyes as she was doing that. That's the first moment. That's when magic really begins.

W

Wil 16:10

Right? That's, that's beautiful, I got to be honest, that's really, really cool. I can speak personally, I have two cousins on both sides of my family, my mom and my dad who one of them was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago. And it's funny because I think it was either this morning or yesterday, you know how Facebook gives you the, you know, your memories, like the post that you posted a year ago, or three years ago, whatever. Again, it was either yesterday or today, she's three years cancer free, and Make-A-Wish in Florida, that's where she lives, did grant her a wish to send her and her family, her parents and her sisters and her brothers to Hawaii a few years ago. So that, you know, it's touched me personally. Even if it wasn't, you know, my own child, I have two girls of my own, and I couldn't imagine, you know, something like that happening to them. Them going through a disease or anything that would, you know, threaten their life. So to know that Make-A-Wish, is there to really provide these unforgettable experiences for these kids is just something that is awesome. And it's beautiful. And I love it. So thank you for what you do.

J

Julie 17:30

Oh, thanks. Wil, and I hope the whole family enjoyed it too, because much of the wish is for the child, it's really nice, because it's an opportunity to bring the family back together. Because so often families are, you know, one parent might be with the child at the hospital, or they might the other child might be with grandparents and just to bring that back together and give them some normalcy. That's also another wonderful piece of a wish.

T

Terri 18:01

Yeah, I think that that's one of the most, you know, fascinating aspects of the Make-A-Wish. You know, is that you, you include the whole family unit, knowing, Julie that the whole family is affected by sickness, right. I mean, that's really what it comes down to. It's just like, yes, this child is going through it, but the heartache and, you know, some and the burden that, you know, that parents or, you know, siblings take on as well. It's, it's very impactful.

J

Julie 18:32

Yeah, I think one of those moments where I had the realization of the impact of a sibling is we, we had this big event, and one of the siblings asked me, Can I speak my sister doesn't feel really well right now? And this young lady Julia got up and spoke from the heart, about her love for her sister, and what Make-A-Wish had done for her sister and really went into depth about how she felt through her sister's illness and watching it and not being able to fix this for her sister. And how, you know, she felt helpless. You know, how as a child, she, you know, everything was swirling around, you know, her sister and you know, and she was kind of standing there alone and not even sure how to deal with it. I mean, it was, it was just the most beautiful speech I've ever heard. And I wish I could remember some of the exact word she used but it was, you know, you could see that passion and that love and that taken care of, but also in the moment behind it you were seeing how, you know, isolated she was, the attention she wasn't getting. A lot of times when we go when we do those first initial visits, I mean, we don't, we never walk in empty handed and we always bring, you know, gifts and icebreakers for the wish child. But we also find out the ages and you know, some of the likes of the siblings, and then bring gifts for them as well and include them in, you know, in in the whole celebration of a wish.



Terri 20:25

That's awesome.



Wil 20:26

So, Julie, over the years, it sounds like, you know, a lot of money has been contributed by the credit unions here in New Hampshire, over \$3 million to date. How does that make you feel? And, how does that make you feel, knowing that these communities that the community is being supported by all these great organizations?



Julie 20:49

It's overwhelming. I am so appreciative. All of the credit unions, all of our credit union partners, you inspire me. You increase my determination and my dedication to every year to get to a point where we can grant a wish for every eligible child. We're not there yet. That's what keeps me up at night. And knowing that I have the credit unions, and especially Triangle Credit Union by my side. I know we're going to get there. And I know that, you know, someday we'll be there for every child, it would be even better if no child had to face it, but if they do, we want to be a tool for them and help them through this really, really tough time.

W Wil 21:42
I have one other question. Who is the biggest celebrity that a child has wished to have met?

J Julie 21:50
Oh, my gosh, I think just about everyone. So I can answer who has granted more wishes than any other celebrity been requested is John Cena. John Cena has granted five or six hundred wishes. It's absolutely amazing.

W Wil 22:08
Jonh Cena, I love that guy. He is awesome. And I had a feeling you were gonna say that. Has he granted? Is that nationally, or is that in New Hampshire? specific?

J Julie 22:20
That is nationally, but he just did a wish for us this week.

W Wil 22:24
Wow.

J Julie 22:25
That's why he's very top of mind. So we did a celebrity meet and greet with messages from John Cena and some of the other wrestlers just this week for a young girl.

W Wil 22:40
Wow, that's awesome. I grew up watching wrestling and I'm excited that you said John Cena.

J Julie 22:48
You know, all this, the sports figures are amazing, the actors are amazing. You know, it's wonderful. It's got to be a different feeling. And that would be really neat to, you know, have a conversation with one of them kind of just one on one. You know, what did you feel like when a child could have anything, and they choose you?

W Wil 23:11
Right?

J Julie 23:12
How did that make you feel?

W Wil 23:13
Gotta be humbling, that's for sure.

T Terri 23:15
Yeah, for sure.

J Julie 23:16
Yeah. Danica, who is one of the racecar drivers. There's a little girl Stephanie, who wanted to meet her a couple of years ago. Yeah, Danica Patrick. And she, you know, she was just kind of like, really, like a little girl wants to meet me? And the two of them sat there, and Stephanie, the wish child was just very, very shy, you know, didn't know what to do. And they sat there kind of looking at each other for five or six minutes. And Danica is trying to kind of bring her out and talk a little bit about racing and different things. And then Danica said, Well, I think the only thing I haven't done today is I haven't picked out what shoes I'm going to wear when I race today. And Stephanie's face lit up and they went into Danica's hauler, and the two of them bonded picking out the shoes that Danica was going to race in that day. It was absolutely precious.

T Terri 24:16
That is awesome. Like I can't even imagine like you've just brought two of the coolest, aspects of life together, shoes in racing. Like that's awesome.

J Julie 24:30
Let me go for the trifecta. We do puppy wishes too. Everybody loves puppies.

T Terri 24:35

Say no more actually, you can embellish on that anytime you want. So you've mentioned volunteers several times during our time with you here today. And if there's anyone who's listening who wants to get involved with Make-A-Wish New Hampshire, what are some of the ways that people can volunteer or how can they contribute? To help you out the most?

 Julie 25:02

We have a couple of different kinds of volunteers. And they're all amazingly important to what we do. We have wish granting volunteers, which I've given you a little window into. Those are the volunteers, they go out in pairs, or sometimes it'd be three wish granting volunteers. And these are the volunteers that go out and sit with the child, and figure out what that child's wish is, gather all that information, bring it back, and then work to bring that child's wish to life with other volunteers and staff members and put all the pieces together. We have some amazing volunteers that are ambassadors for us. And those are really the volunteers who are out speaking about us in in public, they are sharing our mission, you know, they're really busting some of those myths about Make-A-Wish, you know, one of the meaning that, you know, it's not just something nice to do, as I mentioned before, that this is really, really vitally important. In fact, we've done a lot of wish impact studies, where healthcare professionals and parents are telling us that a wish was was actually a life changing moment for their child. And it was transformational for them as they were really fighting their illness. So these volunteers that are out kind of spreading the word are absolutely amazing. We utilize them in a lot of different ways. Then we have volunteers who come into the office, and they help us with our administrative work, really enabling us to put so much more of our dollars toward wish granting. So they perform everything from, regular office work, to completing huge projects that we really need help with, throughout the weeks and the months. And then we have another group of volunteers that raise money for us. They do different events for us throughout New Hampshire and raise dollars for us. And, you know, the credit unions, actually. We have credit union volunteers who fall into every single one of those buckets, but throughout history, you know, Triangle and some of the other credit unions have really been there for us with the golf tournament, the candy bars, stars, selling calendars for us, and really spreading the word throughout all of your branches, your membership, and your your staff and your team.

 Wil 27:44

So Julie, what are some ways that people can follow stories and get in touch with you?

 Julie 27:52

Well, people can really, they can follow us on Facebook, we have YouTube. I mean, our Facebook page, and our Instagram page, we try to really give some wonderful, detailed content, in fact. We did a shopping spree with today. So I forgot to mention that. So we had a little girl who wanted, her original wish was she wanted to go to the Mall of America. But with everything that's happening today, she really didn't want to wait for that. So she said, Can I do an Internet shopping spree? And then we thought, Well, you know, you can also go to you know, stores in New Hampshire, whatever. And so she, actually had a shopping spree today and decided to go to the malls around New Hampshire and just, you know, spend money. I mean, now that's a wish, you know?

W

Wil 28:57

That's like everybody's dream, though. That's awesome. I'm looking at the pictures right now on your Facebook.

J

Julie 29:04

A couple of years ago, and I got to go along and be the credit card. And it was so much fun. So this young lady gets there, she's a teenager and she says, Julie, I want clothes and shoes and jeans. So she spent the entire morning kind of going through stores and, you know, looking at things and trying to decide what she wanted. We're sitting down and we're having lunch or taking a little bit break and I said, Molly, you really haven't spent any money, you know, like, get busy. And so all of a sudden she kind of got it and so all afternoon she would run into stores and she would grab all the things she wanted and she would throw them at me. I would grab them, I'd run to the register and she would run to the next store. And then she would grab everything that she wants. She must have got 50 pairs of jeans. She was having an absolute ball. It was so much fun to watch her. But every wish is just so different, you know, and it's really kind of brought to life in their own imagination. And I think that's what makes it the most fun for those of us who choose to help. It's not, you know, we don't just say, okay, they want this and you know, so here are the parameters of doing this. We're really trying to figure out, you know what that means for that particular child, that particular family and, how we can do a little bit differently, to make it special for them. We just did an electronics wish with a boat parade a couple weeks ago, that was fun. For a little boy named Eli. So yeah, we had the marine patrol, pick him up at the docks in Wolfborough. And then we had about 20 or 30 boats, follow him to Meredith. And then we did a pizza party lunch, but while he was gone, while we were distracting him, the Geek Squad was in his house setting up an entire gaming setup for him because that was his wish. And so then when he got back and walked into the house, his whole room was set up with, you know, all the big screens and the fancy, you know, gaming computer. And so yeah, that was fun. Seeing his face when he walked in,

because he knew what he wished for. And he was just like, oh they're just distracting me. I'm having, lunch with some new friends, you know?

T Terri 31:51

So, Julie, I do have a quick question. I know that you've covered all of our questions. So now this is just bonus material, if you want but so the process. For us when we're trying to do something creative? Oftentimes, we'll get together as a team, and just kind of like, brainstorm and stuff like that, is that your process as well? Like, are you involved to that degree, when when you guys get a wish come through? Are you are you still at that level, I know that you're so busy in other ways.

J Julie 32:29

It's interesting, because in my last role, before, Make-A-Wish, you know, I supervise people who supervise people. And, you know, I love being part of strategically thinking through something and leading change, being that visionary person, but what I found was that I also really, really love the ability to touch one person, one child at a time. It is really something different when you can, you know, touch it and be involved. So I do. I really stay involved in that way. You know, when for instance, this afternoon, you know, I've chosen with myself and a couple other friends, my husband gets involved, to be wish granters you know, the volunteer piece for different wishes. And I do several of them, several of them a year. And then I also jump, handpick and jump in on wishes I get excited about. Right now I'm I'm looking for a pontoon boat for a child, they want a pontoon boat. I love boating so I'll jump in on that one. That's really what makes my heart sing. You know, it's that excerpt from Laura Esterly's the the book The Starfish Thrower. Did I say her name right? There was an excerpt in that book where she describes that there is a man walking on the beach, and he sees a young person way up ahead, and it looks like the person's dancing. And as he gets up closer, he sees that that person is throwing starfish back into the water that have been washed on to the beach so that they live. And the old man says, Why are you doing that? You know, you can't save all of them. And the young man looked at him and said, but I saved to that one.

T Terri 34:36

Yeah. That's awesome.

J Julie 34:38

Yeah. So that's kind of my mantra a little bit, you know.

T Terri 34:42
That's good. That's real good. Thank you so much, Julie, for joining us today. We really appreciate your time and all the good work that you're doing over there.

J Julie 34:53
Thank you so much for having me and if you need anything else. You know where to find me.

T Terri 34:57
Actually, why don't you kind of give us a shout out of where people can find you. What's the best way to reach out to Make-A-Wish NH?

J Julie 35:05
One of the best ways to reach out to Make-A-Wish New Hampshire is to go on our website. It's nh.wish.org. or find us on Facebook Make-A-Wish New Hampshire. Also on Instagram, we have a YouTube channel. But if you go on to our website, we can connect you to all those different pieces. Our staff is all listed on there. So you can jump on and email any of us individually that you'd like, depending on how you might like to get involved with the organization.

T Terri 35:42
Excellent, terrific. Thanks again, Julie. It's been a pleasure having you.

J Julie 35:46
You guys are so much fun.

T Terri 35:48
All right. Take care.

W Wil 35:49
Bye Julie.



Julie 35:50

Bye.



Wil 35:51

If you want to learn more about how to get involved, head on over to nh.wish.org to get started or find them on Facebook. They are really doing some incredible work right here in our community and we couldn't be more proud to support them and their mission. Thanks for listening to today's episode. Please leave us a review on Apple podcasts. This is Wil and Terri with the Making Money Personal podcast. Take care.