

MY MAKE A WISH TRIP

My name is Daniel Fritz. I am 8 years old. My mom and dad are Lisa and Tim Fritz. I am the oldest of 4 children and for those who do not know I was born with Cystic Fibrosis which is a life threatening disease, therefore I qualified for "Make a Wish." My Uncle Mark Pennington referred my name to make a wish and they then contacted my mother. There was some formal paper work that I had to fill out such as my top three wishes. Choosing my top three wishes really was not a hard choice:

#1 I wanted to go to Disney and I also knew my brothers and sister would enjoy it as well.

#2 I wanted to swim with dolphins.

#3 I wanted to go to an Ottawa game but for my brothers it would have to be against Calgary for Darian or Toronto for Dustin and I would want to be the one to choose.

After I let the Make a Wish people know my top three wishes, there were some other papers my mother had to fill out and then the Doctor had some to fill out as well. Once that was approved, the ball was rolling, we had to get passports and ,of course, time was ticking... Finally, one by one, the passports rolled in. Within a few days a big package came in the mail and it was official: My Wish had been granted and I was going to Disney! We had plane tickets and instructions, and lots of dreams. We each had something we wanted to see. Dustin wanted to see Mickey Mouse. Raelyn was all about the princesses. Darian, well, maybe not him, but I wanted to see and do as much as possible.



In front of villa: From left, Raelyn, Daniel, Dustin, Darian.

So during March Break of 2008, the Make-A-Wish Foundation made it possible for me to go on a dream trip to Florida with my family that I never will forget. It started with a limo ride all the way from RR2 Brussels to Detroit. My brothers Darian and Dustin thought the limo ride was so cool, we probably could have ended the trip at that point for them. But the best was yet to come! At Detroit we got on an airplane and flew to Orlando International Airport. When we got off the plane there was a Make a Wish greeter waiting for us. He was holding my name "Daniel Fritz" as if I were a celebrity. He gathered up our luggage, and took us to our rent a car.....which was a van of course to fit all six of us. We then got in our nice, new, clean, fresh-smelling van – the smell was a lot different from the smell of ours - and we drove to our villa at the "Give Kids the World" resort. WOW!!!! It was amazing. As you will see from some of the photos, the Give Kids the World resort was amazing on its own. As soon as we got there, my "wish" really started. First thing, my brother my sister and I were given a stuffy, shirts, and even better, the best ice cream I've ever tasted! And it was all-you-could-eat ice cream! Like you could even have ice cream for breakfast and we did! Even mom did!

In the "Give Kids the World" resort, they served meals in a place called the Gingerbread House. We ate breakfast and supper in the Gingerbread House and was it ever good! I think we all gained a little weight from the great meals, or maybe it was from all the ice cream and milkshakes we had! If we stayed out at the parks late, then we could order pizza from the village when we got back, so we did that, too.

At Give Kids the World, they had every kind of treat and activity that kids dream about. There was cotton candy, slushies, and did I mention the awesome ice cream? There was face painting, miniature golf, boat racing, pools, a merry-go-round, a games room and a toy train as well as a ride on train. There were movies in the movie theatre. We had a Thanksgiving celebration one night and another day, we celebrated Christmas with a parade and Santa and gifts. If you can imagine this, every Thursday it is Christmas at Give Kids the World, so the "Angels" set up all the decorations and every thing in just a few hours then take it all back down until the next Thursday when they do it all over again. Can you imagine putting up and taking down your Christmas decorations once a week? And they do this every week! It is absolutely amazinglike really unbelievable, the work and time and effort the Make a Wish people put into making children like me have the best week of our lives. There is no possible way to thank them enough.

One of the most memorable things that I did at Give Kids the World was an activity with the Star Fairy. The Star Fairy gave me a very special star. I got to put my name on and place it on a special spot in the ceiling. My star is there to take care of me and protect me and keep me from getting sick. If I ever get the chance to go to Florida again, I am welcome to go back to Give Kids the World for a day visit. I'd like to do that so I could find my star again. The whole ceiling is full of stars from other children from all over the world that have stayed there.



From left, Darian, Raelyn, Dustin (coat on), Daniel (behind him).

Most of the workers at the village are volunteers called “Angels”, and they really are because they are so dedicated donating their time and they go so far out of their way to make sure the children are having the time of their lives....It really is the happiest place on earth.

The Give Kids the World Village that we stayed at is all set up in conjunction with Make a Wish. Parks like Disney, Sea World, Universal, and companies like Coke and Friendlies Ice Cream all work together and donate tickets, food, and pictures. These companies played an important roll in my trip, as well as the vacations of all of the kids from all over the world that were staying at Give Kids the World. There was so much to do there that the Disney characters even came to the village to meet us. Every thing was free to us in there because of all of the people who care so much for the children.

The theme parks also provided an amazing experience for children sponsored by Make a Wish. The theme parks gave us VIP parking and fast passes- but even better, as soon as the park people would see my buttons, we usually were pulled to the side to go in the exit for rides and when there were characters to meet, someone from the park would radio ahead for the character to meet us. It was if I was royalty and every one was catering to me.

While there was tons of fun things to do, it was great just being together as a family and having fun. While we were away on our trip, I still had to do treatments and take pills, of course, but no one asked questions and there was no talk of doctors or sickness.

We just got to have fun. We have many memories that we will never forget such as Raelyn putting on shows every where we went so people would tell her how cute she was. She ordered a whiskey one morning for breakfast and of course everyone laughed at her again, and went on about what a doll she was. She was getting very good at knowing who and when to sucker people in. On our way home, she knew time was running out and got her last big show in the airport while we were waiting to go home. While everyone was sitting around in the waiting room they were bored so Raelyn begins to sing the Hokey Pokey. Once she knew everyone was watching her, she really put on a show by doing the verse when you put your bum in and shake it. Everyone was laughing again and commenting on her being so cute and adorable. Ya right, more like a big bull! Speaking of that she ran up to Goofy and knocked him over, but I guess it couldn't have happened to a funnier character. Later the two boys and Raelyn ran up to Barney and knocked him off balance ...Good thing he has a tail. Mom wasn't sure we would be able to help him up because he was sooo round.

Around here some people might get my brothers Darian and Dustin mixed up, but while we were away, people were actually calling Darian and Dustin twins! Darian got mad at first then he began saying, "No, we are not twins! I am the oldest and he is the biggest."

Oh and it just wouldn't be a true adventure without Dustin there being clumsy! He was just walking around and oops he tripped on his feet again! There he goes rolling down a hill (again!) People who didn't know this was a daily occurrence were wondering why Mom was laughing at him, so she had to explain just how clumsy he is and that the same sort of thing would probably happen again yet today. Actually, Dustin is kind of an amusement all on his own. Who else would walk around with a coat and hood on in the 80 degree Florida weather? Oh, and then there was the time he ordered mashed potatoes for breakfast and the volunteers just couldn't get it through to him that it was morning, like breakfast.

As you can see, we managed to capture many of our memories on camera. We even held a crocodile and mom put the snake around her neck for me just to get a picture. Another memory that we seem to have lots of pictures of is Darian being Mister Cool in his shades, and wrecking most pictures with that stupid smile. It was funny when he fell off the pretend surf board because he got a little carried away with his coolness. Dad says some of the pictures we took on our trip may even come back to bite Raelyn and the "twins" on their wedding days!

The parade at Disney was one of the many highlights at Disney. The floats and all of the characters were amazing. Another one of my favourite moments was when the one worker at Universal sent me on the Drop Zone all by myself. My mother's mouth dropped, but the Universal guy reassured her that I would be just fine...I was already gone so it didn't much matter, but when I got on the ride I was a "single" as they say, so I had to go on with 2 hot teenage girls. Another funny memory was my mom reassuring my dad that he wouldn't get very wet on a ride. Hmmm – that didn't quite work out the way she said! Dad was soaked and so were we! They don't call it Splash Mountain for nothing! Some of the other rides I really liked were Jaws although I was so scared that I almost peed my pants on it! The car stunt show at MGM was awesome. The Shrek 4 D movie was cool – we actually got dragon snot on us when the dragons sneezed. The boys all thought it was cool, BUT the princess in our family didn't like that. She needed to wash.

Meeting the characters like Donkey and Mickey Mouse and all of the Seuss Landing characters was fun as well.

What a week I had! My wish was everything I dreamed of, and more. For the opportunity to Make a Wish, I am very grateful to the Make-A-Wish Foundation and all of their affiliates, donors, sponsors and wish grantors. I would also like to thank my Adopt – a –Wish sponsor: the 2008 Big Game Bash Superbowl Party. Their sponsorship really made my wish come true.

I know that the Brussels Optimists are long time supporters of Make a Wish, and I grateful that the Optimists have decided to support Make a Wish with this year's dinner and auction. Tonight you are becoming a part of some little boy or girl's dreams when you give to Make a Wish. You truly do make a life long smile come to the faces of children like me. I am glad to be here tonight to share my memories and to show my gratitude of the week I will never forget. As you see, people who support Make a Wish have helped our family make many amazing memories, and I am really excited for the children who will have their wish granted with the money raised here tonight. On behalf of the children who are still dreaming of their special wish, thank you all for taking a part in making their dreams come true.

I would like to thank the Optimists for asking me to speak and to share my Wish. I don't think that most people who hear about Make a Wish really realize how many people are touched by each wish. I hope I have touched your hearts with my experiences as you continue to be "Friends of Youth."