

Young Cornwall boy with illness headed south

By Ryan Pfeiffer
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The smile didn't leave the face of eight-year-old Alex Fournier. He did, after all, just receive an all-expenses-paid trip for he and his family to Disney World courtesy of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Eastern Ontario.

Alex will be spending his March Break in Orlando with his parents, Denis and Karen, and his 10-year-old twin sisters, Caitlin and Kailey, all of whom are very excited for the vacation.

The Fourniers will be taken by limousine from Cornwall to Ottawa where they will fly to Detroit and then to Orlando. They will stay at the Give Kids the World Village, a villa that will cater to the specific needs of Alex and his family. A rental van will be provided for transportation to and from the various theme parks, along with US \$700 in spending money.

Alex was referred to the Make-A-Wish Foundation by St. Columban's School student support worker Kim Blanchet.

The foundation is set up to grant wishes to terminally ill children aged 3-17 such as Alex, who has suffered from heart disease since birth.

After meeting with Alex, it was just a matter of verifying he was healthy enough to travel before the final plans were made.

Make-A-Wish executive director Mike Wlotzki, executive directors at BNI and Alex's wish angels Denis Brisson and Jocelyne D'Aoust, and family members were all on hand as the trip was outlined to the Fourniers.

"We have been overwhelmed by the generosity, time and effort that they put in for Alex and other kids," said Alex's mother, Karen.

Since qualifying for the trip, she has noticed an improvement in Alex's outlook.

"He has to go to CHEO for tests, which he doesn't like, but knowing he will be going on this trip has helped ease his anxiety," Karen added.

Mike Wlotzki speaks of the foundation as a way to create joy, strength and hope in a terminally ill child with the granting of a wish.

"It makes positive effects on the child's life and on the



(Staff photo/Pfeiffer RP07021902)

Eight-year-old Alexander Fournier and one of his wish angels Jocelyne D'Aoust smile as he is explained the itinerary of his upcoming trip to Walt Disney World in March.

family," Wlotzki said. The foundation is looking to expand its scope from granting 30 wishes a year in eastern Ontario to more than 50.

"Anyone that knows a child with a terminal illness can contact Make-A-Wish, it's that easy," said Wlotzki.

BNI, represented by executive directors Denis Brisson and Jocelyne D'Aoust, were responsible for raising the necessary funds to pay for the trip.

"Each year BNI holds a golf tournament in Ottawa with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to the kids," explained Brisson.

This year the group was able to raise the \$6000 required to finance the trip.

"This is the first year we've taken it from beginning right to the end and it's very special to see," said Brisson.

The company will be holding another benefit tournament June 6 at The Meadows in Ottawa.