

‘Making-A-Wish’ come true

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Photo Courtesy: Abishek Nair

Coimbatore: When we think of a room full of cancer patients, a dull or gloomy room comes in to our mind where there is no spark of life. But what awaited us in the Ramakrishna Paediatric Oncology Ward was very different from what we expected. The room was filled with kids who are enjoying their stay in the hospital. They have created their own small little home there. They have their family and new friends with them.

We had the opportunity to see the cheerful face of Shakthivel and Priyadarshini on that day. Shakthivel, a 14 year old boy, was presented with a bicycle which was his all time wish. As Priyadarshini was just 4 year old girl, she

didn't want anything else but toys. She was gifted with various types of toys for her to play. We also met an energetic kid, Aswin, who was running around the room to jump into the camera frame whenever he gets a chance. We also found kids who are very interested in studies. They just want to get back to school to be with their old friends and teachers.

"I just want to meet my friends and brother", 17 year old Vishnu Priya said. He wants to become a cricketer and wishes to meet his favourite cricket player, Suresh Raina of Indian cricket team. "I want a yellow churidar that I can wear for diwali", that's what 5 year old Narmada wishes.

We were able to see those merry faces because of Bindu Rajiv. She is the Programme Coordinator of the Make-A-Wish Foundation started by her in Coimbatore. She has given up her corporate job and joined this social work for the past one and a half years. She goes around hospitals and find out children living with 'life threatening illnesses' (between the ages of 3 and 18 years) and meet them often to uncover their 'most cherished wishes'. After discovering the wish, she, along with her student volunteers will try to find out sponsors who can grant the children their wish.

"99% of the wishes are materialistic wishes. So, if the wish is something small, we won't wait to get sponsors. We will grant it with our own money", said Bindu. "In my career in this field, there were two kids who died before granting them their wish."

There are other kids also whose wishes were granted before. Jeevan Krishnan (Trissur), who wanted to meet the celebrity keyboard player Stephen Devassiya, had his wish come true when he had the chance to spend one full day with him and also to be a part of one of his concert. A 3 year old child, who doesn't want to reveal her name, wishes to become an Engineer. She was taken to the company Bosch for one full day and spends her day acting like a true engineer.

Every 3 months, the organization will conduct an event in which they will invite all their 1000 kids to whom they had granted wishes. The event will have programmes like storytelling, recitation and so on. There will be functions on various important days also like on Christmas, Diwali, and New Year.

Make-A-Wish Foundation of India is affiliated to Make-A-Wish Foundation International. The Indian division was started by Uday and Gita Joshi in 1996. They had a little boy Gandhar, suffering from leukaemia, was in United States for his treatment. At that time, he wished to visit Disneyland with his family. This cherished wish was granted by the volunteers of Make-A-Wish Foundation there. After Gandhar passed away, the Joshi family returned to India and decided to 'take on the mission of bringing magic and power of the wish experience to children suffering from life-threatening illnesses in India. So that was the beginning of Make-A-Wish Foundation in India.