

Make-A-Wish Foundation® of San Diego Honors Our 2011 Volunteer of the Year Awardees



Volunteer of the Year: Evelynn Aquino

It is rare when a volunteer desires to take on multiple roles within a Foundation. Our volunteer of the year, Evelynn Aquino, proves to do just that each year. Since joining the Foundation in 2003, Evelynn has touched practically everything that we do. She is a wonderfully fun wish granter, always wearing silly hats and bringing joy to each visit. She has granted 60 wishes so far and has not slowed down a step. She also serves as an airport greeter, volunteers at special events, co-chaired the Walk For Wishes volunteer team, and recently joined the Make-A-Wish Tuna Challenge Committee. Evelynn has her foot in almost every open door and her contributions have given great value to the Make-A-Wish organization.

Fundraising Volunteer of the Year: Carolyn Morris

Carolyn is a longtime supporter and volunteer; her commitment to Make-A-Wish is exceeded only by her boundless energy! As the Acquisitions Chair for the Make-A-Wish Tuna Challenge, Carolyn worked with literally hundreds of sponsors and donors for our largest fundraiser of the year. In her time with Tuna Challenge the event has raised over \$1.5 million for the Foundation. In addition to Tuna Challenge, Carolyn has also supported and volunteered at other Make-A-Wish events and in 2010, as if she wasn't busy enough already, she decided to create a new fundraising event for Make-A-Wish called Fashion With A Passion. In it's second year, that event tripled in revenue and Carolyn has committed to continue growing it to be another huge annual fundraiser. This year she will retire as Tuna Challenge Acquisitions Chair to focus on her new event and other special projects for Make-A-Wish. She is a volunteer who combines her ability to ask people to support a cause with her passion for the mission of Make-A-Wish. We are proud to honor Carolyn with this much-deserved award.



Wish Granter of the Year: Katie Gates

Our mission could not be delivered if it were not for the efforts of our hard-working and dedicated wish granting volunteers. These volunteers are the face of our Foundation and are at the heart of our mission delivery. This year we recognize Katie Gates as our Wish Granter of the Year. Katie joined the Foundation in 2007 and became a Wish Granter in 2009. In the past two years Katie has granted 16 wishes, 10 of them since January of this year! She is extremely organized, in constant communication with wish families, volunteers and staff and ALWAYS does everything in her power to make sure the wish process is smooth and magical. She understands our wish guidelines and policies and is always able to somehow deliver the rules with magic and joy to the wish family, not an easy task. We are grateful for her consistent dedication and compassion to wish granting!





Airport Greeter of the Year: Yolanda Lopez

Each year we host approximately 160 families from other parts of the country whose wish is happening in San Diego, and each one is greeted at the airport by a volunteer who welcomes them and makes sure they have a smooth and worry-free arrival. Our airport greeter of the year is Yolanda Lopez. She joined the Foundation last May and quickly became passionate about this unique volunteer role. She goes out of her way for each family to make sure they are comfortable, taken care of and welcomed, and treats each wish child to a teddy bear! In the past year Yolanda has greeted over 20 families at the airport, and she approaches every one with compassion, love and enthusiasm.

Starfish Award: John Rufing

Each year, we select one standout volunteer from the Make-A-Wish Tuna Challenge committee to recognize with our Starfish Award. A new volunteer last year, John Rufing stepped up to fill a gap this year and became the banquet chair for the event. This included everything from organizing set-up and breakdown for an event with 1,000 guests, securing a band, emcee, rentals, food, and everything else you could possibly think of, organizing hundreds of volunteers, and overseeing all operations and logistics. When describing set-up day, our staff member Alex Cano says, "John never sat down... I don't think he ever took a break or even ate anything. He never stopped working...he is amazing." And, John did it all with a smile, making many new friends along the way and helping to make this year's event the most efficiently run Tuna Challenge ever!



Event Volunteer of the Year: Athena Warmenhoven (pictured above)

Athena joined the Make-A-Wish Tuna Challenge committee three years ago, taking on the challenging task of chairing the event's huge auction. As the aunt of a wish child, Athena holds a very special place in her heart for Make-A-Wish and approaches her volunteer work with love and dedication. This year, in addition to her duties with the Tuna Challenge, Athena took on new responsibilities with our other special events, organizing our auctions for Roll Out The Barrel and the Golf Classic. She has brought her great sense of style to all of our events, along with a wonderful crew of volunteers who help her.



Infinity Award: Steve McCaffrey

Steve joined Make-A-Wish as a volunteer in 1988, and has consistently served the Foundation for more than 2/3 our entire history. He has worked on numerous wishes over that time period, all of which were special, but one that stands out was 5-year-old Kelsey's wish to have 100 butterflies.

Kelsey was fascinated by butterflies. When she was referred to Make-A-Wish, she was very sick and unable to travel to see butterflies where they are indigenous. Steve decided to instead bring the butterflies to her. He organized volunteers to set out all over the country to various butterfly farms to pick up the sleeping butterflies. They were brought to Kelsey's house, where a butterfly habitat was set up in her living room. Many of Kelsey's friends came over and helped the wish granters "wake up" each butterfly one by one and allow them to fly around. Kelsey was so happy with her butterfly habitat and used to lie on the floor for hours watching her butterflies. Kelsey passed away a few months after her wish but her family remembers it as the happiest they had even seen her. Make-A-Wish thanks Steve for his continuous dedication and support.



Rookie of the Year: Amanda Andrzejewski

Amanda joined the Foundation early last year and drove right into any and all opportunities we had available. She became an avid airport greeter, an active wish granter and a familiar face at many of our events. Amanda’s vibrant personality and positive attitude stood out from day one. She is a joy to work with and our wish families and volunteers consistently rave about her character. Amanda is also responsible for bringing on many of newer wonderful volunteers, due to her recruitment and outreach. In the past year, she has already granted 8 wishes, attended many of our events and continued to greet families at the airport.

Rookie of the Year: Eric Arnold

Eric is a new volunteer who came to the foundation through a member of our Board of Directors, Jarrod Dillon. With a disposition for events, networking and raising funds, Eric took a lead role at the Make-A-Wish Golf Classic as our Fund-A-Wish auctioneer and helped raise over \$7,000. Not only has Eric joined the Golf Classic committee, he has committed to support next year’s Roll Out The Barrel wine and food event by assisting with acquisitions and helping us develop corporate partnerships. Eric is a natural leader who exudes enthusiasm for every project and or task he has worked with us on, most recently giving up a Saturday to help construct a Rapunzel playhouse for wish kid Emma.

