



**Make-A-Wish Foundation®  
of Central & Northern Florida**

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“We all live under the same sky,  
but we don't all  
have the same horizon.”

-- unknown

Dear Robert:



Sarah with her little sister Amy, her stem cell donor

While most girls gave fond memories of turning “sweet sixteen”, for my daughter Sarah, it has been a year she’s rather forget, filled with serious illness and severe pain that wakes her from her sleep in tears. While her friends, social activities and school life moved on without her, Sarah was held hostage in a hospital room by a life-threatening illness called Myelodysplastic Syndrome.

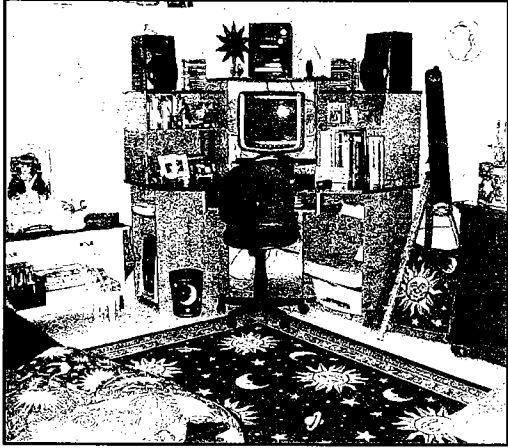
Despite the devastating side effects of the chemotherapy drugs, Sarah’s spirit remained strong and determined. Her only hope for a cure was a stem-cell transplant. Fortunately, her 8-year-old sister Amy was a perfect match. Out of love for her older sister, Amy unselfishly stepped into a strange and scary world without hesitation.

During this chaotic time when Sarah felt like everything was beyond her control, she was visited by two volunteers from the Make-A-Wish Foundation who asked her to “make a wish” for whatever her heart desired. Finally, Sarah had something wonderful to focus on, something she could control.

Sarah’s wish was for something practical that showed her deep desire to return home. She wished to transform her bedroom into her own personal heaven on earth! A serene and beautiful place with a celestial theme, rich blue walls, and plenty of suns, moons and stars, where Sarah could comfortably watch movies, listen to music and spend time with friends. Sarah’s eyes sparkled with ideas as her wish grantors made a list of what they would need to complete her grand vision, including a stereo, TV, DVD player, and a computer.



Sarah with one of her Volunteer Wish Grantors, Renate Weber



Sarah's Personal Heaven On Earth

As Sarah's dream bedroom neared completion, everyone looked forward to the day she'd return home. But there were times the doctors feared that day may never come. After her transplant procedure, Sarah endured serious complications, including several surgeries to remove fluid that had accumulated around her heart. Discouraged and frightened, yet true to her spirit, Sarah stayed strong and focused on coming home. She knew beyond the four walls of her hospital room, her wish come true was waiting for her at home.

Four long months after entering the hospital, Sarah finally returned home! As she walked through our front door, a small gathering of family and friends shouted, "Welcome home!" There were happy tears, hugs and smiles all around. Sarah made her way through the decorations towards her bedroom, stopping at her doorway. As she stood taking everything in, she exclaimed, "This is so awesome! It's exactly what I wanted!" For the rest of the evening, Sarah didn't leave her room. We adults smiled, content to listen from the living room to happy sounds of our sweet Sarah and her friends enjoying her little blue heaven. It was the end of a wonderful day, one we will relive again and again in our memories.



Sarah with her mother Dana and sister Amy

Sarah's wish is not only a beautiful memory, it is also a beautiful reality. A reality made possible by compassionate people in our community that keep these wishes alive for seriously ill children, enriching their lives with hope, strength and joy.

Right now the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Central & Northern Florida has a record high number of more than 120 seriously ill children awaiting their chance to have a wish fulfilled. Each of these wishes cost between \$3,500 and \$5,000. Your donations are needed now more than ever! Please help Make-A-Wish continue this important work by making your contribution today. Your donation today will help turn many more wishes, like Sarah's, into realities tomorrow.

My best wishes to you and yours,

*Dana Duffie*

Dana Duffie- Sarah's Mom

P.S. Sarah would like you to have this bookmark as her way of saying thank you for "spending time with her" by reading about her journey. It features one of Sarah's favorite quotes, good advice by which she lives. She also thanks you for helping make wishes come true for children like herself.