

Helping Children with Life-Threatening Medical Issues



**Joanne
Mattern**



Conquering Disease
Emergency Aid
Environmental Protection
**Helping Children with Life-Threatening
Medical Issues**
Helping Our Veterans
Preserving Human Rights Around the
World
The Quest to End World Hunger
Support for Education

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Introduction



Illness, injury, and death are sad facts of life everywhere on Planet Earth. While most of us are lucky enough to enjoy good health and a happy life, millions more children suffer every day.

Millions of children are born in countries filled with poverty and warfare. These conditions prevent children from receiving good nutrition or necessary medicines. A doctor might be miles away, if a doctor can be found at all. For children in these countries, even a minor illness can turn into something deadly. Children who live in poverty or war zones get sick more easily. They can also contract diseases that are very rare in the United States. Without the medicine to help them, children die every day.

It isn't only children in faraway lands who suffer. Children all over the United States and Canada have problems too. Even though the United States and Canada are highly developed countries with many programs to help sick children and their families, many children still suffer from illnesses and chronic conditions, such as asthma, which is a respiratory disease that makes it hard to breathe. Even tooth decay can be a huge problem in areas where it isn't so easy to go to the dentist. Children live in poverty even in your community. It's a sad fact that not every child has access to good health care or dental care.

It isn't only poor children who have medical problems. A serious illness, injury, or birth defect can strike any family at any time. For these children, medical help is needed right away. But how can families find the help they need?

Fortunately for children and families all over the world, there are many organizations whose sole purpose is to help sick families. Some of these organizations make life better for sick children by granting wishes and creating once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Other organizations visit children in hospitals or create a home away from home where a family can relax and experience normal life while still being close to a hospitalized child.

Hospitals help too. Many hospitals have created cutting-edge medical programs to help ill or injured children. At some of these hospitals, children receive the best medical care free of charge—all because caring people decided to help.

Other organizations take a broader approach. Global organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children strive to improve conditions all over the world by wiping out illnesses and providing medical care for children who would otherwise have no way to see a doctor.

In this book, you'll discover some of the organizations and people who are working tirelessly to make the world a better place for children with medical needs. You'll also find out how you can help in ways both big and small. Sometimes the best medicine is just someone reaching out a helping hand.

CHAPTER 1



Batkid Makes a Wish

Early in the morning of November 15, 2013, an urgent message went out to residents of the San Francisco area. The city's police chief asked if anyone knew where Batkid was because the city needed his help to solve some serious crimes. Soon afterward, Batkid—the secret identity of a five-year-old boy named Miles Scott—was in the city and ready for action.

Batkid teamed up with Batman and climbed into the superhero's car, the Batmobile. Quickly they raced to the Hyde Street cable car line where they found a damsel in distress tied up on the tracks. Batkid helped Batman untie the woman before the cable car came along. Hundreds of people watched from the sidewalks and cheered the little superhero as he saved the day.

But Batkid's work wasn't done yet. Another message came in from police, announcing that one of Batman's archenemies, the Riddler, was robbing a bank. Once again, Batkid and Batman rushed to the scene of the crime where they caught the Riddler red-handed and saved the day in front of another cheering crowd.

Then it was time for a break. Batkid and Batman stopped at a local restaurant for some hamburgers and superhero conversation. But another crime was in the works. Just as they finished lunch, an urgent message came in from the chief of police telling Batkid to look out the window. There he saw a huge crowd of people jumping up and down and yelling for help. It turned out that the Penguin, another classic villain, was kidnapping Lou Seal, the famous mascot of the city's baseball team, the San Francisco

Giants. Once again, Batkid and Batman jumped into the Batmobile and sped off to the ballpark. Thanks to their quick work, the Penguin was captured and Lou Seal was saved.



Batman holds up Batkid Miles Scott in front of a cheering crowd in San Francisco after the two saved the city as part of a Make-a-Wish event on November 15, 2013. Miles, who lives in Tulelake, California, has battled leukemia since he was a toddler and had his biggest wish—to be Batkid—come true.



The mayor of San Francisco presents Miles “Batkid” Scott with the key to the city after the little superhero saved the day as part of a Make-a-Wish event.

With the city’s crime wave stopped in its tracks, it was time to celebrate. Batkid went to City Hall where San Francisco’s mayor and police chief thanked the little boy for his hard work. They also presented Batkid and his younger brother with special keys to the city—keys made of chocolate! The *San Francisco Chronicle* printed a special newspaper that day describing all of Batkid’s heroic achievements. The headline read, “Batkid Saves City.”¹ Batkid also received thousands of messages on Twitter and other social media sites. Even President Barack Obama got

involved, posting a short video on Twitter to say, “Way to go, Batkid. Way to save Gotham City.”

Why did San Francisco go to so much trouble to transform itself into Gotham City and set up crimes for Batkid to solve? It was all to make a sick child have the best day of his life. Miles Scott—the real Batkid—is a five-year-old boy who has battled a form of cancer called leukemia since he was eighteen months old. An organization called the Make-a-Wish Foundation asked Miles what he would like most in the world. Miles’ answer was to be Batkid for a day. “He is a sunny, positive little boy and finds his inspiration in superheroes,” the Foundation said about Miles. “When we interviewed Miles for a wish, he surprised even his parents: He wishes to be Batkid!”²

As it does with thousands of other wishes every year, the Make-a-Wish Foundation set about granting Miles’ wish. San Francisco, which had worked with Make-a-Wish before, was happy to help.


“This is one that we thought of as a great opportunity for people to share in the power of a wish so they can see how it affects not only the children and their families, but also the other people involved,” Jen Wilson, the marketing and promotions manager for Make-a-Wish in San Francisco, told ABCNews.com. “It has a big impact on many people. Since he wants to be a superhero, we felt like having a large crowd there waiting with signs and cheering him on would make him feel like a hero, not just because he battles villains and helped fight crime, but he’s a true hero.”³ So Make-a-Wish asked for volunteers to play the parts of Batman, the Riddler, the Penguin, and other characters, as well as the crowd that cheers Batkid on. They expected about a hundred people to volunteer. Then something unusual happened. Miles’ story went viral. Suddenly Twitter was blazing with the hashtag #SFBatKid. Facebook and other social media sites reported on the story. Soon thousands of people were volunteering to help.



After Miles Scott's request to be Batkid for a day went viral on social media, thousands of people came out in San Francisco to cheer him on, and his story was reported all over the world.

Batkid's experience was unusual for Make-a-Wish. As Jen Wilson admitted, "This is definitely not the typical wish we grant."⁴ Still, Batkid's adventures had an important result. Helping Miles and viewing his story made a lot of people feel good. These people discovered that helping sick children is an important and wonderful thing to do. Also many people found out about the work of the Make-a-Wish Foundation, which has dedicated itself to granting wishes to sick children for many years.



 The Make-a-Wish Foundation made Diego Diaz's wish come true. The boy got to meet—and fist-bump! —President Barack Obama during a visit to the Oval Office on June 23, 2011.

The Make-a-Wish Foundation got a lot of publicity on November 15, 2013, but it has been helping children in ways big and small for more than thirty years. Make-a-Wish is not the only organization that helps sick children. There are many other places, organizations, and people who work tirelessly so sick children can have the best care and the best chance at life. There are hospitals where desperately ill children can receive the best medical care for free. Foundations raise awareness of different diseases while providing support to families and funds to doctors to research new treatments. International organizations work to wipe out diseases all over the world, while many large corporations donate money and encourage their employees to donate their time to make life better for children in need.

There are so many children and families who need help and so many people who are willing to provide that help. In this book, you'll learn more about these organizations and how they are changing the world, one child at a time. You'll also learn what you can do to help.

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