

**Make-A-Wish®
Illinois**

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Illuminate the Journey: Wish Ball 2017

Make-A-Wish® Illinois Celebrates Most Successful Wish Ball

CHICAGO — A night highlighting the many impactful points of the wish experience, guests at the annual Make-A-Wish Illinois Wish Ball shared many laughs and heartfelt moments with emcee **John Stamos**, and his co-emcee, Maya Gray, 14, a wish recipient from Chicago. This event held on May 20, 2017 at Navy Pier and presented by Paul and Joan Rubschlager, raised **\$2.4 million** to support Make-A-Wish Illinois and the organization's mission to grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions.

"Our goal here tonight is to raise money for this great organization so it can continue to provide these amazing experiences of hope, strength and joy for thousands of children who deserve a memorable break from their daily battle, whatever that may be," wish parent Lou DeFalco shared during the evening's program. DeFalco, of Woodridge, and his wife Mary are the parents of two children diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. Their son Michael's wish was granted in April when he met Riyad Mahrez of the Leicester City Football Club on a trip to the UK. The DeFalco's younger son Dylan is still in the process of discovering what his true wish might be.

"The wish experience showed me that just because I have a disease does not mean I am limited," wish alum Maiya Washington shared in remarks during the pre-event sponsor reception emceed by WGN-TV's **Dina Bair**.

In addition to the moving remarks by wish families, guests enjoyed live and silent auctions, a raffle and a rousing musical performance by John Stamos. Backed by a live band, Stamos was accompanied by two wish alumni who are also accomplished musicians; Camiah MacNeal of Chicago and Andrew Christopoulos of Northbrook.

Throughout the evening, the lasting impact of a wish and the resulting hope and resilience were accentuated through performances and family remarks. This inspiring evening raises critical financial support for the Make-A-Wish mission of enriching lives with hope, strength and joy. In addition to presenting sponsors Paul and Joan Rubschlager, the evening was also supported by Platinum Sponsors: Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., Conagra, DLA Piper, Ergotron, GATX, MARC USA, UGN, Inc. and Unum.

About Make-A-Wish

Make-A-Wish Illinois will grant more than 700 wishes to children across the state this year. Wishes are granted to children with life-threatening medical conditions such as cancer, organ transplants, genetic diseases and many more. Wishes can be a vital part of the treatment process, empowering children to explore possibilities and providing strength to comply with medical treatments. Make-A-Wish Illinois strives to reach every eligible child with an impactful wish experience. For information or to help, call 312.602.WISH or visit www.illinois.wish.org