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DECEMBER 2009



# A CHILD'S WISH

MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE FOR KIDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

## Local Teen Realizes the Dream of Disney

by mimi greenwood knight

Spunky is a word people use to describe Kristina Kennedy. If you met her, you'd agree. The outgoing thirteen-year-old honor roll student stays busy cheer leading, playing baseball and Angie Junior High football crowds recently hailed her their homecoming queen. You might find her bubbly, energetic, vivacious. The last thing you'd call her, though, is sick.

To look at Kristina now—with her hair just returning from chemotherapy—you'd witness the picture of health. What a difference a year can make. This time last year, Kristina showed her mom, Kimberly Kennedy, a lump she'd just discovered in her groin area. "I took her to the pediatrician who sent us straight to Children's Hospital in New Orleans," she remembered. "I guess that should have alarmed me but I was completely unprepared for the news we got there."

Malignant peripheral nerve sheath tumor was the diagnosis. "I'd never heard of it," Kimberly said. "The doctor told us it's a type of cancer so rare that only 1% of the population will contract it. My mom had come along with us and she and I started crying right away. Kristina asked the doctor, 'Can you make me better?'

He said, "Kristina, I think I can."

She said, 'Okay' and that was it. She never cried through the whole thing—the treatment, the chemotherapy, radiation, losing her hair. She was the one who kept the rest of us going."

There was a mantra Kristina picked up that her parents quickly had it written on a shirt for her, I don't fear cancer. Cancer fears me. "I felt like I had to be strong for my family," she explained in a school essay where she detailed the ordeal from start to finish. Her story was chosen to be displayed at The Washington Parish Fair this month. "I wanted to write it to give other kids with cancer hope," she explained. "If they know that I'm back in school and doing all the things I

love, maybe that'll let them know it's going to be okay for them too."


Along with the things she loves Kristina and her family will be doing something they've never done before. Thanks to the non-profit A Child's Wish, Kristina, her mom, dad and eight-year-old little sister, Alaina, will be boarding a plane for some fun-filled days in Disney World.

They'll be staying at Give Kids the World Village which I'm told can be as much fun as the theme park and the whole trip will be paid for by A Child's Wish. The web site explains it like this...

For a child faced with a critical illness, there is only one time to make that most special wish come true. It is NOW.

Some of the wishes are expensive... some not... some big dreams and some simple. To grant a wish. To see a smile. To watch faces light up, tears flow, and memories made. The TIME IS NOW.

For twenty years that's what the Metairie based organization has done. They enable young sports fans to meet their heroes, arrange for bedroom makeovers and purchase new computers, bikes and playhouses. They arranged for one terminally ill teenager to release his own music CD, two young boys to be firefighters-for-a-day and a young lady to visit the set of her favorite TV show then hobnob with cast members. They even made arrangements for two recipients to enjoy a special audience with the pope when he was in town.

For Kristina and others like her the future is uncertain. "She has return for tests every three months to make sure the cancer hasn't returned," her mom said. A Child's Wish is here to see that—right here, right now—they're able to realize some of their lifelong dreams, forget about being sick for awhile and just be kids having fun with their families. For information on A Child's Wish or to make a donation visit [childs-wish.org](http://childs-wish.org). 

Kristina Kennedy is from Angie, LA and is 12 years old. She has peripheral malignant nerve sheath tumors. For her wish she went to Disney Oct 18 - 24 with her 6-yr old sister, Alaina, and her parents, Mark & Kimberly.

