

# WISHES

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This isn't the first time the pair have been involved with Make-A-Wish. As teenagers, they both worked with the organization, but back then they weren't granting wishes, they were receiving them.

Pozniak and Goehring were both diagnosed with a type of lymphoma when they were 14 years old. The couple know the fear that goes along with a cancer diagnosis and it is their hope to provide a child with a glimpse of hope.

"The opportunity to give a wish to a child goes beyond what the wish is, it is what it stands for," Goehring said. "It gives hope to a child and reminds them that the future is brighter, sunnier, and waiting for them on the other side."

**Survivors unite**

While they may have grown up more than 500 miles apart, it was ultimately their diseases that led them to each other.

"I first identified John at the Relay For Life in 2010 (at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities)," Goehring said. "It wasn't hard to spot another young survivor in a purple shirt."

Pozniak earned the purple shirt after fighting a battle most teenagers don't have in mind. Like most adolescents growing up in the Falls, Pozniak spent his time on Rainy Lake, playing baseball and improving his guitar-playing skills. His focus was on getting a driver's license in a few years, not going to the doctor for a persistent cough and some back pain.

"I was stubborn to go to the clinic, but my mother called my stepmother Kelly, a nurse at the clinic, who

got me an appointment with Dr. Charles Helleloid that evening," he recalled. "I had been camping on Rainy during these days so I thought I was just sore from the trip and coming down with a cold, nothing seemed alarming at the time."

However, less than 24 hours after the Aug. 17, 2000, appointment, Pozniak was in Duluth trying to absorb a fate he did not see coming.

"The oncologists came into my room and...performed a biopsy of a lymph node in my neck," he said. "Within in about an hour, he returned with the results, looked at me, and stated, 'You have stage IIA T-cell non-Hodgkins lymphoblastic lymphoma.'"

Confused, Pozniak asked the doctor to translate the diagnosis in layman's terms. To this day, he can remember the three words that came out of the doctor's mouth, "You have cancer."

The following day, chemotherapy started and continued nonstop for the next two years. Throughout the entire battle, Pozniak said the thought of "not surviving" was never an option.

"My reaction was determination to live a life not letting (having cancer) get in the way or draw attention to it," he said. "It has been over 14 years since I was diagnosed, (with) no re-occurrences knock on wood."

**Emily's battle**

Three years later, Goehring was an active athlete growing up in Clarks Mills, Wis., about 30 miles south of Green Bay. The starting point guard on the eighth-grade basketball team had just graduated from grade school when she noticed she was getting tired easily and more than usual. On top of that, she had a

## Donate to John and Emily's cause

To help John Pozniak and Emily Goehring fund the wish of a child diagnosed with cancer, visit friends.wish.org. On the right hand side of the screen, click "Start here." Next scroll down to "Make-A-Wish Wisconsin." On the right hand side, choose "Find a friend's special event page." Pozniak and Goehring are listed under "Emily Rose Goehring's John & Emily's Wedding Wish fundraiser."

dry cough that wouldn't go away.

"My physician thought it could be asthma, but when the symptoms persisted, they put me on antibiotics and called it bronchitis," Goehring recalled. "Weeks went by and my performance in basketball kept slipping and my physician ordered a chest x-ray, which would be the beginning of my cancer journey."

Based on the x-ray results, Goehring's doctor sent her to a children's hospital in Milwaukee. During the 90-minute drive, she noticed a bump on her neck.

"We hardly walked through the door (of the hospital) and (doctors) were prepping me for a biopsy of the lymph node," she said. "Having never undergone a surgery, other than my tonsils when I was 4, I was nervous."

That night, less than a week into her summer vacation, Goehring was diagnosed with stage 2B Hodgkin's lymphoma. The cancer took up one third of her chest and kick started four rounds of chemotherapy on 21-day cycles.

"School was a big part of my life and I wanted to lead the most normal life as possible," she said. "Therefore, when I had to have my radiation treatments, I would drive to Green Bay at 6 a.m. every morning before school for three weeks. By Oct. 2003, my scans showed no sign of

any cancer."

Unlike Pozniak, who remained in remission after having clean scans, Goehring's cough returned.

"I had a really bad feeling about it," she said. "I was scared to death."

The scans came back clean, but a month later, the monster returned. This time, it was more aggressive and had metastasized to her lungs. It was considered stage four and called for high doses of intense chemotherapy.

"The thing that scared me the most was that I knew exactly what I would have to endure again," Goehring said. "The nausea, the pain, the hair loss, and the look of pity in stranger's eyes. But I was a fighter and I knew I could get through this with the help of my family and friends."

This time, the 15-year-old would need a bone marrow transplant, and fortunately, she could be her own donor. Two days before turning 16, she received the transplant and spent the next 30 days in isolation.

"I was transfusion-dependent for six months after the bone marrow transplant," Goehring said, adding she went to the hospital three times a week for blood products. "This was not a life to lead which led to a consultation for another bone marrow transplant. My family was tested and my oldest brother was a match. The day scheduled

for further testing, my blood counts started to climb. My counts continued to increase to normal levels and the thought of a second transplant vanished. That was over 10 years ago."

**Wishes come true**

A bright spot in both Pozniak and Goehring's treatments were receiving wishes from the Make-a-Wish Foundation. It gave them a chance to escape the cancer demons and inhale a fresh gulp of normalcy.

Randy Pozniak, John's father, submitted the application for his son's wish and John was surprised with a phone call.

"It was the best phone call I had ever received," he said.

After considering his options, Pozniak chose a 16-foot Mirrocraft boat with a 25 horse motor and center steering column. During the summer 2001, the boat was launched for its maiden voyage. And the boat, he said, was more than put to good use.

"I have gone all the way from Ranier to Kettle Falls countless times in that boat, making several stops at Andersen Bay for cliff jumping and camping," Pozniak said. "I grew up on the lake so I could fish in the boat right out in front of my house. I've pulled friends skiing and water tubing, traveled with friends to all the resorts on the lake and even drove it up through the north arm of Canada."

Fourteen years later, the wish is still put to good use.

"I gave Emily a tour of Rainy Lake just last summer," Pozniak said. "We went to Sha-Sha and Little American Island. Still runs great."

Goehring decided to include her family on her

wish in January of 2004, when the group escaped the cold Wisconsin winter and traveled to Oahu, Hawaii, for a week of swimming with dolphins, riding in a helicopter, and enjoying a pig roast on the beach.

"I wanted to pick a wish that included my family, who endured just as much, if not more than I had gone through," she said. "They would jump over backwards for me and I couldn't have asked for a better support system. I wanted to get away from reality and try to enjoy time together as a family."

**A new wish**

Whether it's a boat or a trip to somewhere tropical, the couple said they hope they can fund the wish of a child who is going through the unthinkable fight of cancer.

"We have a unique past and we both feel strongly about the Make-A-Wish Foundation," Goehring said. "Nothing would make us happier than sitting across from a child and not only ask what they would like to do, but also be able to finance their wish."

For now, the couple has set a goal of raising \$5,000. So far, they've raised almost \$1,000.

"Since this is an avenue we have never gone down before, we are unsure if we will fall short or exceed our goal," Goehring said. "Overall, this is a charity that is close to our heart and we simply want to make another child smile. When you are diagnosed with cancer, your world shatters. A wish is there to pick you up and encourage you to keep going...It helps, even if it is just for a moment, to take the fear out of the disease. What a wish can provide to a child is limitless."

# COUNTY

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"I don't know if I agree with spending almost \$34,000 to put up a website for four years," Skoe said.

Commissioner Brian McBride agreed the cost was significant, but said it was necessary.

"I agree it's expensive, but we may need to enter the 21st century on this stuff," McBride said. "Because ours is nothing."

Jaci Nagle, county information systems data manager, said she agreed with McBride's assessment of the current county website. However, the county only pays a \$175 annual fee to host the current site, she said, and "you get what you pay for."

When economic development consultants with Newmark Grubb Knight Frank addressed local leaders recently, McBride said they stressed the importance of having a useful website.

"They did say, 'you need a website, and it has to be interactive, and it has to be up to date,'" McBride said.

McBride said he met with a department head last week, and the person said they went on the county's website to look up some information, and found it was "totally inadequate." The city of International Falls uses CivicPlus services, he said, and its website has much more functionality than the county's website.

"You can look up ordinances, you can look up planning and zoning, and everything's up-to-date," McBride said.

Commissioner Kevin Adee agreed with McBride, and said an up-to-date website is an economic develop-



Wade Pavleck



Brian McBride



Wayne Skoe

ment tool. However, to make sure the site is used to its fullest capabilities, county staff need to input the data.

Nagle said the agreement with CivicPlus includes help with that issue, and the company will migrate data from the current site to the new one. She'll meet with the department heads to determine what they want on their department's pages, but that would happen with any new site, she said.

"There will be plenty of work, still, internally," Nagle said. "But I would have to do that even if I redesigned the site myself."

Chairman Wade Pavleck said the cost appears high, but as long as the board is not raising taxes to pay for it, "I think modernization is necessary."

"With the costs I'm hearing from other counties, this does sound very reasonable," Pavleck said.

The goal of the agreement with CivicPlus, Nagle said, is to create a current website, and also to provide groundwork to keeping it current and updated.

"We won't ever be stuck in the situation we are now, with, 'Gee, our website's really stale, and now we need to invest money into it,'" Nagle said.

**Background**

During the 2015 budget request review, Nagle said the topic of updating the website came up. County officials

reached out to CivicPlus, and Bryan Hahlbeck from the company came to a meeting in November to present the product to the board.

In December, Hahlbeck conducted a remote presentation for county department heads. Nagle said she then gauged their interest in the system. The survey produced mixed results, she said, with many of the department heads agreeing the website needed to be updated.

However, some of the department heads didn't want to post their own data, while some did, Nagle said. Most of the department heads were also concerned about some of the system's more advanced features.

The Association of Minnesota Counties provides website services, and Nagle said she looked into that service. However, due to its similarity to the county's current system, she said this route wouldn't provide a significant improvement over the current website.

"The software they use is similar to what we use here," Nagle said. "Long-term, it would just be a more expensive way to do what we're doing now."

County Administrative Director Teresa Briggs said the CivicPlus system is the system many counties and cities are moving to. When she spoke with AMC staff about the service, she said the AMC representative actually recommended CivicPlus as an alternative to their service.

# COUNCIL

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Brian McBride said Tuesday the letter accuses him of a conflict of interest, while Anderson said he simply conveyed concerns voiced by others and that he does not believe it proper that McBride signs checks involving his brother. Brian McBride said he has not signed checks to or involving his brother.

McBride told Anderson he would be served with a summons as he has petitioned the district judge to consider the issue. He said the judge would decide whether the appointment had been properly made, and apologized to the council for losing his temper over the issue.

Jaksa and Kalar both reiterated their concern that Anderson seemed to be inconsistent with reappointment of people who represent the city on boards and committees. Jaksa said it appears there is political motivation which has not been shared with other members of the council.

Kalar said he believes that people who have been appointed by the city to boards, and do nothing wrong in service and want to continue service should be reappointed. Both he and Jaksa said they had no concerns about Thompson's ability to serve.

Bob Rapaway, former sewer treatment plant supervisor, and sewer board member Doug Dault spoke in favor of reappointment of McBride. They cited his experience on the board and in wastewater treatment, his knowledge of the plant renovations, and that the board has two fairly new members, David Farmer and Mike Rud, who were appointed by Anderson one year ago. Other city representatives on the board include Steve Blair and Dault, whose terms expire at the end of this year, and Tom Worth, who was reappointed to the board by Anderson at the Jan. 5 meeting.

Asked why he sought an appointment to the board, Thompson replied "To see where the money goes."

In other business Tuesday, the council on a 4-1 vote approved paying \$10,454 in dues, an increase of \$450 over last year's dues, to the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities.

Anderson voted against the motion, saying he be-

"The only discussion should be about the integrity, character and ability of Mr. Thompson to fill the position. Period."



Brian Briggs  
International Falls City Council

lieved it was duplicating services the city now receives from the League of Minnesota Cities at a lesser cost of \$6,000.

Jaksa, who now serves as the coalition's second vice president, said the coalition is a successful advocate for local government aid and economic issues facing small, rural cities, while the league represents cities of all sizes.

Briggs supported paying the dues, saying the coalition stands up for the rural communities in the state.

The council approved a sustainable management proposal from the Minnesota Rural Water Association to develop of action plan.

City Administrator Ken Anderson said he would ask staff with the association to assist in development of a "let water run" policy for city water customers asked to do so to avoid freezing. Anderson said there will no cost for the assistance because the city is a member of the association.

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