

August 12, 2016

Make-A-Wish Helps Make College Student's Dream Come True

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MIAMI (CBSMiami) – A South Florida college student is back **home** from the trip of a lifetime thanks to Make-A-Wish Southern Florida.

After receiving a bone marrow transplant from her brother, Stephanie Diaz is making memories she and her **family** will never forget.

“I am 100 percent **happy** with how my life is right now,” she said.

But just a few years ago, Stephanie was given just a 50 percent chance of survival.

“At 15 years old, I was diagnosed with aplastic anemia. It’s a rare blood disease that your red blood cells just stop working,” she explained. “In my junior year of high **school**, March 2014, I had a bone marrow transplant.”

Stephanie spent two months in the hospital and much of the next **school** year out of the classroom. But she still managed to graduate on time with the classmates she grew up with.

“She did,” her mom Suzanne Diaz said through tears. “It was amazing. The strength that she has is incredible.”

Make-A-Wish Southern Florida wanted to celebrate that strength. So earlier this year, it made Stephanie’s dream trip a reality.

“I wished to go on a Mediterranean cruise with my family. We went to Spain, France and Italy. It was an amazing experience,” she said.

For Stephanie, seeing the Trevi Fountain in Rome for the first time was a life-changing experience. “I started crying. It was so good to be alive and be with my family and take it all in because that was what I really wanted to do,” she said.

“A wish for us can be magical. It really can be the turning point in a child’s recovery,” said Taylor Gang, the chairman of Make-A-Wish Southern Florida.

For the Diaz family, the trip is just one of many more happy memories to come.

“Make-A-Wish came up and came around and said, ‘We know you’ve been suffering and we want to do something to make you happy’,” said Suzanne.

“I couldn’t have asked for anything better,” Stephanie added. “These are happy moments. We

have to live in these happy moments every chance we get.”

Stephanie’s trip was the 100th wish sponsored by Florida-based Watertree **Health**. The organization hopes to grant 100 more wishes in the next year alone.

Lauren Pastrana

Lauren Pastrana is the co-anchor of CBS4 News This Morning airing Monday-Friday, from 5 to 7 AM. She joined CBS Miami in April 2012 as a reporter.