

Aloha wish

Ill Hills boy, 11, has dream fulfilled

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

Come late February, Eric Meredith, 11, will spend long, leisurely days amid the sun and surf of Hawaii, chomping pineapple and paying scant attention to school he is missing back home in Farmington Hills.

Eric, a fifth grader at Eagle Elementary, parents Sheri and Jeff, brother Ryan, 13, and helpmate "Spoon" will spend 11 days vacationing in Hawaii, a special treat provided for the others by Eric.

The vacation, Eric's wish for "warm weather" and "eating pineapple," is a dream-come-true, granted by the Northwestern Council of Michigan's Make A Wish Foundation.

ERIC, WHO has used a wheelchair since first grade, has Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a particularly severe form of the disease that his mother describes simply as "not nice."

Eric has asked that he, his family and Ron "Spoon" Witherspoon, an Oakland University student who attended Eric during summer camp last year, enjoy a vacation in Hawaii.

Meanwhile, in Redford Township, Eric's pending dream-vacation brings smiles to the faces of Scooter, Dimples, Chimples and the 30 or so other colorful members of Clowns Around Redford who donated \$300 to the Wish Foundation recently.

"You betcha," said Barbara Eckert of the Wish Foundation. The clown's donation definitely makes possible Eric's dream vacation.

A clown called Scooter, the founder of Redford's clown club who is named Leslie Wright said, "We're a non-profit organization. We had a

profit at the end of the year. We decided we'd share it."

Scooter and the others earned the money by performing at such community functions as Redford Township's annual Oz Feast and the Farmington Elk Club annual Halloween fund-raiser for cystic fibrosis, according to T.J., a tramp clown named Tom Driver.

Driver, who by day works for General Motors, is married to the president of Clowns About Redford, Sharon Driver, whose clown name is Dimples.

THE CLOWNS agreed to donate their extra money to Make A Wish because they believe it a "worthy organization."

Chimples club treasurer Richard Burrows, and wife Marilyn, a white-faced clown named Gumdrops, presented the donation to Eckert.

Eckert, a volunteer who serves as wish chairman for the Northwestern Wish Council, is busy arranging Eric's dream vacation to Hawaii, as well as wishes for a half-dozen other sick youngsters.

For some, she has already completed arrangements and their dreams have come true.

"I got a game, a Thunderblade, a Sega, play earrings," said 4-year-old Donald Kaske, breathlessly punctuating each item with an "ummm."

Donald's wish was a trip to Toys 'R Us in Westland Inc last year where he spent 15 minutes dashing about selecting \$5,000 in toys. His voice still rings with excitement when he talks about it.

"Yeah, I been to Toys 'R Us," he sings.

Donald, who lives in Livonia, was accompanied by mother Margaret and brother Steven, 10. "It was unbelievable," Margaret Kaske said

of the experience.

The dash, however, was not without problems. Ten minutes into it, Donald, who was receiving chemotherapy at the time for a malignant tumor, started hyperventilating and had to be carried the final few minutes of the dash.

"We learned later he had a partially collapsed lung," Margaret said.

Donald has also lost a kidney to the cancer. But for now, he is in remission, thoroughly enjoying his computer games. And when the weather warms, he'll be out-of-doors playing

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ART EMANUELE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Farmington Hills resident Eric Meredith, 11, has a pet cat (Tigger, 4) that makes for pretty good company when he is not playing video games.



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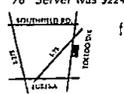


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