



“I wish to have a hot tub”

Ryan, 3

Middleville, Michigan

Three-year-old Ryan’s mom, Tiffany, often calls Ryan her fish out of water. The “sweet little boy with a high spirit” spends his summers in a small wading pool in his backyard, and his winters in the bathtub, sometimes even eating his meals there.

“Words can’t describe Ryan’s love for water, and the freedom he gets in the water that he doesn’t out of the water,” Tiffany wrote. “He would spend all day in the water if we would let him.”

When he was 6 months old, Ryan began experiencing seizures. Doctors diagnosed him with

lissencephaly, a brain formation disorder that prevents him from being able to walk, crawl or speak. The condition has caused several other medical complications, forcing Ryan to keep a strict diet and face doctors’ visits, tests and surgery. But Ryan’s family has always found hope in the power of water.

“When Ryan is having one of his long and hard spasms, we can run water in the bathtub and he seems to come out of the spasm and is happy splashing in the tub instead of crying in pain,” Tiffany wrote in a letter to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, adding:

Ryan can’t crawl or walk but he sure can roll around fast when he hears the water. Even if the water is not running and Ryan decides that he needs to play in the water, he will roll back to the bathroom and knock on the tub while yelling “Aw, aw, aw” louder and louder until he is in the water.

Ryan’s physical therapist, Jennifer, credits the progress she’s seen in Ryan to his time in the pool and the tub.

“Ryan experiences freedom in the water. He is able to move his arms and legs in ways that aren’t possible on land,” Jennifer said.

“Seeing him move in the water gives his family just a glimpse of what life would be like if he could move and run like other children.”

Even though Ryan could not speak his heartfelt wish aloud, there was no doubt that he would wish for a place where he could swim year round – an indoor hot tub. So the Make-A-Wish Foundation teamed up with Midwest Pools Inc. to grant a wish that would truly change Ryan’s life.

Just before Thanksgiving, Midwest Pools employees built a custom hot-tub frame inside Ryan’s newly heated garage. They added special touches, including steps, a unique cover, decorative tile and a second motor for the hot tub jets. Then, a giant truck arrived in the driveway to unload the hot tub itself, complete with seats at just the right depth for Ryan. Dave Meyers Custom Cabinets donated a counter where Ryan could sit outside the pool and cupboards to store his pool toys.

“I was speechless,” said Deb, Ryan’s grandmother, “It was a dream come true. We couldn’t ask for anything more.”

At first, Ryan didn’t understand that the pool was his. But after climbing in and splashing around, a joyful

smile beamed upon his face.

“He was amazed by the steam and kept running his hands through it,” Deb said. “Seeing him try to swim was so cute. He always tried to swim in the tub, but now he has room to splash and kick.”

And Ryan’s wish offers him strength as well as joy. “I believe that some of the motor gains I have seen Ryan make this year are related to the opportunities to be in the water...[Having a] pool at home is an excellent opportunity for him.” Jennifer said.

According to Tiffany, Ryan’s wish is a gift that “will keep on giving, every day.”

By Kathryn Roethel



The Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Michigan grants the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy.

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