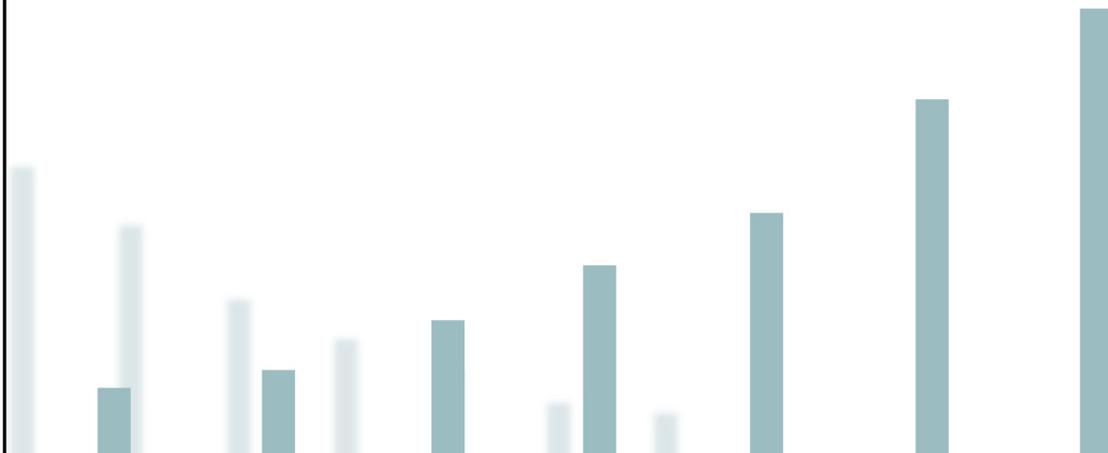


FEBRUARY 2007

## Make-A-Wish Foundation of America Funding Growth



## Make-A-Wish Foundation of America



*"Don't muddy up the purity and simplicity of the mission."* — Paul Velaski, Vice President & Chief Financial Officer

### Organization Snapshot

Founding date: 1980

Revenue (2004): \$160 million

Structure: Network

NCCS classification: Healthcare—patient services—entertainment, recreation

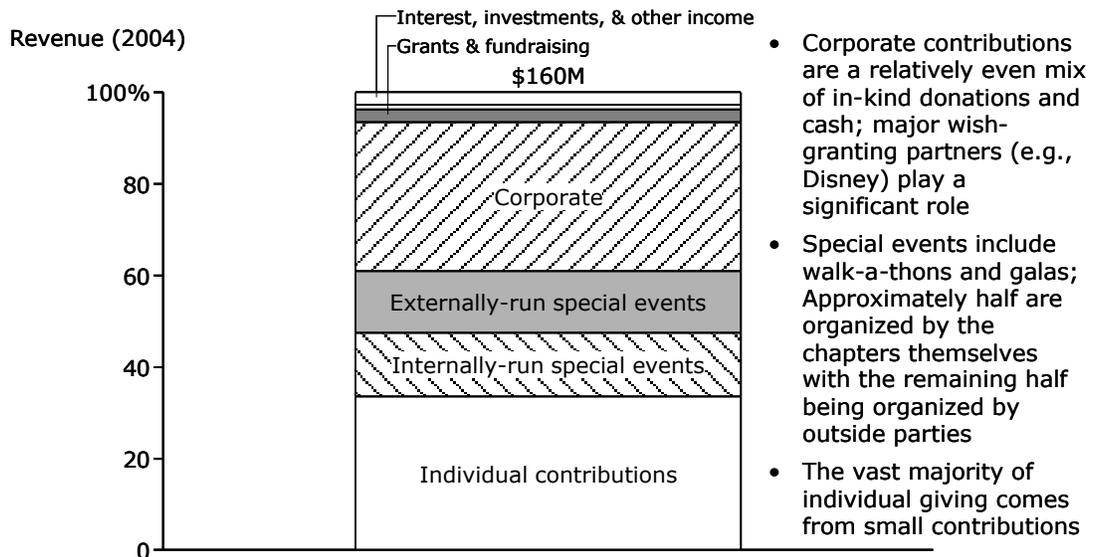
Services: Grants wishes

Beneficiaries: Children with life-threatening medical conditions

Leadership (selected): David Williams, President & Chief Executive Officer; Paul Velaski, Vice President & Chief Financial Officer

Address: 3550 North Central Avenue, Suite 300, Phoenix, AZ 85012-2127

Website: [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org)



Source: Annual report; internal data from organization

## OVERVIEW

The origins of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America trace back to 1980, when a terminally ill little boy named Chris Greicus had his wish granted. All his young life, Chris had dreamed of becoming a police officer. On April 29, 1980, he was sworn in as the first ever and only honorary state trooper in Arizona history. Later that year, Make-A-Wish received tax-exempt status as a nonprofit organization and began fundraising to grant more wishes.

Make-A-Wish has granted the wishes of more than 144,000 children worldwide, in pursuit of its mission to “grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength, and joy.” It now has 71 chapters in the United States. The Make-A-Wish national office provides operational, financial, training, marketing, and development support to the U.S. chapters. More than 25,000 volunteers serve as wish granters, fundraisers, and special events assistants.

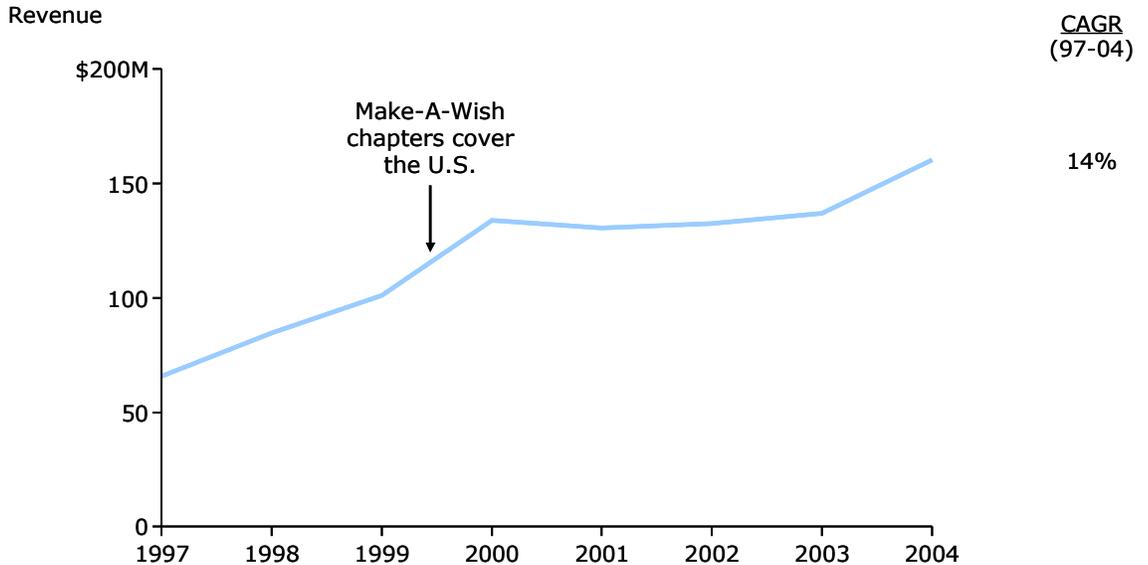
The organization’s revenues now exceed \$160 million. It has achieved this scale through a combination of individual and corporate support. Individual funds come from donations and special events. Corporate support is a mix of in-kind gifts (i.e., the granting of wishes) and cash contributions.

## GROWTH STORY

- **1980** – Chris Greicus, a terminally ill young boy, has his wish realized shortly before his death. His experience serves as the inspiration for the founding of Make-A-Wish.
- **Early 1980s** – Make-A-Wish establishes a relationship with the Walt Disney Company.
- **1984** – Make-A-Wish forms a national office.
- **1990 - 1991** – The organization changes its mission statement to include all children with life-threatening medical conditions rather than just those who are terminally ill.
- **1996 - 1997** – The national office hires first director of development.
- **1999** – Make-A-Wish chapters cover the U.S.
- **2003** – The organization launches a major process to identify services chapters need the national office to provide.
- **2004** – Make-A-Wish amends its bylaws to support an increased role for the national office.

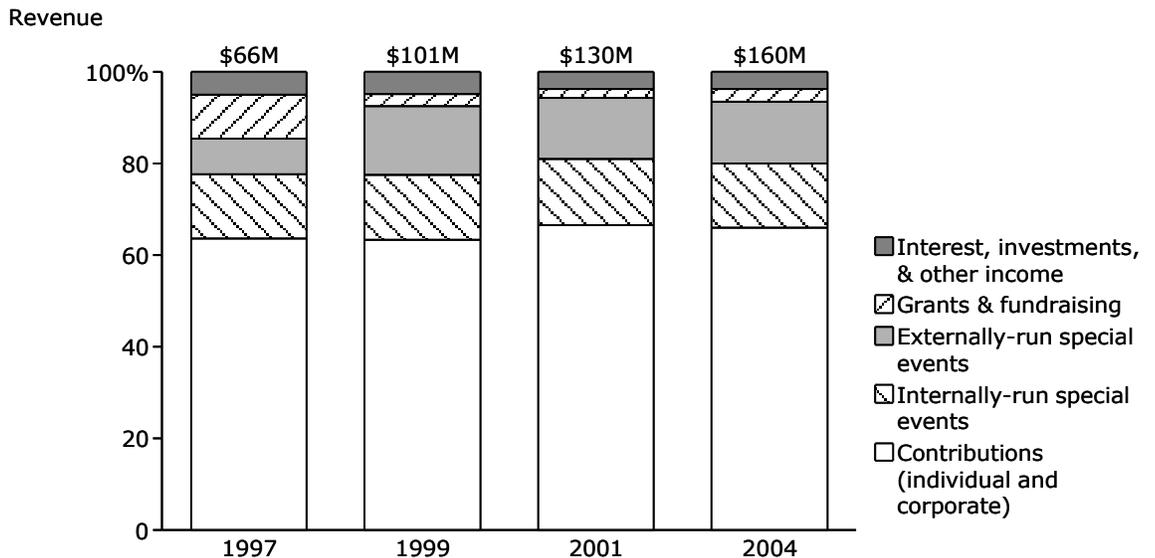
## REVENUE TRENDS

**Revenue growth:** Make-A-Wish has grown solidly from its inception. Growth slowed somewhat after the organization covered the U.S. with chapters.



Note: "CAGR" stands for compound annual growth rate  
 Source: Annual reports; internal data from organization

**Funding mix:** Make-A-Wish's funding mix has been largely constant for the past decade. Early in its history, special events comprised a larger percentage of total fundraising.



Source: Annual reports; internal data from organization

## ACTIONS THAT HELPED PROPEL GROWTH IN FUNDING

- **Relied on simplicity and purity of the organization's mission.** The simplicity and purity of Make-A-Wish's mission has propelled fundraising, partnerships, and volunteer activities. The organization's leaders have worked hard not to muddy the waters.
- **Diversified funding sources where possible.** Make-A-Wish has had great success with both small individual donors and corporate contributors. It has expanded its individual support from special events to direct mail and now to the Internet. The organization also has worked to diversity its corporate support by increasing its number of corporate partners.
- **Covered the U.S. with local chapters while loosely governed.** Make-A-Wish fueled its growth by opening local chapters across the U.S. during a loosely-managed phase. By 1999 it largely had covered the country with chapters. Since then, U.S. growth has been more gradual and the national office increased its overall management role.

## FUNDING CHALLENGES

- **Funding training and development.** Funding for staff training, volunteer training, and board development has been the hardest for Make-A-Wish to secure.
- **Meeting the heavy cash demands associated with building new chapters.** Covering the U.S. with local chapters drew down national's cash reserves. With coverage now complete, cash reserves are once again strong.