

## Grace splashes out with Jenny the Dolphin!

Eight-year-old Grace Stanley from Huyton near Liverpool recently had her dearest wish to go swimming with dolphins granted by Starlight Children's Foundation, the UK's leading wish granting charity for children with serious and terminal illnesses.

In January 2009, Grace was diagnosed with a rare, life-threatening condition called acute lymphoblastic leukemia, which is a cancer of the white blood cells. It was a very difficult time for Grace, particularly as she lost her grandfather and her little brother George, aged 20 weeks, all in the same month that she was diagnosed with the disease.

Grace is a very strong and courageous young lady, who has shown enormous bravery throughout her illness. During the grueling months of intensive treatment, she has amazed her family by maintaining her sense of humour and lovely smile. As she had to spend a huge amount of time in hospital, Grace missed lots of school but, despite these setbacks, she is as determined as ever. She says that when she grows up she would like to be a doctor, an artist and work at Jungle Fun, an indoor play area that she loves!

During her treatment at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Grace was put forward to Starlight by one of the support workers at CHICS, the children's cancer support group. The charity said it would be delighted to grant Grace a special wish and asked her to choose what her dearest wish would be. After lots of thought, Grace asked to swim with dolphins in Florida, which would be something special for her to look forward to during the long stays in hospital.

Starlight organised for Grace and her parents, Elaine and Peter, to travel to Orlando, Florida for a wonderful adventure. The charity had booked a family house for them to stay in, which was ideally located just a ten minute drive from all the attractions, which included Discovery Cove, Sea World, Aquatica and Bush Gardens. Starlight had purchased passes for all the parks so that Grace and her family could make the very most of their time there!

The highlight of the trip, the swim with Jenny the dolphin, was at Discovery Cove, which is well-known for the wonderful experiences it offers families wishing to swim with dolphins. Before they were introduced to Jenny, they were able to snorkel over some amazing tropical fish, including sting rays (the non-dangerous ones!) and see beautiful tropical birds.

Then it was time for the long-awaited dolphin swim! Apparently Jenny was adorable and very friendly; she particularly loved being stroked by Grace. She also did some very clever tricks for Grace and her family and greeted them with her special way of communicating. The family was then able to have a little swim with Jenny, who was very strong and able to pull them along with great strength. Afterwards, they said they loved Jenny so much they wanted to take her home!

On their return from the trip, Grace's mother Elaine said, *"The whole holiday was a memorable holiday, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The dolphin experience was an emotional one, seeing Grace looking so well and happy, swimming and kissing Jenny the dolphin, it was a world away from the hospital days when the worse case scenario crossed our minds. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Starlight for the memorable experience and making our daughters dream come true."*

### Information

To refer a child for a wish or to make a donation, please go online at [www.starlight.org.uk](http://www.starlight.org.uk). For every £1 you donate, 92p goes towards helping Starlight's very ill children.

For more information, please contact Henny Vere Nicoll at [henny@starlight.org.uk](mailto:henny@starlight.org.uk) / 020 7262 2881 # 231.

Starlight grants once-in-a-lifetime wishes for seriously and terminally ill children, restoring the magic and fun of childhood and giving the whole family happy memories to share, whatever the future holds. Starlight also creates entertainment in every hospital and hospice throughout the UK.

Sick children go to Starlight parties, laugh their way through pantomimes, go out on Starlight Escapes, play games and watch films on the Starlight Fun Centre, and enjoy the toys and puzzles of the Starlight Distraction Box. Happy children respond better to treatment and Starlight helps children to forget about their illness and simply have a bit of fun.