

# Gwinnett Daily Post

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## Boy's ice cream creation to benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation

By Amy Leigh Womack

SUWANEE — By inventing a new ice cream flavor, an 8-year-old heart transplant recipient is giving back to the organization that recently gave his family a trip to Alaska.

The Atlanta office of the Make-A-Wish Foundation chose Alexei Bowers of Suwanee to invent a new ice cream flavor through Cold Stone Creamery.

Proceeds from the sale of “Alexei’s Creation” — a blend of cake batter ice cream with Oreos, M&Ms and fudge — will benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation and help fund the granting of wishes for children suffering from life-threatening medical conditions.

Alexei said he chose his favorite flavors and put them together to form “Alexei’s Creation.”

More than 200 wishes will be granted this fiscal year in North Georgia, said Paulette Lohman, marketing and communications director for Make-A-Wish.

She said children between the ages of 2 1/2 and 18 are eligible to have wishes granted through the donor and volunteer dependent organization.

“The wish is limited only by (a child’s) imagination,” said Diane Valek, Make-A-Wish CEO. Valek said Alexei’s wish was to take his family on a trip to Alaska. “Alexei could have had anything at all,” she said. “But he wanted to be able to touch and feel and see the wildlife he’d read about.”

Alexei’s parents Brett and Anji Bowers and 2 1/2-year-old sister Anya joined him on the seven-day trip earlier this month.

“We saw porpoises and sea lions and all sorts of things,” Alexei said.

Anji Bowers said her son also was able to feed a giant octopus, ride on a dog sled and pet seals. “It was just incredible,” she said.

Alexei was referred to the Make-A-Wish Foundation by Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta at Egleston in 2002 while he awaited a heart transplant.



Alexei Bowers recently invented his own ice cream flavor at the Cold Stone Ice Creamery. Alexei, who suffered from dilated cardiomyopathy, has had a heart transplant and now wants to give something back to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which arranged a trip to Alaska for the 8-year-old and his family. Proceeds from “Alexei’s Creation” will benefit the foundation.

After suffering from childhood diseases in an orphanage in Khabarovsk, Russia, Alexei was adopted at the age of 17 months and was brought to the United States where he lived a healthy life until March 2002.

“It was out of the blue and at the spur of the moment that he got sick,” Bowers said. She said her son came home with a report card and a 100.5 degree fever one day from school. He was then diagnosed with strep throat and given antibiotics.

Bowers said one day she noticed her son’s shirt moving as he slept on the couch and realized his heart was racing. He was immediately taken by ambulance to Scottish Rite Hospital and diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, a condition in which the heart weakens and becomes enlarged. “His heart was twice the usual size,” Bowers said.

After being placed on a list to await a heart transplant, Alexei was transferred to Egleston Hospital where his parents watched him gradually weaken for 20 days.

“He was listed for 20 days and he didn’t have 21,” Bowers said. “He was failing fast.” On the night of April 5, Bowers said she and her husband received a call about a potential heart. “It was the best day of my life,” she said.

After a 3-hour surgery and a 7-day recovery period, Alexei returned home.

More than a year later, Bowers said Alexei is doing tremendously well.

Alexei undergoes a check to ensure his body is not rejecting the transplanted heart every three months, takes medication to prevent rejection and suffers from a weaker immune system than normal children, but otherwise is a normal child.

“He’s doing everything an 8-year-old boy would do. He runs and plays,” Bowers said. Alexei and his family will be visiting the Cold Stone Creamery location at 4880 Lower Roswell Road in Marietta tonight from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Visitors to all Cold Stone locations today can try a free scoop of “Alexei’s Creation.”

For more information on the Make-A-Wish Foundation or to volunteer, visit [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org).