



## Give Kids The World Village: Where Dreams Really Do Come True



[www.gktw.org](http://www.gktw.org) 

Nearly 40 years ago, a young girl named Amy suffering from leukemia had a wish to visit Orlando's magical theme parks. She wanted to laugh, play, and create priceless memories with her family— a chance to escape reality and make her dreams come true. Word of Amy's request traveled until it made its way to a man named Henri Landwirth.

Landwirth, a respected hotelier, was deeply moved by Amy's story. As a Holocaust survivor, he knew all too well what it was like to give up childhood. He had used his GI benefits – obtained from serving in the U.S. Army – to learn hotel management, rising from bellman to owner. Decades later, he found himself in the position to help Amy's once-in-a-lifetime wish come true with a complimentary hotel stay. Sadly, Henri and Amy would never meet. The remainder of Amy's travel plans took too long to arrange, and her wish never came true.

This single experience changed the trajectory of Landwirth's life. Every child is precious and deserves the quintessential childhood, above all those who deal with hardships the rest of us can only imagine. He made a vow: never again would a sick child's wish go unfulfilled. The course of events in Landwirth's life had directed him towards this – his greatest calling and purpose.

He opened Give Kids The World Village in 1986 and has kept his promise ever since - providing critically ill children and their families with magical week-long wish vacations in a whimsical storybook oasis imagined from the pages of a fairytale. From life's simple pleasures to the stuff that dreams are made of, every family is treated to an all-inclusive experience including accommodations; all meals and snacks; donated theme park tickets; nightly entertainment; daily gifts; and nonstop fun at the Village, featuring an array of accessible rides and attractions...all of which creates joy, optimism and hope which lasts long after families return home. Wish children from around the world visit the nonprofit resort just outside Orlando, sometimes as quickly as within 24 hours if necessary. In fact, half of all children eligible for a wish choose to visit Central Florida and its world-renowned theme parks!

## The Magic Of The Village

Today, Give Kids The World Village is an 89-acre resort encompassing 166 villa accommodations, unique entertainment attractions for children of all ages and abilities and whimsical, accessible venues- from the Enchanted Carousel and Henri's Starlite Scoops to Amberville Train Station and the Park of Dreams pool. You can eat Ms. Merry's carrot cake with Mayor Clayton, a magical 6-foot-tall bunny who governs the Village and play CandyLand® with Murphy the gingerbread man. Kailey the penguin comes up from the South Pole to visit the Village and puts smiles on faces during the warm weather.

Every night of the week, wish families can also enjoy entertainment parties and holiday celebrations. Every Monday is a Halloween extravaganza, and every Tuesday night "Stellar's Star Show" where they can share their talents, where children can sing, dance, tell jokes, and have light saber battles. Thursday night celebrates winter holidays, and every Friday pirates, princesses, and mermaids descend upon the resort for "Once Upon a Village."

For one incredible week, wish children and their families enjoy Give The Kids World Village and a host of other attractions and experiences at absolutely no cost, including Walt Disney World®, Universal Orlando Resort™; SeaWorld Orlando®; Gatorland™; the Kennedy Space Center; LegoLand® Florida Resort; and more. For wish children who have faced the unthinkable, Give Kids The World unlocks a magical week of "YES" where wish kids can experience the joy and wonder of childhood away from hospital stays and medical treatments, and where families can relax, reconnect, and recapture many of the priceless moments that may have been missed due to a child's illness.

For wish children who have faced the unthinkable, Give Kids The World unlocks a magical week of "YES" where wish kids can experience the joy and wonder of childhood away from hospital stays and medical treatments.





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—**Ian Cole**, Chief Innovation Officer

An especially meaningful part of the Village experience is the opportunity for every wish child who visits to personalize a gold star and have it placed on the ceiling of the Castle of Miracles and Star Tower. "There's a light that shines in every child who comes to the Village. Each child's star stays there forever as a symbol of their time at the Village and their shining light. This is their legacy," explained Give Kids The World's Chief Innovation Officer Ian Cole. Some wish children return as adults with their own families to view their star while other stars are viewed by surviving family members.

The Village is continually expanding to include new experiences and offerings – like [Mayor Clayton's WonderLab](#), an interactive, hands-on educational center where children can engage in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) activities. As a leader in technology, Cole is particularly excited about this development.

## **The Village Takes A Village**

Give Kids The World's mission "To create the happiness that inspires hope" for wish families is made possible by thousands of volunteers, who donate their time, talent and passion

orchestrating virtually every aspect of the Village – from operating the accessible rides, scooping ice cream and serving food to hosting parties and assisting the Gift Fairy. Volunteers fill up to 1,800 volunteer shifts every single week, making the Village one of the nation's largest single-site volunteer operations.

Also making it possible for Give Kids The World to fulfill its mission are countless donors, wish-granting organizations, and corporate partners like Avaya. The Village utilizes Avaya Unified Communications and contact center applications as well as an online portal, enabling partners to make requests and manage information; however, its phone system is the most relied on for external communications. A small but mighty Village Vacation Planning Services (VVPS) team is responsible for facilitating communications and building personal relationships with partnering wish-granting organizations and other stakeholders on a global basis.

Wish-granting organizations communicate with families during the wish granting process; all medical approvals, travel arrangements, and other considerations are made in partnership with the Village prior to the wish trip.





Once these details have been confirmed, wish-granting partners reach out to the VVPS team, and an assigned team member takes over – reaching out to each family before their visit to share insights about the Village, collect vital information, and identify ways to personalize the wish experience for every member of the family. From special character meet and greets and favorite foods to unique behind-the-scenes opportunities, the Village goes above and beyond creating once-in-a-lifetime moments and truly unforgettable memories.

More than 800 guests each week means hundreds of interactions daily to coordinate care and confirm reservations, with call volumes even higher during busier times of the year such as the holidays. The Village also doesn't dictate dates for a visit – wish families have complete control over their experiences – which may mean additional communication with third-party service providers.

Having the right people taking calls with unprecedented reliability and quality is crucial to the journey Give Kids The World creates. Reliability is also critical for Cole's small technology team, who are responsible for managing and maintaining thousands of connected devices across the resort. "We don't have time to be tied up by our phone system," said Cole.

"We need a high-performance system that we know will work seamlessly. The Avaya Customer Experience Services (ACES) team has absolutely delivered in this way."

There is at least one physical phone in every guest villa that can be used for requests like ordering from the resort's pizza kitchen or bakery cart. Of course, these devices are also crucial for emergency communications. The Village is currently working on migrating from analog phones to fiber and SIP, which will significantly improve reliability, prevent downtime (Florida is considered the lightning capital of the world based on strikes per square kilometer), and reduce operational costs. "We are looking forward to moving to SIP for long-term viability. This will play a key role in the environment we create and the experiences we're able to deliver," said Cole.

## Building Smarter Emergency Communications

At a property that caters to critically ill children and their families, 911 is often called. Avaya enables Give Kids The World to increase communications speed, accuracy, and efficiency in these crucial moments. The Village has always paid special attention to emergency services and looks forward to using SENTRY from partner 911Secure, the world's first enterprise NG911 secure data repository.



This will enable Give Kids The World to send additional detailed location information to responders such as which gate and building to enter, down to the specific floor and/or room. The resort hopes to use this geo-location capability in the future to be alerted when guests call 911 using their personal cell phone devices. This is a significant development that will enhance emergency readiness across the 89-acre property.

The solution also [ensures compliance with Kari's Law and Ray Baum's Act](#). These measures require Multi-Line Telephone Systems – like those in businesses, hotels, government agencies, and schools – to enable direct dialing to 911 call centers and that those calls include a detailed dispatchable location to decrease response time.

## Where Happiness Inspires Hope

Everyone associated with the Village – from employees like Cole who work behind the scenes and the Village's indispensable WPS and Guest Services teams to thousands of volunteers and organizations – has a heart to serve and a passion for making every moment magical.

“The world can be a challenging place. It's wonderful to come to a place where people are actively working together to make it better,” Cole reflected.

Avaya is humbled and honored to power technology that ensures consistent, effortless communications and emergency preparedness at Give Kids The World Village. This one-of-a-kind organization, which has changed hundreds of thousands of lives for the better, is truly the epitome of experiences that matter.



## About Give Kids The World Village

Rated Four Stars by Charity Navigator, Give Kids The World Village is an 89-acre, whimsical nonprofit resort in Kissimmee, Florida, that provides week-long, cost-free wish vacations to critically ill children and their families from around the world who want to visit Central Florida.

Since 1986, Give Kids The World Village has welcomed more than 187,000 families from all 50 states and 76 countries. The Village is made possible by the support of generous donors and community partners, as well as thousands of passionate volunteers – who donate their time and talent making wishes come true.



## About Avaya

Businesses are built by the experiences they provide, and every day millions of those experiences are delivered by Avaya Holdings Corp (NYSE: AVYA). Avaya is shaping the future of customer experiences, with innovation and partnerships that deliver game-changing business benefits. Our communications solutions power immersive, personalized, and memorable customer experiences to help organizations achieve their strategic ambitions and desired outcomes. Together, we are committed to helping grow your business by delivering Experiences That Matter.