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Dream Come True to Magic Kingdom for Palmerton girl

A trip fit for a princess

By SHARON MINNICH

sminnich@tnonline.com

Many young girls dream of being a princess and meeting Prince Charming and 10 year-old Voula Sabol is no exception. However, Voula had that dream come true.

The Palmerton girl returned last week from a week-long trip to Florida arranged through the Blue Ridge Chapter of Dream Come True. Voula, along with her parents Kay and Adam Johnson, visited Disney's Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Kingdom, along with Sea World and Universal Studios.

'I liked everything,' says a very happy Voula, the day after she returned from her trip. 'I want to move there.'

'It was so unbelievable,' adds her mother, Kay. 'They treated her so special and she loved the attention.'

Every detail of the family's trip was planned by the Dream Come True chapter. Chapter president Eileen Thompson and board member Kaye Nalesnik took care of making all of the arrangements for Voula's dream.

A limousine arrived at Voula's house bright and early in the morning to take the family to the airport for their flight to Florida. Her grandparents, some neighbors, Thompson, and Nalesnik were all there to send them off. Before leaving Palmerton, the limo took a short detour to drive by S.S. Palmer Elementary School, where she is a fourth grader. From the limo, Voula could wave to some of the teachers and students who were outside of the school.

In Florida, the family stayed at the Give Kids the World Village, which is a non-profit organization that works with wish granting organizations from around the world. The village, located about 10 minutes from Disney World, hosts about 5,000 families a year. When asked what the best part of her trip was, Voula had to think hard because according to her mom, everything was so wonderful. Some of her favorite memories though were feeding the dolphins and the Journey to Atlantis ride at Sea World.

'I went on that four times,' she says with a big smile.

She also enjoyed the parade at Magic Kingdom where she and her family had special V.I.P. seating and also her dinner with Cinderella at the Grand Floridian Hotel.

'Prince Charming was there, too,' Voula says. 'He was real cute.'

They also talked about how wonderful their experience was at Give Kids the World Village.

'Everyone was so nice there. It was so unbelievable' says Voula's mom.

The family also had the opportunity to meet some of the other families who were staying there also.

'It was so great to see families being so happy here,' she adds.

Voula came home with plenty of souvenirs from her dream. She has plenty of photos, and an autograph book that's filled with signatures from just about all of the Disney characters. She also brought home many souvenirs that she received as gifts at Give Kids the World Village. Every day, when they would return there after an exciting day in one

of the parks, there would be another gift waiting there for Voula, such as plush Disney characters or Disney videos. □

Voula was the first dream recipient from the Blue Ridge Chapter of Dream Come True, which was just established this past March. Dream Come True is an all volunteer organization that fulfills dreams for qualified chronically, seriously or terminally ill children. The Blue Ridge Chapter serves families in Carbon County and parts of Monroe, Lehigh, and Schuylkill counties. □

'Previous to becoming a chapter our group was primarily a fund raiser group and the dreams were fulfilled through the Lehigh Valley Chapter,' Thompson says. □

She also noted that the new chapter already has had 15 referrals for children to have their dreams fulfilled. Children are referred to Dream Come True usually by physicians, teachers, or in Voula's case by an occupational therapist at S.S. Palmer Elementary School. □

Voula has a very rare condition called Towne's Syndrome. According to her mother, she had to have heart surgery when she was two years old and she could still have future heart problems and so she must see a cardiologist every other month. With Towne's Syndrome Voula also experiences a number of other health problems. □

'Right now everything is stable and emotionally she's doing okay,' says her mom. 'We try to keep her as happy as we can for now. I tell people never take your kids for granted.' □

As Voula talks about her Dream Come True trip, the huge smile on her face leaves no doubt that she had the time of her life. □

'The dream was worth it for her,' her mom says. 'We don't know what her future holds, but she had this.'