

A WISH FULFILLED IN A SIESTA SUMMER



Kayla Campbell, 20, who has had more than 20 surgeries, and had a kidney removed, told Ohio-based Wishes Can Happen that she wanted her mother to see the ocean for the first time. She is now vacationing in Sarasota with her parents and her boyfriend. STAFF PHOTOS / CNP LUTHERLAND

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Making most of the time that she has



"Siesta is the prettiest beach I've ever seen," said Kayla Campbell, who is visiting from Ohio with her family, thanks to a wish-granting organization. STAFF PHOTOS / CNP LUTHERLAND

Sarasota vacation is about enjoying what time she has

By HALLE STOCKTON, halle.stockton@heraldtribune.com

Worries over an uncertain future with a single ailing kidney took a backseat in Kayla Campbell's mind Saturday as she sailed through the Gulf of Mexico. She scoured the waters for dolphins, narrowly missed a sea turtle sighting and took the helm of the Key Breeze charter boat before surrendering it near a sandbar.

The 20-year-old with pink-streaked blond hair was afraid she would crash the boat, but she is no longer afraid of dying.

Campbell says she has quashed her fear of death and instead focuses on living every moment to the fullest.

The Rittman, Ohio, resident has undergone more than 25 kidney surgeries to remove one infected kidney and keep the other kidney stone-free over the past two years.

She has a congenital defect that makes the hospital her second home and tear-inducing pain a regular occurrence.



Tim Solomon helps Kayla Campbell pilot the Key Breeze during a sailing trip in the Gulf. "I have a lot of stuff I still have to do in my life," said Campbell, who has a life-threatening kidney disorder.

But she, her parents and boyfriend are enjoying a rare spate of stable health in Sarasota this week — a vacation wish granted by the Ohio organization Wishes Can Happen.

Wishes Can Happen fulfills wishes for Ohio residents ages 3 to 21 with life-threatening medical conditions.

Most choose a trip to Disney. Some ask for pools or to meet their favorite celebrity. But Campbell wanted her mother to see the ocean for the first time.

"My parents have sacrificed so much for me, this means everything to me to be here with them," she said. "I doubt I'll ever

See WISH on 6B

WISH from 1B
be able to take a trip like this with my parents ever again."

The family has sunbathed at Siesta Beach, gone parasailing at 1,200 feet and rented a four-person tandem bike.

"Siesta is the prettiest beach I've ever seen. I could spend weeks there," Campbell said. "I doubt I'll ever go parasailing again, though. That was scary."

On Saturday, Key Sailing owner Janet Hamel Solomon and her husband, Tim, treated the family to a morning sail. They enjoyed sodas and chocolates, and Campbell relaxed in the sun with her boyfriend, Justin Brisentine.

"This was the best day yet," Campbell said after twirling on the bow. "Just hanging out with no rush to get anywhere."

Parents Paul and Tammy Campbell enjoyed the scenery, most notably



Campbell's father sang the Eagles song "Take it Easy" to her as a child, and the line has become a mantra of sorts for her, helping her stay calm during medical procedures.

their daughter's constant smile.

"It means the world to me to see her happy like this," Tammy Campbell said. "She's been through so much, she deserves it."

Still on the agenda is riding jet skis and visiting the Sarasota Jungle Gardens.

Then, Campbell will return to Ohio to finish her G.E.D. and attend cosmetology school.

She hopes doing hair will pay for and prepare her to work for an entertainment design degree at Kent State and do makeup for actors in horror movies.

She also wants to be a singer, has detailed plans for a wedding and is even considering starting a charity for people without insurance.

"I have a lot of stuff I still have to do in my life," she said.