



### **Brendan**

Sixteen year old Brendan is the oldest of four siblings. In 2010, his life and that of his family was forever changed when he was diagnosed with Friedrich's ataxia, an autosomal recessive inherited disease that causes progressive damage to the nervous system. Brendan's condition is incurable. Friedrich's ataxia causes gait disturbance, speech problems, heart disease, and diabetes. His progressive loss of coordination and muscle strength will inevitably leave Brendan reliant on a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

Brendan says when he was first diagnosed, "I was shocked. I started worrying and thinking about it a lot. But I was actually a little relieved. All my life I was never the best athlete, I could never skate well in hockey or write neatly. But at that moment all my failures made sense."

The first few years following his diagnosis were difficult for Brendan. Kids teased him and constantly asked questions about his condition that he was not prepared to answer. Worse yet, he was longer able to play most of the sports he loves.

Since then things have only gotten better. Now in Grade 11, Brendan and his family have a better understanding of his disease, although, he admits he "hates everything about it." He has adjusted well to high school life and spends as much time as possible with friends. Despite his uncertain future, Brendan is grateful for the unwavering support of his family. He appreciates the many accommodations that have been made for him to make day-to-day living easier.

Brendan is passionate about writing, watching hockey, and watching and editing movies. So much, in fact, that he hopes to study film editing after graduating high school. His favorite film is Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, so it came as no surprise that Brendan's Wish was to meet his idol, George Lucas, at Skywalker Ranch.

The Kimmet Cup hockey tournament participants and supporters worked hard, on and off the ice, to turn Brendan's Wish from dream to reality.

My name is Brendan Gillingham, and my wish was to visit Skywalker Ranch. For those who don't know, Skywalker Ranch is where George Lucas keeps most of the props and costumes from the "Star Wars" franchise, it also houses a fully functioning sound studio, George Lucas's private office, and even livestock. I choose this wish because Star Wars is without a doubt my favourite franchise, and I thought it would be cool to see the Original props from the movies, although, truthfully this seemed like a far-fetched goal to achieve, as Skywalker Ranch is a very private place and is in no way open to the general public. However, with the amazing help, support, and dedication of the people involved in Kimmett Cup in combination with that of the Children's Wish Foundation, I got to have quite literally the best day of my life.

We flew out to San Francisco on August 24th, and we visited the actual ranch on August 26th, which is located about 40 minutes North of San Francisco. First we visited the farmhouse, which serves as George Lucas's private office. The sheer size and beauty of the building was quite exceptional, every room was filled with masterful woodwork and detail, and there was even a library where the books all focused on film and general media. Next, we saw all the authentic props and costumes in the Archives, it was row upon row of ceiling high shelves filled with Star Wars props. Everything was there, Lightsabers, blaster guns, puppets, Podracers, space ships, weapons, pretty much anything and everything from the movies. It was beyond mind-blowing to say the least. Then it was off to the sound studio, and things only got better. We saw a huge recording hall, we were shown how different sound effects were made from an editing booth, we got to see footage from a movie that was still being put together, I got to hold an Oscar, and perhaps the highlight of the entire trip, I saw the Darth Maul fight scene in George Lucas's private screening theatre. The entire experience was so much more than I or my family was expecting, and the Kimmett Cup is to thank here. It is a truly special moment that we as a family can look back on with fond memories. The fact that they have the power to do all this for other families too is beyond incredible, and I will continue to attend and support this event for many years to come.

Brendan Gillingham

