

## Herp Make-A-Wish

**Herp community helps Make a Wish come true.**

*By Eric Syverson*

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Elizabeth Mize of Angier, N.C., made a wish.

At the time, she was several treatments into her first chemo regimen. About three months had passed since she had been diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a form of bone cancer. "I was sick," she said, "and I missed my babies."

Mize's babies are her reptiles. Their cages were scattered about the teenager's house, and she couldn't get around to see them. So she made her wish.

"I didn't want to travel or meet anyone famous," she said. "I wanted to have all my guys (and girls) near me and in a place that met both their needs and mine."

The Make-A-Wish Foundation of Eastern North Carolina heard her request. Spokeswoman Ziva Raney said staff started looking for contacts who could help make Mize's wish a reality. One source led to another, and soon several businesses and organizations in the herp community were ready to contribute to the cause. "It was a beautiful example of how the community came together to make this wish happen," Raney said.

Then on Dec. 10, 2008, Mize and her family entered the Museum of Life and Science in Durham. She was told what to expect, but she wasn't ready for the sheer amount of stuff. That, she said, "was insane." Waiting was an estimated \$8,400 worth of gear: bedding, cage decorations, reptile food, thermometers, books, clothing, and two custom-built 6-foot-tall enclosures equipped with lights and heaters. Museum staff brought out reptiles. Mize took a ball python, and news photographers snapped photos. Afterwards, her family took the new equipment home, where eventually she and her 12 snakes, eight lizards and two turtles will put the products to good use.

Mize made a wish. Did it come true? "Definitely," she said. "The cages are wonderful. They don't take up near as much room as the aquariums, and they have dividers so the cages fit the snake. Plus all the furniture makes sure they will feel at home."

### Mize's Reptiles:

- 1 Subadult Suriname boa
- 1 Juvenile high-pink Colombian boa
- 2 Juvenile Guyana boas
- 2 Juvenile anery Colombian boas
- 2 Subadult ball pythons
- 1 Juvenile ball python
- 3 Juvenile corn snakes
- 2 Adult leopard geckos
- 3 Adult bearded dragons
- 3 Juvenile bearded dragons
- 2 Juvenile yellow-bellied sliders

### Contributors:

- Zilla – reptile supplies and cage decorations
- Herpcages.com – two 6-foot-tall custom-built enclosures
- Zoo Med Laboratories – lighting equipment for the enclosure units
- Midwest Tongs – reptile equipment
- ECO Herpetological Publishing – books, T-shirts and hats
- REPTILES and BowTie Press – year subscription and Advanced Vivarium Systems books
- Museum of Life and Science – year membership
- Chicago Herpetological Society – society membership

### Contributor comments:

“We hope Elizabeth will dream big even as Dana Savorelli did when he was 12 years old and is now the owner/founder of Midwest Tongs. We wish you happy herping.” — Midwest Tongs

“We hope the excitement and thrill of her animals will bring joy and laughter to Elizabeth.” — Chicago Herpetological Society

“We are a small community; we take care of each other. Elizabeth has put together an amazing menagerie of animals. Luckily we had a cap, a shirt and a book to give her to match each species!” — Bob and Sheri Ashley, ECO Herpetological Publishing

“We were so excited that we could make her wish come true. We were touched by her story, and the courage she displays each and every day in her fight against osteosarcoma.” — Daniel Lorica, Zilla

“Elizabeth could have wished for anything, yet she wished for things to help her provide the best care for her reptiles. Now there’s a conscientious herper of the highest caliber.” — Russ Case, Editor, REPTILES